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2015 WIN-A-TRIP APPLICATION

I didn't come to reporting through HBO's "The Newsroom" or by the words of seasoned journalist Barbara Walters.

In fact, I didn't fall in love with reporting through American media at all; rather, in a sense, I came to journalism in spite of it.

As I stood in the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre and stared at hundreds of fuzzy, Polaroid photos—often the only token of remembrance for thousands of Rwandan genocide victims—I couldn't hide the anger in my flushed cheeks.

I had spent five weeks teaching—my former professional of choice—in Rwanda's capitol city alongside strong, local educators who occasionally asked my help for pronunciation of tricky English words like "equator."

Perhaps this is what made the genocide memorial especially unbearable, for when I sat down in front of the clotheslines of gently rippling pictures, I didn't see the fathomless number of 800,000.

I saw Deborahs, Shakiras, Nouaimas, Alberts and Odettes. I saw people.

Had Western media seen people in 1994 when systematic killing was occurring in Rwanda, I believe the reported response may have been different.

Words used to soothe global inaction like "tribal" and "civil war" may have been earlier replaced by more accurate terminology like "structural violence" or "genocide."

The failure of western media to accurately report the genocide in Rwanda and other human rights abuses around the world has led me to pick up the torch.

Through my studies in journalism, I'm increasingly aware of the power media has to reproduce certain attitudes and beliefs in society.

And through my international studies in Africa and the Global South, I am increasingly aware of the power this has on how we, especially as First World Americans, perceive global politics and foreign social climates.

I'm afraid that our culture has adopted a subconscious attitude about social justice that allows many to acknowledge it only when affecting U.S. commodity prices or conveniently trending on Twitter.

This fear, whether reality or not, has motivated me to seek out answers skimmed over by mainstream news, to test mediated images through travel and experience and to expose injustice when it has been neatly swept under the rug.

My portfolio site, [Compose to Expose](#), is a manifestation of this spirit. When I'm not communicating on behalf of the [UW-Madison African Studies Program](#) or editing words for [PBS MediaShift](#), my mind wanders to the questions and truths of this space.

While Compose to Expose is rather new in its existence, it carries the enthusiasm of several blogging endeavors before it, the most recent of which [documents my summer weeks in Rwanda](#).

And as I stare at my blinking cursor, preparing to spill another winding stream of consciousness as I did so many times in the land of one thousand hills, I am reminded that at the end of the day, media is produced and shared by human beings—humans that can harbor attitudes of truth and integrity and humans that can harbor deep self-interest and ignorance.

This ultimatum in mind, I look forward to a career in international reporting that will challenge these attitudes through storytelling, in an effort to help shape the issues my generation cares about and stands up for.

So, while I mastered mosquito nets, fried plantains, bucket showers and a classroom of 40 first graders in Rwanda, my real success was vocational in nature.

Rwanda showed me the failure of media in the face of humanitarian crisis. I am now determined to be part of the solution. While my work will not bring back the Deborahs, Shakiras, Nouaimas, Alberts and Odettes who were killed in Rwanda over 20 years ago, there is still room to expose systems of injustice that allow similar tragedies around the world to occur every day.

I believe that after having experienced the shock of poverty through my travels in Rwanda and Honduras, I am well-positioned to begin unpacking the structural violence that allows such realities to survive, and I would like nothing more to put my studies and passion to work through this opportunity with Nick Kristof and the New York Times.