

Humane Reporting: An Overview

What is Humane Reporting?

Humane Reporting focuses on the personal stories behind broader issues, prioritizing the human element that often appears only in a few “colorful quotes” or scene-setters. Humane Reporting helps us remember that what makes an event newsworthy is the effect it has on people. What’s interesting in reading an article about the tech boom in India is not simply the sparkling new call centers going up, but the people whose lives are being changed, from the new class of young professionals emerging on the streets of Bangalore to the American workers who’ve seen their jobs go overseas and the rural Indian farmer that hasn’t felt his life change at all.

Humane Reporting takes this contextualized, human-centered approach one step further by making these people – and not a detached expert economist, for example – the central sources of every story.

Why Do We Need It?

- **Human Coverage.** News coverage has increasingly moved toward the business model, reporting local and international trends and events as if they are only relevant to readers as inside investment tips, while ignoring the lives and humanity of people involved on the ground.
- **Bottom Up Reporting.** By orienting news coverage towards celebrities, politicians, and the wealthy we disempower the common citizen from full participation in society. Humane Reporting says that everyone is a qualified source to explain their own lives and experiences. Their voices should have equal weight to those of the traditional experts in discussing the issues that affect their lives.
- **Globalizing Humanity.** International reporting increasingly serves only to create a sense of fear and isolation. By focusing international coverage on creative, solutions-oriented projects or on-the-ground problems that are often ignored, Humane Reporting can combat the “if it bleeds, it leads,” and “follow the pack” mentalities that currently dominate mainstream news and ignore people’s struggles for economic and social justice.
- **Regaining Trust.** Young, politically-minded Americans are already moving away from the traditional news sources of the past, in favor of alternative online sources telling new stories in a non-commercial format. Humane Reporting addresses these media consumers’ concerns and helps combat the cynicism with which many view the media, and remind the fourth estate that one of its primary goals is to challenge power and provide a voice to those that are not already being heard.

Humane Reporting in Action: Kazakhstan



On arrival in Kazakhstan we established contact with the local Human Rights Commission and an environmental group, looking for a story beyond the oil and real estate booms that tended to dominate coverage of the region – always with a positive spin. Being in direct contact with the community, the NGOs tipped us off to a story of squatters who were being evicted, and helped us get in touch with community members. We chose not to strain for soundbites from developers and politicians that didn’t want to talk to us, but to spend our time with a community on hunger strike, in protest to make way for new development. We used two people from local communities, both struggling against corrupt development practices, whose lives and voices carried this complex story.

To contextualize news from a place many of our readers might have some trouble finding on a map, we added a new feature to our site, Country Fact Sheets. See Kazakhstan’s:

<http://clpmag.org/content/pages/factsheets/kazakhstan.php>

Positive Reporting Across Borders

The mission of the Common Language Project is to develop and implement innovative multimedia approaches to international and local journalism. We focus on positive, inclusive and humane reporting of stories ignored by the mainstream media.