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Human Rights, Testimony, and Transnational Publicity

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In the period between the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the events of September 11, 2001, human rights became the dominant moral narrative by which world politics was organized. Inspired by the momentous political and cultural transformations taking place at the time, from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the spread of global communications technologies, promoters of human-rights discourse optimistically predicted that a transnational public sphere dedicated to democratic values would emerge. (We now know, of course, that such predictions were wrong, as early post–Cold War hopes gave way to the harsh realities of contemporary globalization.)

In order to help create the transnational public sphere they envisioned, international human-rights activists deployed a number of strategies, among them the production and circulation of testimonies by victims of rights abuses.

A testimony is a first-person narrative in which an individual's account of bodily suffering at the hands of oppressive governments or other agents comes to stand for the oppression of a group. Rooted in the Christian notions of witnessing and of the body as vehicle of suffering, testimony is a deeply persuasive cultural form that animates and moves Western sensibilities. Although testimony has long played an important part in rights advocacy (dating back to abolitionism), its use grew in the 1990s, when testimonies proliferated in multiple genres and arenas, from written texts to film and video documentaries to live performances and face-to-face encounters at activist meetings, NGO forums, and governmental hearings.[1] This essay explores this phenomenon, focusing on the role of several mediated forms of testimony, such as "cine-testimonials" (testimony on film or video) and online testimony, in activists' attempts to construct a transnational public.

While media are recognized as being critical to the general diffusion of human-rights norms and values, especially in the post-Second World War period, relatively

The Nakamata Coalition, comprised of ten tribal groups in the Philippines, is learning to harness digital technology to defend its members' rights in one of the poorest and most remote places on earth. From the film *Seeing is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights and the News,* codirected by Katerina Cizek and Peter Wintonick (www.seeingisbelieving.ca/press/stills).

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little scholarly work exists that adequately addresses their role in the making of contemporary human-rights claims.[2] This neglect can be attributed to two things: first, a tendency to treat human rights as "something out there" waiting to be realized legally or philosophically, rather than as a flexible and expansive category through which politico-ethical claims are made and sociopolitical transitions are accomplished; second, a tendency to overlook the fact that media are not merely conduits for social forces and do not simply express social realities, but possess a logic and power that is itself constitutive of thought, identity, and action. One implicit aim of this essay, therefore, is to counter rights legalism by demonstrating the centrality of media (and cultural production) to the human-rights movement.

To render something public once meant submitting it to the critical judgment of others; in recent years, publicity has gained new meanings—making something public is the result of a "bewildering array of spatial and technical mediations." As Arvind Rajagopal notes,

> the effect of the means and modes of reproduction, whether analog or digital, electronic or mechanical, and the space of an event, whether in a shopping mall, a crowd, [or] a city square, or, for that matter, in a broadcast image or a Web site, all shape the experience of publicity in significant and different ways. The kinds of visibility a public event has are not secondary to its being public; rather, they condition the forms of publicity mobilized.[3]

The taxonomy of testimony proposed in this essay underscores Rajagopal's observation that analysis of public texts, events, and practices must be form sensitive. Testimony can work through the enumeration of facts, as well as through emotionally laden narratives of suffering; each entails a different kind of signification. Although human-rights activists often deploy both kinds simultaneously, the larger point is that testimony is not a transparent genre or practice, as the following discussion of its mediation in various forms demonstrates.[4]

Analysis of the relation between human-rights testimonies and transnational publicity thus involves bringing aesthetic questions about formal semiotic properties and generic conventions to bear on considerations about how testimonies generate action outside the textual event itself. In this essay, I argue that human-rights testimonies can be understood as a form of political communication, that is, a means through which ethical arguments or claims are made and collectivities are hailed and potentially persuaded and mobilized.

testimony as documentary evidence

The discovery and representation of information on human-rights abuses through specific forms of realism is central to most human-rights work. Indeed, human-rights activists and organizations are first and foremost "collectors, filterers, translators, and presenters of information regarding human rights violations."[5] The underlying assumption is that the circulation of such information generates political action, whether it

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be through direct pressure on governments or corporations to change their policies or through the mobilization of individuals on a grassroots level. Although the naive epistemology about exposure and revelation upon which this belief is based has been challenged in recent years by situations in which knowledge has actually failed to produce action—most notably the war in Bosnia, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and, more recently, the American occupation of Iraq—it nevertheless remains a guiding principle of traditional human-rights politics.[6]

In the early years of Amnesty International USA, activists devoted a huge amount of their energies to gathering specific data about violations, which they analyzed according to human-rights principles and put in the form of written reports. These "thick rivers of fact" were circulated to governments and the press as evidence of their claims.[7] Activists' reliance on "documentary rhetoric"—realist forms of representation and conventions of documentation—presents a problem in that abuses are never clear-cut; there are always contradictions between human-rights classifications of violence and how violence actually plays out on the ground.[8] In order to manage the instability of the category on which their claims are based, human-rights activists formulate their reports using abstract universal discourses and a particular style of journalistic realism. In his writing on human-rights reports, Richard Wilson notes that the genre presents information as if it were simply factual and transparent; claims are supported with numerous references to how sources are checked, to international human rights standards, and to previous reports.[9] By presenting their findings in this way, NGOs are able to appear credible (and their information objective), and in so doing, they "cultivate a veneer of independence and impartiality in the international arena, which helps legitimize their assertions about the need for human rights norms."[10] In recent years, this orthodox insistence on revelation and documentation has come under considerable pressure, for instance in the context of truth commissions, which some have argued enable a process of forgetting—rather than the prevention of forgetting—crimes against humanity and human-rights violations.

Seeing Is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights, and the News, a documentary film directed by Katerina Cizek and Peter Winotick, is an instructive look at the role of digital video in documenting human-rights abuses around the world.[11] Filipino political scientist Alex Magno sets up the broader framework of the piece with his observation that video cameras are simply part of a long line of new communications technologies or "small media" that have played a critical part in various political revolutions around the world, from audiocassettes in Iran in 1979 to faxes in China in 1989 to e-mail and text messages in the Philippines in 2001.[12]

Gillian Caldwell, the executive director of the New York–based human-rights media organization Witness, elaborates on Magno's point, underscoring the importance of video images gathered by activists as visual evidence of human-rights violations. Drama is provided by the story of a Filipino activist named Joey who works closely with a coalition of indigenous people's groups known as the Nakamata Coalition. First Joey is shown training members of the coalition to document their struggles with local

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plantation owners over land in Mindanao; then coalition members take the camera themselves to record a meeting with some officials. The practice of documenting oral transactions on video has emerged as an important one for indigenous people who view such transactions as contractually binding within their own societies. By videotaping discussions about land claims, for instance, nonliterate activists create records they can use when agreements between parties break down.[13] Soon after the coalition training process finishes, violence breaks out, and the camera provided by Witness is there to record it all.[14]

At the heart of this film is a theory of truth and transparency that is premised on two things: the authenticity of experience (I was there, I witnessed it, therefore it is true) and a commitment to gathering and displaying visible evidence. Yet as countless writers on documentary photography and film point out, the truth status of images has always depended on critical contextualization. Images do not create meaning without framing, a point perhaps most starkly illustrated by the various readings of the video footage elicited by the prosecution and the defense during the trials of the police officers charged with beating Rodney King.[15] Ilan Ziv's documentary *Consuming Hunger* further underscores the need for contextual information to educate audiences about what they are actually seeing.[16] Although the transparency attributed to video evidence parallels that attributed to legalistic realist forms such as written human-rights reports, human-rights testimonials on film (or "cine-testimonials") can be distinguished

Video still of Los Angeles police officers beating Rodney King, March 3, 1991, in Los Angeles, California, from an amateur video shot by George Holliday (CNN via Getty Images).

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by the use of explicit framing devices that supplement images with specifically targeted information aimed at provoking change.

What happens when the documentation is done not by the victims of human-rights abuses but by the perpetrators? Such was the case with the now-iconic photographs of detainees taken by U.S. soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2003. These low-resolution images, made with the near-ubiquitous cell-phone cameras then carried by many Americans in Iraq (which have since been forbidden by the army), were not just the means through which humiliation and abuse were revealed, but also a part of the abuse itself. Or as Allen Feldman put it, "The photographs of American soldiers humiliating and terrorizing Iraqi detainees are not incidental documentary records or a recreational pastime of the jailors, but central to the meaning of the war and occupation"; they are part of America's war of "visual dominance."[17] Of course, it is ironic that this "inconvenient evidence" emerged and circulated globally, given the Bush administration's "highly controlled visual strategies," which were used to sell the war and then to prevent the American public from seeing images of Iraqi civilian casualties or of dead American servicemen and women in coffins.[18]

testimony, affect, and ethical argument

In *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention,* Neta Crawford explores the consequential role of argument in world politics. Her theory focuses on the place of ethical arguments in fostering changes in long-standing practices of oppression, such as colonialism, slavery, and forced labor: "Ethical arguments concern how to act in a particular situation so as to be doing good, assuming that the good has been defined through cultural consensus or meta-argument."[19] They operate through an assertion that an "existing normative belief or moral conviction ought to be applied in a particular situation."[20] She points out that assertions that slavery was not "natural" and contradicts Christian principles, for instance, were persuasive because they were emotionally appealing—they played on and resonated with audiences' underlying ethical and moral beliefs.

The use of testimony by abolitionists can be seen as an early precursor of the use of testimony by human rights activists since the Second World War.[21] Like slave narratives, human-rights testimonies are important vehicles through which ethical arguments are made. They use symbols, images, and accounts of individual experiences of suffering to engage their audiences affectively and to persuade them of a cause's moral worth.[22]

The body (and its pain) is a necessary medium in human-rights work, because it is what people have in common with others. Testimony is premised on the belief that pain is universal.[23] This belief in the universality of pain and its effectiveness as a tool for creating solidarity is underscored by researchers who have found that torture is the easiest human-rights issue on which to campaign.[24] Testimony creates an intersubjective space for exchange in which identification with a suffering "other" can take

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place. Through our identification, we become connected to a political project and can be moved to action. As Alison Brysk notes, "A message can foment change by creating an alternative reality, transferring daily experience to a different realm in which it is valued and thus opening the recipient to consider a new social order."[25] In this sense, human-rights testimonies are performative—they make ethical claims on viewers and listeners and cultivate potential ethical actors in the global arena.

This observation is perhaps best exemplified by the video *Testimony: Annie Lennox in Conversation with Palden Gyatso*.[26] Produced and directed by Annie Lennox, the well-known Scottish singer from the Eurythmics, the video documents the testimony of Palden Gyatso, a monk from Tibet who was imprisoned after the Chinese takeover in 1959. A large portion of the half-hour program is devoted to Gyatso's tale of his arrest and mistreatment by Chinese authorities over the years, including torture with an electric cattle prod made in Britain. At one point, Gyatso pulls out several torture instruments that he brought with him from Tibet. (It is never explained how the monk managed that.) He leans forward and demonstrates to Lennox the way the thumb cuffs work. Lennox, for her part, leans forward too, watching and listening attentively. In this moment, testimony functions as a kind of intercultural technology, bringing together individuals from different worlds through the medium of pain.

Testimonial documentaries thus work on an affective level by exposing audiences to stories of pain with which they cannot help but identify on the basis of the embodiment or corporeality they have in common. They also work on another level of signification, one that reinforces the first. As "a discourse about the world," as Bill Nichols puts it, documentaries show us situations and events "that are recognizably part of a realm of shared experience, the historical world as we know and encounter it, or as we believe others to encounter it."[27] The experience of documentary "can be a force unto itself and move us beyond itself, toward that historical arena of which it is part."[28] In other words, engagement with documentary can extend "beyond the moment of viewing into social praxis itself."[29]

How is this effect achieved? The answer begins with the exceptionality of documentary's referentiality and the materiality of the indexical bond that exists between the photographic image and the object in the historical world to which it refers. What is seen on film can seem "to bear indexical links to another world with autonomy and specificity of its own,"[30] although, as the Rodney King video proves, even "raw" video footage doesn't guarantee a particular meaning. This sense of a referential link creates a sense of awe that makes it easy to forget that the film is a system of signs, not a direct, unmediated duplication of reality. The result, Nichols suggests, is a constant oscillation between the duplication of reality and the reality of the duplication. The tendency to forget that the filmic reality remains a construct, an approximation and re-presentation of a profilmic reality to which it does not grant truly direct, unimpeded access, however, is what gives viewers of realist documentaries such pleasure: for the time being, their knowledge of this fact is suspended, and they can surrender themselves to the immediacy of the reality on-screen.

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Much has been written about "resemblance" in the documentary aesthetic. One strand of documentary theory in recent years has tried to recuperate realist film by making an argument for the politicizing potential of documentary based on its "aesthetics of similarity."[31] Jane M. Gaines, for example, uses the term "political mimesis" to describe the process whereby a sensuous link is formed between bodies represented on-screen and bodies in the audience.[32] Here she is building on the work of the film theorist Linda Williams, who writes about film genres that "make the body do things" through a kind of involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on-screen; for example, "horror films make us scream, melodrama makes us cry, and porn films make us come."[33] According to Gaines, realist political documentaries work by performing a mimesis; that is, they produce emotion in the spectator in and through conventionalized imagery of struggle. Through an indexical identification with the characters on-screen, then, spectators are "poised to intervene." As she is careful to point out, however, shared cultural and historical values, and not the indexical image alone, are what lead viewers to sympathetic action. In other words, political mimesis is possible because an audience experiences the same set of political, historical, and cultural forces. Realism, then, is a device that, through the process of political mimesis, acts on a politicized audience, extending the community of activists.

I suggest that human rights testimonies on film and video achieve their representational efficacy through the process of political mimesis Gaines describes. By producing and circulating these texts, activists explicitly seek to create intersubjective spaces through which processes of political mimesis can occur and sympathy can be evoked and performed.[34] It is in this sense that a transnational "witnessing public" is constituted around human-rights trauma through testimony.[35]

transnational publics and the branding of human rights

The global spread of electronic and new digital technologies over the last two decades has transformed the ways social movements organize their relationship to publicity.[36] Human-rights activists have been in the forefront of the creation of a new kind of media activism, one that not only makes sophisticated and innovative use of techniques of celebrity and publicity through a wide range of forms, including older analog media, such as print, photography, and film, and through new digital media, such as the Internet, digital video, mobile-phone photography, and video blogs, but that also involves the creation of new organizational structures that provide a kind of scaffolding for the production and distribution of these media. Indeed, a whole new arena of social practice has emerged around human-rights media, from organizations that provide media training to activists, such as Witness, the SPIN Project, and the Digital Freedom Network, to those that provide outlets for distribution, such as the International Human Rights Watch Film Festival and MediaRights. These organizations help activists channel their messages to their intended audiences, whether those audiences are found in classrooms, watching home videos, in movie theaters, on the Internet, or in official

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forums, whether governmental (for instance, congressional), intergovernmental (such as the United Nations), or nongovernmental. In providing the means for the production and distribution of human-rights media, these new organizational forms are contributing to the creation of a new circulatory matrix or platform through which testimonies can summon witnessing publics.[37]

This aspect of the human-rights movement builds on a long history of pioneering work by Amnesty International, which was the first group to attempt to "brand" its organization through the creation of a logo in the 1970s. The explosion of rights-oriented digital media in the second half of the 1990s represented an expansion of this kind of image politics, with human-rights activists self-consciously deploying complex rhetorical strategies borrowed from advertising. Before the creation of the World Wide Web, political activists used the Internet to connect to each other via e-mail, newsgroups, and chat rooms; the "virtual politics" carried out online was a largely logocentric affair.[38] Since then, as it has become faster, easier, and cheaper to send visual data electronically, there has been a seismic shift in the political use of networked computers. Today, activists of all stripes recognize the necessity of having a presence online—well-designed Web sites are now assumed to be key "portals" into activism, especially by members of the younger generation, who take the existence of the technology for granted. In the case of human-rights Web sites, information and testimonies are increasingly presented not in a gritty, realist, documentary style, but embedded in such objects as Flash graphics and supplemented by downloadable MP3 audio files—strategies that pivot not on the emotional identification discussed above, but on different forms of signification.

The significance of this shift in relation to age and generation was brought home to me in my teaching a few years ago when I asked students in an undergraduate class on human rights to pick out their favorite human-rights Web sites. I was interested in what students thought about the sites' organization and aesthetic strategies, as well as what conclusions they might draw about the sites' potential efficacy as tools to promote human rights. One of sites we explored together was www.stoptorture.org, a project of Amnesty International. On the bottom of the screen were the words "Click here to stamp out torture."[39] Absurd as the proposition that one simple click could stop such a practice might appear to me, none of my students seemed to question the claims of sites promising visitors this kind of fast and easy activism. The point was underscored when we looked at the site of Group 133, a local Amnesty International group based in the Boston area that was responsible for organizing a campaign to free fourteen Tibetan nuns imprisoned by the Chinese for demanding their homeland's independence. Group 133 launched the site www.drapchi14.org in December 2001. I was initially interested in the site after reading something about its innovative use of MP3 files. While in prison, the fourteen young women managed secretly to make a tape recording of songs calling for Tibetan independence; the tape was smuggled out of the Drapchi prison and eventually landed on the desk of Robert Barnett, the cofounder of the now-defunct

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Tibet Information Network, in London.[40] After removing the names of the women on the tape in order to protect their identities, Barnett made the tape available to human-rights groups interested in the nuns' situation, including Group 133.

Drawing on Amnesty International's "prisoners of conscience" model, Group 133's Drapchi 14 campaign was designed to publicize the nuns' situation and, in so doing, to win their release. In an interview, one of the group's organizers, Carl Williams, adopted a marketing metaphor to describe what they were doing: "If you want to use the marketing term 'branding'...to get a person's name out there makes it much more difficult to torture or kill that person," Williams told the *Boston Herald*.[41]

Williams's comment about branding prisoners of conscience raises an interesting set of issues that are worth spelling out briefly. First, what does it mean for human-rights advocates to articulate their politics using an advertising term or commercial idiom? Like the subjects of countless human-rights documentaries, the individuals represented on the Drapchi 14 site are victims whose stories of suffering are meant to provoke readers' identification and to stimulate political action. Yet the way they are represented—that is, through the techniques of celebrity and advertising—transforms their meaning. Or does it? Could there be different ways of interpreting or decoding the relationship between form and content such that what strikes one generation as the "aestheticization of politics" strikes another as a new way to reconcile political goals and capitalist aims using a pervasive and influential medium? For those who have grown up in the post-1970s era, one marked by the growth of social marketing, is this mode of political communication simply taken for granted? Do teenagers and people in their twenties simply possess a different aesthetic, as Lev Manovich suggests in his writing on the use of Flash software in Web design, than that of previous generations, who located gritty politics in realist representation?[42] Indeed, can the continuing evolution of technological and aesthetic strategies and the consequent production of new political forms be mapped in terms of generational shifts?

More work needs to be done on the link between the emergence of new commercial venues in which human-rights testimonies circulate—for example, in the Benetton commercials on MTV—and their forms of signification. Clearly, encountering testimonies in such contexts challenges our sense that such material belongs in the so-called rational public sphere where citizens deliberate on political issues. The question is how and whether deeply moral and politically contested issues can be meaningfully expressed in commercial culture using commercial language. Given that it is our language, how do we effectively suffuse it with meanings that resist the rhetoric of advertising, which is designed specifically not to tell the truth or to convey complex or contradictory ideas? Does the option to "click here" merely position us as consumers who are choosing between predetermined possibilities online, or is it a meaningful way of taking "action"?

A second issue linked to the idea of branding victims of human-rights abuses is efficacy. In *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies,* Naomi Klein examines some of the

Stoptorture.org entices visitors with the promise of direct action through the phrase: "Click here to stamp out torture."

limits and contradictions of what she calls "brand-based politics," by which she means antiglobalization activism that focuses on individual companies, such as Nike, Shell, McDonald's, and Starbucks.[43] Klein notes that although targeting popular brand-name corporations has been successful, these sorts of campaigns can have unintended and contradictory consequences (for example, companies often end up spending more time and money on publicity than on internal reform, or people decide they must consume more ethically and don't do much else). Similarly, by focusing a campaign on individual sufferers of human-rights abuses who have been branded in a certain way on these sites, activists run the risk of freeing certain people, but not necessarily achieving the long-term effect they desire—forcing governments to change their practices. For example, China released well-known members of the Drapchi 14 on the condition that they leave the country.[44] This is part of a much broader Chinese policy toward dissidents that enables the government to quiet Western criticism of its poor human-rights record without actually having to make major changes. Once the individuals are released, the

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pressure on the Chinese government is usually lessened, and attention is focused elsewhere. Thus, although activists are always extremely happy to be able to secure the freedom of individual dissidents, there are clear limits to the usefulness of deploying publicity in this manner.

conclusion

I began by noting that human-rights activists often deploy various genres of testimony simultaneously, each of which circulates in a particular arena, reaching a particular audience. I want to conclude by suggesting that we think about this practice in terms of activists' use of different "registers" to construct political issues. These registers feed off and at times clash with one another in interesting and productive ways. For instance, logocentric and realist forms of documentary evidence and testimony continue to play a fundamental role in the work done by human-rights lawyers; they remain powerfully persuasive to congressional committees, international legal bodies, and nongovernmental organizations that seek to influence policy, rather than mass audiences. Human-rights documentary films and videos, although they rely on a similar concept of visible evidence, are visual media and, as such, have a capacity to generate emotion in audiences through evocative storytelling and affective imagery. Activists use this form to mobilize new publics around individuals who function as "nodal points" in a transnational network of identification and solidarity.[45] Through victims' on-screen narratives or testimonies, witnesses are situated as potential ethical actors who might intervene in the situation that produced the suffering that is on display.

Finally, new media refashion prior media forms, such as writing, film, and photography, and this process of "remediation" upends old ideas about subjects and participants, producers and texts, that underpin theories about how media work.[46] In the case of human-rights Web sites, instead of occupying just one position, readers occupy multiple, shifting positions (voyeur, consumer, activist). How does this plural positioning square with the argument made above that human-rights media offer one subject position, that of the witness with an ethical responsibility? Understanding the ways digital activism might reshape the possible horizon of identities and actions that can be produced is critical to making sense of the new arenas of practice and publicity that are emerging around human rights.

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1 The spread of human-rights testimonies also contributed to a more general cultural trend that led Renata Salecl to describe the 1990s as "the decade of testimonies." See Renata Salecl, "Why One Would Pretend to Be a Victim of the Holocaust," *Other Voices* 2, no. 1 (2000). Available online at www.other-voices.org/2.1/salecl/wilkomirski.html. See also Geoffrey Hartman, "Tele-suffering and Testimony in the Dot Com Era," in Barbie Zelizer (ed.), *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), pp. 111–26.

2 See Meg McLagan, "Introduction: Making Human Rights Claims Public," *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1 (2006), pp. 191–95, and Mark Philip Bradley and Patrice Petro (eds.), *Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

3 Personal communication. Thanks to Arvind Rajagopal for sharing his thoughts on "publicity and its careers" with me.

4 See Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 167, for a discussion of this point in relation to trauma theorists' claim that testimony is an "impossible genre, an attempt to represent the unrepresentable."

5 Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 3.

6 See Thomas Keenan, "Publicity and Indifference: Media, Surveillance, 'Humanitarian Intervention,'" in Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel (eds.), *CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 544–61.

7 Kenneth Cmiel, "The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999), pp. 1231–50.

8 Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol, "Introduction," in Hesford and Kozol (eds.), *Just Advocacy?: Women's Human Rights, Transnational Feminisms, and the Politics of Representation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 1–29.

9 See Richard Wilson, *Human Rights, Culture and Context: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto, 1997).

10 See Ann Marie Clark, *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), on the role of Amnesty International USA in the formation of international human-rights norms.

11 Katerina Cizek and Peter Wintonick, *Seeing Is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights, and the News* (New York: First Run/Icarus Films, 2002).

12 For more on this topic, see Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), a seminal study of "small media" during the Iranian revolution. See also Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), on the importance of faxes and CNN during the events in China in 1989, and Vincente L. Rafael, "The Cell Phone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in the Contemporary Philippines," *Public Culture* 15, no. 3 (2003), pp. 399–425, on the use of cell-phone text messages during the uprising against President Joseph Estrada in the Philippines in 2001.

13 See Faye Ginsburg, "'From Little Things Big Things Grow': Indigenous Media and Cultural Activism," in Richard G. Fox and Orin Starn (eds.), *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Activism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 118–44, for more on the use of video in indigenous communities.

14 For more on Witness, see Sam Gregory, "Transnational Storytelling: Human Rights, Witness, and Video Advocacy," *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1 (2006), pp. 195–204.

15 For more on the use of video in the Rodney King trials, see Allen Feldman, "From Desert Storm to Rodney King via ex-Yugoslavia: On Cultural Anaesthesia," in C. Nadia Seremetakis (ed.), *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 87–108; Avital Ronell, "Video/Television/Rodney King: Twelve Steps Beyond the Pleasure Principle," *Differences* 4, no. 2 (1992), pp. 1–15; and Bill Nichols, "The Trials and Tribulations of Rodney King," *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 17–42.

16 Ilan Ziv, *Consuming Hunger* (Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll World Video Library, 1988).

17 Allen Feldman, "Abu Ghraib: Ceremonies of Nostalgia," *Open Democracy,* October 18, 2004. Available online at www.opendemocracy.net/media-abu_ghraib/article_2163.jsp.

18 On "inconvenient evidence," see Brian Wallis, *Inconvenient Evidence: Iraqi Prison Photographs from Abu Ghraib* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2004). On the Bush administration, see Wendy Hesford, "Staging Terror," *The Drama Review* 50, no. 3 (Fall 2006). It is even more ironic that the U.S. military appears to have had an easier time controlling professional journalists than the civilian personnel and contractors working for it. See Peter Howe, "Amateur Hour," The Digital Journalist, June 2004, www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0406/howe.html, and Susan Sontag, "Regarding the

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Torture of Others," *New York Times Magazine,* May 23, 2004.

19 Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 24.

20 *Ibid.*

21 See the discussion of abolitionism as an early form of transnational advocacy in Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders,* pp. 39–78.

22 Meg McLagan, "Affective Politics" (manuscript).

23 See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), in which she argues, contra Stanley Cohen and others, for the difficulty of translating pain across the membranes between bodies.

24 See Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), and "Government Responses to Human Rights Reports: Claims, Denials, and Counterclaims," *Human Rights Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1996), pp. 517–43.

25 Alison Brysk, "'Hearts and minds': Bringing Symbolic Politics Back In," *Polity* 27, no. 4 (1995), p. 560.

26 Annie Lennox, *Testimony: Annie Lennox in Conversation with Palden Gyatso* (n.p.: Television Trust for the Environment, 1998).

27 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. x.

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30 Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 238.

31 Feldman, "From Desert Storm to Rodney King."

32 Jane M. Gaines, "Political Mimesis," in Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (eds.), *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 90.

33 Linda Williams (ed.), *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), cited in Gaines, "Political Mimesis," p. 90.

34 Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries,* p. 13.

35 Meg McLagan, "Principles, Publicity, and Politics: Notes on Human Rights Media," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 3 (2003), pp. 605–12.

36 See Meg McLagan, "Spectacles of Difference: Cultural Activism and the Mass Mediation of Tibet," in Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin (eds.), *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 90–111, for an analysis of new forms of mediated activism.

37 See Meg McLagan, "Circuits of Suffering," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 28, no. 2 (2005), pp. 223–39, for an exploration of these new political practices and spaces.

38 Meg McLagan, "Computing for Tibet: Virtual Politics in the Post–Cold War Era," in George E. Marcus (ed.), *Connected: Engagements with Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 159–94.

39 Clicking on the link leads to the home page of Amnesty International's Stop Torture campaign, which includes images of several recent victims of torture and a brief paragraph stating Amnesty International's position that freedom from torture is a fundamental human right. At the bottom of the page is a space where people can enter their e-mail addresses if they want to receive updates and appeals for action. This site is no longer available online.

40 One example of this is the case of Ngawang Sangdrol, a nun detained at the age of thirteen for participating in independence demonstrations in Tibet. The best known of the Drapchi 14, she arrived in the United States in early April 2003 after being released from prison on parole by the Chinese for medical reasons. See www.savetibet.org for more information on her reception in the United States. See also Steven D. Marshall, *Rukhag 3: The Nuns of Drapchi Prison* (London: Tibet Information Network, 2000), and the accompanying CD-ROM.

41 Christopher Cox, "Marketing Human Rights: Amnesty International Group Tries New Tactics in Support of Political Prisoners," *Boston Herald,* January 3, 2002. Available online at www.tibet.ca/wtnarchive/2002/1/3_4.html.

42 Lev Manovich, "Generation Flash," available online at www.manovich.net/DOCS/generation_flash.doc.

43 Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador USA, 2000), pp. 421–38.

44 For more on the campaign, see www.drapchi14.org/drapchi14/.

45 Diane Nelson, "Indian Giver or Nobel Savage: Duping, Assumptions of Identity, and Other Double Entendres in Rigoberta Menchu Tum's Stoll/en Past," *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 2, (2001), pp. 303–31.

46 Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

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