

A Talk with Keith Harmon Snow

Independent War Correspondent Discusses Genocide in Africa

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by JOEY LARGE

Keith Harmon Snow is an award-winning independent war correspondent, photographer, and human rights investigator. Tomorrow night, Tuesday January 27 at UCSB he will be giving a lecture illustrated with his photos titled *The Political Economy of Genocide—Conflicts in Contemporary Africa and the New Humanitarian Order*. Snow will discuss several regions where he has reported on genocide, including Rwanda, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Somalia, China, and Tibet. He will also discuss the genocide convention of 1948, resulting in a doctrine that defined genocide.

Who are you hoping to influence with your lecture?

Nobody. I used to think that I could change the world and change everyone's minds. I'm just going to tell people how it looks to me: the things I've seen, places that I've been and the research that I've done. People can accept it or reject it. All I'm going to do is give them my version of the truth.

Do you feel that college students should be more involved in understanding conflicts around the world?

It is incumbent upon students to become educated about violence and warfare around the world. The U.S. is almost always involved. I think people should spend their energy to change the policies and the government and the programs within the country. Most of the problems in underdeveloped countries are coming from the structural violence that is emanating from so-called Western civilization.

The Political Economy of Genocide: Conflicts in Contemporary Africa

- 0. When: **Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009**, 7:30 p.m.
- 0. Where: UCSB Campbell Hall, 574 Mesa Rd., Santa Barbara
- 0. Cost: Not available
- 0. Age limit: Not available

[Full event details](#)

What is the “New Humanitarian Order?”

The idea that’s put forward by the propaganda system is that we have to take action to help those people over there. The idea that we need to go in there and help people is defined as a humanitarian mission or humanitarian rescue. This is big business, it’s not about humanitarianism. Our media system is completely compromised in respect to resources that are used. The Pentagon says something, and the *New York Times* publishes that.

Where is the greatest threat to human rights today?

Keith Harmon Snow

The United States. “European universalism” means everybody should abide by the humanitarian rights paradigms that we believe in ... The greatest threat to human rights in the world today is the U.S. What I mean is the government in power. Nothing’s changed. I

don't think it's going to be any different on the 20th or 21st of January.

What is the overall perception of America in these conflict regions?

The sad part about it is that all over the world people are eating up the American propaganda. European universalism can be summarized by saying: ever since the Enlightenment, Western intervention around the world is legitimized by appealing to notions of civilization, development, and progress.

Are there human rights issues in this country that should be addressed?

I think it all comes back to the defense budget. American military, private military out of the U.S. and proxy groups we support. This is the largest source of violence in the world, and largest single most devastating impact on human rights around the world would be unlimited American power. Individuals and institutions from the US are not being held accountable for the massive human rights violations that they are responsible for all around the world, including within the United States.

Do you think the spirit of protest in this country is dead?

Pretty much. There's no legitimate protest in this country. You get a permit, you can do a march. Whether it's Gaza or Congo, I don't feel that marching is an effective form of social protest. As Alexander Haig said, "They can march all they want, as long as they pay their taxes." Most people don't know what it means to protest anymore.

What will it take to open America's eyes to the war, killing, rape, and displacement that is so rampant in Central Africa?

Before long, everybody in America will be aware of what's going on in Central Africa. However, what they understand is probably going to be completely backward, upside down, or just plain wrong. So people will see the propaganda, but they'll be convinced that it's more tribalism. That's what you see already happening.

Why isn't there greater media interest in this type of journalism?

The greater media is corporate. The directors of the *New York Times* are also the directors of large multinational behaviors. They don't want to be held to account for the crimes that their corporations are committing. Because corporate executives are very rarely held accountable, their interest is to maximize their profits. These are advertising delivery mechanisms, where the "news" is filler, and not the other way around. In the sales pitches they include their version of news, which is just, generally, profit-based propaganda. It's meant to sell something, which is often some government program, which supposedly the people need or want. It creates and instills in American people a belief that their set of values is the best set of values.