

The Filipino Catholic Church in Crisis: 'Who Is This Stupid God?'



Nuns light their candles during a demonstration calling for "truth, justice, and peace" across Malate Church in Manila. Image by Eloisa Lopez. Philippines, 2019.

Country: Philippines

Themes: Drug war, State violence, Peaceful resistance

February 08, 2019 | *Commonweal Magazine*
BY ADAM WILLIS

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte in his 2016 election pitted himself against the Catholic Church. For the past two years, he has waged a brutal war on drugs, killing thousands of Filipinos, while prosecuting the Church. But Duterte still has popular support in the country.

As the violence continues to rise in Duterte's drug war, the Catholic Church has begun to speak up and the decisions it makes through the remainder of Duterte's administration will shape the religious future of the most Catholic country in Asia. This story follows Catholic Church leaders who have begun to speak out against Duterte's violence more forcefully and calling on Filipino Catholics to not remain silent.

Fight for the Areng Valley Cambodia: The Way of the Monk

In the forest, a group of monks tie saffron cloth around tree trunks while chanting a centuries-old Buddhist chant still relevant today. It is a chant of compassion, pity, and love and of a divinity that does not exist in a temple but in the forests that the monks and the villagers both call their home. Image by Kalyanee Mam. Cambodia, 2014.

Country: Cambodia

Themes: Climate change, Culture

July 31, 2014 | *Pulitzer Center*
BY KALYANEE MAM

The Cambodian government intends to build a network of 17 dams across Cambodia, hoping this will generate enough electricity to meet domestic demand, reduce energy costs, and export surplus energy abroad. While the goal of transforming Cambodia into the power plant of Southeast Asia may promise economic gain, it also entails significant costs.

This story looks at how the Chong people of Areng Valley and the monks of Cambodia are striving to protect their homes and the forest. The monks here are working with the consent of the local people to stop the construction of dams in the area which are estimated to flood at least 26,000 acres of land, including land considered sacred to the ethnic Chong people who have lived in the valley for over 600 years. The dam would also threaten the future of one of Cambodia's remaining pristine natural habitats for 31 endangered species, including the Siamese crocodile.

The Ordinary People Keeping the Peace in Nigeria's Deadly Land Feuds

A stream near Nghar Village in Nigeria's Gashish District, where more than 200 people were killed in June by men thought to be cattle herders. Those killed were part of the farming community, which uses land the herders covet. Image by Jane Hahn. Nigeria, 2018.

Country: Nigeria

Themes: Land rights, Conflict, Ethnicity

December 11, 2018 | *The Washington Post*

BY MAX BEARAK AND JANE HAHN

A decades-long battle over territory between herders and farmers in Central Nigeria has escalated with more than 1,000 deaths since January 2018. Growing animosity between ethnic groups coupled with lack of security has fomented this increase in violence in recent years. Inaccurate and biased reporting by local media has created a public frenzy against the predominantly Muslim Fulani herders. This media fervor encourages people to call the crisis a religious war against the mainly Christian farmers and to politicize the crisis ahead of next years elections.

Despite the divisive chaos engulfing the Middle Belt, a small group of multi-ethnic men, including those from the clashing Fulani and Berom (largely Christian) tribes, have joined together to form the ‘Vigilante Group of Nigeria’. Together they are intermediaries for all victims—no matter their creed—as trust between different ethnic groups and security forces is non-existent. These people are a prime example that all ethnicities and religions can work together to find peace countering dangerous narratives that have engulfed not only Nigeria, but also the world.

Jamaica: The Guardy and the Shame

Nadine. Image by Andre Lambertson. Jamaica, 2014.

Carrol Flemming. Image by Andre Lambertson. Jamaica, 2014.

Country: Jamaica

Themes: LGBTQ+ rights, Health, Religion

January 06, 2015 | *Virginia Quarterly Review*

BY KWAME DAWES

This project explores homophobia and HIV/AIDS in Jamaica, delving into the Jamaican idea of shame and its cultural origins. This required a closer look at the intersection of Christianity and national identity. How the evangelical Christian church in Jamaica has influenced laws criminalizing same-sex relationships becomes clearer when the idea of a Christian nation is at the forefront.

In Jamaica shame functions both to shame those in same-sex relationships, but also those who call for decriminalization, as opponents of Jamaican identity.

Tibet Is Going Crazy for Hoops

Monks, nomads, and a sport's unlikely ascent in a remote corner of the globe. Image by An Rong Xu.
Tibet, 2018.

Country: Tibet

Themes: Sports

December 17, 2018 | *The Atlantic*

BY LOUIE LAZAR

In the villages and monasteries of the Tibetan plateau, an unlikely group of nomads, Buddhist monks, and yak-wool artisans could be changing the region's future—through basketball. The isolated village of Zorge Ritoma, in northeastern Tibet, is home to a newly-formed semi-professional basketball program: the Norlha Textiles.

The team's coach, a 6-foot-8 MIT graduate and former pro player named Bill Johnson, has an ambitious goal: to find the most dedicated and talented players on the vast and treacherous plateau - including big, bruising monks from an historic area monastery—and to bring them to Ritoma to join the team.

Afropunk Brings the Black Lives Matter Ethos Abroad

Fanta (left) came from Chicago to attend the Afropunk festival in Paris last summer. "It's a royal existence to truly live who you are," she said. Thuto Vilakazi, 16, visited his grandmother so he could attend the Afropunk Solutions Sessions that were held before the festival's debut on the continent of Africa, in late 2017 in Johannesburg. Image by Melissa Bunni Elian. South Africa, 2017.

Countries: South Africa, United States

Themes: Culture, Identity, Art

September 04, 2018 | *NPR*
BY MELISSA BUNNI ELIAN

After hosting shows in Brooklyn, Paris, London, and Atlanta in 2017, AFROPUNK, an American music festival, debuted in Johannesburg, South Africa for the first on the continent. More than a celebration of alternative black music, AFROPUNK is a social and political movement rooted in an “African spirit and heritage” that centers around an ethos of championing social underdogs.

Following in the tradition of blues, jazz, and hip hop, AFROPUNK is establishing itself as a global artistic force, one that challenges inequality and discrimination, while providing a platform for young people to express anger, hope, creativity and pride. African-Americans have a long history of employing music to respond to oppression.

The Rising Voices of Women in Pakistan

Days before Pakistan's general elections, 50-year-old activist and human rights defender Bushra Khaliq encouraged rural women to vote. A longtime campaigner for women's rights and labor rights, Khaliq has survived social and state-level attacks on her work. In 2017, the Ministry of Interior and home department of Pakistan accused Khaliq's organization of performing "anti-state activities." Khaliq took her case to the Lahore High Court and won the right to continue working. Image by Sara Hylton/National Geographic. Pakistan, 2019.

Country: Pakistan, Afghanistan

Themes: Women's rights, Peacebuilding
February 08, 2019 | *National Geographic*
BY ALICE SU, IMAGES BY SARA HYLTON

In 2018, as tensions rose between Afghanistan and Pakistan with border closings, mutual accusations of support for militant extremists, refugee deportations, and numerous terror attacks, a group of women met in Kabul and Islamabad. They were Afghan and Pakistani lawyers, activists, civil society leaders, and researchers—peace builders, many of them survivors of conflict and violent extremism, all of them women. As the U.S. continued to send troops and arms into its longest war in history, the Taliban and Islamic State tightened their clutches, and Afghanistan's peace process stuttered, the women proposed a radical solution: include them.

Journalists Alice Su and Sara Hylton profile Afghan and Pakistani women peace-builders across Pakistan who are working together to resist violent extremism. For decades, women have suffered from Afghanistan and Pakistan's intertwined conflicts: they are widowed, orphaned, disabled, forcibly displaced, subject to sexual violence, forced to watch family members become militants, and given little venue to fight or speak about these things. Yet some women refuse to be mere victims.

Su and Hylton amplify the voices of Afghan and Pakistani women whose governments blame one another for their problems, and who have intimate, painful knowledge of how the two countries' crises are connected, but choose to respond with solidarity, not scapegoating. They tell stories of women who've brushed against the military conflict, terror, and extremist violence that dominates traditional coverage of the region, and yet choose not to retaliate, but to actively build peace.

Greenland's Vanishing Villages



Young people play on an icy hillside in front of a neighborhood in Nuuk. Image by Jonas Bendiksen/Magnum Photos. Greenland, 2018.



Crosses in a cemetery in Nuuk. Greenland has one of the highest rates of suicide in the world, which researchers attribute in part to the fact that many people have difficulty finding their place at the crossroads of traditional and modern lifestyles. Image by Jonas Bendiksen. Greenland, 2018.

Country: Greenland

Themes: Population and demographics, Globalization

August 07, 2018 | *Pacific Standard*

BY JONAS BENDIKSEN AND KATE WHEELING

Jonas Bendiksen documents the unique drivers behind displacement on this island nation, where nearly 90 percent of the country's roughly 56,000 inhabitants are Greenlandic Inuit. Many young Greenlanders leave the country seeking work, educational opportunities, or alternatives to the traditional indigenous lifestyle. But the women return to Greenland far less often than the men. Today there are only 85 women to every 100 men. To counter the exodus, Greenlandic authorities are working to create jobs that appeal to the country's highly educated women—even easing restrictions on oil and mining operations to attract investment from the extractive industries.

Jonas spends 10 days in Greenland, documenting the tension between the desire to preserve a traditional lifestyle and also to enter the global community. He spends time with young women in the capital city of Nuuk, and also in more traditional and remote communities outside of the capital. He mixes images of wild landscapes and remote towns with manifestations of the ever-present global culture found in Nuuk.

The Risk of Nuclear War with North Korea

Students at the Pyongyang Orphans' Secondary School, which is housed in a new brick-and-steel complex. In a class of ten- and eleven-year-olds, one boy asked, "Why is America trying to provoke a war with us?" Image by Max Pinckers/The New Yorker. North Korea, 2017.

Countries: North Korea, United States

Themes: Diplomacy, Nuclear deterrence

September 08, 2017 | *The New Yorker*

BY EVAN OSNOS

In 2011, when Kim Jong Un, at the age of twenty-seven, became the third member of his family to rule North Korea, many analysts around the world predicted that his regime would not survive. But, six years later, he is very much in charge — “He’s the only guy that counts,” a senior U.S. official told me — and he has accelerated the development of North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. To Americans, his actions can look bizarre, even crazy, but to the strategists and analysts who study him, Kim is rational about his national interests.

By the summer of 2017, after a series of missile and nuclear tests, Kim had thrust North Korea into a standoff with Donald Trump. The relationship between North Korea and the United States entered a period of brinkmanship and hostility of an intensity rarely seen since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

How does the nuclear crisis look from North Korea’s perspective? What does Kim’s government really think about Trump’s strategy, including the threat to launch a “preventive war”? What has shaped Kim’s decision-making, behavior, and political personality? What will his actions mean for the future of nuclear security?

With those questions in mind, I visited in Pyongyang, Seoul, Beijing, and Washington, to produce a portrait of a twenty-first century nuclear crisis.

The Midnight Train to Moscow

When it is finished, this building will offer vocational training for Tajik workers. After the program, migrants will hopefully find well-paid work either in Tajikistan or Russia. Sultansho, who manages the guards at this massive site, is proud of the building – and the workers building it. “No, the men working here didn’t learn how to build in Russia,” he says. “It’s the opposite: they went to Russia to help them to build.” Image by George Butler. Tajikistan, 2016.

Countries: Tajikistan, Russia

Themes: Migration, Labor

August 11, 2017 | *Foreign Policy*

BY JOSEPH SCHOTTENFELD AND GEORGE BUTLER

The train between Dushanbe, Tajikistan and Moscow takes four days to traverse the entirety of Central Asia. Tajikistan is the most dependent country in the world on labor migration; this time of year the train's full of migrants, all of them men, traveling to Russia for work.

They chat about the work they might find, the state of the Russian economy, the harassment by Russian police they are all almost sure to face. Some debate Islamic practice—a few hundred Tajik migrants have gone from Russia to Syria to fight for the Islamic State.

This project chronicles the train ride and explores the stories of a few passengers to show the rise of radicalization among the migrant population and, more generally, the precarious situation of all the passengers riding the train. The Russian economy has worsened, and new Russian visa regulations have suddenly made many vulnerable to deportation.

Abdullo was born in 1993, near the start of Tajikistan's civil war. Just after he was born, his father was killed by a bomb not far from the barbecue. Abdullo made his first trip to Russia when he was 14, and sold fruit in a Moscow market; this was his third trip. All three of Abdullo's older brothers have also worked in Russia. One, who works as the de facto head of a small Tajik construction crew in Moscow, has not been back to Tajikistan in years. His wife and children, along with Abdullo and his family, live in Abdullo's mother's house. Image by George Butler. Tajikistan, 2016.

What It's Like to Be Part of India's Queer Community



Kriti, a member of Delhi's LGBTQ community, poses for a portrait. In many cases, Western notions of sexuality and gender don't translate seamlessly to India, and Kriti was one for whom Western labels seemed ill-fitting. Image by Jake Naughton and Aarti Singh. India, 2017.

Country: India

Themes: LGBTQIA+ rights

June 18, 2018 | *Vice*

BY JAKE NAUGHTON AND AARTI SINGH

In 2009, the Delhi High Court decriminalized Section 377 of the penal code, which made same-sex sexual activity illegal. When the decision came down, many believed it was a huge step in a march toward progress in the rapidly changing country.

So the shock was widespread when, just a few years later in 2013, the Supreme Court nullified that decision. As a result, India has the peculiar distinction of being one of the only (if not the only) countries in the world to have decriminalized and then re-criminalized homosexuality.

Though court convictions are real, they are uncommon. Instead, the law provides legal cover for harassment, physical abuse, and a general climate of homophobia and transphobia. What's more, though the law is back on the books, the interstitial years of freedom cannot be erased or forgotten as easily as a rule can be reinstated. For untold numbers of LGBTQ people who thought they were leaping into a sunny future, the reality is very murky.

In January this year, the Supreme Court announced it would revisit its decision by October, and activists have said they are “cautiously optimistic.” Until then, however, the uncertainty continues.

Ballet and Bullets: The Favela Dance Class Stuck in the Crossfire

Students of Na Ponta dos Pés ("On Tiptoe") project, in Rio. Image by Frederick Bernas. Brazil, 2018.

Country: Brazil

Themes: Violence, Poverty, Art

November 01, 2018 | *Vice*

BY FREDERICK BERNAS AND RAYAN HINDI

“Na Ponta dos Pes” (On Tiptoe) is a ballet project in the Alemão favela complex in Rio de Janeiro. It's the brainchild of Tuany Nascimento—a 24-year-old dancer who represented Brazil at international events during a flourishing career that was abruptly cut short by lack of resources.

Rather than letting her head drop, the setback strengthened Tuany's determination to help troubled communities through dance. In 2012, she started teaching classes in the Morro do Adeus favela, where she lives. It's one of the roughest parts of Alemão, which is currently at the center of a roiling feud between rival drug cartels.

Many students in Tuany's group of girls, aged 4-15, come from families caught up in narco turf wars and afflicted by the chronic crisis of opportunity that exemplifies urban poverty across Brazil. With an average of 30 incidents of weapons fire every day in Rio, last year saw 6,590 deaths. Many of the victims were innocent citizens caught in the crossfire. Intensifying violence in Alemão has heightened Tuany's motivation to find support for the construction of a community center which will give her girls a safe space to dance and study.

After the challenges of her own career, Tuany knows her students can't all become pro ballerinas—but the discipline she teaches will transcend the act of learning to dance, setting them up with a better chance to escape the bitter cycle of hardship which swallows up so many young lives in Brazil.

The Surprising Lives of Those Living Along the U.S.-Mexico Border

Young boys from the Arias family peer over the first, older U.S.-built border wall at dusk into the flood-lit no-man's land created between the two walls/fences where U.S. Border Patrol is present 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Image by James Whitlow Delano. Mexico, 2017.

Countries: Mexico, United States

Themes: Migration/Immigration, Poverty

April 17, 2017 | *National Geographic*

BY JAMES WHITLOW DELANO WITH DANIEL STONE

Thirty years ago—three decades before any 21st-century president riled crowds by promising to build a wall—photographer James Whitlow Delano wondered why the U.S.-Mexico border was so fraught. Here were two countries at peace for over a century. But the divide between them was enough to warrant a series of border fences and angry debates about how to stop illegal immigrants.

Thirty years later, the debate, and the region, have intensified. The patches of fence have since been fortified by drones, scanners, and guards. Smugglers who once charged a few hundred dollars to cross the border in the carved-out floor of a truck or in a mad dash across the Sonoran Desert have been replaced by expensive coyotes and deadly cartels, whose only guarantees are high prices, extreme danger, and threats of kidnapping and extortion.

Delano's latest work focuses on the people who live on the stretch of borderland—known as *la frontera* on the southern side—and the constant tension, threats, and danger that are part of their daily lives.

Nearly Eight Weeks After Hurricane Maria Hit Puerto Rico, the Struggle for Basic Supplies Continues

Rosalda Olma, a wife and mother to three kids, sorts through what remains of her home in Loiza. The entire home and contents were destroyed by the hurricane, and the family is living in a nearby school for the time being. "It's hard getting used to these living conditions," she said. "All five of us are trying to fit inside a single room." Image by Ryan Michalesko. Puerto Rico, 2017.

Country: United States / Puerto Rico

Themes: Natural disasters, Poverty

November 18, 2017 | *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

BY RYAN MICHALESKO

Nearly a month after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, residents continue to battle for the essential food, water, gas, and electricity. Most still have no reliable source of water, and only a fraction of the island's power grid has been restored.

Four deaths are suspected as a result of leptospirosis—a bacterial infection spread by animal urine in the groundwater. However, the deaths won't be certified as "hurricane related" until the Center for Disease Control and Prevention confirms the victims became infected by contact with contaminated water.

Adding another layer to the difficulties, many Americans don't realize that what happened in Puerto Rico is a domestic disaster, not a foreign one. A poll of 2,200 adults taken in September by Morning Consult found that only 54 percent of Americans know that people born in Puerto Rico, a commonwealth of the United States, are U.S. citizens.

How Young Indigenous, Quilombola, and Riverine People From the Tapajós River Are Becoming Rainforest Defenders

Image by Pablo Albarenga. Brazil, 2019.

Country: Brazil

Themes: Environment, Climate change, Indigenous rights

June 19, 2019 | *El País*

BY FRANCESC BADIA I DALMASES. IMAGES BY PABLO ALBARENGA.

Amidst an increasingly destructive and often murderous atmosphere, indigenous communities along the Tapajós River (PA), in the Brazilian Amazon, are struggling to defend their rainforest and river ecosystems. Constantly harassed by agribusinesses, illegal mining, logging, and infrastructure construction projects, organized indigenous women and young people are raising their voices in defense of their Borari, Tupinambá, Arapiun or Munduruku land. They have become front line fighters in the global battle to stop climate change.

The youth organization Engajamundo is currently implementing the *Engaja na Amazônia* project. Their mission is to make young Brazilians aware that, by changing themselves and their environment, and by engaging politically, they can transform their reality. Young people in traditional communities are being challenged and trained to undertake activism, use advocacy tools, create journalistic content about threats to their environment, and become transformative leaders within their communities.

American Origami: From Columbine to Parkland, Reading the Relics of Grief

(L): Item from the February 14, 2008, Memorial Collection, Northern Illinois University Archives, Founders Memorial Library. DeKalb, IL. (R): Burger King Hat: Item from the April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives, Virginia Tech Special Collections Library. Blacksburg, VA. Image by Andres Gonzalez.

(L): Angel: Item from the April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives, Virginia Tech Special Collections Library. Blacksburg, VA. (R): Chest x-ray, Ryan Auginash. Image by Andres Gonzalez. Virginia, 2018.

Country: United States

Themes: Gun violence, Grief

November 20, 2018 | *Virginia Quarterly Review*

BY ANDRES GONZALEZ

Japanese legend has it that anyone who makes 1,000 paper cranes will be granted any wish, a piece of lore rooted in the cultural reverence for this regal bird, which was once thought to live to a thousand years. This story of wish-making was embraced by a twelve-year-old Japanese girl named Sadako Sasaki, who had been struggling with leukemia as a result of the US bombing of Hiroshima. The year she died, Sadako was able to make more than 1,400 paper cranes with the help of her classmates. Decades later, a children's book, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, told her story to an American audience, which helped to popularize the ritual of making origami cranes in response to tragedy.

Whenever a mass school shooting happens, the grieving community is inundated with gifts and letters. (In Parkland, Florida, alone, 227 boxes of mementos were collected at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School within a month of the shooting there.) For more than five years now, I've been visiting these communities, studying the massive accumulation of materials sent in response to this particular kind of tragedy. I have sifted through hundreds of boxes of artifacts, mostly stored in basements and vaults beneath state archives, university libraries, and local museums. The resulting work explores how we collectively process trauma, and the malleability of cultural memory.