

## FPA HONORS 2009 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNERS

By Randy B. Hecht

“It’s important to cover events beyond our shores. It informs our actions.” With those words, ABC News Chief Investigative Correspondent Brian Ross underscored the importance of the work about to be undertaken by the winners of the 2009 FPA Scholarship Fund awards.



**Damiano Beltrami, Andreas Bermudez, Simon Akam** Photo: John Rizzo

Ross, the featured speaker at the awards dinner held on May 7 at the Roosevelt Hotel, spoke of the dangers—from arrest to kidnapping to death—that journalists face around the world. It’s a reality of the business he knows first-hand: he shared with the audience tales of his own experience held for three days on a hijacked plane in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and says his mind returns to that experience every time he hears of a journalist colleague who’s been taken hostage.

Speaking of the technological changes the media are facing, Ross urged young journalists to recognize the “great platform” the Internet offers and to remember that “it’s our job to figure out how to use this technology to better inform our readers and viewers.” But the technology itself won’t mean anything, he added, unless we report important stories, including those that require us to overcome obstacles put in our paths by powerful governments.

“That is our mission. All of us as journalists need to heed that call.” It’s a mission clearly being embraced by this year’s scholarship award winners.

Presentation of the award to this year’s first-place winner, Colombian Andres Bermudez Lievano, included this quote from his application: “The issues that the continent faces call for a responsible and committed journalism, exercised with a strong ethical sense and a will to generate reflection in a society that has sometimes become numb to what happens around it. My goal is to contribute to that process as a skilled and convinced professional.” Having just completed the master’s degree program at Columbia University, he will spend the summer working in Buenos Aires before moving to Paris to attain a second journalism master’s degree and further his ability to work in French, one of five languages in his repertoire, in addition to his native Spanish, English, Italian and Czech.

Recounting the achievements of second prize winner Simon Akam, FPA President Alan Capper seemed to be speaking of an experienced colleague rather than a graduate student from Columbia University. An Oxford graduate and recipient of the Fulbright Alistair Cooke Memorial Scholarship, he is already a veteran of reporting in the Middle East and will spend the summer as an intern at

the New York Times before taking an assignment as a Reuters correspondent in Istanbul.

While third prize winner Damiano Beltrami joked in his acceptance speech that he hoped winning the award would help him to silence the criticisms of a professor in his native Italy that he used “too many adjectives” in his reporting, the young Italian has his sights set on serious international journalism. Also a Fulbright scholar, he is enrolled in the City University Graduate School of Journalism and will go to Jordan to write his thesis, about Iraqi refugees living in that country.

The evening concluded with a drawing for a door prize, a pair of airline tickets donated to the FPA by American Airlines, a strong supporter of the Scholarship Fund. The airline’s generosity helped to end a memorable evening on a celebratory note.

## DIALOGUE BETWEEN TED SORENSEN AND ALAN CAPPER

Had JFK lived there would have been no Vietnam War, said Ted Sorensen, Kennedy's speech writer and special counsel being interviewed by FPA President Alan Capper.

In a spellbinding evening at the Foreign Press Center over 50 journalists listened to the hour long interview followed by a question and answer session with the audience. Sorensen, who had worked for Kennedy for 11 years as speechwriter, advisor, and White House Special Counsel has written of his experiences in a new book, "Counselor, A Life At the Edge of History" which was the source of a number of Capper's questions.

The evening began when Capper introduced Ted Sorensen, saying that the subtitle of the book was inaccurate. "Ted has been at the heart of history for a great part of the 20th Century, not the edge," he said. He then cited, Sorensen's experiences as Kennedy aid, speechwriter, counsel, campaigner for Bobby Kennedy and Jimmy Carter. "As a huge Kennedy admirer I feel that I have know Ted Sorensen for much of my life since I read his biography of JFK in 1965."

Sorensen said that the recent euphoria for President Obama's election reminded him of the arrival of President Kennedy in the White House. He said, that although President Obama faces

major challenges, Kennedy's were every bit as great. "It was the cold war and Kruschew was a formidable opponent."

This led to a lengthy discussion as what has been described as the 13 most dangerous days in the history of mankind - The Cuban Missile Crisis.

Sorensen said that Kennedy's leadership had been superb, particularly in the face of opposition from the military and Members of Congress, who favored early military action. The deal that was done to make the Soviets withdraw from Cuba paved the way to the first arms control agreement.

In the movie "13 Days" Sorensen denied that he had been played by Kevin Costner. "He was much to hyper. I had to remain calm. Remaining calm was one of the great assets of the President."

Sorensen was asked what the country lost when Bobby Kennedy was killed. He said that he was a remarkable hu-



Alan Capper and Ted Sorensen

Photo: Mika Horelli

man being and a president that could have been as great as his brother.

He strongly believed that Kennedy's view was that the Vietnamese people would have to fight there own war, and that he planned to reduce the number of advisors in Vietnam.

When asked what was Kennedy's greatest speech, he replied, that the one given at George Washington University four months before his death was particularly significant. "In the final analysis we all live on the same planet, we all breath the same air, we all care about our children's future and we are all mortal."

## LETTERS FROM SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

### ANDRES BERMUDEZ LIEVANO

This week I will be graduating from Columbia, just as my days in New York are quickly coming to an end. On June I will be leaving for Buenos Aires, where I will intern at one of Argentina's national newspapers, *Clarín*, as a Metro reporter.

In September, I will travel to Paris, thanks to an agreement recently signed by the Journalism School and the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris - Sciences Po. The agreement gives students from Columbia's program the opportunity to study in France for a second year, obtaining their degree as well. This second year consists of internships

in French language media, intensive French writing, and the master's level courses from Sciences Po's graduate programs that each student sees fit to further his or her professional goals.

It is with thanks to the Foreign Press Association scholarship that I will be able to travel to France, where my objective is to further my knowledge of the topics I'm interested in covering, including transitional justice, urbanism and development, and public health. My goal is to return to Latin America afterwards and put these skills and academic background into practice.

I am deeply grateful to everyone at the Foreign Press Association for helping me fulfill this dream.

### SIMON AKAM

I was thrilled to receive my award from the Foreign Press Association at the ceremony at the Roosevelt Hotel. I am now coming to the end of my year at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism – a Fulbright scholarship brought me to New York from my home country of England.

After graduating from Columbia I will be spending the summer at the New York Times, where I have been selected for an internship. I am delighted to have the opportunity to work at the American newspaper of record, and I will be reporting on the metro desk – where I hope to practice the

## CYPRIOTS WANT TO BE HEARD

By Jan Latus

In 1974, Turkey invaded and occupied one third of Cyprus, a beautiful island in the eastern Mediterranean, populated by 72 percent Greeks and only 18 percent Turks. The invasion led to the displacement of thousands of Cypriots and the establishment of a separate Turkish Cypriot political entity in the north of the island. The world didn't stay quiet. The European Union and other international bodies condemned Turkish actions and demanded unconditional withdrawal. Unfortunately, the very same countries which condemned Turkish policies, at the same time, were tightening political and business contacts with Turkey, which aspires to become a member of the EU.

This inconsequence, if not a cynicism, of the European countries in regard to Cyprus was the subject of a meeting on April 23, organized for FPA members at the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the UN. The special guest and speaker was Prof. Van Coufoudakis, a distinguished political scientist who specializes in modern history and policies of Cyprus. Prof. Coufoudakis is author of the book *International Aggression and Violations of Human Rights. The Case of Turkey in Cyprus*, which has just been published by the University of Minnesota, in its series Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs. This publication, packed with convincing facts

and written in passionate language, rare in scientific dissertations, was given to the journalists in yet another attempt of Cypriots to make their case more visible and the world more sympathetic to their struggle.

Prof. Coufoudakis spoke about the Turkish government that signed many documents regarding human rights but in practice ignored them, with a quiet acceptance of the EU members. For Coufoudakis, the last international attempt of solving Cyprus conflict, so called Annan Plan, was rejected by Cypriots of Greek nationality since it was *de facto*, advocating turning Cyprus into a confederation. According to Coufoudakis, the idea of confederations rarely works in practice and is against international laws since it condones dividing a country along ethnic lines. Prof. Coufoudakis argued that the Annan Plan was largely influenced by the U.S. and the U.K. Also the newest international attempts to accept the Annan Plan lead to nowhere since the idea of confederation has not been abandoned.

In Q&A Prof. Coufoudakis discussed numerous cases of violating human rights in the northern part of Cyprus,



**Amb. Hadjmichael, Alan Capper, Suzanne Adams, Prof. Coufoudakis**

*Photo: Zygmunt Malinowski*

such as denying Greeks access to religious practices and education, and making it impossible to reclaim family properties.

The border between Turkish and Greek zones of the island is not closed anymore, and since 2003 Greeks and Turks are able to travel and meet with each other. However, going back to the days when all Cypriot Greeks and Turks lived in harmony may be impossible to recreate, since the younger generation knows only one Cyprus: divided along ethnic lines.

After this brilliant presentation was concluded, we were invited to sample Cypriot wines and excellent food.

## LETTERS FROM SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

skills I have learned this year. I am then heading to Turkey for a further internship with Reuters in Istanbul, a result of an award I won from the OPC.

The funds from my FPA award are instrumental in allowing me to put these plans into action, and I am hugely grateful to the association for its support. It was also a pleasure to meet such professional, inspirational and entertaining journalists. I will most certainly not forget you, or the wonderful events of last Thursday evening.

### DAMIANO BELTRAMI

I was deeply honored to receive a 2009 FPA Scholarship Award. It makes my career commitment to international reporting even stronger.

In the short term, it gives me the opportunity to cover the heavily under-reported issue of Iraqi refugees in Jordan. This is going to be the master's project at CUNY School of Journalism.

The report will give voice to Iraqi citizens forced to leave their homes from sectarian violence who lived in limbo. They can't work; they can't go

to western countries; they can't go back to Iraq. Amman is like a gigantic train station with no place to go..

I will consider different aspects of the Iraqi refugees' presence, such as the reasons they are stuck in Jordan, and the impact they have on Jordanian society from an economic and social perspective.

In the future, I would like to work as a correspondent from the Middle East and establishing an online organization for foreign news that preserves the quality and ethical standards of good traditional papers.

## SINCERE THANKS

The overwhelming success of the FPA Scholarship Fund is due entirely to the support of our Corporate Contributors. We are extremely grateful for your continued dedication to this outstanding program.

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## CHRONICLE

By Suzanne Adams

Just heard the exciting news that **Julia Engelhardt** and **Andreas Henry** became the parents of a baby boy, Benjamin. I am so happy for both of you.

And also in the new baby department, congratulations to our lovely **Nancy Kamel** who has two baby grandchildren in her life. All good wishes to you and your family.

Congratulations to **Agnes Niemetz** on the graduation of her son, Daniel Dudevich. He graduated from Columbia University and is off to study for a Master's Degree at Churchill College at Cambridge University. In July, he will be attending the lectures celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Charles Darwin in Cambridge. To add to his honors he has been accepted at Columbia University for a Ph.D. program in Biology following his return from Cambridge.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE

By Suzanne Adams

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to our members who served as judges to ensure the success of the FPA Scholarship Fund Awards Program. We have noted that each year brings more submissions from students than previous years.

The major requirement in the application process was for each student to submit an OP-ED article of 750 words in which they were asked to discuss the following topic:

**Jeffrey Sachs, in his book, The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities For Our Time, discusses how to help the world's poorest people. There are substantial barriers to overcome in the fields of health, agriculture and education. His basic argument states that the developed countries should help, but they are unwilling to ante up the money and instead blame the underdeveloped countries for their plight. We ask you to argue for or against his thesis.**

For the many hours they spent reading, re-reading, and evaluating applications from students at graduate schools of Journalism in the United States, I offer my sincere thanks to the Scholarship Awards Committee.

**Neheda Barakat  
Bill Blase  
Alan Capper  
Yolanda Gerritsen  
Randy Hecht**

Had the pleasure of seeing a production of *Love and Sex*, three one act plays by our favorite playwright, **Mario Fratti**. The plays explore the role of politics – sexual, personal and intercontinental – in a wry, sly and always unexpected style. Bravo, Mario.

Heartfelt condolences are extended to **Friderika Szatmari** on the passing of her beloved husband.

### GONE FISHING

The Editorial Staff of the FPA wishes all of you a wonderful summer. The next issue of the newsletter will appear in the Fall.

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### SAVE THESE DATES

**June 3<sup>rd</sup> FIRST WEDNESDAY 6 PM**  
at Kennedy's 327 West 57<sup>th</sup> St.  
*The Handwriting Is On The Wall*  
Handwriting Expert **Ruth Brayer**

**June 12<sup>th</sup> CARNEGIE HALL 8 PM**  
Free ticket for you and a guest  
Pianist **Katya Grineva**

## IMPRESSUM

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