

Quest Club Presentation

“The Photography of Peter Turnley”

Alfred S. Brothers Jr., PhD

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Introduction

The topic of the Photography of Peter Turnley provided me the opportunity to reflect upon my hobby of photography and its impact on my life. Like many of you I have been photographing people, family events, sporting events, vacations and travel, scenic views, nature, and many other topics. The photographs elicit for me a very positive personal response as I reflect upon the circumstances and people involved. My journey started with a simple Kodak Browne camera, with black and white film, given to me by my uncle Ken Brothers, a manager of a photo processing plant in Boston and with it, free film processing. I graduated to a 35 MM Cannon FT purchased during the Vietnam War using color film and now my 35 MM Canon Rebel digital camera. There have been other cameras in between these key three. Each camera has a plethora of stories of people, places and events associated with it. With the advent of the cell phone camera our photographic experiences have been enhanced with the opportunity to immediately share our pictures with others via the internet and expand our interests.

Yes, most of us have produced pictures, snapshots and photographs of people, family, events, and places but few have excelled to the artistry and mastery of Peter Turnley, a Fort Wayne native.

Our topic today is the “Photography of Peter Turnley”.

But first let us explore the medium and process of photography. From the History of photography in Wikipedia, “When we think of the camera and photography, the term daguerreotype may come to mind.” The history of cameras started in the mid-1820s, but required at least eight hours or even several days of exposure in the camera were required, and the earliest results were very crude. Louis Daguerre went on to develop the daguerreotype process, the first publicly announced and commercially viable photographic process. The daguerreotype required only minutes of exposure in the camera, and produced clear, finely detailed results. The details were introduced to the world in 1839, a date generally accepted as the birth year of practical photography.”

“From that modest but critically important invention and beginning has resulted in a new industry both professional and amateur or hobbyist. Roll films popularized casual use by amateurs. In the mid-20th century, developments made it possible for amateurs to take pictures in natural color as well as in black-and-white.

The commercial introduction of computer-based electronic digital cameras in the 1990s soon revolutionized photography. During the first decade of the 21st century, traditional film-based photochemical methods were increasingly marginalized as the practical advantages of the new technology became widely appreciated and the image quality of moderately priced digital cameras was continually improved. Especially since cameras became a standard feature on smartphones, taking pictures (and instantly publishing them online) has become a ubiquitous everyday practice around the world.”

As we further explore the topic of photography two terms may come to the forefront – Photography and Photojournalism. The first question to ask is how do we define photography? Photography, from the Merriam Webster Dictionary, is the art or process of producing images by the action of radiant energy and especially light on a sensitive surface (such as film or an optical sensor)

In contrast what is photojournalism? From the same source, it is journalism in which written copy is subordinate to pictorial usually photographic presentation of news stories or in which a high proportion of pictorial presentation is used broadly, for example news photography.

I personally view the photograph as a time machine that captures a specific moment in history and our lives. The photographer and photography are the enablers to record and display our communities and our lives from the instant it is taken. The photograph is like the night sky it displays what was not what is now.

When asked in an interview how does photography relate to your larger vision?

Peter replied:

“In my mind, photography really isn’t that much about cameras. Cameras are a tool. I respect the tool, and I think it’s important to know the tool and to be able to master it. But I think the most important thing about vision has everything to do with why it is that we choose to frame a moment with a camera and hold onto it for now and for time, to share with ourselves and with others. Photography can be many things: It can be an expression of what needs to be changed and a demonstration or expression of how things should be different. But it can also be an opportunity to underline what is wonderful about life and offer a glimpse of what life can be.” (22)

“The Turnley twins, David and Peter, were born in Fort Wayne, Ind., in 1955. Their father, Dr. William Turnley, was an orthodontist. He was also a lifelong champion of civil rights.

"He once picketed his own Rotary Club meeting," David recalled, "because the speaker was pro-apartheid. He came home mad, not because of the speech, but because hardly any of the Rotarians knew what apartheid was."

Their mother, Betty Turnley, was a pianist and taught music at Indiana University.

The Turnleys' third son, William III, is a documentary film maker in Washington; their daughter, Anne, is an artist in New Vernon, N.J. The Turnley family was and is a very active, creative and involved family.

In the mid-1960's, the family moved temporarily to Indianapolis so Dr. Turnley could study orthodontics.

When the twins were 16 and the family was back in Fort Wayne, their parents gave Peter, who was recovering from a football injury, a camera, and a book of photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson. It was a defining moment: Peter swears he decided that day to become a professional photographer.

In 1973, the twins moved on to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. In the middle of freshman year, Peter returned to Fort Wayne to create photo essays for the city's Department of Urban Affairs. Over the next three years, both he and David spent time on and off campus. One summer, for example, Peter worked for

the State of California, documenting urban and rural poverty from the Mexican border to the redwood forests far north.

And they both spent time in Paris, David during part of his sophomore year, and Peter his entire junior year. "We were really lucky," David said. "We were part of an experimental college within the university that gave us credit for just about everything we did during those years." They graduated in 1977 with degrees in French literature. (31)

Questor John Feighner's wife Margie Speer Feighner reflected on knowing the Turnley brothers. They lived in the same Indian Village neighborhood in Fort Wayne Indiana. She, like they, also went to Elmhurst High school but was a year ahead of them. Both brothers played football and both were active photographers at school. She characterized them as pretty quiet but very personable. The 1973 Anlibrum Elmhurst High School yearbook had a picture of them both accepting awards for outstanding Photography during an awards ceremony. This was the precursor to great careers for them both.

John Shoaff and Julie Donnell graciously provided further stories about Peter. John reflected on having been at a campaign rally for Barak Obama and watching Peter take many more pictures than the other photographers to capture the

ambiance of the moments. Julie mentioned that the Turnley brothers came to her house when she was a kid and auditioned with her mother who was a choir director. I could not find that either were part of the school choir, but perhaps they were.

In 2017, Peter Turnley spoke with Steven Krolak, academic information officer at Indiana University Southeast, about his career and creative vision. (22)

When asked by Steve Compassion does seem to inform your photos . . .

Peter responded: “While my family was not formally religious in any way, there were strong humanistic values I was brought up around. My father was very passionate about civil rights. He was involved in the civil rights struggle in the state of Indiana in the 1960s and 1970s and there was always a lot of talk at our household about the haves and have-nots, and a sense that one ought to try to do something with one’s life that would make the world a better place.”

Another question: What are some of the other influences that have shaped your approach?

“My relationship with the world I don’t believe is static. It’s always changing and moving, and it can be somewhat unpredictable. My whole vision of the world probably is tied not only to the values that I grew up around in my family, but also

the time-period of the late 1960s when I was coming of age, which we all know was a very tumultuous time in the world. It was a time when young people were questioning everything, the central sort of core institutions and (the) ideals of society and government and the world were being questioned right and left. That was the backdrop of how I have always looked at the world.” (22)

Another question: How do you put yourself in a space to be receptive to that hope?

“The things that I’ve seen definitely have left serious scars on my existence and on my heart. But I would say that in the middle of very difficult human situations, one can witness the most incredible demonstrations of goodness and decency and bravery. These moments are revelations of human beauty, of love and care and dignity and strength and courage. And having witnessed those moments is one of the things that keeps me moving forward.” (22)

“My formal education, Peter said, in photography began and ended with a two-week workshop taken during the summer before my senior year of high school. The Belgian Photographer Gabriel DeLobbe who taught the course, encouraged me to be aware of my surroundings because “every moment you spend looking down is a moment you are denying yourself the gifts of life that are waiting to be

observed.” The images of people from around the world impressed upon me the strong potential for photographers to highlight the subtle distinctions that we possess while underlying our common humanity.” (19)

Turnley is a graduate of the University of Michigan, the Sorbonne of Paris, and the Institut d'études politiques of Paris, one of the few American students ever to do so. He has received honorary doctorates from the New School of Social Research in New York and University of St Francis (Indiana). Harvard University awarded him a Nieman Fellowship for 2000–2001. (4)

“When I review my life as a photographer, he commented, I feel blessed and fortunate to have experienced so many wonderful emotions, the most significant being the sense of being alive, powerfully alive.”

These beautiful experiences began with a book by the master French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, a gift from my parents while I was hospitalized with a knee injury sustained during a high school football game. It was 1971, I was 16 years old, and that year in my hometown of Fort Wayne, Indiana, I discovered photography. Cartier-Bresson’s work awakened me to the glory that existed in the common moments of daily life. Suddenly my primary mode of self-expression at the time, sports, gave way to countless forays into the

inner city of my hometown with my camera. Photography expanded my world. It has always been, for me, a medium through which I can share my observations and responses to the world.” (19)

“During my early years in Paris I met many of the great French photographers who had inspired me. They advised me and touched my life in profound ways. My encounters with Henri Cartier-Bresson always left me feeling blessed, because his personal presence, language, and words always reminded me that photography is not at its core about cameras or film vs. digital, but about exploring and contemplating the richness of life and the world around us.” (19)

“Peter Turnley has photographed world conflicts including the Gulf War, Bosnian War, Somali Civil War, Rwandan genocide, South Africa under apartheid, First Chechen War, Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti, Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Afghanistan, Kosovo War, and Iraq (2003). During the end of the Cold War (1985–1991) Peter Turnley photographed Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev more than any other Western journalist. He witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989, Nelson Mandela's walk out of prison after 27-years incarceration, and the ensuing end of apartheid in South Africa. Peter Turnley was also present in New York City at

"Ground Zero" on September 11, 2001, and in New Orleans during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. He photographed the election and inauguration of President Barack Obama and produced a multimedia piece on this occasion for CNN." (4, 31)

A Newsweek photographer for 20 years, Peter Turnley has had images published on covers of the magazine more than 40 times that have been seen by millions of people. His list of portraiture subjects reads like a "Who's Who" of recent world history, including President Barack Obama, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Ronald Reagan, Yasir Arafat, Muammar el-Qaddafi, Vladimir V. Putin, Princess Diana and Pope John Paul II. (23) His list also includes Boris Yeltsin, Hosni Mubarak, Margaret Thatcher, Francois Mitterand, Fidel Castro, Muhammed Ali as well as Presidents George Bush Sr, and Bill Clinton. This is truly a very accomplished and distinguished list of international figures for his photographs and photojournalism. (19)

Questor Sister Elise talked to me about Peter Turnley's Obama Election exhibition at the University of St Francis. Subsequent to that exhibit, Sister Elise, 3 years ago, led a University tour to Dublin, London, and Paris. Peter Turnley, when contacted, joined her and 5 faculty and students for dinner at a Paris restaurant. He, she

commented, is truly a sincere and honest personality. Peter travels everywhere to photograph key events in the world and is personally acquainted with key world figures. He gets to know people and their situation. She suggested I contact Justin Johnson, the University of St Francis Gallery Director, for more information.

Justin Johnson graciously invited me to view some of the Obama Campaign exhibit photographs. I was impressed with the focus, the depth, the composition, and imagery of the photograph series which Justin said was called "The Hope". Justin also mentioned that Peter's work provides great context to a situation and can show great historical contrasts. Both brothers, Justin said, were in New York city during 911 working within blocks of each other but did not know it at the time.

Peter is a frequent lecturer and teaches photography at universities worldwide including the University of Hanover Germany, Parsons School of Design, Paris, the University of Michigan, the University of Iowa, Indiana University, and the University of St Francis. Peter teaches workshops on street photography in Paris, Istanbul, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, and New York City and has taught a workshop at the University of St Francis. (4)

Susan Portnoy's comment in her article "What Photojournalist Peter Turnley Taught Me About Street Photography", in 2017. "New York is filled with photography workshops; I chose Peter's because I admire the versatility in his work. As a former photojournalist for Newsweek, his powerful images of war and social injustice earned him 43 covers and world acclaim."

"But his pictures from years spent roaming the streets of Paris and Cuba show that he's also adept at capturing romance, mystery, and a sense of beauty in everyday life. In short, his photos inspire me, and I think that's an essential component when choosing a photographer from which to learn." (11)

Peter has authored or co-authored 8 books. Three of which were produced with his brother David. The books are as follows:

Beijing Spring, in 1989

David and Peter's photo essay is the definitive visual record of the democracy movement in Tiananmen Square, from the euphoric occupation of the square to the shocking bloodletting. (36)

Moments of Revolution, in 1990

This book depicts, primarily through photographs, significant emotional moments in the struggle for democracy in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, East Germany, and Bulgaria. (37)

In Times of War and Peace, in 1997

During the three years David lived in South Africa, he showed apartheid as the prevailing system, its subsequent destruction, and the first elections of the new democratic state. Peter pursued his interest in documenting the world's fourteen million refugees, and also photographed the fall of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe. Together they photographed student dissidents in the months leading up to the Tiananmen Square massacre; their photographs of the massacre itself are among their most recognizable. Shining through all the photographs is the strength of individual character and hope against powerful social and political conflict. (38)

Parisians, in 2000

Peter's work is rooted in his 25-year affair of the heart in the most beautiful city in the world. A long-time resident of Paris he invites us to share an intimate Paris that outsiders rarely see, giving us a seductive glimpse of Paris as lived on the street, in the Metro, and at countless neighborhood cafes. (39)

With brother David, McClellan Street, in 2007

McClellan Street was three blocks long, its' residents primarily of Appalachian and Hispanic origin. The life of the street was always full of lots of outdoor activity. There was something about (t)his street that made a strong impression on us-a sense of community that was different from our own middle-class neighborhood. There was an openness among the people there, and we had a feeling about the place that was very strong and positive. (19) The street as photographed no longer exists, but the photographic history of it made by the brothers will endure for future generations.

French Kiss a "Love Letter to Paris", in 2013

Peter writes: "A Love Letter to Paris, is a tribute to many of the wonderful moments of romance, beauty, hope and love that I have witnessed and been inspired by in Paris, my adopted home over the past 40 years. I believe with this adopted home that photography is ultimately about sharing. I am excited to share with the world these moments of the heart that have touched my own, in this most beautiful city Paris." (21) Peter lives in Paris and maintains an apartment in New York city.

“Cuba – A Grace of Spirit”, In 2015

Peter’s comments on his book, “A Grace of Spirit”: “I have a deep love for the people of Cuba. Throughout a lifetime of world travel, rarely have I been to a place where I’ve witnessed so much wonderful humanity. Each time I have visited Cuba, the heartfelt expression of life reminds me of what a beautiful family of men and women we are all a part of. (12)

He commented: “I am often asked, what has been the most exciting or important moment I have witnessed. I avoid answering this question, as I am blown away almost every day by the amazing moments I continually witness everywhere. But, a possible response would be the profound and lasting impact I felt in seeing and photographing Nelson Mandela walk out of 27 years of incarceration from Victor Verster Prison, in Capetown, South Africa, in 1990. This was one of the most glorious sights I’ve ever witnessed!” (12)

“A New York-Paris Visual Diary “The Human Face of Covid-19”, 2020

“In late March and early April of 2020, New York City was the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in America. Photojournalist Peter Turnley traveled the city to photograph its inhabitants caught in an unparalleled moment in time, when one of the most densely-populated communities in the world began social distancing, businesses were closed or were severely tested, and services were stretched to the limits.” (5, 14)

A broad collection of Turnley’s work, cataloging the range of emotions, has been condensed into one photo essay aptly titled “Moments of the Human Condition.” Many of those early photographs of everyday citizens in Indiana are included in “Moments of the Human Condition” alongside images of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Rwandan Crisis, refugees, unforgettable political leaders and more.

“The title reflects a lot about how I view the world,” he said. “The realities of life cross on a very wide spectrum from moments where life is at it’s most beautiful, most joyful, sensual and happy moments to moments that are where life is at its absolute worst, representing hardship, oppression, inequality, conflict, poverty, disaster and then everything in between.”

He said, “I have embraced photojournalism as a means to communicate, provoke and inspire, as well as to document history. I have employed the camera as a voice to shout out about injustice, while affirming what is beautiful and good.”

“When I review my life as a photographer, I feel blessed and fortunate to have witnessed, so many wonderful emotions, the most significant being the sense of being alive, powerfully alive.”

“The one thing that is always clear in my mind is that the people and their stories, and the themes of life that I photograph, are always more important to me than the process of photography itself.” (32)

Peter Turnley works in the medium of both Black and White and Color Photographs. The preponderance of his professional work has been in Black and White. Each venue has its attributes but there is a dramatic difference in the effect produced. Having worked first in Black and White, I found that certain period photographs have had an impact on me. The work of Mathew Brady during the Civil War and the photographs taken documenting the great

depression and the dust bowl resonate with me. The first because of the documentation of war and its impact and horror, and the second showing both the despair and resilience of people as they moved on with their lives. Both tell the story of the human condition.

Removing color from a picture helps the viewer to focus on a subject's emotional state. Black and white portraiture lets the audience see the subject's face and read his or her eyes without distraction. (33)

I tried an experiment at home to show the difference between the impact of color and black and white imagery.

The first was a fireplace scene taken in both Black and White and Color. The fireplace scene in color shows the mood, the warmth and comfort of the fire, while the black and white image highlights the structure, depth and detail of the fireplace and its surroundings.

The second was a winter scene in my backyard after a significant snowfall. The winter backyard snow scene in color shows the beauty of the white-clean snow as it engulfs the trees and landscape. Conversely the black and white image highlights the stark bare trees and desolation of the landscape in winter. To me the difference was very apparent in its impact.

Peter Turnley embodies the current art of Street Photography taught to him by Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Street Photography, from the Encyclopedia Britannica, is a genre of photography that records everyday life in a public place. The very publicness of the setting enables the photographer to take candid pictures of strangers, often without their knowledge.

Peter was asked: ***“As a street photographer walking into a neighborhood, how do you go about building trust?”***

“Trust is one word one could use. I, he said, also think authenticity, credibility, spontaneity, and being genuine are all words that are important.

A lifetime of experience tells me that most people appreciate it if they feel like your presence is honoring them, and they feel dignity and respect.” (22)

As I reflect upon his philosophy, Peter, who is working on a continuing project to document the lives of refugees all over the world, said his kind of photojournalism was a commitment "to share their lives, their sorrows, their daily risks, even if only for a brief period."

Taking pictures, he said, is "a voice to scream about things you see." (31)

Peter Turnley remains relevant today and is in contact with those who follow and admire his work daily. His website highlights his current books for sale and his available exhibitions and classes. His Facebook page is a daily treat with photographs posted both recent and from the past with his commentary on his work. I did purchase his latest work “The Human Face of Covid-19”. It is an intriguing study of the people and the condition surrounding the horrific pandemic in New York. His daily posting of pictures and commentary reaches over 500 ardent supporters of his craft. Peter’s focus has always been upon showing people in their environment and condition.

Photojournalism has its challenges. Peter and Harper magazine were engaged in a Lawsuit over a funeral picture – “Open-casket photo sparks privacy suit against magazine” as reported in the Reporter’s Committee for Freedom of the Press, June 20, 2005.

“An open-casket photograph of an Oklahoma National Guardsman killed in Iraq is the centerpiece of an invasion-of-privacy lawsuit against Harper’s Magazine.

On June 20, 2005 *Harper’s Magazine* is asking an Oklahoma federal district court to dismiss a lawsuit brought against it by Robert Showler, the father of Army

Specialist. Kyle Brinlee, 21, who was killed in Iraq and featured in an open-casket photo in the magazine's August 2004 issue." (20)

In WASHINGTON, DC, The National Press Photographer's associated reported on October 2, 2007 that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in favor of photojournalist Peter Turnley and Harper's Magazine by upholding a March 2007 decision of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which found that Turnley had a First Amendment right to take a photograph of U.S. Army Specialist Kyle Brinlee's open casket at a large public funeral in Oklahoma and Harper's Magazine had the same right to publish it. Thus, ending the ongoing case against Harper's Magazine and Peter Turnley, and ending a tense moment in his professional life.

Peter Turnley is a photographer for all seasons. His sense of timing, his compassion, his respect for those he photographs, and the mastery with which he practices his craft of photography is underscored by his understanding of our human weaknesses, our strengths and our resilience.

In Conclusion

Photographs are a moment in time, and describe people, places, and events in Black and White and Color. Peter's work is ongoing and truly reflects our Human Condition. Peter states:

“I continue to hope and to want to believe that the best story I will ever have known is one that has yet to occur. This quest will certainly require that I keep my head up and my eyes open as I walk down the street. It will require that I embrace what my dear friend Edouard Boubat once told me one afternoon over a glass of wine at "Tartine" in Paris. "Peter, if you keep your heart and your eyes open, there is a gift waiting for you at the corner of every street." (19)

Thank you.

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