

## Emergent Human Rights Contexts: Greg Constantine's "Nowhere People"

In "Nowhere People: The Global Face of Statelessness," the photojournalist Greg Constantine documents the conditions of statelessness and the lives of stateless people across the globe. The online version of the exhibition consists of several multimedia compilations and photo-essays on the Rohinyga in Burma, Dalit in Nepal, Bihari in Bangladesh, Hill Tamils in Sri Lanka, children in the state of Sabah in Malaysia, Nubians in Kenya, and ex-Soviets in Ukraine. As Constantine notes in his introductory materials, the United Nations estimates that nearly fifteen million people are stateless: "Statelessness can come as a result of conflict, shifting borders or in the creation of a new state, but in most cases, statelessness is rooted in discrimination and intolerance." Constantine's stated rhetorical intent is evidentiary; he wants to counter the invisibility of statelessness and "provide tangible documentation of proof that millions of people hidden and forgotten all over the world actually exist."<sup>1</sup>

Although we approach Constantine's documentary project from distinct disciplinary perspectives as professors of rhetoric and folklore, we share an interest in understanding the pragmatic and ethical challenges of representing the conditions of statelessness and, more broadly, the circulation of knowledge about human rights violations. Constantine's stated goal is to "document and expose the human face and personal histories and stories of stateless people." We are interested in the conditions of this invisibility. Constantine points out that "stateless people are invisible to most." We ask, for whom are the stateless invisible? In asking "for whom" the stateless are invisible and "to whom" their newly staged global visibility is addressed we aim to contextualize the evidentiary promise of "Nowhere People." Through the examination of the disciplinary protocols, the aesthetic principles, and the symbols that designate social groupings and to which human rights representations are tethered, we hope to show how Constantine navigates these protocols. Given that the tools to create and distribute images have democratized and the subaltern increasingly can and does speak directly for herself, we ask what role photojournalists and scholars can play in the generation of human rights contexts and witnessing publics.

Social media may be transforming the power dynamics of human rights representation, but we should not overestimate the impact of technological innovations or underestimate the valiant efforts and material risks that those resisting repressive regimes continue to face. Additionally, we should attend to the risks of romanticizing stateless subjects or unmooring representations of statelessness from the contexts and technologies that shape their production, reception, and circulation as part of a

broader visual human rights culture. In *The Spectatorship of Suffering*, Lilie Chouliaraki argues that “the ethical disposition that connects spectators with the distant sufferer depends on the capacity of . . . symbolic practices to produce proximity with sufferers and propose action to alleviate their misfortunes.”<sup>2</sup> We add that in addition to producing proximity, our ethical responsibility also requires what Dominick LaCapra refers to as “empathic unsettlement,” critical awareness of the differences that limit proximity.<sup>3</sup>

Constantine’s photographs provide evidence of a variety of proximities, including the intimacies between the subjects themselves, between the photographer and the subjects of the photographs (about which we know very little in this case), and between distant spectators and the photographs.<sup>4</sup> Even (or especially) humanizing photographs, which might alert and awaken distant audiences to injustices, call attention to the limits of understanding, empathy, and identification. Constantine’s photographs invite provocative questions; for example, once a situation is made visible, to whom is it legible, and what are the conditions of its legibility? Photojournalists working in the field of human rights use certain compositional techniques (such as the close-up facial portrait) to simulate visual proximity between sufferers and distant spectators. Yet the political efficacy of such aesthetic practices, we want to suggest, lies not only in the humanization of the suffering “other” but in the capacity of the producers and receivers of such images to generate interactive human rights contexts, however provisional, which interrogate social injustices and imagine a “just” future. The responsibility for documenting human rights violations does not lie solely with violated subjects or the professional class (nonexclusive categories); the responsibility must be shared among local and global witnessing publics. This responsibility takes on great urgency when we consider the consequences of visual evidence (or lack thereof) for social justice and change within and against state power, and the exceedingly high risks in documenting repressive regimes for both journalists and violated subjects.

Scholars have noted the futility of the “symbiosis of suffering and spectacle” in arousing exploitative voyeurism, in violating the privacy of the subjects represented, and obscuring or reducing the complexity of the social situations depicted.<sup>5</sup> As Mark Reinhardt and Holly Edwards note in their introduction to *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, photographs of suffering enjoy a “durable trust . . . that can harbor diverse illusions and excuses—for example, that the viewer need look no further to understand distant events; that structural violence requires only a personal response; . . . or that addressing the problem is the privilege or the perquisite of the viewer.”<sup>6</sup> Reinhardt and Edwards raise probing questions, such as: “What forms of picturing . . . respect the dignity and agency of those shown? What will mobilize useful action and what will, instead, exacerbate the injury? How much do the answers depend on the site of the encounter between image and viewer?”<sup>7</sup> To these questions, which foreground the role of distant spectators, we add the following: How are social media and social networking sites transforming the zones of spectatorship and suffering? Is the now customary political aesthetic of visual inclusion as an antidote to social exclusion a sufficient mechanism for social action and justice? Further, what are the particular challenges of “respect[ing] the dignity and agency of those shown” when

the people are stateless; how is an invisible condition made visible, and is this contradiction one way of exposing the strategies of the photographer and thus providing an opening for empathic unsettlement?

We face an ongoing risk in this commentary of continually returning to ourselves, or to an enlarged version of the photographer's gaze that includes us. Our discussion of the secondary witness, whether the photographer or the distant spectator, both raises questions about the authority of the Western viewer and points to the imbalances and complicities at the heart of the stateless/citizen relationship.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing the conditions of the stateless people offers secondary witnesses the opportunity to identify with the shared humanity and equality of the people in the photographs and to de-identify with the political policies that produce displaced people.<sup>9</sup>

### **Cultural Codifications and Translations**

Human rights representations often risk the codification of cultures as deviant or primitive through the characterization of acts defined as human rights violations. Within the context of political asylum hearings, for example, oppressed people are (inadvertently) required to produce themselves as barbaric in order to get attention to human rights violations. The political asylum process does this especially in cases of sexual victimization. The context of barbarism and the visibility of the victimized "other" makes structural violence more legible to the immigration officials and at the same time dehumanizes and humiliates the individual forced to narrate her multiple subjugation. The same problems apply to statelessness, especially the problem of making an invisible condition legible across multiple, often competing discourses without homogenizing others. Constantine's project exposes a wide range of what might otherwise seem to be isolated situated local tragedies. One danger is that the similarity of photographs from different cultural sites of human rights violations can make their subjects appear too similar and universalized.<sup>10</sup>

The iconic recognizability of images provides opportunities for cultural translation, and yet the similarity of images can give the false impression that human rights violations are everywhere the same. Alternatively, claims that human rights laws are entirely culturally specific are equally problematic, especially if they rely on the idea of the untranslatability of particular human rights violations to efface the global dimensions of structural violence.<sup>11</sup> When the conditions of structural violence are invisible, the violence itself can become invisible or illegible to distant others. The generalized category of statelessness, applied across different circumstances, can make those conditions more legible to outsiders. This recognition might have little bearing on whether and how bureaucrats, policy makers, or powerful people recognize the conditions that produce displaced people. We need to ask: what is it that was illegible about their situation in the first place? What hides the conditions of displacement and in whose interest is it to promote concealment? Indeed, it is precisely the innumerable conditions that produce the invisibility/illegibility of stateless subjects that pose the greatest challenge in framing statelessness as a human rights issue.

Importantly, in his writing accompanying the photographs, Constantine observes that statelessness is not everywhere the same. He argues that people "are stateless for many reasons—migration, refugee flight, racial or ethnic exclusion . . . the quirks of

history—but human rights groups tend to focus on the politics—trafficking, exploitation, discrimination—rather than the root of those conditions, their statelessness.”<sup>12</sup> The statelessness Constantine documents is different for each group. For the Nubians, the problem is a forgotten history and lack of recognition that results in a lack of citizenship. The Nubians, unlike some of the other groups, are not refugees or migrants but instead regard the place where they live as their home, although not recognized by Kenya. “The Lost Children of Sabah” are the children of illegal migrants from the Philippines and Indonesia who were deported from Sabah, Malaysia. Both groups are stateless, but their invisibility is produced differently. Here Constantine addresses the difficulty of making the invisibility of statelessness visible. One can have a home, like the Nubians, but be stateless. The lack of citizenship or the lack of the right to remain in a particular place are not visible in the photographs, but other factors, especially the presence of people in public places, for example the photograph of children of Sabah sitting in front of a restaurant and waiting for customers to leave, are hypervisible, and this hypervisibility is multiply represented in public discourse about hygiene, begging, and fear of foreigners.

Photographs of social suffering often (or always?) are embedded in relations of social inequality, not only between the photographer and the subject. For example, we need to pay attention to the multiple directions of power in the circulation of images and avoid quick pronouncements or oversimplified relationships based on who takes photos of whom. Local knowledge, that is, knowledge produced by people about their own experiences (including images produced by people about themselves), is never entirely local, either in its production or its circulation. More importantly, local knowledge does not automatically produce either authenticity or integrity and is subject to the same problems we recognize in knowledge produced by others about others for others.<sup>13</sup> The multidirectionality of power in representational practices compels our attention to the cultural codification and translation of the experiences of stateless subjects and the mediation of structural violence.

### **Aggregated Human Rights Images and Contexts**

Photographs of human rights violations can reference cultural specificity or universality or both, but the idea that they capture a stable or fixed context is an illusion of the fixed frame; their exhibition and circulation perform and generate new human rights contexts. Constantine’s project on the Nubians in Kenya was first shown at the Go Down Arts Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, as well as an outdoor exhibition/installation in the Kibera slum. These particular exhibitions cultivated a human rights framework for the photographs to be viewed by local audiences invested in the domestic challenges of statelessness in Kenya. Clearly, the value and meaning attributed to Constantine’s photographs cannot be discerned irrespective of context. Future appearances of Constantine’s photographs in news articles, advocacy Internet sites, and national and international exhibitions and, more broadly, the multidirectionality of human rights appeals through social networks, also require an understanding of the rhetorical situation (i.e., the relation between text, subject, and context) as dynamic and aggregative.

In a recent essay, “The Ethical Engagements of Human Rights Social Media,”

Sam Gregory, the director of Witness, a non-governmental human rights organization, building on his work with the film theorist Patricia Zimmermann, offers a valuable framework for approaching the ethical dilemmas and opportunities that new social media pose for human rights advocates, artists, and scholars. Two provisional principles directly relate to the circulation of human rights representations that we consider here: the preservation of the victim/survivor's agency and the aggregation of human rights images and narratives as they multiply, mutate, and spread via social media. The constant reframings and contingent repurposing of human rights images, stories, and contexts require a "networked ethics," and a shift in our understanding of the witness from "a position assuming empathy to the witness in the social media landscape as a chronicler, remixer, networker, viral seeder."<sup>14</sup> Gregory and Zimmerman turn our attention from the iconic figure of the empathetic witness in human rights and trauma studies to the figure of the witness as someone who produces new or activates latent human rights contexts. Gregory's and Zimmerman's vision of the witness corresponds, in some respects, to the concept of empathetic unsettlement. The protocol of a "networked ethics" entails recognition of the differences that limit proximity, but it also shifts our attention from the psychological journey of the secondary witness to the generative production of witnessing publics.

Social media presents new venues for image-based witnessing and for the manipulation of images. But photographs do not simply move from sites of suffering to the sites of distant spectators, who are removed from the suffering represented; photographs can also be made for the victims of human rights violations for their own purposes, including the possible purpose of controlling the circulation of knowledge about them. Often, communities have means for documenting their own everyday cultural practices as well as calamitous events that disturb everyday life. Groups have different practices of documentation; for example, some document ritual events and others do not. To avoid assuming that the outsider's photograph is the first documentation, we need to pay attention to other forms and sites of documentation, whether narrative or visual. Visual anthropologists have raised questions about the possibilities of reflexivity or interaction to create different forms of circulation, especially circulation that gives greater agency to the people represented. Constantine's project "Kenya's Nubians: Then and Now" includes historical photographs from the collection of the Nubian community. For example, one picture is captioned "A Nubian woman holds a family photo of her grandfather as an officer in the King's African Rifles. He served for the British Army in World War II and held a British Colonial passport." Including these photographs not only provides historical context, in this case about colonial relations; it also demonstrates the complexity of the Nubians' self-documentation. In Constantine's words, "And I really wanted the Nubians to tell their story, and not for me to tell the Nubians' story for them. And so the multimedia project we did only has Nubians talking, and it incorporates a lot of the photographs." Constantine's website includes the photographs he collected from the Nubian community, dating back to 1912, and photographs of the current community viewing the enlarged photos he duplicated, enlarged, and mounted on the walls of a school in the slum where they live. The Nubians are stateless, denied citi-

zanship in Kenya, but as Constantine's project powerfully demonstrates they lack not a history but a recognition of their history.

Part of Constantine's representational challenge lies in representing a negative category, a lack—namely, statelessness. The quotation from Hannah Arendt with which Constantine leads off his project references this phenomenon: “To be stripped of citizenship is to be stripped of worldliness; it is like returning to a wilderness as cavemen or savages . . . They could live and die without leaving a trace.” Yet this is not simply an issue of historical recognition but also a question about the need for a deliberative context, however provisional, for this history to be heard. Denied the rights of citizenship, the Nubians are excluded from the social sphere and bereft of a political community and viable public platform of representation recognizable by the state. The online version of “Nowhere People” opens with a telling quotation from a twenty-nine-year-old woman named Veronica, who is stateless and living in Ukraine. The words slowly emerge onto a charcoal-gray background: “I feel like nobody who belongs to nowhere. Like I don't exist.” The term “nowhere” can suggest an insignificant or remote place. However, in Veronica's statement, “nowhere” signifies a state of nonrecognition. Veronica ties her sense of self and identity to the lack of national recognition and belonging. Thus rather than signifying an absence of context, “Nowhere People” dramatizes the precarious relationship of the stateless to the law, living in an interstitial space between the rule of law and its suspension.

Giorgio Agamben's theory of political exceptionalism draws our attention to the sovereign suspension of law and dissolution of order as a formative component of the sovereign's power and political structures. Agamben observes that “the normative aspect of law can thus be obliterated and contradicted with impunity with a governmental violence that—while ignoring international law externally and producing a permanent state of exception internally—nevertheless still claims to be applying the law.”<sup>15</sup> “Nowhere People” likewise acknowledges that the stateless are set apart from the law and yet victims of the sovereign's unrestricted power and discretionary abilities. The title “Nowhere People: The Global Face of Statelessness” also foregrounds the dependency of international human rights law on nation-states for its implementation—a situation doubly confounding for those rendered stateless, including citizens living in failed states. Here we see how stateless subjects throw the relation between the universal human rights subject and national citizenship into crisis, as the conditions of statelessness require stateless subjects to navigate shifting scenes of recognition.

“Nowhere People” also prompts us to consider the disjuncture between human rights' universalist vision and the sociopolitical scenes of nonrecognition. Human rights images of the suffering “other” typically set up a hierarchical relationship between a vulnerable subject and privileged viewer, who is positioned as the distributor of rights and as a moral subject of sight. But it is not simply the spectator-sufferer relationship that warrants our consideration; we also need to consider the contexts (and narratives) that frame and activate this relationship, which include the geopolitics of agenda-setting driven by governments, organizational cultures, and international legal frameworks. International law defines *statelessness* as the condition of a person who is “not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.”<sup>16</sup> From the perspective of international law, which defines personhood as

national belonging, those who lack a national legal identity could be construed as “nowhere people.” And yet this is precisely the problem with such definitions of statelessness: they do not account for the “multiple, shifting identities” of those given that label.<sup>17</sup> In other words, people without national affiliation aren’t always able to claim a selfhood defined by the parameters of human rights law. Clearly, in some cases, those who are stateless do claim a selfhood, but they often do so through the nation-state and its ideology of the “deserving” and “grateful” refugee.<sup>18</sup>

Human rights law often presumes a connection between people and places. Asylum law in particular requires people to prove their claims to be from a particular place, and asylum officials often question the credibility of someone who doesn’t speak the expected language or doesn’t know whatever the official thinks she should know (especially what her national flag looks like). People who cannot establish a place of belonging raise suspicions, whether because they move frequently, or because they have moved to their spouses’ families’ homes. Many people are displaced because of disputes over land, and yet officials still regard people as having homes to which they could return, or to which they could be deported. Anthropologists long ago dismantled the idea that people, places, languages, and cultures are coherent stable units, but many official policies still regard culture as fixed. Constantine’s photographs offer an opportunity to challenge those fixed assumptions, even if only by forcing us to ask: where were these people when the photographs were taken?

The Nubian photographs provide a complex intersection between the voices of the Nubian narrators, the contemporary and historical images, and the captions. The information each provides does not always overlap with the others. The Nubian narrators seem mostly interested in telling the story of their settlement in the land they have called Kibera for more than a hundred years. Kibera, the narrator tells us, means “forested,” in contrast to the slum the area has now become, pictured in the photographs. The viewer/listener is invited to examine this contrast. The unarticulated contrast is between the captions, offering factual information, and the narrative, providing a rationale for a land-claim. The Nubians’ current statelessness has produced an origin narrative, a strategic use of memory about a place that exists only in memory and a people whose identity has been officially obliterated along with the forested place. The complexity of the Nubians’ narratives interferes with any exploitation or voyeurism in circulating these images elsewhere. It is clear that the Nubians want this story to be told in a particular way, and they have participated in its crafting. They resist their statelessness by using narrative to recall their origins in Kenya and their claims to the land and their citizenship. Theirs is a plea for recognition, and like other such pleas, it is understandably strategic, positioning their rightful claim as historical.

Constantine’s portrait of the Nubians works against the illegibility of their statelessness and their lack of recognition by making their story legible to distant others through the literal representation of their faces and voices. Lack of documentation is often the biggest obstacle stateless people face. However, the Nubians’ documents are illegible to the Kenyan bureaucracy and are ineffective in creating visibility and recognition for them. Constantine’s photographs expose these contradictions. It is entirely possible that these photographs will be effective in creating recognition for the

Nubians. The Nubian portrait, then, makes a significant intervention in Constantine's central challenge, the visual representation of the stateless, by invoking multiple and contradictory domains and discourses.

### **Liminal Sites/Sights**

Statelessness is what Agamben describes as a "state of exception," a liminal state in-between or, in this case, outside of citizenship. Constantine's photo-essay "The Lost Children of Sabah" tells a story about stateless Filipino and Indonesian children in the Malaysian state of Sabah, who are victims of laws that deny them birth certificates, abandoned because their parents have been deported, reliant on odd labor-intensive jobs with little pay, and left to fend for themselves and attend to each other. The title invokes the trope of lost or stolen childhoods, which is common to Western sensibilities and representations of childhood as a universal state of innocence and powerlessness. The social investment in children's innocence and moral salvation dominates U.S. domestic and international elite news media representations of human rights violations against children and relies on certain scripts—such as the rescue narrative—that many scholars argue reinforce children's disenfranchisement as cultural and political actors.<sup>19</sup> Notions of childhood innocence have long been linked to the creation and security of the nation-state. "Lost Children of Sabah" both invokes these tropes and gives viewers insight into the changing constitution of childhood in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as interstitial zones multiply around us. Constantine's works invite us to ask how we might avoid and/or strategically mobilize these scripts. How can we replace them with another script? What are other readings (scripts) of Constantine's images?

The images might be said to humanize abject poverty for distant spectators, primarily Western audiences, by featuring familiar activities associated with children at this age, playing pool and guitar. The captions, however, disrupt this possible familiarity. The photograph of the children playing guitar and pool most dramatically illustrates the difference between the image and what the caption tells us. In the image, a boy wearing a Vodafone t-shirt plays guitar, while another boy, slightly off-camera, shoots a pool cue on a pool table, and other boys watch. The caption reads, "Kinarut is a slum located 30 miles outside of Kota Kinabalu. Once a UNHCR run camp in the 1980s, Kinarut is now riddled in crime, drugs and poverty. Kids who have no form of documentation do nothing during the day but sit around, play games and gamble. All of the children were born in Sabah to illegal Filipino immigrants and have never been to school." The captions describe what we can see missing in the photographs: no adults, no homes, and no resources, and together with the images they engage the viewer in a repetition that leads to awareness of an atrocity, not familiarity.

Constantine's photographs imply but do not make visible either the atrocities that created statelessness (violence, oppression, and discrimination) or current suffering and violence. Importantly, they portray children living their everyday lives. The children are caught between the presumed ordinary worlds of the places they come from (and may never have known) and the places their parents have gone to. They remain in the liminal space of what Constantine labels as "nowhere," but, importantly, it is an ordinary space, if destitute. The viewer, also, is encouraged to occupy a

liminal place of not knowing the conditions that produced this less-than-normal ordinary world. It is not so much an invitation to gain more information as it is an invitation to recognize these almost unrecognizable people, and also, lacking any specificity about who is responsible, to recognize a more generalized complicity.

The title and captions evoke a narrative of abandonment that renders the state invisible. Yet the state haunts these photographs as a ghostly apparition and as a force of abstraction. The invisibility of the state corresponds to the aesthetic abstraction of the child, a compositional feature that echoes the documentary photography style of Lewis Wickes Hine, a reformer employed by the U.S. National Child Labor Commission during the Progressive Era. Hine documented children working in U.S. factories, mills, farms, and on urban streets. Like Hine, Constantine depicts the children's social entrapment through the abstraction and extension of the child's body as part of the labor machine. Yet Constantine does not cast the children solely in the terms of an idealized script of lost innocence, though his captions do emphasize the children's abandonment, by both their parents and the state—an abandonment that translates into a political aesthetic premised on the representation of absence. Constantine's images also show children as cultural actors.

The risk in rendering the state invisible and the stateless (hyper)visible, particularly if these images are circulated in local media contexts, is that the photographs reinforce a discourse of fear, contagion, and criminality commonly associated with street children in Sabah (most of whom are stateless). As Elizabeth Majaham, a writer for *Insight Sabah*, reports, "Most of Malaysia's half a million street children are in Sabah, touting pedestrians and motorists with their waves of cigarettes and vegetables or their services as shoeshine boys. They rummage rubbish bins for food, toys and clothes. Some become child prostitutes. Almost all of them are stateless." She continues, "The public is disgusted with them. The local media have little empathy for street kids, regarding them as a nuisance to society."<sup>20</sup> Organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund have conducted media workshops aimed at helping local journalists to better understand the root causes of these children's conditions.<sup>21</sup> Among UNICEF's guiding principles of media interaction are the advocacy and promotion of children's rights, respect for the child's privacy and protection from harm and retribution, and representation of children's views, voices, and decision-making capacities. UNICEF's workshop materials indicate that children "have a right to have their opinions heard and to participate in decisions affecting them. Give them space in the media to voice out their concerns."<sup>22</sup> Human rights group such as Refugees International and Child Frontiers continue to work on behalf of stateless children born to foreigners in Sabah in order to obtain birth certificates. These organizations call for the state to honor its ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which stipulates the right of every child to an identity and citizenship. Temporary centers have also emerged in Menggatal to care for small numbers of stateless children.

Clearly, as Constantine observes, the children are "caught in the middle of the battle over politics, cultural identity, and impoverished economies." These battles are not easily visualized, nor are the efforts of local and international organizations. We see but do not hear the children. This visualization, however limited, is crucial to

Constantine's efforts to refute the public's disgust and to replace abjection with humanization. For example, the lack of specificity in the photographs of children may contribute to the process of humanizing them, as these images invoke common typologies of children in international human rights and humanitarian campaigns as "moral referent[s]" and "motives for action."<sup>23</sup> Of course, any effort to humanize is itself complicated and always compromised, not only because failed efforts result in voyeurism and further exploitation but also because such efforts raise key questions such as who counts as human and what are the conditions that reduce people's sense of their own humanity?

Constantine's challenge is to create critical awareness and recognition for a situation that is both invisible, rendering people "nowhere," and hypervisible, rendering them objects of disgust. We have argued that the invisibility of the stateless is inevitably linked to complicity in those conditions as well as to the conditions of legibility. Ethical representational practices, networks, and social interactions therefore require a measure of critical doubt toward a political aesthetic or methodology of visual inclusion and visual intimacy. In particular, we need to exercise critical awareness about how we use images as means of sociopolitical and legal recognition. Is there a universal right to become an image—a right to be visualized for an elusive international audience? This right is based on the premise that circulation of humanized images might prompt social action. However, the democratization of media and photojournalism's humanist aesthetic may not in and of themselves prompt social justice, though they may create the conditions for recognition, legibility, and awareness of statelessness. "Nowhere People" counters the invisibility of statelessness and "provides tangible documentation," as Constantine suggests. But the project's moral and political value, we argue, "belongs to the contexts of [its] reception" (local, global, pedagogical, juridical, and so on), a reception that always risks reproducing the hierarchy of suffering as the right to be seen by distant others.<sup>24</sup> This is, of course, a risk worth taking, as long as it is taken with critical awareness. The power of "Nowhere People: The Global Face of Statelessness" lies in its potential to generate public recognition of these risks and the paradoxes of rights suspended in a state of exception.<sup>25</sup>

#### NOTES

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1. All quotations from the text accompanying "Nowhere People" are taken from the online exhibition at <http://www.nowherepeople.org> (accessed March 25, 2011).

2. Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006), 187.

3. LaCapra writes, "Empathic unsettlement in the attentive secondary witness . . . involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place." Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 4 (1999): 696–727.

4. See Peter Biella, "Visual Anthropology in a Time of War: Intimacy and Interactivity in Ethnographic Media," in *Viewpoints: Visual Anthropologists at Work*, ed. Mary Strong and Laena Wilder (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 140–76.
5. Mark Reinhardt and Holly Edwards, "Traffic in Pain," in *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, ed. Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Dugganne (Williamstown, Mass.: Williams College Museum of Art, 2007), 11; Mark Reinhardt, "Picturing Violence: Aesthetics and the Anxiety of Critique," in *ibid.*, 14.
6. Reinhardt and Edwards, "Traffic in Pain," 8.
7. *Ibid.*, 9.
8. See Judith Butler's discussion of what she refers to as "decentering of First Worldism" in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2003), 8.
9. Jacques Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization," in *The Identity in Question*, ed. John Rajchman (London: Routledge, 1995), 67.
10. Liisa Malkki, "Commentary: The Politics of Trauma and Asylum: Universals and Their Effects," *Ethos* 35, no. 3 (2007): 336–43.
11. Paul Farmer, "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below," *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Perspectives* 3, no. 1 (2009): 11–28.
12. Interview with Liz Smailes, <http://mag.ttoasia.net/one-world>. As this article went to press, the piece was no longer available online. Also see Seth Mydans, "Stateless, with Borders All Around," *New York Times*, April 8, 2007.
13. Amy Shuman, "Dismantling Local Culture," in *Theorizing Folklore: Toward New Perspectives on the Politics of Culture*, ed. Charles Briggs and Amy Shuman, special issues of *Western Folklore* 52, nos. 2–4 (1993): 345–64.
14. Sam Gregory, "The Ethical Engagements of Human Rights Social Media," *The WITNESS Blog*, November 22, 2010, <http://blog.witness.org/2010/11/the-ethical-engagements-of-human-rights-social-media> (accessed December 2, 2010).
15. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 87.
16. 1954 Convention Related to Status of Stateless Persons.
17. Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 169.
18. Carol Bohmer and Amy Shuman, *Rejecting Refugees: Political Asylum in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2008), 172–210.
19. Wendy S. Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics: Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).
20. Elizabeth Majaham, "Children's Rights, Public Disgust, Media Apathy," *Insight Sabah: The Voice of Sabahans*, October 24, 2009, <http://insightsabah.gov.my/article/print/45> (accessed March 25, 2011).
21. UNICEF organized a media workshop in October 2009 in Kota Kinabalu in conjunction with the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, as the organization put it, "aimed to strengthen understanding around child rights issues and to inspire each reporter to become a champion for every child." See [http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/campaigns\\_crc20-child-rights-reporters-workshop.html](http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/campaigns_crc20-child-rights-reporters-workshop.html) (accessed March 6, 2011).
22. UNICEF, "Children in the Media: A Guide to Media Policy Affecting Children in

Malaysia” (2009), <http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Children-in-Media.pdf> (accessed March 25, 2011).

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