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The day the sky fell: Globalization and me

The day the sky fell I was the only one that noticed, because when it fell it fell on me.

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global citizen.

I stopped watching television years ago, I found I could not shake the images that would flicker on the screen. I avoided scary films because I don't like watching people being killed. I spend a lot of time in the digital world. Floating around from website to website, learning little bits of information staying well within my confront zone. I engage in conversations via chat, or voice with people I don't know in real life. I am connected in social media and I can Google with the best. I am no fool though, I was in no way a global citizen. I was not engaged in this global community. I was in fact selfish. I did not take the time to learn of the global issues, as I seem to be drawn to stories focusing on children. I did not want to think about children hurting each other or worse adults hurting children. I suffered at the hands of others and still struggle to make sense bits of memories. Last year I created an artwork called "8 inches and closed"(Knoll, 2011). The concept for this work is abuse never heals completely, we revisit it. I always think I am ok, then it is time for annual licensed childcare training.

On April 18th 2012 , I attended the educational symposium advocating wellness strategies ,hosted by CONCERN hotline Inc. The theme was, "Are You Concerned?" focusing on bullying, exploitation, suicide and abuse (<http://www.concernhotline.com/content/are-you-concerned>). I became so concerned, I texted my son at school and told him the I loved him.

I listened as the experts admitted to their failing ability to keep up with the digital technology fast past growth. They are merely throwing ideas against a wall to see if they work. What does that mean?

I researched bullying and internet safety. I could see some of the failures in the anti-bullying programs. They seem to be missing an element that would truly engage the students. They

address the issue with students signing contracts to "not bully" each other and lecturing in "circle time". The programs I found never mention redirecting energy spent on misguided behavior into digital technology and game based learning environments. I wondered why school administration and anti-bully programs provide training for educators, but don't focus on art. The arts intrinsically develop self esteem, critical thinking skills which naturally decrease the likelihood for the student to be bullied or to bully. The Arts can be an alternative outlets for the bullies to speak and be heard, after all they also are students using skills they developed from others. Yet I thought, what do I know. I am only one.

April 19th was the day the sky fell.

I was listening to Steve Johnson, educator and photographer for the University of Florida lecture on the power of a single image can tell a story and how they move world. He flashed the image of Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize' earning photograph, "A vulture watches a starving child" (<http://www.pulitzer.org/awards/1994>). I interjected, " why did he not save the child?" Someone else in the class said it was not his job to do that. How could it not be his job? What happen to humanity?

I struggled with the idea it wasn't his job. I started talking in all the places I talk, and to anyone that would listen. I began to realize globalization issues are difficult to understand and difficult to label as just one problem. Much like bully and humanitarian they are conceptual umbrella words to describe a human response to environment, culture, and community, Globalization.

One of the strongest ways to communicate is through visual language. Kevin Carter's image of "A vulture watches a starving child" was more than just a child dying as a vulture waited to eat. It was a metaphor to what was happening in Sudan as the indigenous people were being enslaved, and killed by greed, power, and bigotry (Brown, 2000). They were being bullied out of their homes, land and being stripped of their lives, but without a complete understanding I blamed the photographer, taking advantage of this child. I perceived an imbalance of power between the photographer and his subject and I was not the only one (MacLeod, 1994, Alfredo, 2006).

A photographer is a bystander, his job is to think visually, recording his experience and hope to capture enough information another person can find the story past what is visually there. I was placing the same amount of blame on Kevin Carter as the people responsible for these terrible acts of hate.

I blamed the child's parents. Why would they leave the child to die. Where were they? How many times do I ask that when something horrible happens to a child, maybe there was no one to save the parents. I jumped to conclude who was the bully without having the full story, after all a photo cannot tell a complete story only one aspect of it.

Kevin Carter was what Olweus Bully Prevention Program would call an empowered bystander (Ilakkuvan, 2012). He got involved. He used the abilities he had to step in. He did what he could, he captured a moment that 19 years later, still has enough power to have me up all night questioning humanity and my part in it. When do I step in?

Why was I so mad about something that happened in 1994. I had to ask myself where was I? What was I doing? This image marked a day in history, and I seem to have been completely unaware. I wasn't web surfing in 1994, or maybe I would have taken notice as the image as it possibly would have gone viral, leaving its disease on my homepage. Now in 2012, I care about this child that has long since passed away. The photographer who took his own life leaving behind a message that he could not shake the images of what he saw and experienced. Yet research shows that there is "NO" direct line between suicide, victimization, or witnessing what in this paper I argue to be the worst form of bullying (Ilakkuvan, 2012).

Kevin Carter did have other problems drug abuse, a falling relationship, and poverty. He did reach out several times to friends and colleagues (MacLeod, 1994, p.70). I had assumed, he only measured the value of life in F-stops. He stated, " You are making a visual here. But inside something is screaming, 'My God.' But it is time to work. Deal with the rest later" (MacLeod,1994, p.70).

What does this all mean to me? It means I have just enough information to be dangerous. I need more knowledge so I am not seeking to shoot the messenger. I need more understanding of the concept of the empowered bystander, the bully, and the message.

I am still only one person, but I know how to use technology to seek different points of views. I know how to research to find humanity in myself. I do know how to speak visually to others, and I can reach out and teach those skills.

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