

International Conference on Broadcasting Media & Film Industry

October 20, 2014 DoubleTree by Hilton Baltimore-BWI Airport, USA

Photojournalism and social media and the power of images for bringing social change and advocacy

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Everyone is a photographer today, thanks to easy access to iPhones and digital cameras. Our eyes are drawn to beautiful images instantly but our hearts are drawn to pictures that leave a deep impact on our soul. This is the power of images. Photojournalism is not just about capturing moments but it is a vehicle to inform, raise awareness and preserve history for future generations. Now images from around the world arrive on our devices with a touch of a button via live feeds of various newspaper websites and social media like Twitter and Instagram. The power of the shared image gives us a chance to advocate and raise our voices about issues that we feel strongly about. Example: Photographer Donna Ferrato's work on domestic abuse in America was published worldwide and later she worked with senators, police chiefs, foreign governments and grassroot groups to stimulate people into taking a stand against domestic violence. "Too Young to Wed" is a global project on child marriage started by photojournalist Stephanie Sinclair a decade ago. The project has been published in hundreds of publications across the globe. It is now a non-profit organisation that works to build a community dedicated to ending child marriage. The author has witnessed the power of social media and how it can bring people together from different corners of the world irrespective of different cultures and religions. As an Indian woman, the author has encountered several incidents of sexual abuse and harassment. It was but natural for her to work on the issue of rape and sexual violence in India. In a country with a feudal and patriarchal mind-set, rape victims are seen as disposable creatures. The author believes in the power of images since it acts like building blocks for a better society. Photographs can convey empathy and raise social consciousness because, after all, everyone is made of flesh and blood.

Biography

Smita Sharma is an Indian freelance photojournalist and documentary photographer currently based in New York. She is overseeing the social media and research work on the global campaign on child marriage – "Too Young to Wed.org". Her work has been published in prestigious international publications and exhibited in galleries from South Korea to the United States.

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