

Promoting Justice and Peace Conference Interview
John Goheen, Loyola University Chicago School of Communication
By *Joe Flaherty*

Professor John Goheen has been a member of Loyola's School of Communication faculty since 2009. He teaches courses involving video and multi-media production, as well as documentaries. Professor Goheen is a 12-time Emmy winner for his work in television news. He has worked as a freelance producer and photographer for all the major U.S. television networks including NBC, CBS, and ABC. He has also won multiple awards for his work as a documentary filmmaker.

How did you initially get involved with the conference?

I was invited to attend based on the conference wanting to invite someone who had media production experience and background.

What will your specific role be at the conference?

Essentially we want to videotape all of the sessions, many of which will happen simultaneously. Jameson Chen, our SOC Manager of Technology, and I came up with the idea of trying to get students who may have an interest in video production from local universities to come and volunteer. They will all have access to the convention, and then as volunteers, we would assign them to operate a camera to videotape a certain session. Jameson and I will do training the day before the convention with these volunteers and teach them little tricks of the trade.

Since 1991, I've been to Africa and over 20 other countries. I've mostly covered conflict and that type of thing. I will talk about ways on how to cover conflict and to bring attention to a particular subject with the intent of informing a broader audience.

How do you think Digital Media and Media Technology can contribute to promoting peace and justice?

It has to do with what you've seen happening in the Middle East, in Egypt, and even in North Africa. Through social networking and people with their iPhones and things like that, people are serving to document events through social media and sharing video with digital technology. The rest of the world can sort of see what's going on.

It's one thing to hold your phone up and capture an event, but it's another thing to take that footage and use it to further a cause or tell a story that can reinforce an event or an occurrence that takes place. Anyone can take video, but what you do with it, and how you use it, and how it's used is part of what we want to bring to a conference like this. We want to help enable people to become better storytellers by using digital technology effectively.

Pictures are great, pictures say a lot, but how you use them and who you talk to, how good it is... all of that makes a difference in getting out your word and reinforcing whatever it is that you want people to learn, hear and see.

What do you hope to gain from the conference?

I've been a storyteller, a documentary filmmaker for over 30 years. Now I'm an educator, and it's the next generation's turn; people in their 20's who you want to share your skills with so they can become the storytellers of tomorrow.

On the African continent there's lots of conflict, as there is in other parts of the world. You want to be able to make sure that every part of the world has competent people who can tell a story accurately and fairly, and do it well so that it becomes credible. That way when people see it, they recognize that it's legitimate and that it's important to share whatever that message is to the rest of the world so the rest of the world is aware of what's going on in that particular place at any particular time.

What do you hope the conference accomplishes as a whole?

At these kind of conferences, like anything in life, you never know who you're going to impact, how you're going to do it, or when that's going to take place. From personal experience, I've done things where I've affected change, or influenced people with what I've said. You never know when that's going to happen, and it only has to happen one time to that one person, where something you say resonates with them and directs them in a certain way.

That's not really something you can control. Some people will be there for a different purpose or reason, but you always hope that what you say will make a difference in someone's life, and that they will somehow be impacted by your presence and your experience and your knowledge. They can then take that and eventually become a person who does the same thing as a result of what they have heard. That's when it becomes a chain of events that leads to good.

Will you be doing anything else in Africa outside of the conference?

Jameson and I have applied for a grant, and if we get it, we will go to Malawi after the conference and do some shooting there for a U.K. not-for-profit organization that operates in several countries. They work towards bringing education to rural communities in Africa that need assistance, mostly for girls. Lots of times in African countries as in many other parts of the world, girls are often neglected when it comes to education. In a lot of places, education isn't provided by the government. You have to pay for it. In a lot of these impoverished countries, people don't have the resources or the money, and so girls are usually the first ones who aren't allowed to continue and get a full education. We plan on doing a video that will show the value of educating all people. The video will go to help with furthering their cause: either fundraising or raising awareness for the organization.

Anything you'd like to add?

I love Africa. Having been there since 1991, and having been to over 20 different countries, you realize every place is a little bit different. Almost everything I've done, with a few exceptions, has always been during difficult times. It's nice to go there and not have to cover a Civil War or a famine or something of that nature. To give back to Africa in such a way would be rewarding.