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Dear Reader,

Some years ago as I was starting my doctoral studies, I determined to focus on the responsibility of corporate leaders and of the media in impacting the environment and the communities, in the case of the media, shaping attitudes and having an educational influence. Later I decided to narrow the focus and concentrated on business leaders. So when I discovered a conference called Media as Agent for World Benefit I was excited to participate! A few weeks ago I attended the 2009 Conference of Images & Voices of Hope, an NGO whose mission is "to expand awareness of the choices those in media make that raise public trust, generate constructive meaning, and amplify human hope, enhancing humanity's capacity for life-promoting action."

Kim Weiss, PR specialist in the publishing industry, and writers' coach, shares in this issue her personal blogged summary of a unique conference.

Enjoy the reading!

Isabel Rimanoczy
Editor

Quote of the Month

"Whenever they are in the news, that's when they exist."

Edwidge Danticat
(Haitian-born American author, 1969 -)

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Issue 111

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**BUSINESS AS AGENT FOR WORLD BENEFIT
2009 SUMMIT**

By Kim Weiss ^[1]

Drizzling rain masks the emerging autumn colors of the hills of the Catskill Mountains. It's 11:00 am on Sunday and most of the people in attendance at the 2009 **Images & Voices of Hope** Summit have taken to their cars off to Albany and other NY airports. With them they take enriched spirits and heads full of ideas about the impact of media messages on our world and our personal lives. More than ever the uncharted, uncertain and seemingly unstable state of our media expands the conversation to places equally uncharted. Many hang on dearly for the life of their careers and all are on high alert about what is inevitably coming down the road.

It is this quality of the unknown that makes for some pretty interesting exchanges.

What will Apple's new "tablet" do to the way we receive our news? How can we trust the news coming from cottage-based operations that consist of one blogger? What is this new (or is it old) phenomenon of citizen journalism? Should they be trained according to professional standards? Can advertising morph from its sleazy reputation for how it sells soap to creating positive change in the thinking and habits of its viewers and readers? Are the younger generations only getting news from YouTube? Are they getting news at all (the real question)?

If we don't yet have concrete answers about these and a myriad of media-related topics, the folks who gathered this weekend at Peace Village sure gave finding them a valiant try.

My head is swimming. Sure, it's partly my slow-healing ear infection, but mostly it's a healthy stupor of information overload. It'll take some time to process this.

In a charming yet simple setting in the Catskills, I rubbed elbows with giants once again (refer to my **blog** about this last year—I was big on the giant factor).

This time I was in the presence of David Fanning, the grand poobah of course, but it's him, right? of PBS's **Frontline**, probably one of, if not the bravest news programs available on the US television. Stories that no one else tells, that no one particularly likes to look at, and stories that have more depth than our sound byte brains are deluged with on a daily basis. We must bring something to our viewing of Frontline stories. In a word, it's something that most television programming allows us to ignore—our conscience.

I say bravo to Mr. Fanning's presentation. My heartfelt wish is that PBS and the Frontline family steadily overcome any "preaching to the choir" scenario and work to expand their audience. Truth in journalism, hey, you've all heard of that, right? Wouldn't be a bad element to return to the living rooms of more viewers.

June Cohen from Ted was there. You know, TED, the conference and subsequent taping of them that dazzles us online with their plethora of 18 minute talks. If you DON'T know TED, go there now: <http://www.ted.org>. In my inimitable, perpetually adolescent way, I approached June at the end of the conference, so enamored with her current and past work, I actually said, "Had I been a bit younger, I would say—'can I work for you?' or better yet—'I want to BE you.'" From her response, I don't think she thought me an idiot. Her smile looked accepting. Media intersecting with technology is/was her specialty. Media intersecting technology needs to be of interest of us all. Dinosaurs included.

How about this for titans of the advertising world? There were the two Mikes (Hemingway and Hughes): respectively, the people behind the Dove "Real Beauty" campaign, and the "Geico", Walmart "Save More, Live Better" campaigns. Brilliant minds sharing a passion for not just the art of selling soap but bringing real valuable goods that are not tangible. Things like, self-esteem, sustainability, compassion, etc. Not the usual staples we think of when we think of advertising minds, but thankfully, conscience has been creeping in there as well.

Seth Farbman of the gi-normous Ogilvy agency, particularly the OgilvyEarth division, presented a brilliant and controversial peek at the ad campaign called "**Hopenhagen**," the theme of this December's critical worldwide summit on climate change in Copenhagen. People in the audience, mostly journalists, had a lot to say about all of the presentations from their typically natural enemy, the admen. Some bristled. Most applauded. What the presentations offered was a look at the very best of the best (and conscious) work being done, in my estimation, anyway.

Remember: Hope not Cope, or from Cope to Hope. Anyway. It's a good idea. See more at: <http://www.hopenhagen.org>.

Kim Spencer, talked about his work at **Link TV** which I'm embarrassed to say I hadn't heard of. International news "unfiltered" (scary) that never makes it to the usual network and cable channels. I know a friend who subscribes to Link and thinks it's unmatched. Smart people there. There's tons of news of all sorts available but they've included a world music channel and another on spirituality. Spirituality coverage, with NO affiliation on a serious news network is not your mom and pop's typical evening news fare.

Good for them.

Speaking of the blending of worlds, like including music or matters of the spirit with traditional (if there is such a thing) news, the IVOH summit is masterful at blending. Throughout the more linear "work" of appreciative inquiry sessions where groups discussed some prescribed questions and the witnessing of presentations, there were moments woven in probably not seen at most conference that discuss the media. There were readings, some very intimate, from participants who drafted essays in the style of National Public Radio's "This I Believe Segment." There were little journals given to all of us for periodic moments of reflection when we were asked to stop what we were doing and jot down something we wanted to hold onto, express, or share later.

The lovely Brahma Kumaris Spiritual University organization hosted the conference for us soldiers of the media making every possible comfort available to soothe our souls while we stretched our minds. Optional meditation class was available at sunrise and for those of us who love our snooze buttons, tai chi and chi gong classes came at a more civilized 8:00 am. Midday, Collette led the energetic through the woods with the lure of possible deer or bear sightings At the very least, they would be treated to the beginnings of fall's magnificent color palette.

I'm writing this now while I'm still fueled with the summit's magic, yes, I said magic. There's something about this place, these hosts, and these people, some of whom I met last year, that make this an event I vowed never to miss for the rest of my life.

Easy fast to my tribe members! Om Shanti to the rest of you.



[\[1\]](http://www.helpmewithmybook.com/blog) Visit her blog at <http://www.helpmewithmybook.com/blog>

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