

**NEW YORK CONFERENCE
JULY 15-16, 2014**

**Grantmaking For Strategic Communications:
Building the Human Rights 'Brand' in the U.S., Africa, and the U.K.**
Wednesday, July 16th
10:30 am-12:00 pm

Session Organizers:

- Esther Hughes, Executive Director, Global Dialogue
- James Logan, Programme Officer, International Human Rights, Oak Foundation

Facilitator:

- James Logan, Programme Officer, International Human Rights, Oak Foundation

Panelists:

- Neil Crowther, Director, The Thomas Paine Initiative, Global Dialogue
- Jeanne Elone, Director, International Criminal Justice Fund, TrustAfrica
- Shireen Zaman, Program Director, Security and Rights Collaborative, Proteus Fund

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James Logan introduced the session by explaining how difficult it has been to successfully communicate the positive value of human rights on a global scale. This particular session was a continuation of last year's IHRFG New York conference plenary on the same topic. The purpose of the panel was to provide practical insight on how to implement communications strategies and to have an interactive conversation on the issue.

James began by asking each panelist a series of questions:

- 1. Why do you feel the opposition has been winning the argument?**
- 2. How have you been successful and what have you been doing right?**
- 3. What is your grantmaking strategy?**

Shireen Zaman works on civil and human rights in the United States within Arab and Muslim communities as part of the Security and Rights Collaborative at the Proteus Fund. Essentially, their opponent is fear, which can be a hard narrative, particularly within the frame of keeping the United States safe in a post-9/11 context. Fortunately, as time passes, that fear diminishes. In addition, directly after 9/11, the American people were more willing to compromise their human rights in the name of national security. However, the recent National Security Agency (NSA) scandal has encouraged the American people to support a culture of human rights.

The Proteus Fund provides direct support to their grantees, with fifty percent of their support going toward a communications hub. They make the grant to an independent organization which manages and staffs the communications hub. Proteus Fund's other grantees are also members of the hub. The hub has built grantee communications capacity while providing a strategic resource, effectively allowing the communities to connect to bigger, intersecting issues in the media. It has also allowed the community to become more proactive instead of reactive by identifying news stories before they break, which allows additional time for strategizing and then releasing their own perspective first.

What does success look like? According to Shireen, the field in which she works is more organized, particularly in terms of their capacity to release reports and interact with the media. They now support a media communications hub, which has exponentially developed the sophistication of grassroots leaders. The field has also shifted from being reactive to proactive.

Jeanne Elone's communications work at the International Criminal Justice Fund with TrustAfrica is to advance international criminal justice in Africa, with a particular focus on the debate around the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its role in Africa and specifically Kenya. They are confronting a shift in support of the ICC as an important body to address crimes related to the 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya toward a backlash against it, with the argument of neocolonialism from the Kenyan government. The opponents have a very clear message, saying that a vote for the ICC means you don't believe in Kenya. They have been successful because the Kenyan government has a lot of resources. They were able to transform a campaign about justice for victims to one of national rhetoric, also positing the ICC as "conspirators from the West against African governments."

TrustAfrica uses several advocacy strategies, including shifting from a reactive to proactive approach, supporting civil society organizations to focus on the needs of victims of the crimes in more local contexts, and changing the narrative of Africa vs. the ICC to cover stories about the affect on local communities.

Neil Crowther is from the Thomas Paine Initiative, a collaborative fund working in the U.K. to promote and increase awareness of human rights. Although the U.K. was central in drafting the European Declaration of Human Rights, there is a growing hostility towards the idea of human rights. This is due to increased xenophobia in the UK and the common perception that human rights are only for marginalized groups, like travelers, who are already negatively perceived by the general public. Moreover, human rights are now seen as something which undermines the justice system, instead of something which promotes justice and upholds codes of fairness. One of the Thomas Paine Initiative's main goals is to address these public attitudes around human rights using strategic communications.

What strategies have worked well for them? Professor George Lakoff from the University of California at Berkeley has been very important in terms of creating frames for effective communications. Frames are unconscious and activate the audience's existing values or assumptions. In order to be successful, it is important to shift these frames, as negative or reactive frames are unsuccessful. Moreover, simply presenting facts does not change minds. They have a three-part strategy. First, they provide empirical support of communications, as it is important to first understand the audience, their values, and their source of stories and narratives. From here, it is easier to invest in specific strategies. Second, they are putting human rights in the mainstream frame by bringing other groups into the conversation through development of NGO human rights networks. Third, they are creating thematic campaigns about issues which are important to the public, like the rights of children, and framing these issues as human rights as well.

Question and Answer:

One participant asked: What is the impact of these initiatives? Shireen cited public opinion data that shows a perception shift toward Muslims and Islam. Proteus has also heard from their grantees that 93% have seen a significant improvement in their communications capacity. TrustAfrica hosted an international conference in Senegal to discuss the public relations challenges around the ICC and to encourage collaboration. The Thomas Paine foundation now has an evidence-based communications strategy that didn't exist 18 months ago.

Another participant asked if they were trying to engage journalists who were already addressing their issues but who weren't using their frame. Yes, particularly in the case of the Proteus fund. Forming relationships with journalists and inviting them to community spaces has been strategic in creating stories where, for example, Muslims are seen as survivors of violence and not perpetrators of violence, like in the case of the Boston Marathon bombing.

When you talk about the human rights brand, how important is it that groups are using the human rights frame and understanding this terminology? Neil responded that it's not about what you say, but how you construct a sentence. The sequencing is really important. They would lead with an issue regarding a population group with which they knew people would be sympathetic, and then mentioned human rights at the end to try to shift the perception.

In conclusion, the panelists emphasized the importance of investing in strategic communications, whether through investing in a communications hub to support grantees, shifting the story as opposed to presenting facts and statistics, or highlighting local stories to make the most impact against nationalist rhetoric.

Biographies of Panelists:



Neil Crowther, Director, The Thomas Paine Initiative, Global Dialogue

Neil Crowther is Director of The Thomas Paine Initiative, a funders' collaborative which aims to build stronger support for the values underpinning the European Convention on Human Rights in the United Kingdom. He is also an independent consultant working with government and non-governmental organizations in the UK and internationally to implement human rights, particularly focusing on the rights of persons with disabilities.

In this capacity, he acted as adviser to the UK's Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights' inquiry into the rights of disabled people to live independently, has researched and written reports on behalf of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Commission, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Inclusion International and led research by University College London into the integration of equality bodies and national human rights institutions within the European Union. He is presently developing a manual for national human rights institutions on their role in promoting, protecting and monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities. He previously held the posts of Director of the Human Rights Programme and Director of Disability Rights at the British Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Prior to joining the EHRC, he was Head of Policy at the Disability Rights Commission.



Jeanne Elone, Director, International Criminal Justice Fund, TrustAfrica

Jeanne Elone is Director of the International Criminal Justice fund, which aims to combat impunity and build African capacity to address atrocity crimes. Previously, Jeanne coordinated research on North African civil society, examining the role of civil society in the political transformations that shook the region in 2011, as well as analyzing the legal and regulatory environment in which these groups operate.

Jeanne has lived in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, France, and the United States, working on a range of issues from human rights to development finance. She studied at Columbia University in New York, the National Institute for Political Science in Paris, and Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. She is bilingual in French and English.



James Logan, Programme Officer, International Human Rights, Oak Foundation

James coordinates Oak Foundation's work to end impunity for international crimes and to support human rights defenders through the dissemination of new tools and tactics. His work is informed by his experience at Amnesty International where he was a country specialist on Turkey and where he conducted research and led campaigns against torture and disappearances and for the protection of human rights activists. He

has also previously worked as external advisor to companies seeking to develop and implement human rights policies. James holds a Master's degree in Public International Law with Distinction from the School of Oriental and African Studies and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Turkish and Arabic from Oxford University. He is a proud member of the IHRFG's Steering Committee and the Chair of the Thomas Paine Initiative, a donor collaborative seeking to promote positive attitudes towards human rights in the United Kingdom.



Shireen Zaman, Program Director, Security & Rights Collaborative, Proteus Fund

Shireen Zaman comes to the Security & Rights Collaborative having led organizational transformation, resource development, and program management at several nationally recognized nonprofits. Most recently, she was Executive Director at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding in Washington, DC. Her focus was on improving the understanding of issues and policies impacting the Muslim Community in the media and among policy makers and on developing strategic partnerships. She is also a board

member of Slim Peace Groups, an organization that brings together Jewish and Muslim women for common goals of developing healthier eating habits, empowerment and relationship building. In 2013, Shireen was recognized as a White House "Champion of Change" for her work as an Asian American woman leader. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Human Development from Boston College and a Master's degree from the School of International Service at American University where she focused on public diplomacy and U.S. relations with the Muslim world.