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## Interview to Sam Gregory: a member of the Jury of the GC Visual Contest 2017

**Interview to Sam Gregory, Director of WITNESS. He is a member of the Jury of the [GC Visual Contest 2017](#).**

**Videos are powerful means to witness human rights violations, but they risk to retraumatize victims; what is the balance between the necessity to document and the imperative to preserve human dignity?**

*At the heart of human rights is a belief in the dignity of individuals, and a commitment not to re-victimize people who've already faced violations. I think it's a critical part of both the practice of human rights professionals and the way we support citizen documentors and civic witnesses to help them think through issues of consent, re-victimization and representation. At WITNESS we focus on how to help people understand the ramifications of sharing images in a digital era - the person you least expect can see an image when you least expect it, with all the consequences for someone's safety and dignity that can result. It can also be that you don't need to widely share an image - we also try and help people think when sharing the right image, perhaps just for evidentiary purposes, is critical rather than broad circulation. We have a lot of resources in this area in our training library at [library.witness.org](http://library.witness.org).*

**What advice would you give to participants willing to develop a persuasive storytelling? What are the main risks?**

*First you have to know why you are creating a narrative. For advocacy and persuasive storytelling in an age when there are so many images out there (there is no shortage of human rights images sadly) thinking smartly*

*about audience and tailoring your storytelling to that audience - which can be large or small - is what matters. You can't control how an image or story will circulate but at the very least you can make sure it's resonant and impactful for your core audience. I also think it's critical for advocacy storytelling to allow a 'space for action' by the audience - an ability for them to engage and see where they can be part of the solution or have a way to act. We explore how to do this effectively and for different audiences in many of our [training materials](#). Most recently at WITNESS we've been attempting to do this in the context of live-streamed video storytelling, piloting approaches to turning viewers from spectators to 'distant witnesses' in our Mobil-Eyes Us pilot project in Rio de Janeiro.*

**Videos create empathy and inspire for action. How is it possible to link virtual campaign with classic activism?**

*To my mind there's no real distinction between virtual and classic IRL (in-real-life) campaign - in both you need to work out how to maximize the contributions of your participants in creating whatever impact you are trying to achieve (pressure, organizing, fundraising). Social media and online video allow us to engage more people than ever before - they do also mean we reach unexpected audiences. Sometimes this can be good, sometimes this can be challenging (an example would be the unexpected reach and 'success' of the Kony 2012 video). I do worry about the flood of images of horror we encounter online and the risk that people spectate in response to them rather than bear witness (or else just turn away). It's another reason we've been exploring projects like Mobil-Eyes Us to explore how you use immersive campaigns that blur the line between on-the-scene activists and witnesses and virtual or 'distant witnesses' experiencing it at a distance and acting. I talk more about it in this blog on ['Immersive witnessing: from empathy and outrage to action'](#).*

**You can follow the visual contest** with the hashtag **#GlobalCampusVisualContest** on Facebook, Twitter, Google + and Instagram. **Website:** [www.globalcampusvisualcontest.org](http://www.globalcampusvisualcontest.org)

Read the interview to **Poulomi Basu, a member of the Jury of the [GC Visual Contest 2017](#)**