

## News Literacy Lecturer's Background Pack

Lecture Title: Power of Information

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Director's note to Backpack builders:

If you were standing up in front of 200 people to give this lecture, what information would you want at your fingertips? What gems of fact, context or history?... "What were the dates and circumstances of Wickrematunge's assassination? His paper was called...? Sri Lanka's population is....?"

The best Background pack is not an exhaustive bibliography. It's a briefing that has been curated with lecturing in mind. So, it will summarize key information on all the news examples, studies, historical events, people, etc that are referred to in the lecture. If we refer to any foreign country, the BBC's excellent country summary will be useful, for instance. If nuclear weapons are a topic, perhaps the list of which nations have nukes, and so forth.

Below are examples of the kinds of material we want:

### DANIEL PEARL BIO

From Daniel Pearl Foundation website

... Wall Street Journal reporter who was kidnapped and murdered by terrorists in Pakistan in early 2002, just four months after 9/11.

Danny was born on October 10, 1963, in Princeton, New Jersey, and grew up in Los Angeles, where he displayed an insatiable curiosity for music, academics and sports.

A gifted writer from a very young age, Danny's aptitude for journalism became apparent as a student at Stanford University where he co-founded the student newspaper *Stanford Commentary*. He graduated in 1985 with Phi Beta Kappa honors and then spent a summer as a Pulliam Fellow intern at the *Indianapolis Star* before joining the *North Adams Transcript* and the *Berkshire Eagle*. After a few years, he moved on to the *San Francisco Business Times* and within few weeks he joined the *Wall Street Journal* in 1990. Danny started in the Journal's Atlanta bureau and moved successively to the Washington and London bureaus, serving as a Middle East correspondent. After he met Mariane in 1998, he moved to Paris where they were married a year later.

In October of 2000, they moved to Bombay, where Danny became the South Asia Bureau Chief for the Wall Street Journal. Danny's skill as a foreign correspondent was apparent not only in his entertaining Page One "A-hed" pieces which shed light on other cultures, but also in investigative stories that uncovered the truth from the rubble of war and devastation. It was Danny who uncovered that the U.S. had mistakenly bombed a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant, believing it to be a weapons factory. Later, he broke the story of Al Qaeda's money laundering through the Tanzanite gem market.

It was from Bombay that Danny covered the "war on terrorism," occasionally venturing into Pakistan. He was retracing the steps of "shoe bomber" Richard Reid and hoped to meet with Sheik Gilani, a spiritual leader, when he was abducted in Karachi on January 23, 2002. For weeks, millions around the world -- from heads of state, to religious leaders and ordinary people -- rallied for Danny's release. In Danny, the terrorists believed they abducted a media figure, an American, and a Jew. ...Several weeks elapsed without word of his fate; his murder was confirmed on February 21, 2002. Four of the kidnappers were convicted on July 15, 2002, including mastermind Omar Saeed Sheik, although others believed to be involved are still at large.

Two days before his abduction, Danny learned that his wife Mariane was expecting a baby boy; he chose the name Adam for their son. In May, just three months after his murder, Mariane Pearl

gave birth to Adam.

The book "At Home in the World" published in June 2002, features 50 of Danny's best articles, illustrating his curiosity, humor, fairness and his love of humanity.



Thursday, Jan. 08, 2009

## Dying for Journalism: Lasantha Wickrematunge of Sri Lanka

By Jyoti Thottam / Colombo

Lasantha Wickrematunge, one of Sri Lanka's leading journalists, a freelance reporter for TIME and an outspoken critic of the Sri Lankan government, was shot this morning as he drove to work in Colombo, his country's capital. He later died of his injuries.

The attack, by two gunmen on motorcycles in the middle of morning-rush-hour traffic, was brazen even by the standards of Sri Lanka. The country has suffered through more than 25 years of war between the government and a Tamil separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which pioneered the use of suicide bombers. Wickrematunge wasn't far from his home in Colombo South when he was approached sometime between 10 and 11 a.m. by the two gunmen, who blocked his car and shot him in the head and chest. He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he died shortly after 2 p.m. local time.

Wickrematunge, who was trained as a lawyer, started the *Sunday Leader* with his brother almost on a whim... it was especially frustrating for him to be prevented from running pictures or firsthand reporting from the war zones in northern Sri Lanka. [The government claims that the 25-year-old war is finally approaching an end](#)— but it has refused to allow reporters or photographers regular access to the war zones or to those areas where an estimated 230,000 people have been stranded amid the shelling.

Even more than the war, Wickrematunge's specialty at the *Leader* was no-holds-barred, occasionally salacious stories alleging corruption and self-dealing among the powerful. No matter who the ruling party was, all officials were his potential targets. The *Leader's* motto is "Unbowed and unafraid," and it's a good reflection of its editor's philosophy. Wickrematunge had worried over the past few days that he was being followed, but that had not diminished his enthusiasm for the next big story...

## The Lewinsky scandal

Note: This Summary from Wikipedia

The Lewinsky scandal was a political sex scandal emerging from a sexual relationship between United States President Bill Clinton and a then 22-year-old White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. The news of this extra-marital affair and the resulting investigation eventually led to the impeachment of President Clinton in 1998 by the U.S. House of Representatives and his subsequent acquittal on all impeachment charges of perjury and obstruction of justice in a 21-day Senate trial.[1]

In 1995, Monica Lewinsky, a graduate of Lewis & Clark College, was hired to work as an intern at the White House during Clinton's first term, and began a personal relationship with him, the details of which she later confided to her friend and Defense department co-worker Linda Tripp, who secretly recorded their telephone conversations.[2] When Tripp discovered in January 1998 that Lewinsky had signed an affidavit in the Paula Jones case denying a relationship with Clinton, she delivered the tapes to Kenneth Starr, the Independent Counsel who was investigating Clinton on other matters, including the Whitewater scandal, the White House FBI files controversy, and the White House travel office controversy. During the grand jury testimony Clinton's responses were guarded, and he argued, "It depends on what the meaning of the word is".[3]

Lewinsky confided in a coworker named Linda Tripp about her relationship with Clinton. Tripp convinced Lewinsky to save the gifts that Clinton had given her, and not to dry clean what would later be known as the "infamous blue dress".

News of the scandal first broke on January 17, 1998, on the Drudge Report website,[18] which reported that Newsweek editors were sitting on a story by investigative reporter Michael Isikoff exposing the affair. The story broke in the mainstream press on January 21 in The Washington Post. On January 26, President Clinton, standing with his wife, spoke at a White House press conference, and issued a forceful denial, which contained what would later become one of the best-known sound bites of his presidency: *"I want to say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me. I'm going to say this again: I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time; never. These allegations are false. And I need to go back to work for the American people. Thank you."*

Clinton admitted in taped grand jury testimony on August 17, 1998, that he had had an "improper physical relationship" with Lewinsky. That evening he gave a nationally televised statement admitting his relationship with Lewinsky which was "not appropriate".

### **TANK MAN PHOTO**

From the New York Times' photographers' blog: LENS

June 3, 2009, 12:01 am

Behind the Scenes: Tank Man of Tiananmen

By PATRICK WITTY

...Twenty years ago, on June 5, 1989, following weeks of huge protests in Beijing and a crackdown that resulted in the deaths of hundreds, a lone man stepped in front of a column of tanks rumbling past Tiananmen Square. The moment instantly became a symbol of the protests as well as a symbol against oppression worldwide — an anonymous act of defiance seared into our collective consciousness. "It all started with a man in a white shirt who walked into the street and raised his right hand no higher than a New Yorker hailing a taxi," James Barron wrote the following day in The New York Times. The picture appeared on the front page of this newspaper as well as in countless other publications around the world.

To this day, the identity and fate of the man in the picture remain unclear. A riveting documentary, "The Tank Man," by PBS Frontline in 2006 explored his fate. Yet still no one knows for certain who he is or what exactly happened to him. The image is largely blocked on the Internet in China. Despite its iconic status and historical significance elsewhere, most young people there do not recognize the photograph. There was not just one "tank man" photo. Four photographers captured the encounter that day from the Beijing Hotel, overlooking Changan Avenue (the Avenue of Eternal Peace), their lives forever linked by a single moment in time: Charlie Cole, Stuart Franklin, Jeff Widener, Arthur Tsang Hin Wah. Arthur Tsang Hin Wah of Reuters was beaten two nights earlier by students who mistook him for a spy. *Patrick Witty is the international picture editor at The Times.*

### **Country profile: Sri Lanka**

#### **BBC NEWS**

Lying off the southern tip of India, the tropical island of Sri Lanka has beguiled travellers for centuries with its palm-fringed beaches, diverse landscapes and historical monuments.

But the island has been scarred by a long and bitter civil war arising out of ethnic tensions between the majority Sinhalese and the Tamil minority in the northeast.

After more than 25 years of violence, the conflict appeared to be at an end - at least militarily - in May 2009, when government forces seized the last area controlled by Tamil Tiger rebels.

Known as "Serendip" to Arab geographers, the island fell under Portuguese and Dutch influence and finally came under British rule when it was called Ceylon.

#### NATION AT WAR

Army and Tamil separatists fought a long conflict involving air raids, roadside blasts, suicide bombings, land and sea battles

There is a long-established Tamil minority in the north and east. The British also brought in Tamil labourers to work the coffee and tea plantations in the central highlands, making the island a major tea producer.

But the majority Buddhist Sinhalese community resented what they saw as favouritism towards the mainly-Hindu Tamils under British administration.

The growth of a more assertive Sinhala nationalism after independence fanned the flames of ethnic division until civil war erupted in the 1980s between Tamils pressing for self-rule and the government. Most of the fighting took place in the north. But the conflict also penetrated the heart of Sri Lankan society with Tamil Tiger rebels carrying out devastating suicide bombings in Colombo in the 1990s. The violence killed more than 70,000 people, damaged the economy and harmed tourism in one of South Asia's potentially prosperous societies.

Full name: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Population: 20.2 million (UN, 2009)

Major languages: Sinhala, Tamil, English

Major religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity

President Mahinda Rajapaksa won a landslide victory in January 2010 in early elections which he called after he declared victory in a 25-year war with the Tamil Tiger separatists.

A Buddhist lawyer from the Sinhalese ethnic majority, Mr Rajapaksa draws the core of his support from rural Sinhalese voters whose rights he championed as labour minister in the 1990s.

...He promised to protect journalists and freedom of speech, but at least one prominent journalist was murdered and dozens have been beaten, arrested or forced to flee the country during his time in office. Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders says Sri Lanka is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists.

In late 2008, a grouping of international media freedom groups noted a deteriorating situation, marked by "murders, attacks, abductions, intimidation and harassment of the media".

Reporters Without Borders says the media come under pressure from the authorities, while the Tamil Tigers "allow no dissident voices" in the areas they control.