

barefoot workshops

MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST YOUTH WORKSHOP
"THIS IS HOME"

June 18th - 24th, 2006



The media has neglected to tell Mississippi's stories from Hurricane Katrina. In June of 2006 Barefoot Workshops with sponsors including Canon Photo, Canon Video, Apple, Bogen, Sennheiser, D&M Professional, Sandisk, the Mississippi Film Commission, and the Mississippi Department of Education, ran two simultaneous workshops with high-school kids from Bay St. Louis and Waveland, Mississippi. Using digital video cameras, digital photo cameras,

digital sound recording devices and desktop editing stations, students explored what happened during Katrina, how they coped with the devastation, and what life was like almost a year later.

Photographer Ron Blaylock of Jackson, Mississippi ran the photojournalism workshop and took the "new media" approach of mixing field sound recordings, still images, and non-linear editing to create short photo stories similar to online sites like Media Storm. The stories were filled with interviews with townspeople, ambient field sound, personal narration, music and moving photos. Blaylock said this, "These students had never used any of this equipment before, had never seen this software. It was amazing how quickly they took to it. All it takes is a spark and a little technical knowledge, and you have a whole generation of freelance journalists. Once students see the potential and the access that the internet gives them, they begin to see what a powerful voice they have."

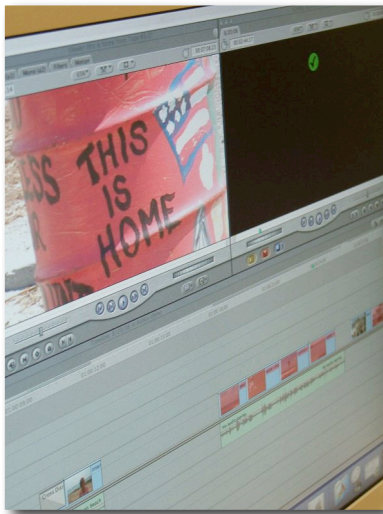


In the field, the photo students used Canon Rebels provided by Canon, Marantz field recorders provided by D&M Professional and hand microphones provided by Sennheiser. Editing was done using Final Cut Pro on Apple computers.

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Chandler Griffin of New York Workshops ran the video in the field, students used DV Video and tripods provided by Bogen Imaging. The video students also edited on Final Cut Pro with G5 towers provided by Apple. "As far as technology goes, these kids are light years ahead of anything my generation could even conceive of doing. It's amazing to think what they will be able to do in five years. It's amazing to see what they're doing now."

Their films ranged from 2 to 4 minutes and included interviews and visual "B-roll" to weave stories reflecting past thoughts on Katrina and how the coastal community is dealing with the aftermath today. Students used a variety of approaches to tell their stories. Some filmed themselves in a "video diary" style as if they simply turned the camera on and starting talking, others chose to write a narration to guide their visual story and a few depended on individuals in the community to weave their stories.



Both Blaylock and Griffin grew up in Mississippi and felt it was important to teach high-school students how to tell their stories for a mass audience. Griffin said, "If we want people to hear our stories in Mississippi... If we want people to know what's happening in our own backyards and the media fails to cover the stories, then we'll tell the stories ourselves. These students have access to the technology and who better to tell the public? We're giving the youth of Mississippi a voice through technology and letting them tell their own stories." Blaylock, who was living in New Orleans when Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and said this, "A major frustration I encountered after evacuating for Katrina was the lack of reliable information from news sources that knew the area. The best

information came from blog postings from locals, because they could give accurate, first hand accounts. This is the concept we are trying to teach: The most accurate news comes from those who are living it. Combining photography, video, commentary, and the ability to quickly post this online can provide incredibly accurate and timely news, whether it is from Mississippi or Mozambique."



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By the end of the week the 21 students were able to edit together 5 short photo stories and 8 short videos. They hope to stream the videos on various websites and educate the public with their personal stories.

Stay tuned to www.barefootworkshops.org so you can follow more work from the students.



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