

Remarks by Michael Livingston (Class of 2022)
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Raising of the Peace Flag, April 22, 2022 (Earth Day)

Last month a documentary filmmaker and journalist named Brent Renaud was shot dead while driving his car Northwest of Kyiv. He was filming for a documentary about forced migration and was focusing on Ukrainian citizens who had to flee their homes. He's one of five journalists who were killed in the first month of the invasion.

While I didn't know Brent personally, an old editor of mine did. So, when he told me he'd have to cancel a phone call with me because he was working to get Brent's assistant, who was badly injured during the shooting, back to the United States – I thought I completely understood the urgency until I began reading about Brent's work.

It made me realize that as we watch, listen or read about the horrors of war. The people bringing you that information - that are desperately trying to help you understand what is happening – are making sacrifices in the name of peace.

As we spend today reflecting on the goals of the peace through law movement, let's examine E.C. Warriner's blueprint and how it connects to the role of the journalist. Specifically, his first step - lose no opportunities to *teach* about the horrors of war.

It's people like Brent Renaud who are our teachers – the ones who are surrounded by conflict, not with a gun, but with a camera or a notebook.

A huge reason why the Vietnam War sparked a movement of peace advocates was because Americans could watch military abuses on their living room television. When you hear gunshots on the radio or read a story that makes you curl up in your chair, that's a lesson about the destruction of war. The journalist is the vehicle that brings them to us.

Of course, it's not always about reporting from the war zones. Independent journalists in nations that try to silence the free press are among the bravest people on earth in my opinion. We've heard stories about these truth seekers being killed or exiled by their governments.

You may remember on October 2 2018, Jamal Khashoggi (Ka-show-g-jee), a US-based journalist and critic of Saudi Arabia's government walked into the Saudi consulate in Istanbul and never walked out again. How about the six writers for the Russian Novaya Gazeta (*Na-voy-a Gaz-ee-et-a*) who were killed over the course of many years for their critique of their government.

These too are lessons about the horrors of war.

Journalists make sacrifices to write the first draft of history. But rather than making your experience like reading facts straight from a textbook, they try to put real people at the heart of their stories. A good journalist writes stories to be vessels for empathy.

I'm not asking you to put individual reporters on a pedestal. What I want is after you leave today, find a story that teaches you something about the horrors of war and use that story as fuel to make better decisions in your own lives.