

Photojournalist Lynsey Addario will be speaking on Tuesday, March 17th at Upper St. Clair High School as part of the Town Hall South speaker series.

Addario started her career in the 1990s with no formal training in photography, working first for the Buenos Aires Herald in Argentina and then for the Associated Press in New York City. While based in New York in the late 1990s, she made several trips to Cuba to document the effects of communism. She moved to India shortly afterwards, and traveled through India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, focusing on humanitarian and women's issues, where she began to photograph Afghanistan and Pakistan under the Taliban's rule before the 9/11 attacks.

She has worked extensively for the *New York Times*, as well as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *National Geographic*. Since 2000, Addario has covered conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Darfur, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2011, she was one of four *Times* journalists kidnapped in Libya and released a week later.

Her recent body of work includes covering the humanitarian crisis in Yemen for the *New York Times Magazine*, women fighters around the world for *National Geographic*, and maternal mortality in the U.S. and Somaliland for *National Geographic*. Her memoir, *It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life of Love and War*, was published in 2015 and was optioned for a movie by Warner Brothers. She published her first solo book of photographs in October 2018, titled *Of Love & War*.

Lynsey Addario answered some questions via email about her career and her life.

A. *How has photojournalism changed in the post-9/11 era?*

Q. The 9/11 era is sort of when I established myself as an international photojournalist. I was lucky, because at that time, there were many publications that had substantial budgets for foreign news assignments,

and would put freelance photographers like myself on assignment for weeks at a time. This was really the beginning of the War on Terror, and newspapers and magazines were hungry for information from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and on the roots of the attacks, so it was a fascinating time to work on the region.

*Q. What inspired you to take up photography when you had no previous training in it?*

A. I started photographing as a hobby and taught myself the basics of the camera through books and through my older sister Lisa, who did photography, and family friends. But I never anticipated it would ultimately end up as my profession, so never believed I had to dedicate my studies to photography. By the time I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in International Relations and Italian, I realized that my passion and interest was really in finding a way to use photography to tell stories, to travel the world, to learn about other countries and cultures. Rather than go back to school to formally learn how to do this, I decided to just move abroad to Argentina to study Spanish, and learn as I traveled. Photojournalism to me has a lot to do with instinct and curiosity and one's interaction with people, so I felt like traveling and trying to work with small newspapers was a better approach than learning in a classroom. So it went from there.

*Q. Do you ever feel burned out or overwhelmed by what you're taking pictures of?*

A. Yes, definitely. I think it's important for me to recognize when I get overwhelmed and when it's time for me to step back and either turn my camera to something else—not war-related, or difficult humanitarian/human rights abuses stories—and just give myself a mental break from the difficulty of what I witness and process psychologically. I realize this is a great luxury to be able to do this, as most of the people I photograph aren't able to just pull back and take a break.

*Q. How do you deal with the dangers associated with working in a war zone?*

A. Over the past 20 years of covering war, I have learned tactics to minimize danger and ways to manage my fear when I am in danger. These things are an integral part of my work. One of the main tactics is to hire local journalists or producers often referred to as fixers, and they can help us navigate stories, areas in a particular country, and danger. I speak with other journalists who have worked recently in a given area to get a sense for the situation on the ground, and try to have contingency plans when roads or stories are not accessible. A lot of this work has to do with contacts and doing proper research before setting out and making sure that our security information is always updated.

*Q. What did you use your MacArthur Fellowship for?*

A. I used my MacArthur primarily to start documenting maternal mortality around the world. The MacArthur was really the first time in my life and career where I had been handed money to work with no strings attached—I could decide the subject matter, and it wasn't for a specific assignment. I wanted to focus on an issue affecting women, and when I learned how many women were dying in childbirth around the world at that time—and moreover, just how many of those deaths were preventable with basic changes or investment—I felt like I needed to cover maternal mortality more. I first started with Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, and then worked from there.

Subscriptions to next year's Town Hall South series, an outreach of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Upper St. Clair, are available through [www.townhallsouth.org](http://www.townhallsouth.org). Next year's line-up includes veteran news anchor and journalist Dan Rather on October 6th; Kevin Surace, a Silicon Valley innovator and visionary, on November 10th; global adventurer, inspirational speaker, and host of Netflix's *The Kindness Diaries* Leon Logothetis on December 8th; diplomat, historian, and former TIME editor Richard Stengel, on February 2nd, 2021; and author and professor of animal science Dr. Temple Grandin, who will discuss her personal journey with autism, on March 16, 2021.

