

A picture's worth a thousand words of empowerment

A partnership between USC and a local arts group will support photography to promote social change.

Katelyn Johnson

Issue date: 10/2/07 **Section:** [News](#)

The Annenberg School for Communication and USC Center on Public Diplomacy partnered with professional photographers and artists from Venice Arts on Monday to launch the Institute for Photographic Empowerment, which will teach documentary and photography techniques.

"We want to encourage others to use visual mediums as a way to express their lives," said Larry Gross, director of the School of Communication.

The institute, funded by Annenberg grants and Venice Arts, will focus on providing assistance to projects involving child photographers in developing nations. Much of this work involves children with social challenges, economic injustice, HIV/AIDS and environmental problems, said Jim Hubbard, creative director of Venice Arts. "Venice Arts has pioneered photography by citizens to express their views and concerns, instead of citizens being viewed as an object by the media," Gross said.

Hubbard is the founder of Shooting Back, an organization in Washington, D.C., that gives homeless children the chance to take pictures of their own lives. Shooting Back was one of the first organizations to use photography as a medium to promote awareness about children in poverty.

"The overwhelming universal fact is that the kids unequivocally love it," Hubbard said. "They love when we are there and are disappointed when we leave with the cameras."

Hubbard said he hopes the institute will help promote individual projects on this subject matter.

"Because of the Annenberg School for Communication and the Center on Public Diplomacy and their connections, we think this is the right time and place to found this institution," he said.

Other co-founders of the institute include Lynn Warshafsky, executive director and founder of Venice Arts, and Neal Baer, executive producer of "Law & Order: SVU."

The institute will work with groups from around the world "to brainstorm, to bring their problems and solutions, and to organize a global center for the pursuit of this work," Hubbard said.

It will also offer online instruction for projects and hold conferences and seminars designed to teach people



Media Credit: Eric Wolfe | Daily Trojan

Say cheese | Jim Hubbard, a co-founder of the Institute for Photographic Empowerment, speaks during a press briefing Monday as fellow IPE co-founder and former Annenberg Dean Geoffrey Cowan listens. Hubbard's class, Visual Communication and Social Change, will be offered spring semester.

how to use photography to document their experiences.

Hubbard said the institution has already seen interest from people from across the world, including a woman who has worked with Haitian kids for 10 years and a USC alumnus who founded Youth in Focus, a photography organization for children, in Seattle.

"There is an interest in the social advocacy of this work," Warshafsky said. "People are asking us how to receive help with their projects."

Some students who attended the event expressed interest in photojournalism.

"I've always been a supporter of photographic journalism," said Carey Schwartz, a senior majoring in communication. "I'm curious to see what this program will do and to see the recent frontiers of photographic journalism."

Students can become involved with the institute this spring when Hubbard will teach Visual Communication and Social Change (COMM 499). The class will create photojournalism projects documenting their own lives.

Critics argue that time and money invested in projects like this one should be spent building houses for the poor and homeless, instead of letting them take pictures.

But supporters of the institute say by taking pictures that expose the problems, policy makers can be influenced to enact greater changes.

"Change has to begin with awareness, which is a critical part of our work," Baer said. "The information has to be out there before social change can occur."

Page 1 of 1

Article Tools

Share:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Blogger](#)
- [del.icio.us](#)
- [digg](#)
- [newsvine](#)

Subscribe:

- [My Yahoo!](#)
- [Google](#)

Be the first to comment on this story

- Name: (required)