

Tom Laffay**Filmmaker / Visual Journalist**

Based in Bogota, Colombia

Born 1989 Cleveland, OH, USA

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Education

Graduated 2011, The College of Charleston, cum laude

- BA in Political Science
- BA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies

Languages

- English
- Spanish

References

Ed Kashi

Photojournalist, filmmaker and educator

ed@edkashi.com

+1 917 558 6655

Julie Turkewitz

Journalist - New York Times

julie@nytimes.com

+1 301 928 5072

Jon Watts

Journalist - The Guardian

jon.watts@theguardian.com

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Professional Experience

Freelance Filmmaker / Photojournalist

April 2013-Present

Director, DP and visual journalist producing original documentary film, long form investigations and reporting for a range of media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) across Latin America and beyond.

TIME Magazine

November 2022

Directed, filmed and produced with TIME senior climate correspondent Aryn Baker and photojournalist Ed Kashi a documentary film on migrant laborers from Nepal facing heat related illness in the construction boom leading up to the Qatar 2022 World Cup.

Too Hot to Work: Qatar's World Cup Building Boom

<https://time.com/6233628/world-cup-climate-change-migrant-workers/>

PETRO Film- Guagua Productions / Long Count Films

September 2021 - August 2022

Director of Photography on feature length documentary film following Gustavo Petro's ascent to the Colombian presidency and the Colombia Humana political movement across the country directed by Sean Mattison and Produced by Trevor Martin.

Festival releases tbd

International Crisis Group

January 2022

Directed and filmed a documentary report with ICG senior analyst Bram Ebus on links between deforestation and armed conflict in Colombia's Caqueta region.

A Broken Canopy: Deforestation and Conflict in Colombia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2mtQCfYC34>

TED

October 2021

Directed, filmed and produced Nemonte Nenquimo (TIME 100) TED talk in her home village of Nemonpare, Ecuador. Nemonte Nenquimo is an Indigenous leader of the Waorani peoples, legendary hunter-harvesters of the south-central Ecuadorian Amazon. She is a founder of the Ceibo Alliance and Amazon Frontlines and a board member of Nia Tero.

https://www.ted.com/talks/nemonte_nenquimo_the_forest_is_our_teacher_it_s_time_to_respect_it?language=en

ARTE

May 2021

Co-Directed and filmed with Juan Camilo Cruz documentary reportage on coca producing communities under AGC paramilitary control in Colombia's Choco region.

The Peasants' Revolt

<https://www.arte.tv/en/videos/102727-000-A/arte-reportage/>

VICE World News**September 2021**

Self shooting director and investigator on documentary component of investigation into mercury trafficking in the Guiana Shield Region (Guyanan / Suriname). As part of a larger investigation coordinated by InfoAmazonia in collaboration with Bram Ebus and Gustavo Faleiros, the 30 min film was acquired by VICE Global News as part of new programming and has garnered over 6 million views.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyCq_Isr9O4

The New Yorker**January 2020**

Self shooting director of a short film about a Siona indigenous woman in Colombia's Amazon who is clearing landmines from her ancestral territory in hopes that her people may return. Part of a larger effort towards making a feature film, the New Yorker commissioned this short piece to bring awareness to issues facing the Amazon and the indigenous peoples who protect it.

[Awarded 2021 Online Journalism Awards Best Medium Format Documentary](#)

TIME Magazine**March 2020**

Filmed and directed video of TIME 100 winner, Amazon defender Nemonte Nenquimo in her home village of Nemonpare, Ecuador.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L42ZY_wmscM

Amazon Frontlines**March 2020**

Directed, produced and oversaw edit of series on indigenous female land defenders in the Amazon. Carried out production of two profiles in Waorani and Kofan sovereign territory before the project was interrupted by COVID-19.

Not yet public

PEHSU - Hurricane Health Film Series**April - June 2019**

Directed, produced, filmed and edited a series of narrative educational documentaries on health preparation for hurricane scenarios for the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units ([PEHSU](#)). Production of the series shot on location in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico and will be used throughout the entire US Southeast by clinicians to educate the public how to be prepared in terms of their healthcare needs, particularly women and children, in the inevitable event of a hurricane.

Currently in production

Global Focus on Cancer - Colombia Cancer Navigator Series**May 2019**

Directed, produced, filmed and edited a 16 video series for New York City based NGO [Global Focus on Cancer](#). The series is a guide for cancer patients in Colombia going through treatment, to help them navigate the treatment process as well as psychological challenges they will face. Produced in coordination with four health systems in Bogotá, Colombia, this novel project will play in waiting rooms and be available as a digital package that patients and clinicians will have access to.

Currently in editing

Medellin's Green Corredors - Pelican Pictures**May 2019**

Worked independently directing and filming interviews and visuals over five days about Medellin's world renowned green corridor project for the Ashden Award ceremony after the Medellin government won an international sustainability award.

Currently in editing

ARD German Television**April 2019**

Filmed interviews and visuals around the Venezuelan state crisis for national German Television.

New Media Advocacy Project: Building Resistance to Oil - Voices from Uganda**April 2019**

Worked as director of photography contracted by NMAP to work in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Shot a documentary film while traveling with a group of Congolese and Ugandan environmental activists through the Lake Region of Western Uganda to learn first hand about the impending Chinese led oil extraction that is just beginning to affect local communities.

<https://vimeo.com/338311358>

Unanimous - Independent documentary film directed by Sean Mattison**November 2018**

Worked as director of photography for this documentary film chronicling the grassroots activism and overturning of a Jim Crow era law in Louisiana where a person could be convicted of a capitol offense by a non unanimous jury, that is 10-2 or 11-1. Shot on location in New Orleans during the 2018 midterm elections.

Currently in editing.

New Media Advocacy Project: The Legacy of Oil in California**October 2018**

Worked as director of photography contracted by NMAP to work in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Shot a documentary film while travelling with a group of Congolese and Ugandan environmental activists from San Francisco, through the Central Valley and to Los Angeles to learn first hand about the health effects of oil exploitation on local communities, local activism in resistance as well as sustainable alternatives for energy.

<https://vimeo.com/328022698>

New Media Advocacy Project: The Legacy of Oil in Ecuador**August 2018**

Worked as director of photography contracted by NMAP to work in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Shot a documentary film while travelling with a group of Congolese and Ugandan environmental activists visiting the Ecuadorian Amazon to learn first hand about the long term effects of oil exploitation and indigenous resistance to oil companies.

<https://vimeo.com/328720634>

BBC - Puerto Rico Bets on a Coffee Comeback**September 2018**

Photo essay on Puerto Rico's effort to reestablish their coffee industry in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45552959>

Universidad de Los Andes - Historias Para Lo Que Viene

May 2018 - current

Shot still portraits and video of participants in a public history project involving communities in and around Bogotá, Colombia reconciling with the country's conflict and the displacement of communities.

The Atlantic / El Espectador: Documentary film - Nos están matando (They're killing us)

April 2018

Directed, filmed and edited this documentary film on the assassinations of civil society leaders in Colombia, specifically on indigenous and Afro Colombian ethnic groups in the North Cauca region over the course of 2017/2018. Simultaneously published with *The Atlantic* as well as Colombian national newspaper *El Espectador*. Led a tour of the film while engaging in advocacy in Washington DC holding a screening on Capitol Hill with the office of Jim McGovern as well as public events. Also screened at The University of Pennsylvania, Rutgers, The New School and CUNY.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/561194/colombia-social-leaders/>

National Geographic: Documentary film - With Every Breath

February - March 2018

Worked as a producer and cinematographer with Ed Kashi to produce a film highlighting the realities of rural populations burdened by Chronic Kidney Disease of unknown origin. The work was supported by a National Geographic Explorers Award.

Winner of the Tutti Nello Stesso film festival Audience Award for Best Doc

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2018/08/kidney-disease-peru-dying-unknown-causes/>

New Media Advocacy Project: The Inter American Commission on Human Rights

October 2017

Worked as director of photography to produce a film on the IACHR with NMAP. Shoot locations included Montevideo, Uruguay and Buenos Aires, Argentina and featured interviews with lawyers and victims of human rights abuses as well as filming for the first time inside an IACHR deliberation.

The Guardian

September 2017

Was commissioned to produce a photo essay on violence against indigenous communities in Cauca Colombia. Worked with Jon Watts driving, translating and organizing logistics in addition to producing a photo essay of 15 images for the Guardian's Defenders online series. The story also ran in The Observer as a full spread.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2017/nov/01/colombias-land-battles-shatter-the-peace-in-cauca-valley-in-pictures>

New Media Advocacy Project : The Legacy of Oil in the Niger Delta

August 2017

Worked as director of photography contracted by NMAP to work in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Shot a documentary film while travelling with a group of Congolese and Ugandan environmental activists visiting the Niger Delta to learn first hand about the long term effects of oil exploitation.

DEFENDER - CAJAR

March 2017 -

In collaboration with Colombian human rights lawyer collective, Colectivo Alvaro Jose Restrepo (CAJAR), created photographic profiles of three human rights defenders under death threat where they work in opposition to transnational extractive industries in different regions of Colombia. The work is used to raise the national profile of

these defenders and is being exhibited in Bogota, Colombia at the Centro Cultural Casa Bolivar between September 12 - October 6.

<https://www.tomlaffay.com/defender>

El Espectador - Colombian Newspaper

December 2016

Photographed story on the Yuliana Samboni case for the the first print issue of 2017 as well as an online gallery in Colombia's largest newspaper.

<http://colombia2020.elespectador.com/pais/viaje-la-tierra-y-al-alma-de-la-familia-samboni>

<http://colombia2020.elespectador.com/territorio/galeria-siguiendo-los-pasos-de-yuliana-en-su-pueblo-natal-bolivar-cauca>

La Isla Network (Public Health / Labor Rights NGO)

January 2017 –

current

Communications consultant and media producer contracted to document and provide communications support for the WE Program (Worker Health and Efficiency) in tandem with medical research groups and La Isla Network in El Salvador. Also work in covering global research effort into the epidemic of Chronic Kidney Disease of unknown etiology (CKDu) throughout the US, Latin America and South Asia.

New Media Advocacy Project : *Words That Kill*

July 2016

Worked as director of photography contracted by NMAP for a series of 4 short documentary films about human rights defenders under threat and suffering a defamation campaign by the Colombian government and paramilitary forces. Assignment was over an 8 day period in multiple cities in Colombia.

<https://vimeo.com/nmap/wordsthatkill/video/182113659>

Independent Documentary Film on CKDu in Sri Lanka

June - July 2016

Produced, filmed and edited the short documentary film on the rates of Chronic Kidney Disease of unknown etiology in Sri Lanka's North Central district and the local research effort coming together to address it.

Accompanied photojournalist Ed Kashi for two weeks while he conducted a sole photography project on the same issue. Editing film for La Isla Network to promote their continued research of CKDu.

Work in progress.

Amnesty International

June 2016

Conducted interviews, shot video and still photographs during an 18 day solo assignment in conjunction with an ongoing Amnesty International investigation on land rights issues in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region of Nicaragua. Work was commissioned to provide visual investigative support to a full report by AI which should be published in January of 2017.

Al Jazeera

March 2016

Fixer in El Salvador. Photo gallery commissioned on WE Program health initiative being carried out in El Salvador for May 2016 publication.

[http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2016/06/el-salvador-sick-sugarcane-workers-160608143132976.htm](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2016/06/el-salvador-sick-sugarcane-workers-160608143132976.html)
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PASE

March 2016

Directed, filmed and edited a short documentary film about the work of PASE, (Profesionales para la Auditoría Social y Empresarial) a Nicaraguan human rights, legal organization working to secure legal rights for agricultural workers suffering injuries or disease related to their work.

The Fixers “Stories from a Greater Cleveland”**February 2016**

Participated as one of three local, Cleveland, OH filmmakers in directing and filming a short documentary film on issues associated with public transit in underserved sectors of the city of Cleveland. The project, headed by Cleveland artist Kate Sopko, part of an artistic response to the Republican National Convention coming to Cleveland where citizens wish to express the challenges the city faces to politicians.

<http://www.thefixerscleveland.com/>

Independent film on CKDu in India *Hidden Under the Indian Sun***January – February 2016**

Produced, filmed and edited the short documentary film *Hidden Under the Indian Sun* on the rates of Chronic Kidney Disease of unknown etiology in Andhra Pradesh and the global research effort coming together to address it, in India with partner Ed Kashi over a one month period.

Published on The Atlantic

<https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/514208/chronic-kidney-disease-of-unknown-origin/>

<http://www.tomlaffay.com/hidden-under-the-indian-sun/>

Solidaridad Network (Labor Rights NGO)**February 2015 – 2017**

Communications consultant and media producer contracted to document and provide communications support for the WE Program (Worker Health and Efficiency) in tandem with medical research groups and La Isla Network in El Salvador. Also work consulting local Nicaraguan based human rights and public health organizations in communications strategies and producing original documentary film and photography content associated with their work.

www.weprogram.org / www.solidaridadnetwork.org

La Isla Foundation (Public Health and Human Rights NGO)**August 2014 – February 2015**

Manage the communications department for La Isla Foundation coordinating media attention with international journalists and document the CKDu (Chronic Kidney Disease of non-traditional causes) epidemic from a human rights and public health perspective in Nicaragua and El Salvador by producing original film and photography. Also manage LIF website, social media, internal communications, presentations, events and produce original media content. Also was instrumental in making the transition from a Nicaragua based foundation into an international network of professionals working together around the CKDu issue.

www.laislafoundation.org

Documentary and Multimedia Journalism Clients

Pulsera Project**October 2015**

Filmed video of US / Nicaragua based NGO's social impact and educational initiatives and artisan production for educational video purposes.

(Video not yet public)

Fairfood International**September 2015**

Filmed and edited video interviews with agricultural workers in El Salvador about workers rights, organization, and health issues for Holland based labor rights organization. Produced for a campaign directed towards sugar buying companies to hold producers to certain labor rights standards.

(Video not yet public)

Ingemann**May – September 2015**

Wrote, directed, filmed and edited a short video for Nicaraguan based, Danish Cacao and Honey producer Ingemann Cacao division's marketing needs by documenting the process of specialty cacao production from the trees on the farms in the Central American mountains, to fermentation process to the drying and packaging. (Video not yet public)

Café Nor

November 2014 - Present

Directed, filmed and edited a short video for Danish / Nicaraguan owned Café Nor's marketing needs to expand into new markets in Europe, the USA and Asia. Produced versions of the video in Spanish, English and Chinese. Additionally have worked as marketing consultant for the company.
<https://vimeo.com/119857072>

Chef's Collaborative

October 2014

Filmed over 20 interviews, speakers and event footage of the 2014 Summit in Boulder, Colorado for Chef's Collaborative marketing and social media needs.

Green Triangle

June 2014

Wrote, directed, filmed and edited a short video on Green Triangle's urban permaculture initiatives in Cleveland, Ohio as the base of a Kickstarter crowd funding campaign, which successfully raised over \$5,000 for scholarships for low-income students to participate in their Permaculture Design Course.

Ed Kashi / Talking Eyes Productions / National Geographic

April – May 2014

Filmed interviews transcribed and translated interviews from Spanish to English for the short documentary film *Under Cane* about the CKDu epidemic affecting sugarcane-producing communities in Nicaragua. Film published by National Geographic.
<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/news/150129-news-under-cane-chronic-kidney-disease-vin>

Chefs Collaborative

November 2013

Filmed 25 on site interviews, 15 speakers and food related events over three days during the Chefs Collaborative National Food Summit held in Charleston, SC.

Lowcountry Local First

July 2013

Wrote, directed, filmed and edited a short video on an LLF's Incubator Farm. The video is used at regional food conferences to explain local food initiatives in the Lowcountry of South Carolina. (<https://vimeo.com/73345422>)

Affected Films

January 2013

Worked as cameraman on final documentary shoot for Bananaland on location in Ecuador.
(<http://www.bananalandmovie.org>)

The Pulsera Project

August 2012

Wrote, directed, filmed and edited a short documentary piece on a "day in the life" of a typical high school student in Nicaragua for the Pulsera Project's educational curriculum.
(<https://vimeo.com/54750746>)

CO2Bambu

September 2012

Wrote, directed, filmed and edited a video on disaster mitigation engineering for CO2 Bambu, a Nicaraguan-based builder of low carbon footprint bamboo-based homes.
(<https://vimeo.com/45346528>)

Kelly Whalen – Documentary Producer

November 2011

Conducted interviews and filmed the women's organization, Xochilt Acalt in rural Nicaragua in tandem with the book "In Justice and Health."

(<https://vimeo.com/40159588>)

La Isla Foundation (Public Health and Human Rights NGO, Nicaragua)

Oct. 2011-Sept. 2013

Wrote, filmed and edited short documentary film pieces highlighting the CKDu epidemic among sugarcane workers in Western Nicaragua. Trained locals in video production and editing and organized production teams with locals. Used film pieces as educational tools in universities in the US, Central and South America.

(Videos on LIF site: <http://laislafoundation.org/media/videos/>)

Interviewed and recorded testimonies of human rights abuse victims and contributed to a multimedia human rights report produced by La Isla Foundation legal staff.

(<http://laislafoundation.org/epidemic/anatomy-riot-page/>)

"A Cycle of Death" video published on UpsideDownWorld.org about the CKDu epidemic among sugarcane workers in NW Nicaragua.

(<http://upside-down-world.org/main/nicaragua-archives-62/3402-a-cycle-of-death-inside-nicaraguas-sugar-cane-fields>)

Filmed b-roll of sugarcane workers in the field and filmed a workers health clinic for NBC.

Worked as fixer for NBC and Telemundo during production of news stories on the CKDu epidemic in Nicaragua

Interpreted and assisted photojournalist Ed Kashi on assignment on CKDu epidemic in Nicaragua

"This Epidemic is a Symptom" Photo Essay published on Photo Philanthropy's website

(<http://photophilanthropy.org/gallery-posts/this-epidemic-is-a-symptom/>)

The College of Charleston

August 2011

Wrote, filmed and edited a video on the College of Charleston's Office of Sustainability initiatives which was published on the university's website for current and prospective students.

(<http://sustainability.cofc.edu/about-the-office/index.php>)

Current Personal Projects:

DEFENDER

Is a personal effort to visualize the work of environmental and human rights defenders in Colombia who are being threatened and killed for their work.

(<https://www.tomlaffay.com/defender>)

Independent Documentary Film *Nos están matando (They're killing us)*

2017 -

Work in progress documenting the violence against Afrodescendent and indigenous community leaders in the department of Cauca, Colombia.

<https://www.tomlaffay.com/theyre-killing-us/>

Honors:

- Spoke at the University of South Carolina's Center for Nutrition and Health Disparities on the issue of food access in coastal South Carolina in Fall of 2011 along with presenting my short film *America Street*.
- Spoke and screened films at University of South Carolina, Northwestern University and Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Quito, Ecuador) with LIF President Jason Glaser on the issue of the CKDu Epidemic.
- Won 2013 Jury's Pick for Best Documentary at the Charleston International Film Festival for *SOLO LA CAÑA* (13 min) documentary on CKDu epidemic affecting Nicaraguan sugarcane workers.
- Invited to speak at the Charite University in Berlin during a Public Health "Summer School" conference on the CKDu epidemic affecting sugarcane producing communities in Central America.
- Contributed footage and translations on Ed Kashi's short film *Under Cane*, published by National Geographic.

<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/news/150129-news-under-cane-chronic-kidney-disease-vin>

- Video installations exhibited at the Melkweg Gallery in Amsterdam alongside portraiture by National Geographic contributing photojournalist, Ed Kashi <https://vimeo.com/135325698>
- Photography on the CKDu epidemic in Nicaragua displayed at the Darkroom exhibition in Boston, MA as part of the 'FACING AN EPIDEMIC' project.
- Invited to speak to Alma Mater, College of Charleston in October 2016 about personal work in a campus wide event hosted by the Latin American Studies department as they make human rights a central theme of their curriculum.
- Recipient of a National Geographic Explorer grant to investigate and document CKDu in Northwestern Peru in 2018.
- DEFENDER project exhibited at the Centro Cultural casa Bolivar in Bogota, Colombia as a multimedia exhibition featuring photographs and audio testimony. The exhibition ran for one month.
- DEFENDER shown in video format at the UN in Geneva in November, 2017.
- DEFENDER featured in an exhibition at the Cleveland Print Room in Cleveland, Ohio in January 2018.
- Invited to present *Nos están matando (They're killing us)* on Capitol Hill in September 2018 by the office of Congressman Jim McGovern in coordination with WOLA as part of a human rights delegation organized around the film to engage US politicians on the issue of violence against Colombian civil society leaders.
- Recipient of a *Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting Grant* for a documentary investigation into mercury trafficking in the Guiana Shield Region of South America, 2019
- Recipient of the inaugural *Andrew Berends Fellowship* for first time feature documentary filmmaker, 2020.

- [Awarded 2021 Online Journalism Awards Best Medium Format Documentary](#) for short film *SIONA: Amazon's Defenders Under Threat* published by *The New Yorker*