



**BRIEFING: Monday, October 1, 2007**

USC Annenberg School for Communication and Venice Arts' Launch Innovative

**INSTITUTE FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC EMPOWERMENT**

[www.joinipe.org](http://www.joinipe.org)

**What:** Press briefing on the launch of the *Institute for Photographic Empowerment*, a joint project of the USC Annenberg School for Communication's Center on Communication Leadership, its Center on Public Diplomacy and Venice Arts, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit youth media arts organization.

Photographic empowerment is a growing worldwide movement. It teaches documentary photography to people who have traditionally not had a voice—particularly poor children and those in the developing world—so that they can tell their stories and those of their communities photographically, resulting in images that speak loudly and directly in a remarkably candid way.

This briefing offers examples of photographic empowerment projects from around the world and previews Venice Arts' *The House Is Small But The Welcome Is Big*: Photos by Mozambican children orphaned by AIDS, opening in Los Angeles in November.

**Who:** **Geoffrey Cowan**, Institute for Photographic Empowerment co-founder; director, Center for Communication Leadership; USC University Professor; holder of the Annenberg Family Chair in Communication Leadership; and Dean Emeritus of the USC Annenberg School for Communication.

**Josh Fouts**, Principal Investigator and director, Institute for Photographic Empowerment; director, USC Center on Public Diplomacy; founder and director, Public Diplomacy in Virtual Worlds.

**Lynn Warshafsky**, Institute for Photographic Empowerment co-founder; Principal Investigator and director, Institute for Photographic Empowerment; co-founder and executive director, Venice Arts; Fellow, USC Annenberg.

**Neal Baer, M.D.**, Institute for Photographic Empowerment co-founder; award-winning television writer and producer, currently the executive producer and show runner for *Law and Order: SVU*; expert in the intersection between health, social issues, and media; Venice Arts' board member.

**Jim Hubbard**, Institute for Photographic Empowerment co-founder; acclaimed documentary photographer considered one of the pioneers in the field of photographic empowerment; founder of the internationally acclaimed *Shooting Back*; creative director, Venice Arts; Fellow, USC Annenberg.

**Larry Gross**, professor of communication and director, USC Annenberg's School of Communication, widely published expert on visual communication and culture, art and communication.

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**When:** Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup>; light breakfast 8:30–9:30; briefing 9:30–10:30

**Where:** USC Annenberg School for Communication, Room 207, 3502 Watt Way, Los Angeles, CA 90089. Parking: Park in Structure A, Vermont Avenue entrance (Gate 6). Credentialed media receive complimentary parking.

**RSVP:** [www.joinipe.org](http://www.joinipe.org)

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**\*Media packet and print quality images available online at [www.joinipe.org/press](http://www.joinipe.org/press)\***

**Background:** The Institute for Photographic Empowerment is the first such Institute of its kind in the world. It will support a virtual center, annual conferences, and academic courses and research related to “participant–produced” documentary photography and film projects. The Institute will serve as a resource for people from around the world—photographers, filmmakers, academics, researchers, and project participants—to share best practices, learn from one another, and develop this important and burgeoning field. In conjunction with USC’s Center for Public Diplomacy, IPE will link policymakers with the photographers’ work to give traditionally marginalized and underrepresented communities a direct way of communicating about their struggles and accomplishments.

According to Geoffrey Cowan, “A social phenomenon is emerging in countless communities and countries that we think deserves to be celebrated, replicated, studied and identified. The Institute combines the resources, energies, and contacts of two important institutions: Venice Arts and the USC Annenberg School for Communication. Venice Arts has compiled a remarkable record in the United States and the world—from helping the homeless to document their lives to giving voice to women in Africa who are living with HIV. At USC Annenberg, scholars are studying the impact of these images on communities and individuals. We also have an intense interest in the ability of still and full motion photography to contribute to public diplomacy and to make it possible for people to gain leadership roles in their own communities.”

Lynn Warshafsky adds, “This is an extraordinary opportunity to develop a growing field by bringing a cross–section of people together in practice, study, and research. More importantly, it provides new opportunities for those of us who have been working in communities for many years to better advocate for social change and to support those who tend to be the most voiceless amongst us by lifting up their powerful visual stories for the world to see.”

**Background on the Center on Communication Leadership:** The USC Annenberg School for Communication’s Center on Communication leadership organizes courses, programs, seminars and symposia for scholars, students and professionals to prepare the next generation of leaders for a rapidly changing media environment. Directed by Geoffrey Cowan, University Professor and holder of the Annenberg Family Chair in Communication Leadership, the Center sponsors research, projects and programmatic activities. Areas of inquiry include Politics and the Press, Public Diplomacy, Children’s Media, The Future of News, The Constitution and the Press and Photographic Empowerment.

**Background on Venice Arts** Venice Arts runs innovative programs in documentary photography, filmmaking, and digital media/arts, primarily targeting low–income youth in the Los Angeles area. Since 1998, Venice Arts’ has designed and implemented regional, national, and international participant–produced photo documentary projects with adults and children. Since its inception 15 years ago, Venice Arts has come to be recognized as an Exemplary Arts Organization and has been the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions for its unique Media Art Mentoring programs and its innovative integration of technology into arts learning.

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