



# VULTURE ON THE SCENE!

## SORRY

July 27, 1993. Kevin drove his red Nissan pickup truck to the Braamfontein Spruit River and backed it up to a tree. He attached a hose to the exhaust pipe, ran the hose into his passenger's side window, got into the cab, and lay down using his knapsack. Earlier, Kevin wrote: "I am depressed... without phone... money for rent... money for child support... money for debts... money!!!... I am haunted by the vivid memories of killings and corpses and anger and pain... of starving or wounded children, of trigger-happy madmen, often police, of killer executioners... I have gone to join Ken [late photographer] if I am that lucky."

Underneath that knapsack was another note: "I'm really, really sorry."



The pain of life overrides the joy to the point that joy does not exist."

Kevin committed suicide.

One morning in May 1993.

Nancy Buirski was working as the foreign picture editor at the New York Times. She was looking for a photo to illustrate a story about Sudan for the next day's paper. She phoned Marinovich in South Africa. Marinovich referred her to colleague Kevin Carter who had just returned from Sudan. Buirski convinced Kevin to send her some pictures via the Associated Press in Johannesburg.

"When the picture did arrive, my hands just shook. It came over the machine and it came out of my hands and I thought... Oh my god this is incredible," Buirski said. She took the photograph to photo editor Nancy Lee, who was preparing to attend the daily page-one meeting.

The paper decided to play the photo on pagethree with the Foreign Report.

The New York Times ran it for the first time on March 26, 1993 as the "metaphor for Africa's despair".

The next morning, recalled Buirski, "we got many calls about whether or not the photographer had helped the child."

Practically overnight hundreds of people contacted the newspaper to ask whether the child had survived, leading the newspaper to run an unusual special editor's note.

A picture last Friday with an article about Sudan showed a little Sudanese girl who had collapsed from hunger on the trail to a feeding centre in Ayod. A vulture lurked behind her. Many readers have asked about the fate of the girl. The photographer reports that she recovered enough to resume her trek after the vulture was chased away. It is

not known whether she reached the centre.

Because of this, Kevin was bombarded with questions about why he did not help the girl, and only used her to take a photograph. The St Petersburg Times in Florida said this of Carter: "The man adjusting his lens to take just the right frame of her suffering, might just as well be a predator, another vulture on the scene."

This picture won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography. Three months after receiving the price, Kevin committed suicide.

Filmmaker Dan Krauss said, "In his famous picture of the vulture stalking the Sudanese girl, I began to see the embodiment of his troubled psyche. I believe Kevin did, too. In the starving child, he saw Africa's suffering; in the preying vulture, he saw

his own face."

"It is a photograph of a vulture praying on suffering and Kevin saw himself in that same role, that he was praying on suffering," Krauss said.

"I don't think enough people are apathetic with the experience of journalists. In fact it's usually the opposite, most people are angry, or vitriolic, or completely unsympathetic with journalists and the decisions that journalists make."

In 1994, Kevin said in NHK Television Interview, "It may be difficult for people to understand, but as a photojournalist my first instinct was to make the photograph. As soon as that job was done and the child moved on... I felt completely devastated. I think I tried to pray... I tried to talk to god, to assure him if he got me out of this place... I would always... I

would change my life..."

Kevin often expressed regret that he had not done anything to help the girl, even though there was not much that he could have done, in all actuality. Besides, he was working in a time when photojournalists were told not to touch famine victims for fear of spreading disease.

However, the question -- whether journalists should be witnesses or participants -- is still being asked.

The photograph continues to spark debates among journalists. At the same time, it endures as an indelible symbol of the famine and suffering and as a call to action to the rest of the world.

If it weren't for that photo, one of his colleagues notes, "we wouldn't know how to spell Sudan."

## THE BANG BANG CLUB



KEN OOSTERBROEK



JOAO SILVA



KEVIN CARTER



GREG MARINOVICH

This year South Africa celebrates twenty years of democracy since Nelson Mandela's election in 1994. However, the transition didn't take place in one day.

From 1991 to 1994 violence dominated the country. While most of the media based their articles on police reports, there were four young South African photojournalists who had tried to awaken the world to the gruesome reality. They became known as the Bang Bang Club.

Kevin Carter, Greg Marinovich, Ken Oosterbroek and Joao Silva covered violence in townships -- urban areas that, until the end of Apartheid, were reserved for non-whites.

They were first named the Bang Bang Paparazzi by a local lifestyle magazine. Joao Silva and Greg Marinovich were

offended and persuaded the editor to change into the Bang Bang Club.

The name comes from the culture itself; township residents spoke to the photographers about the "bang-bang" referring to the sound of gunfire. It was also a colloquialism used by conflict photographers.

Six days after Kevin won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize, Ken was shot and killed while covering violence in South Africa.

Beside him were Silva and Greg, who was also shot and injured. As his colleagues were photographing the unrest, Kevin was absent due to an interview about his Pulitzer winning.

After the death of Kevin and Ken, Greg and Silva were posted around the world as war photojournalists. Silva lost his legs in a landmine in

Afghanistan. Greg too suffered four injuries. In 2000, the two co-authored "The Bang Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War", a novel based on their experiences as a Bang Bang Club member, even if it was an informal group. In 2010, a movie called 'The Bang Bang Club' was released based on the book.

James Nachtwey, who spent time side by side with members of the Bang Bang Club unfortunately witnessing the death of Ken in the process, identified with the club's singular devotion. "They put themselves in face of danger, were arrested numerous times, but never quit. They literally were willing to sacrifice themselves for what they believed in."

Source: travisspratt.com; riemansansfrontiere.wordpress.com



Kevin remolded as RJ nicknamed David.

ALL PHOTOS: COLLECTED