

## **Melissa Baumann Siebert**

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### **Work Experience:**

**2007-present: Journalist/editor/freelance writer/scriptwriter/author** – For the past twelve years, I have been freelancing for various South African magazines and newspapers (eg *Wild*, *Getaway*, *Africa Geographic*, *Heritage*, *The Sunday Independent*), writing on travel, culture, wildlife/conservation, music and different social issues. I have edited/proofed several non-fiction books for local publishers and have periodically edited case studies for the Peace and Dialogue Platform, an online project promoting best practice in peace processes around the world. As a script editor/consultant, I have worked with Boondogle Films in Cape Town and privately with clients. I published my first novel, *Garden of Dreams*, which deals with child trafficking in India and Nepal, with Penguin SA in June 2014. I am currently working on my second novel, as well as a memoir.

**2007-2009: Lecturer, Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town** – I taught print journalism, with specialisations in peace journalism, human rights journalism and narrative journalism/creative non-fiction, at the undergrad and honours levels. I also lectured in media studies.

**2006-2007: Consultant/researcher** -- worked on contract for a variety of non-profit foundations on reports/papers related to peace processes around the world.

**2005: Film Series Coordinator, Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA** – responsible for selecting, screening and introducing human rights-related films for the Center's ongoing program.

**2000-2007: Writer/Editor/Researcher/Media Trainer/Consultant** – my former husband, Hannes Siebert, and I were contracted by several organisations (Center for War, Peace and the News Media, New York; Academy for Educational Development, Washington; USAID's Conflict Management and Mitigation unit; the Berghof Foundation) to train and produce on a variety of media initiatives in the Balkans, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Middle East and the United States. These projects ranged from facilitating media co-productions between journalists from the West and the Islamic world, to training journalists in Sri Lanka in covering conflict and their fledgling peace process, to helping produce joint television and radio series between formerly warring ethnic groups in Bosnia and Macedonia.

**1993-present: Co-Director, Media Peace Centre (MPC)** – founder and co-director of the non-profit MPC, an organisation based in Cape Town, South Africa and the Boston area which develops media projects for use worldwide in conflict transformation/resolution. I have served as a producer, writer, editor, researcher and trainer on a variety of projects in print and broadcast (tv) media. MPC projects and training (workshops for journalists on covering conflict more constructively) have been carried out in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the U.S.

**1999-2001: Guest Editor/Co-Editor, The Rhodes Journalism Review** – chief editor on certain issues of the *Review*, an internationally respected professional media journal published by Rhodes University (Grahamstown, South Africa).

**1993-2000: Head Scriptwriter/Associate Producer, Ubuntu TV and Film Productions, Cape Town, South Africa** – for Ubuntu, the production company that my former husband and I founded, I scripted and associate produced on more than 40 documentary and current affairs television programmes, broadcast on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and other networks. These included, among others, “Peace Café,” the first black-driven youth series in South Africa, and “Africa: Search for Common Ground,” a 26-part series for tv and radio on Africans handling conflict on the continent.

**1991-1995; 1997-1999: Editor, Track Two, Cape Town, South Africa** – I commissioned, edited, wrote articles, photo/graphics edited, and worked on layout/design with the DTP person for South Africa’s primary quarterly conflict resolution journal, published by the Centre for Conflict Resolution at the University of Cape Town and, certain issues, jointly with the Media Peace Centre.

**1989-1990: Associate Editor, Cross Times magazine, Cape Town, South Africa** – commissioned, edited and wrote for this monthly magazine promoting dialogue between antagonists in the struggle against apartheid. I was in charge of special theme issues, such as editions on rural struggles/land reform and Namibia’s transition to independence, and its implications for South Africa.

**1988-1989: Freelance Writer/Media Trainer, Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa** – trained young black journalists on intern programmes at ‘alternative newspapers’, the *Weekly Mail* (now the *Mail and Guardian*, Johannesburg) and *South* (Cape Town), as well as for South Africa’s national anti-censorship campaign, Save the Press. I also wrote for those papers, as well as for other South African publications (*Leadership*, *New Nation*, *Southern African Review of Books*), and wrote a number of pieces for *MERIP* (the journal of the Middle East Research and Information Project, based in Washington) on the first Palestinian intifada, based on trips to Israel and the Occupied Territories made in 1988-89.

**1987-1988: Research and Editorial Assistant to Joseph Nye, Kennedy School of Government, Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, USA** – did research and wrote abstracts for

Nye, then director of CSIA and later dean of the school, in the fields of strategic studies/international relations.

**1984-1986: Visiting Lecturer, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Writing Department, American University in Cairo, Cairo, Egypt** – initially worked as a writing instructor (1984-85), teaching in the undergraduate program; in 1985-86, I moved over to the journalism department and taught a variety of courses – basic reporting and writing, editing and layout/design, and a graduate feature writing course, and assisted on the campus newspaper.

**1982-1984: Writing Instructor, Harvard University** – taught/designed expository writing classes, beginning and advanced; also ran fiction writing workshops.

**1980-1982: Associate Editor, Harper's magazine, New York City** – commissioned and edited for 'the well' of the magazine, its main section/cover story each month; also assisted the fiction editor, Joel Agee.

**1978-1980: Managing Editor, The Boston Monthly, Boston MA, USA** – commissioned, edited and wrote for this monthly cultural journal.

**1977-1978: General Assignment Reporter and Feature Writer, the Commercial Appeal (Memphis, TN) and the Jackson Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, MS)** – based in Mississippi, first in Columbus for the *Appeal* and then in Jackson for the *Clarion-Ledger*, I wrote stories on everything from the fate of the Tennessee-Tombigbee waterway to sheriffs uncovering stills in the woods to old blues musicians lamenting how the record companies up north abused them. I ran the bureau in Columbus and worked in the main newsroom in Jackson.

**1976-1977: General Assignment Reporter and Feature Writer, the Beverly Times (Beverly, MA)** – wrote mainly education and feature stories for a local newspaper.

## **Education:**

**Concord Academy**, Concord, MA, USA – 1971

**Smith College**, Northampton, MA – 1971-1972

**Stanford University**, Stanford, CA – 1975, BA English literature -- 1975

**Columbia University (Graduate School of Journalism)**, New York – MSJ, 1976

**London School of Economics and Political Science** (research scholar, international relations) -- 1986-87

**University of Cape Town (MA Creative Writing Programme)** -- 2009-2011

**Languages:** English, with some French, Arabic, Spanish and Afrikaans

**Awards:**

1976: Scholarship grant to attend the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, NYC

1983: Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching, Harvard University

1985: Fulbright Teaching Award (declined)

1986: Friends of LSE Award -- scholarship to the London School of Economics

2005: Open Society and Faculty of Humanities Grant Awards, University of Cape Town

2010: MA Creative Writing Programme Grant, University of Cape Town

2011: Pica Magazine Award (second place), Feature Writer of the Year

**References:** available upon request.