

## **Unnatural Borders, Open Wounds: The human landscape of Pakistan**

Our project explores the unraveling state of Pakistan—through the lives of its myriad ethnic and tribal groups, and its vast population of refugees and displaced peoples. We seek to examine the multi-faceted nature of Pakistani national identity, to probe some of the underlying causes of the country's instability, and to explore the potential for greater peace and security for the people of this region. We will examine the contested borders that are the collapsing frame of this nation, through vignettes of its people and their individual stories of survival.

This project will build on our wider work in the region. Writer Christian Parenti has reported extensively from Afghanistan. Photographer Teru Kuwayama has a decade of experience in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir, India, Tibet and Nepal.

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Over the last year, the outside world has grown increasingly alarmed by the specter of an unstable, radicalized, nuclear state that borders Iran and Afghanistan, not to mention India and China. But the current situation is not a recent development. Its origins may be traced back to colonial misrule, the creation of nations, and the subsequent wars waged in the fallout of empire. Our intention is to approach the complexity of this nation's history and its future, through the individual stories of the people who have been swept across its borders.

### **Collaboration Statement**

We first met in Baghdad in 2003. We had both come to Iraq independently, and crossed paths only briefly there. But over the course of our travels, we visited many of the same places and recorded or parallel journeys. We later co-authored the book *The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq*, featuring our writing and photography together, as a voice and a vision of our experience and our analysis of the occupation of Iraq. Our respective words and images do not mirror each other in literal terms, but provide alternate dimensions to a moment in Iraq's history.

In 2004, We traveled together in Afghanistan, a place that we have both revisited independently on different occasions and developed a deep attachment to. We spent six weeks traveling together, exploring the physical and psychological landscape of a shattered nation, and helping each other navigate its bewildering, and sometimes dangerous terrain. We returned separately in subsequent years, and met again in Kabul in 2007, after the murder of our mutual friend, Ajmal Naqshbandi, a young Afghan journalist who had become close to both of us. His death has made our continuing work in the region an even more personal mission.

In Pakistan, it is our intention to explore the human landscape of the failing state on the other side of the Afghan border, and to examine the map lines that have defined the nation, and created so much conflict for the people within them. The story that we intend

to report covers a complex range of history, geography, and ethnicity that will require all of our skills to approach and comprehend. As a national portrait, composed of individual portraits and individual histories, this project will be an ideal joint venture, built on Christian's interviews and Teru's photographs.

Our mediums are different, but we share a conviction and a critical sensibility that makes our respective works especially relevant to one another. Both of us operate outside the journalistic mainstream, taking an intensely personal approach to our work, and neither of us attempts to strip our feelings from our reportage. We challenge the conventions of our industries, and we challenge each others perspectives as well. We compare and trade notes, visual literal, and personal, to expand the dimensions of each others work.