

ANAQUASH  
A COMMUNITY'S RELATIONSHIP TO ITS RIVER

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY REBECCA HARLAN ENTITLED ANAQUASH BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING, IN PART, REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ART IN NEW MEDIA PHOTOJOURNALISM.

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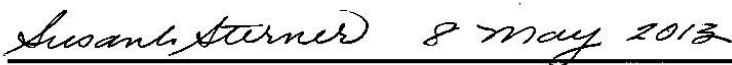
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*Abstract:* This documentary conducted in Washington, D.C. (Ward 7 and 8), along the Anacostia River, and nearby Southeast D.C. between February 2012 and April 2013, *Anaquash*, explores local residents' relationship to the river. The Anacostia is a historically polluted body of water, running through racially segregated and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Using multimedia, photography, text, digital mapping, e-postcards, and locals' photography contributions, *Anaquash*, sought to discover the ways in which the community interacts with the river. Fishermen, both subsistence and recreational, environmentalists, residents, and other river-goers, were the center of this project. My research was conducted through networking with environmental and community organization as well as boots-on-the-ground, exploratory interactions with individuals. I found that environmental issues along the Anacostia were made less important to the community because of more pressing economic and social problems, but that recreation, education, and awareness were the key elements in fostering local stewardship for the river.

## **Introduction**

Winding through the Nation's capital, the Anacostia River derives its name from the Native American word Anaquash, which means "village trading center." The waters that flow there have always been a point of confluence, whether for trade, travel, or just taking a break.

In recent decades, the river has suffered pollution from industry and development, fostering a negative stigma about the area and furthering the divide that the water forms between east and west D.C. In spite of this, the banks continue to serve as a hub for cookouts, fishing, rowing, and front porch-style fellowship. It's paradoxical that such a polluted place could be so full of life, but it's between the ebb and flow that these stories are told.

I have been traveling the banks of the Anacostia, an approximately 8 and a half mile stretch of river, in order to hear the history, learn the geography, and understand the community—meeting fishermen and hearing their stories, attending cook-outs and watching fireworks, canoeing with kindergarteners, and witnessing the community come together to restore their river.

Like the tide, the community around the river ebbs and flows—economies shift, development happens. Nothing stays exactly the same, but the river continues to flow and to provide a place for the ever-changing community to congregate.

## **Project Rationale**

There has been a great deal of discussion about the Anacostia River recently, much of it environmental and economic. One of the major areas of concern is people eating fish out of the river. A study by Opinion Works<sup>1</sup>, a Maryland-based polling group, found that “fifty-three percent of anglers were fishing more than they did three or four years ago.” The study also found that twenty-two percent of anglers have “never heard about possible health consequences connected with eating fish from the Anacostia.” The river is contaminated with PCBs, heavy metals, and sewage runoff, which all have the potential to compromise the health of those consuming the fish, if not immediately, than certainly in the future.

Adding further intricacy to this story is the real estate development occurring along the river. And with development comes swift change. In many ways, this building-up is positive—it creates jobs, provides new resources, and contributes to safety and quality of life. However, there is fear that the existing community might be forgotten. When I spoke with Mickey, a recreational fisherman I met along the Anacostia in July of 2012, he put it quite well when he said, “I’m for development, not displacement.” I want to explore how long-time residents view development of the area.

For me, the ultimate “why?” comes with the “who.” The most basic reason to focus on this issue is show the large role that the river plays in community members lives and how its state affects the health of the community, how the community is perceived, and finally how it perceives itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Opinion Works, “Addressing The Risk.” November 2012.

< <http://www.anacostiariverkeeper.org/updates/anacostia-riverkeeper-partners-complete-subsistence-fishing-report>>

## Research Summary

Initially, I was looking solely for articles on the environmental health of the Anacostia River, specifically those that would show how the toxins have affected the fish, thus affecting any human who consumed them. Those articles have been very helpful, and revealed to me not only the dire state of the river but also the large community of people who are researching and attempting to restore the river. Since then, I have been trying to find sources that will help me understand the history of the Anacostia River as well as that of the East of the River communities, which is imperative in understanding where the communities stand today. I am also very interested in the change that they face as real estate development expands around and across the river.

Additionally, I have been interested in reading books that give me a glimpse into the African American experience. Literature provides me with inspiration, and I found that reading Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* allowed me to embrace some of the wildness and mystery of the river as well as understanding some of the history of race relations in the United States. Much of my research was on the ground, listening to the experiences and opinions of fishermen, community members, and environmentalists, which allowed me to have an even more comprehensive understanding of the community as it stands today.

## **Professional Precedents and Goals**

Initially, I was looking at a lot of photojournalism that focused on environmental issues. I saw this as an environmental project, and those were the stories that I wanted to model my project after. I realized, however, that this community's story was about so much more than pollution, and I began to focus less on toxins in fish and more on people. I also realized that I wanted to create a project that skirted the line between photojournalism and art. I chose to focus more on environments, situations, and feelings, than on actions or a linear narrative. My hopes of telling a dramatic story of an individual surviving strictly off of subsistence fishing from the Anacostia quickly faded into a long-term project about the way that a community interacts with the river that runs through it—how that water both divides it from other areas of the city but also provides a rich resource for relationships to be built upon and recreation to be had.

I explored these questions and ideas first through still images. I soon decided that the voices of residents and other river-goers should be given weight in this project, and began recording audio interviews, which I compiled with still images and some video in a multimedia piece. I also wanted to record a more personal reflection of this process, which I did through a long-form essay.

The final presentation is a website, [www.Anaquash.com](http://www.Anaquash.com), which includes a multimedia piece, still images, a written narrative, community engagement, and an interactive map. The multimedia, composed primarily of still images and audio, highlights different ways that community members engage with the river. Each character represents a different perspective, and those viewpoints build on and speak to each other, allowing the viewer to gain understanding of the many issues surrounding the Anacostia. Pollution, racism, and economics, are therefore explained but also allowed to remain complex.

The interactive map contextualizes the still images and text in order to bring the viewer a greater geographical understanding of the Anacostia. The viewer will be able to click on points along the river to see images and read text, in the place that the images were recorded. I will include vignettes of peoples' lives, so that, looked at this way, story will progress in a tangential, non-linear form.

There is also a still image edit that is sequenced, for a more emotive, curated, and personal experience. The still images are meant to provide small windows into the greater story, building on each other to create a piece that communicates the ethos of the community.

My goal is to have a project that preserves some of the culture and the local narratives of the area as it is developed, as well as to show area residents the river through new eyes. In order to do this, I needed to spread awareness of the project to the immediate community,



which I did by creating an exhibit of sixteen 8" x 10" photographs at the Anacostia Neighborhood Library. The images were mounted and placed on bookstands in the library alongside project information and a call submission for personal images from the river. The submitted photos will be posted in a section on the website titled "Images from the Community," which I will post on the website on a weekly basis. The opening day of the exhibition is April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and it will remain up through June.

I also wanted to introduce those unfamiliar with the area to the people, geography, resources, and importance of the area. Ultimately encouraging those both within and outside of the Anacostia community to reevaluate their assumptions of the river. In an effort to spread the word about this project to a broader audience, I created playful travel postcards to promote the river as a destination as well as address the perception that the area is a very distant, very different location from the rest of D.C. The physical postcards will be distributed at the Anacostia Neighborhood Library, other area organizations, and possibly through the Anacostia Watershed Society, so that they can then be sent to those outside of the Anacostia Community. The postcards can also be sent as e-cards from the website.

I am scheduled to speak about this project with an elementary class in a boarding school in Southeast. I hope to create postcards with them so that they can send them home to their families. This is the type of engagement I will continue to pursue in an effort to raise awareness about the project and the river itself.

**A Year By The River  
By Becky Harlan**

The first time I went down to the river, I couldn't figure out where to park. Even on Google Maps the directions to the shore hadn't been clear. I parked at the Metro stop that looked closest to the Anacostia, and commenced wandering around. At a McDonald's, I asked a few people sitting on the steps outside. "The River?" They asked, sharing confused looks.

I also felt them wondering, "Why are *you* going to the Anacostia River?" I suddenly felt very blonde, very bubbly, and very aware of my pink flats. But they didn't ask me any questions; they just gave me the best directions they could, ambiguous as they were. (Months later, I would realize that the McDonald's sits virtually on top of the river, just west of the John Phillip Sousa Bridge.)

That day, the February sky was muted, but the sun's reassuring presence infused the grey light with warmth. I was hyper-aware of my every move. Should I smile at the people I passed? Look determined and hurried? Passersby saw a lady with a camera offering up half-smiles followed by long gazes at the ground. I wandered for over an hour, under bridges and through a construction site, before I found what I was looking for: Shore.

There are two rivers that flow through Washington, D.C. The Anacostia is the Essau of the two, the overlooked twin—grittier than the Potomac, less loved, feared even. Its eight and a half miles are a ribbon of neglect, abuse, and possibility, flowing through a neighborhood that shares its name. Anacostia is approximately ninety-five percent African American, has had unemployment rates nearing twenty percent, and maintains a reputation of poverty, crime, and underdevelopment. For many in D.C., the river serves as the proverbial set of railroad tracks, with a right side and a wrong side. To those living west of it, anything "east of the River" might as well be a different country.

I'd heard that people were subsistence fishing out of the Anacostia, and I was interested in finding them. My quest for fishermen (and women) was complicated by my unfamiliarity not only with the geography of the river, but its culture. I spent most of my Saturday afternoons that spring getting lost. Anacostia may be a world apart from the transient Capitol Hill culture and \$30-dollar brunches, but it is no stranger to networking. Over time, to my surprise, I would find many new ways to arrive places, always realizing that there were more connections, more bridges, more back roads, and more people who knew each other, than I ever could have imagined. This dirty river, it would turn out, is the backdrop for a lot of people's lives.

The pollution of the Anacostia River may keep people from spending time there, but

my interest in the river came about because of it. As a child growing up in Johnson City, Tennessee, I started an environmental club called “Leaf it to Us.” The membership was me, my best friend and her little sister, picking up trash in our yards. I grew up and moved away, but I kept my interest in protecting the environment. That was one current that propelled me to the river. The other was the fact that I felt disconnected from one entire quarter of the city I lived in. I felt uncomfortable when I crossed the river, and I didn’t like that.

I’d moved to Washington, D.C. six months earlier, and my new life was missing something. I knew this because a few years before, after I’d completed college with a B.A. in Art History, I’d done what all good millennials do and joined a volunteer program. Mission Year, it was called. I was to live in the once seedy underbelly (read: quickly gentrifying) First Ward of Houston, Texas, where I would be fostering community through the arts. My team and I rode the city buses, had no Internet access or television in our home, tracked all the produce specials at the Fiesta supermarket and shared many rice and beans suppers with our elderly African American and Central American neighbors. It was during that time, difficult as it was, that I learned to appreciate the richness of a diverse community and discovered a new kind of gratitude that comes from having enough to share, even if it’s not a lot. When I moved to D.C. for grad school the next year, I told myself I would make an effort to widen my circle and invest in relationships with people who weren’t carbon copies of myself. So the *idea* of Anacostia was appealing to me, partly for its scary reputation but also because I had a hard time with the notion that a place less than four miles away could feel so *other*.

I wanted to meet the people fishing out of this urban river, fishing in water polluted with Polychlorinated biphenyl (bad) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (also bad). The river was also absorbing solid waste from the District at a rate of 2 billion gallons of overflow a year. (Very bad).

Knowing this, I wanted to see this river, this toxic cocktail, for myself.

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What is it about rivers? The potential for travel? For sustenance? A naturally salient view—the water in the foreground, a skyline fading above, reminding us of places we’ve seen in paintings and photographs, letting us into someone else’s story. Does a river make us feel connected? Does it put our mind at ease? Does it let us stop our labored thinking and let our eyes track an egret as it skims the surface, or follow the flow of the water itself, like a cat tracking a patch of light on the wooden floor? Maybe it frees us to engage our senses without the dampening effect of reason.

Or maybe the steady flow of a river connects to the water in our own bodies, pulling us in. I learned that people come to the banks of the Anacostia for different reasons. Some to be alone, some to be together, some to fish, some to eat or talk or think. But they all face their chairs towards the stream and watch it flow past them. No one touches the water—at least not in this river—it’s too dirty. Very few even get on it in a boat. But the water is why they’ve come.

It was Emancipation Day, in April, when I met the Halfacres. Three o’clock on a Monday afternoon under the shade of a willow tree. The whole lot of them were sitting around on the bank, laughing and talking over each other. There was a cooler for drinks and a cooler for caught fish. I approached them carefully, trying to make myself seem harmless and confident all at once. Soon enough, I was, drinking a Nestea and listening to the giddy story of the 60-pound catfish caught the day before. Kay, a petite, athletic woman, showed me a picture of the fish on a small silver digital camera. In the photo, a very large man was holding the fish around its belly the way you would hold a stack of firewood or a big pig. “I don’t care who you are, that’s big!” said Moe, who seemed the least serious about fishing, but the most excited about yesterday’s catch. “It was so big we couldn’t put it in the sink, we had to put it in the bathtub!”

The Halfacres were a hodgepodge of a family, I would learn. The father, Mr. Charles “Kojak” Halfacre was wearing a Fannie Mae T-shirt and had a sweet, gap-toothed grin. He checked on his fishing pole as the train rumbled over the CSX railroad bridge, which crossed the river less than 500 feet in front of him, and explained the group make-up to me. His daughters Karen and Kay were there, Kay with her husband. The others included one of his friends, his ex-wife with her ex-boyfriend, and even a niece (at least I think she was a niece) who stopped by for a few minutes. The niece had a giant tattoo of a koi covering her entire calf. There was a cooler full of beer hidden in a honeysuckle bush. Periodically, someone disappeared into the foliage and reappeared seconds later with a contra-band beverage. The scene was comfortable and casual, almost rural.

Sitting on that grassy bank in the patchy spring light, I knew I had found a different side of the Anacostia and of D.C.—one with history, family, and a relaxed rhythm. Life by the river was slower. It felt idyllic and also, important. I began to worry about this lifestyle disappearing as development picked up in Anacostia. I wanted to protect and document it. Google street view might have marked most of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, but not this knoll.

But I also knew it wasn’t all idyll. I learned there was a kind of information gap along the river that left people to make uninformed decisions. When I asked Mr. Halfacre if he ate the fish he caught, he asked me if I knew how much hooks and bait cost. Because he did, he said. The carcinogens in a catfish from a contaminated river weren’t mentioned.

On the other hand, I understood that fishing is self-sustaining; it's resourceful, but it can also be dangerous. How dangerous, is harder to quantify. That's the tricky thing—the kind of sick this fish can make you doesn't happen overnight. You don't turn green. So people don't take the danger seriously. Just how many fish would you have to eat to get sick? And to make matters worse, everyone wants to catch a big ol' fish. But the bigger the fish, the more time it has had to absorb the river's chemicals, and so the worse it is for the guy who eats it. Bragging rights don't change that.

My wandering thoughts were brought back to the Halfacres, by their talk of a cookout on Friday. The 60-pound catfish would be the main course. They were surprised that a stranger like me wanted to come, but the photographer in me knew I needed to capture this place and these people. They laughed and asked if the photographs would be in National Geographic. "I wish," I replied. We exchanged phone numbers.

But when I called that Friday, Kay said they had moved the cookout to Saturday, I called Saturday and no one answered. I went to the river park a few times to look for the Halfacres after that, but they were never there.

Almost two months later, I returned to their spot. I'd been stood up for a fishing date I'd made with the man from the bait shop. Determined to enjoy the July afternoon anyway, I laid my green and blue striped towel on the patchy grass where I'd first met the Halfacres and sat down. There was a cooler under the willow close to where I was sitting, and when a slight, shirtless man in jean shorts, a straw hat, and caramel skin walked over to it, I asked him if he had caught anything, and I realized with a start, that it was Mr. Halfacre.

Like a lot of fishermen, Mr. Halfacre seemed to have a looser definition of time than the rest of the population. He seemed to just go with the flow. He invited me to stay and fish with him and his next-door neighbor, Kevin. They were clearly comfortable with silence, but over the course of the afternoon, they both shared some stories with me—Kevin about his time playing jazz trumpet in various clubs and Mr. Halfacre about the loss of two children in a fire. Mr. Halfacre also told me that his wife, Gail, had cancer and was going through chemotherapy. The family would be meeting with the doctor the next day to discuss what to do.

A few weeks later Mr. Halfacre met me at the same spot, and this time Gail came along. She had a green oxygen tank and a walker with her. She seemed extremely peaceful, or maybe she was just extremely tired. She and Mr. Halfacre were wearing matching Ketel One Vodka visors. He was bald, and I saw that she was too. American-flag socks peeked over her tennis shoes. She offered me a sandwich and some potato chips and sat under the

weeping willow while Mr. Halfacre fished. He caught at least five “blue cats” that day. Gail said she didn’t like catfish, didn’t eat them. Her clear, bright eyes confidently met my gaze as she told me that Mr. Halfacre was always telling her not to worry, that she had to live for today. After about an hour, she went to go sit in the van. A national park employee came over and asked Mr. Halfacre if he ate the fish he caught. Mr. Halfacre bristled at the question. The park service man said that he knew some people ate them and that it wasn’t good for you. Mr. Halfacre muttered something along the lines of, “Go do your job and leave me alone,” under his breath after the ranger walked away.

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The next time we met, it was at Mr. Halfacre’s house. It was October and the air was finally cooling down. Mr. Halfacre wasn’t going out to the river much because Gail’s health was declining. It was a Sunday morning. He was getting ready to throw some chicken on the rusty, red grill before the Redskins game. The night before, he had stayed out at a club with his nephew until 6 a.m. Now it was 9:15 and he was operating on only a few hours’ sleep. Gail had recently gone to stay with her niece because she now needed 24 hour care. Mr. Halfacre had reduced his workload to tend to her, but he still worked three days a week as a custodian for a school in Northwest D.C. And Gail had become very sensitive to smell. The odor of their dog bothered her, no matter if Mr. Halfacre cleaned up after it or not. Sitting on the porch, gazing at empty Leverett Street, his eyes teared as he recalled the days of friendly family competition fishing by the river and how Gail used to beat everyone bowling on the Wii at his daughter’s house. “The Doctor is the one to give her the medicine,” Mr. Halfacre said, as if consoling himself. “But the man upstairs is the one to heal her.”

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In November, the day before Superstorm Sandy was to hit, I called Mr. Halfacre to see if he was ready for the storm. He said Gail was in the hospital. They were monitoring her for a blood clot. A week later I called back. “She’s gone,” he said. I couldn’t believe it. “No more suffering,” he added.

The following Sunday, I brought him some potato salad and my photographs of Gail. He and his nephew had just returned from a trip to the laundromat around the corner. He was more dressed up than I had ever seen him, in a leather Redskins jacket, a shirt with a collar, and a black knitted hat. He looked so small. Down by the river, he’d

always worn T-shirts. Some of his neighbors were walking down the street with a cart. When they saw him standing in his yard, they stopped, left the cart in the middle of the road, and walked over to hug him. Kojak told them he had been going out to the club with his nephew. It took his mind off everything, he said. He was having trouble getting the money for the funeral. A friend had donated a plot, but they would have to wait for money before they could bury her.

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The nearby suburbs of Southeast D.C. feel like they could be located on the outskirts of any number of small cities in the Southeastern United States. Brick duplexes are arranged in neat blocks, cars are parallel parked on every street, and cracked sidewalks lead residents to liquor stores and laundromats. Kojak and Gail had moved to Oxen Hill, one such community, four years ago. The neighborhood felt worn and forlorn, but the bustle of the residents gave it life. The river, though not immediately adjacent to Oxen Hill, offered an additional space for the front-porch style fellowship so common in this community.

I learned that, like me, Kojak was originally from Tennessee. He'd come to D.C. in the mid-1960s at the age of fifteen to join his siblings. Kojak and Gail had met at a club almost two decades ago. But he wasn't a young man anymore. He must have been distracting himself from his loss, I thought, masking his real problems with late nights out on the town. In a strange way, this behavior reminded me of the development along the Anacostia—the building up of the stadiums, the new apartment complexes. These changes might have convinced someone who didn't know better that the river was okay, thriving even. But these amenities only disguised the reality below and did nothing to fix the damaged ecosystem, the ten feet of silt filled with pcbs that sit at the bottom of the river.

Earlier that year, during the spring, I'd gone out on a pontoon boat with Mike Bolinder, the Anacostia Riverkeeper, a watchdog whose entire job it is to promote and patrol the health of the water. Bolinder is the latest successor of a long line of activists and conservationists to dedicate their lives to the restoration of the Anacostia watershed. Their efforts have not been in vain, but the fight is far from over. Bolinder said that since the river has been improving, it's actually more difficult to remind people that it is still polluted. "It's obviously not a bad thing that we're not on the top 20 dirtiest rivers in the U.S. anymore, [but] the problem is, once the river's not on the top of the list, people sort of forget about the real problems. So there's plenty of people out here picking up trash all the time... but the hard stuff, storm water, toxics..." he paused. "It's the stuff that's unseen, gets forgotten about."

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The Sunday after Gail's passing, when I'd visited Mr. Halfacre, I watched his neighbors operate like one super-extended family. Everyone who passed had comfort to share. At least five people were buzzing around. This comfort wouldn't fix Mr. Halfacre's pain or erase his loss, but I thought it was essential in a practical way—he had friends to disseminate funeral information, to cook for him, to help him figure out financial issues. He had people to help him fill the immediate needs until he was able to cope with the void.

Later, I returned to Shaw, the D.C. neighborhood where I share a row house with three friends. Since moving in, I'd thought a lot about community. I've wondered how my roommates and I fit into this historically African American neighborhood. I've realized that community takes a long time to build, both between friends and especially in a neighborhood. But once it's in place, it gives definition and value to the individual and serves as both a ladder and a safety net, allowing great things to be done.

I think community may be what will eventually heal the river. A community that steps in and is present—people who rally around and persistently pick away at the problems to the point that even they themselves are tired of hearing about the same issues over and over. It's the “how are you's” and the “let us know if there is anything we can do” and the “here's a chicken casserole, just in case,” that the river needs to make it to tomorrow. They say blood is thicker than water. The Anacostia's waters are thick with toxins that should never have been there in the first place, and it will take relationships truer than blood to make it more like water again.

I've realized that my year exploring the Anacostia has taught me what it feels like to enter a community where I don't belong and to be welcomed, what it means for someone to be generous with their time and with their story, and what it means to learn the rhythms of a physical place, and about care that deepens with time.

When I sat with fishermen and we talked about the river, one of the things that almost everyone said is that it is peaceful. People find peace here, at this river, even in the midst of the pollution. When the early evening sun coats washed-up tires in golden light and fills plastic bottles with a warm glow, or when you see the Canadian geese, as invasive as they are, light on the water and leave a long dark dent in their wake, or when tide goes down, leaving silt to dry in a powdery grey line across a wall of kudzu. Once all of this becomes familiar to you, you can't help but cherish it. You learn that for some people, this is home. And after that, you learn that it's not only home to people who were born here. The river will take in anyone willing to put in the time.

## Appendices

### Professional Precedents

**Arnold, Corey, *Graveyard Point*, 2012. Web 17 April 2013.**

< <http://www.coreyfishes.com/#/graveyard-point>>.

Corey Arnold's work with fishermen inspires me because of his ability to capture the stillness of the environment in many of his images. I especially appreciate his images that are a bit quirky, his establishment of eye contact with the subject, and his use of color in a bleak landscape.

**Dalton, Scott. *Macondo*. Scott Dalton, 2012. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://www.scottdaltonphotos.com/3/artist.asp?ArtistID=25359&AKey=ABR8AELR>>

Scott Dalton explores the inspiration for Gabriel Garcia Marquez's masterwork *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Using a 6 x 6 color negatives, Dalton explores the Coastal towns of Colombia, which is where Marquez claimed to have found inspiration. Dalton's translation of magical realism from text into image is fascinating---so matter of fact in a completely whimsical way. I would love to create images with this concreteness and this intensity. His decision to work with a medium format camera is one that I am very inspired by. I hope to achieve this same sense of wonder in my images. I want them to feel timeless.

**Davidson, Linda. *The Hidden Anacostia*. The Washington Post, n.d. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<[http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/the-hidden-anacostia/2011/08/08/gIQAzMCJ7K\\_gallery.html#photo=8](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/the-hidden-anacostia/2011/08/08/gIQAzMCJ7K_gallery.html#photo=8)>

Linda Davidson explores the environmental issues related to the Anacostia, highlighting individuals who are investing in its restoration. She focuses on the founder of the Anacostia Watershed Society, Robert Boone, artist Bruce Macneil, and an Earth Conservation Corps volunteer, Lavette Spears, among others. She also features subsistence fishermen, showing them with their catch. In the article she goes home with the fishermen and shares in their bounty by eating the cooked catfish. This story tackled the same subject matter that I would like to explore, but in a broader, more optimistic way than I would like to. It focuses on concerted efforts of institutions and individuals, and I want my story to be more about place and the way that people interact with it.

**Deghati, Reza. *Water*. Prix Pictet, n.d. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://www.prixpictet.com/artists/statement/229>>

Reza Deghati shows the imbalance of the environment caused by humans.

He hopes to create “awareness about the world that surrounds us. This is what I try to do through my images – highlighting the interdependence between humanity and his environment, in particular water.” His images are case studies of the bigger issue, from drought, to fishing, to aquariums in fancy offices, Deghati tackles the topic of our relationship with water.

**Eich, Mstt. *Sin and Salvation in Baptist Town*. Luceo Images, n.d. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://luceoimages.com/2010/11/sin-and-salvation-in-baptist-town/>>

Matt Eich’s *Sin and Salvation in Baptist Town*, chronicles a small town that is still virtually segregated: rich and poor, black and white, not by law but by history. He shows the under resourced, violence-ridden half, making friends with the community, attempting to photograph the spirit of the people who reside in Baptist Town.

Many people also say that there are two “DC’s” I had a fisherman tell me last week that there was “Washington” and “DC”, not “Washington, D.C.”

The city east of the river often is chronically underserved. I would like to show the public a side of D.C. very different from the National Mall and Capitol Hill.

**Epstein, Mitch. *What is American Power*, Black River Productions, Ltd./Mitch Epstein. 2009.**

<<http://whatisamericanpower.com/>>

Mitch Epstein presents a survey of American sources of power in his interactive and participatory website, “What is American Power?” He also created a billboard campaign with his images. This project is interesting because it chronicles different power sources across the United States., showing the viewer the landscape and the context of the plant, but never explicitly stating whether something is good or bad, after all, we all use power. He allows the viewer to navigate the U.S. plants through his website, where he has an interactive map, as well as users sharing their ideas about what American power actually is.

I appreciate the style of his images and his comprehensive approach to coming at a subject through a broad idea and then contextualizing it with a map. I also appreciate the participatory component.

**Fobes, Natalie. *Long Journey of the Pacific Salmon*. National Geographic, n.d. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/1990/07/salmon/fobes-photography>>

Natalie Fobes focused on the plight of the salmon for over ten years. In this essay, she shows the journey of the Pacific Salmon, non-linearly, but from birth to death, incorporating natural and human dangers. She says that in her work, the salmon “served as the thread that wove together the many cultures around the Pacific Rim. Documenting how humans use and abuse the earth’s resources was a critical theme in

my coverage.” Fobes truly understands the topic she is covering, which is one reason she is able to have the access that she does. She peels back the layers of the connection between humans and the environment in a powerful way.

**Frank, Brian. *Downstream, Death of the Colorado*. Brian L. Frank Photography, 2012. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://www.brianfrankphoto.com/index.php#mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=0&p=0&a=0&at=0>>

*Downstream, Death of the Colorado* shows the degradation of a river, not only at its source but also over thousands of miles. The Colorado River runs all the way into Mexico, and the effects of its destruction are compounded by the borderlines, affecting in the livelihood of farmers and families in Mexico, California, and Arizona, to name a few locations. This essay has images that tell of the source of destruction as well as of the way this destruction changes lives and landscapes. I appreciate the holistic approach this photographer took in explaining the multi-faceted aspects of an ecosystem and its far-reaching affects.

**Hutcheson, Malcolm. *Lahore’s Waste Water Problem*. Prix Pictet, n.d. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://www.prixpictet.com/artists/view/131>>

Malcolm Hutchenson uses a wooden camera to create environmental portraits of Pakistani people who live in Lahore, where 90% of the sewage pours into the “local aquatic environment.” His decision to use a wooden camera, and to create thoughtful portraits of the subjects resonates with me. His images are not about a fleeting moment, but about individuals and a (for now) constantly difficult situation where water, one of the most basic needs, is tainted.

*“Though unaware of the long term risks to health, it is never out of choice that people work in such disagreeable conditions. These photographs show the people who have to work with wastewater, either maintaining the system or making money from using it.”*

**Larsen, Erika. *The Riverkeeper*. Erika Larsen Photography. Web. 18 November 2012.**

<<http://erikalarsenphoto.com/commissioned/the-river-keeper/>>

Erika Larsen captures the work of a man committed to restoring the Mississippi through her stunning images. I love the way she captures atmosphere and how she is clearly in control of her equipment. I also like that she captures some of the “riverkeeper’s” daily life—cooking food, making fire, camping. This piece was commissioned for Reader’s Digest, so it doesn’t go very deep. I would like to have more context than she does.

**McCarthy, Ellen. *Anacostia River: A Photographer Sees Its Veiled Beauty*. The Washington Post, 29 September 2012. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<[http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/anacostia-river-a-photographer-sees-art/2011/08/03/gIQAhrRL7K\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/anacostia-river-a-photographer-sees-art/2011/08/03/gIQAhrRL7K_story.html)>

Bruce McNeil’s photography focuses on what the river *could* be. He hopes that his landscapes of the current river, altered to create a vision of restoration, will inspire

the community to hope for a cleaner river. He has also created work based on a river goddess, taking images of students from Anacostia and layering them with the images of the water, creating a metaphor for the potential helpers and guardians of the river.

<http://new.american.edu/soc/communityvoice/bruce.cfm>

**Rich, Jeff. *Watershed*, Jeff Rich, 2011.**

<<http://www.jeffreyrich.com/watershed.html>>

Jeff Rich explores the French Broad Watershed, which is his entry point for a discussion about “the relationship between man, water, and land.” He creates beautiful large format portraits of place, sometimes showing industry, pollution, people, structures, and always the natural beauty of the Blue Ridge mountains. This project really speaks to me because it presents my home in a new way. It’s topographical approach allows the viewer to really grasp a sense of place, which is heightened by the interactive map, which he links to on his site.

[http://www.jeffreyrich.com/maptest\\_a.html](http://www.jeffreyrich.com/maptest_a.html)

**Smith, W. Eugene and Aileen. *Minamata*. Minamata Photography, 24 June 2004. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://www.oocities.org/minoltaphotographyw/>>

*Minamata* is about the small fishing village, Minamata, that suffered from the Chisso Corporation dumping mercury into the bay. The images show the ill health effects on the lives of the residents, the villagers engaging in fishing, the Chisso Corporation’s plant, the protests, and the President of the Chisso Corporation. Many aspects of the issue are covered.

This essay relates to the degradation of the Anacostia River by various sources: Pepco, Landfills, Sewage, The U.S. Navy, etc., and how the fish are now showing cancerous lesions from carcinogens which are then being eaten by some fishermen.

**Wainwright, Richard. *Bangladesh Climate Change*. Richard Wainwright Photography, 2008=2012. Web. 06 March 2012.**

<<http://www.richwainwright.com/images.php?directory=photojournalism/bangladesh&currentPic=0&title=>>

This essay shows the effects of climate change on a village in East Jelekhali, Bangladesh, one of the most affected regions in the world. The residents have suffered from natural disasters that have altered their landscape and their way of life. These images show the community at work, the severe climate is detectable through the surrounding environment. There is a variety of images/angles/shots that keep this story interesting. The captions are extremely important. The essay also shows children in school, learning about climate change. This aspect gives the viewer hope that there can be some kind of change.

## **Research Bibliography**

Anacostia Riverkeeper. *Key Issues*. Riverkeeper Alliance, 2010. Web. 07 March 2012.  
<<http://www.anacostiariverkeeper.org/key-issues>>.

This outlines the five main issues that the Anacostia faces: Polluted Runoff (Stormwater), Trash, Combined Sewer Overflow, Toxics, and Environmental Justice. The Anacostia Riverkeeper site also briefly covers the history of the river, features an interactive map of the subwatersheds, and posts updates on progress and community activities.

Brentin, Mock. "Something in the Water." *The American Prospect*. The American Prospect, Inc., 17 December 2009. Web. 06 March 2012.  
<<http://prospect.org/article/something-water-0>> .

This article discusses some of the disadvantages, environmental and other, that neighborhoods east of the river have faced. It questions whether green initiatives begun with the \$7.22 billion for environmental improvement projects administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, will catch on with residents there, and if they do how plausible real job creation can be.

Calvert, Rachel. "Toxic Relationship: Ecological Injustice on the Anacostia." *The Georgetown Voice*. 27 September 2012. Web. 22 October 2012.  
<<http://georgetownvoice.com/2012/09/27/toxic-relationship-ecological-injustice-on-the-anacostia/>> .

This summarizes some of the history around the decline of the Anacostia River. The article cites experts from Anacostia Watershed Society, Riverkeeper, and even a fisherman, John Swan, with whom I have also spoken. The article also mentioned the Clean Water act of 1972, AWS's lawsuit against the Navy Yard in 1996, the closing of the Pepco plant on Benning road in May of 2012, and more.

District Department of the Environment. "Fishing in the District." *District Department of the Environment*. The District of Columbia, n.d. Web. 08 March 2012.  
< <http://ddoe.dc.gov/service/fishing-district>>.

This article outlines fishing guidelines such as licensing and regulation, the public health advisory on eating fish, and reporting a fish kill. The public health advisory warns residents not to eat catfish, carp, or eel, limits largemouth bass to 1/2 pound per month, and 1/2 pound per week of sunfish or other fish. The advisory also suggests eating younger, smaller fish and encourages the practice of catch and release.

*Frederick Douglass*. DVD. Directed by: Bill Rosser. New York: New Video, 2005.

Gibson, Joshua C. and Julie A. McClafferty. "Chesapeake Bay Angler Interviews." Anacostia Riverkeeper, 29 March 2005. Web. 08 March 2012.  
<[http://www.anacostiariverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/attachments/chesapeake\\_angler\\_study.pdf](http://www.anacostiariverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/attachments/chesapeake_angler_study.pdf)>.

A report created for the Chesapeake Bay Program showing research on populations that consume fish in the Washington, D.C., area. The report shows interview results from Baltimore, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia. It also discusses research methods used. Some of the results include the most productive fishing sites for finding anglers, the most productive time of year and days of week for finding anglers, the demographics of anglers, and the results on fish consumption.

Homan, Timothy R. "Unemployment Rate in Washington's Ward 8 Is Highest in U.S." *Bloomberg*. Bloomberg, 30 March 2011. Web. 06 March 2012.  
<<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-30/unemployment-rate-in-washington-s-ward-8-is-highest-in-u-s.html>>.

The article discusses the extremely high unemployment rate in Ward 8, which encompasses Anacostia. The article states that the job creation has often generated jobs that require higher education, which a higher percentage of residents in this area do not have.

Izadi, Elahe. "Fishing in the Anacostia A Dangerous Alternative for the Hungry." *DC Centric*. American University Radio, 27 May 2011. Web. 06 March 2012.  
<<http://dcentric.wamu.org/2011/05/fishing-in-the-anacostia-a-dangerous-alternative-for-the-hungry/>>.

The article addresses the rise in subsistence fishermen since the recession. The director of the Anacostia Water Society discusses the dangers of eating the fish and reasons why people do it. The article addresses an upcoming survey to be performed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that will aim to collect data on those fishing the Anacostia.

Montgomery, David. "Anacostia River: Two Fishermen Find Respite From Life's Cares." *Lifestyle*. The Washington Post, 29 September 2012. Web. 07 March 2012.  
<[http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/anacostia-river-two-fishermen-find-respite-from-lifes-cares/2011/08/04/gIQA5v7H7K\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/anacostia-river-two-fishermen-find-respite-from-lifes-cares/2011/08/04/gIQA5v7H7K_story.html)> .

This article describes two men who fish just downstream from Kenilworth Park. The article discusses the demographic of fishermen in certain areas, primarily Latino between Bladensburg and the Benning Bridge. It chronicles the two men as they catch a 32-inch catfish, take the fish home and cook it, and share it with their friends and family. The dangers of eating catfish and other bottom-dwellers from the Anacostia are outlined.

Opinion Works, "Addressing the Risk." Anacostia Watershed Society, 08 November 2012. Web. 16 April 2013. <<http://www.anacostiaws.org/fishing>>.

This study explains local anglers' attitudes towards fishing, eating, and sharing local fish. It highlights misconceptions about the safety of eating local fish, and discusses ways that correct information about fish consumption is best disseminated.

Payne, Ebony. "The Capitol's Dump: The Anacostia." *Planet Harmony*. Planet Harmony, 23 May 2011. Web. 07 March 2012. <<http://myplanetharmony.com/capitals-dump-anacostia>>.

The article breaks down some of the observed effects of living in Anacostia through interviewing a resident. It also goes into the top three major polluters of the area: the Kenilworth Landfill, the Benning Road Transfer Station, and Pepco. The article also discusses some upcoming development, but says that residents worry about what will happen when contaminated land is developed for people to use.

Peckkanen, John. "What's In The Water We Drink?" *The Washingtonian*, July 2012.

This article is an exploration of Washington's two rivers, the Potomac and the Anacostia. The article discusses sources of pollutions, focusing mainly on endocrine disruptors, which can enter the water through prescription medications, such as birth control. Endocrine disruptors are not regulated and there is no uniform method for controlling them as of yet. There are hypotheses that endocrine disruptors can cause obesity among other health issues.

Sheffey, Irv. "Environmental Justice and Community Partnerships, Regional Programs: Washington, D.C." *Sierra Club*. Sierra Club, n.d. Web. 06 March 2012. <<http://www.sierraclub.org/ej/programs/dc.aspx>>.

This webpage discusses the reality of the Washington, D.C., area apart from the monuments and museums. It discloses the reality of the legacy toxic sites located in Anacostia, which are toxic sites about which something should have already been done. The article also focuses on the grass roots effort, which has brought about the expected closing of the Pepco plant on Benning Road in May 2012. The activists will conduct health surveys and test metals in the soil as a watchdog for Pepco. The website also details other environmental issues and past victories, for example, the plastic bag tax.

Institute for Public Representation. *Poplar Point*. Georgetown University Law Center, 24 June 2008. Web. 07 March 2012. <<http://blog.washingtonpost.com/dc/poplarletter.pdf>>.

A Document that describes the legal action taken by RIVERKEEPER®, Earth Conservation Corps, DC ACORN, Friends of the Earth, Potomac Riverkeeper, and the



Sierra Club against the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Department of the Navy, Architect of the Capitol, District of Columbia, and the National Park Service for the reason that, “any person . . . who contributed or who is contributing to the past or present handling, storage, treatment, transportation, or disposal of any solid or hazardous waste which may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to human health or the environment.” The document contains facts about the type of pollution: DDT, DDE, PAH, PCB, etc., that are found at Poplar Point. The case was settled out of court with the agreement that The District would conduct a remedial investigation.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. London: Puffin Classics, 2008.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “Does Being in a Region of Concern Cause Tumors in Brown Bullhead Catfish?” Fish and Wildlife Service, n.d. Web. 08 March 2012.  
<<http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/studies.htm>>.

A report explaining statistics on fish with tumors in the three regions of concern, one of which is Anacostia. There is a higher rate of tumors in the waters of the Anacostia than in other areas not suspected to be regions of concern.

Wiseman, Nick. “Fishing on the Anacostia.” *DC Real Estate*. The Huffington Post, 06 October 2011. Web. 08 March 2012.  
<[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nick-wiseman/fishing-on-the-anacostia\\_1\\_b\\_999063.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nick-wiseman/fishing-on-the-anacostia_1_b_999063.html)>.

This article informs the reader about the historical neglect of the Anacostia neighborhood and river, the development that came along with the Nationals stadium, and the current state of many of the neighborhoods surrounding the stadium. The reality is that Ward 8 has only one full-service grocery store for every 25,000 residents. This is one reason residents have turned to the river for food. The Anacostia Restoration Plan, 3,000 projects aimed at cleaning up the river, is discussed and the author ultimately asks the reader not to forget those that live along the river in the effort to restore the Anacostia.