

# THE “NAPALM GIRL” PHOTOGRAPH: A PERSONAL JOURNEY OF HEALING AND FORGIVENESS

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**Abstract:** The photograph of Kim Phúc, the “Napalm Girl,” is one of the most iconic images of the Vietnam War. It has been the subject of numerous accolades, tributes, and controversies, and has been analyzed by scholars from a variety of perspectives. However, the ethical entailments of the photograph have not yet been fully explored. This paper revisits the photograph 50 years after it was taken, in order to consider the ethical issues raised by its representation of a child’s embodied vulnerability.

**Keywords:** Napalm Girl, Terror of War, Ethics, Vulnerability

## Introduction

She is “napalm girl.” Her name is Phan Thi Kim Phúc. Her image—the 9-year-old child, screaming and naked, scalded by firebombs, seemingly running straight at us—is seared into our memories. This past summer marked her anniversary: 50 years before, that picture was shot, on June 8, 1972, by the South Vietnamese photographer Huynh Công “Nick” Ut. Often titled “Terror of War,” the photograph generated immediate shockwaves when it was sent out on the AP newswire. A damning marker of the war’s horrific impact on Vietnamese civilians, it was quickly reprinted in thousands of news outlets worldwide, and it has since been extolled as “one of the most memorable photographs of the 20th century” (ABC/AP, 2022, para. 25), “a defining public icon . . . a symbol of the horror of war in general, and of the war in Vietnam in particular” (Buell, 1999, p. 102), and “a touchstone for international outrage about the Vietnam War” (Harris, 2022, para. 7).

This photograph has been the subject of numerous accolades, tributes, and controversies, as well as some scholarly analyses. Yet the implications of “Napalm Girl/Terror of War” continue to reverberate, and its ethical entailments have not yet been fully explored. Revisiting it just after the world marked its half-century anniversary opens up new interpretations of the ethical crosscurrents at work in this representation of a South Vietnamese girl’s embodied vulnerability.

The photograph, at the time it was taken and in its aftermath, has significant contemporary relevance for journalistic ethics. I believe its ongoing significance lies in its complex engagements with news values and codes of ethics as well as a philosophical approach that has vital epistemic value today: the ethics of care, a concept haunted by vectors of power in terms of race, gender, and nation. A contemporary turn in ethical theory for journalism studies examines the imperative of humanizing marginalized people and communities to advance social justice in both narrative and visual media (Kennedy, 2012; Thomas, 2021; Varma, 2020). The 2021 theme

of the annual conference of the International Communication Association envisioned communication “as a register for creating spaces of compassion and connectedness” through the conference theme of “engaging the essential work of care” (International Communication Association, 2021, paras. 1, 4). Preceding these shifts, feminist philosophers have advanced a multifaceted approach to the ethics of care that has evolved across the past three decades, ever since Carol Gilligan’s (1982) interrogation of moral philosophy, *In A Different Voice*, was published.

In this context, my analysis of “Napalm Girl/Terror of War” introduces feminist care ethics as a missing discourse in the news values that mobilize the selection and transmission of images of embodied vulnerability as well as a philosophical rubric for assessing the ethics of their consequences, particularly for the subjects of the images. To be clear, I am not targeting the ethical impulses of Nick Ut in his photojournalistic practice but rather using this photograph and its aftermath to highlight the lacuna in the news values that both drive our selection (and celebration) of certain texts and images and elide the impact on the subjects of journalistic practice.

### **“Napalm Girl/Terror of War” and the Imperatives of News Values**

From the moment of its publication, the photograph was instantly recognized as newsworthy: Not only was it widely used, appearing in the most prominent media of the day, such as the U.S. magazines *Life* and *Newsweek*, but it won major awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and “World Press Photo of the Year.” Its resonance among journalists was undoubtedly due to the fact that it exemplified contemporary news values in terms of its timeliness, topicality, impact, human interest, conflict/negativity, and novelty/unexpectedness. Though these criteria vary somewhat in different temporalities and cultural contexts, this list summarizes a “conventionalised repertoire of expressions that are used again and again [by newswriters] to construe an event and its actors as newsworthy” (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 105). As Parks (2019) notes, “News values are integral to every facet of journalistic decision making” (p. 785); they are the criteria by which journalists assess events “based on what they imagine their audiences to find newsworthy” to determine what is included in and excluded from media content (Bednarek, 2016, p. 27). News values are embedded practices that are consistently used by journalists and editors to determine what stories and images should be construed as “news,” and in that sense, news values in fact *constitute* “news.” The uses of news values are motivated by various factors, including economics and budgets, competition for audiences and advertising, and audience engagement and edification (Bell, 1991; Cotter, 2010; van Dijk, 1988). They also engage a history of the experiences, preferences, and worldview of those making news decisions (Heider, 2000).

When Nick Ut took the photograph of Kim Phúc, he knew this was a newsworthy photo; he recalls that he thought, “Good pictures,” as he trained his camera on the bombs and then on the Vietnamese children running from them (Zhang, 2023). He has said people asked why he didn’t flee when the bombing began, and his answer has been, “If I running, I don’t make a good picture” (Goeke & Ut, 2014, p. 35). A professional photojournalist, Ut knew that these pictures were “good” because they encapsulated core news values.

Ut’s motivation was also, in a sense, personal, though he was acting in his capacity as a photojournalist. “I wanted to stop this war,” he explained in an interview (Kaninsky, 2019, para. 8). But even in that aim, he was

envisioning the impact of the photo on audiences, foreseeing that his visual document would catalyze antiwar activism.

In that sense, the photograph he shot of Kim Phúc was about something more than the girl; it was about something more than her naked napalm-flayed body or her utter fear and pain. The photograph was an agent that, in the photographer's view, could contribute to ending a war. It was, as Zelizer (2010) has phrased it, a paused invitation to engagement (p. 312): The violence of the image was synecdochal of the violence of the war. Analyses of this photograph have zeroed in on its inherent moral energy, its capacity to mobilize activism: "This iconic photo was capable of activating public conscience at the time because it provided an embodied transcription of important features of moral life" (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003, p. 40). Ut was exultant that after the picture appeared in the news, it sparked antiwar protests (Phan, 2022, 1:08). "That picture stopped the war. I was so happy," he said in an interview (Bayack & Todd, 2012, 2:44).

Yet it is also crucial to note here that Ut put his camera down and helped the child as soon as he realized that she was burning alive as a result of the napalm (Chong, 2000). He doused her with water and took her and the other children to the nearest hospital, which refused to treat her until he flashed his press pass and warned them that her picture would appear in the news the next day, which convinced them to take her in. The girl survived; she and Ut have stayed in touch ever since. In the 50th anniversary remembrances of this photograph, the close relationship between Kim Phúc and Nick Ut has been the focus of a great deal of media attention. Ut has stated that the child's life was of paramount importance to him. "Even if I were to be famous and she eventually died, I [thought] I will kill myself right away, I will kill myself," he has disclosed (Phan, 2022, 8:17). The American journalists on the scene disappeared as soon as they'd finished shooting, Ut has said. Only he put down his camera and helped the wounded children. "[The American journalists] knew how important this news was so they needed to report it right away," he recalled (Phan, 2022, 5:40). While Ut, too, knew that his photographs were newsworthy, he was also impelled by an ethics of care that interrupted deadline-driven ruthlessness. Rather than rushing to print his photos, he drove the children to the nearest hospital and waited until they were admitted before returning to the AP office to develop his film.

Ut's ability to integrate news values with an ethics of care raises crucial considerations in photojournalistic practice. The tensions between these competing priorities have been assessed in relation to many media representations of embodied vulnerability, especially when the vulnerable bodies portrayed were those of children. Examples include Kevin Carter's (1993) contested photograph of a Sudanese girl collapsing from starvation while a vulture eyed her, or Nilüfer Demir's (2015) photograph of the body of a Syrian toddler who drowned during his family's attempt to escape from the civil war. "The danger," writes Yeong (2014), "is that the camera itself might inhibit empathy in the photographer by encouraging the prioritization of images over individuals" (p. 12). This technological determinism can be extended to the recognition that in photojournalism, the camera is the instrument of journalistic practice and is yoked to the news values that also prioritize the "news" (i.e., the image that makes news—over the individual). The list of basic news values conspicuously, and perhaps deliberately, excludes the value of care for the subject of the photograph/news story or for the photographer/journalist.

This does not mean that photographers or journalists are uncaring or self-serving, though they are often viewed that way. In fact, in the examples above, the photographers *did* care about the individuals in their pictures as well as the issues they indexed. Kevin Carter scared away the vulture and made sure the child got food; Nilüfer Demir said she felt “the silent scream” of the toddler’s body. News photographs are compelling often because they arouse emotion, even empathy, in the viewer. But the language of news values—terms such as timeliness, topicality, and so on—excludes and disallows these emotions, prioritizing criteria designed to attract audiences without acknowledging the affective dimensions of representation or the hierarchies of power involved. As Susan Sontag (1977) has famously observed, to take a photograph of suffering is “to be in complicity with whatever makes the subject interesting, worth photographing— including, when that is the interest, another person’s pain or misfortune” (p. 12). I reject Sontag’s (1977) blanket condemnation of photojournalistic practice; clearly, photojournalists’ ethical engagements with this idea, and with their subjects, are complex and varied. But the language of news values erases the possibility and value of emotional engagement and encourages Sontagian complicity.

Embedded within news values are aspects of representation that inscribe, and reinscribe, power relationships that articulate race, gender, class, space, and place, especially when the news focuses on embodied vulnerability. Whose vulnerable body is represented to whom? As Chouliaraki (2006) points out, the politics of pity in the news usually involve presenting the pain of sufferers in the Global South to spectators in the Global North, comfortable “in their living rooms” (p. 4). The imagined audience is wealthy, White, and located in the resource-rich regions of the world. Her analysis recognizes that this differential tends “to present the sufferer as a moral cause to western spectators” (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 6). The spectacle of suffering focuses on those who are impoverished, non-White, and located in what we once called the Third World. “Napalm girl” is an example of this power differential.

The news photograph, writes Barbie Zelizer (2010), often portrays “unsettled public events” and “the relationship between what is shown and what is seen travels many roads” (p. 307). Thus, Nick Ut’s photograph may have prompted viewers to reflect on U.S. culpability for the Vietnam War; it may have catalyzed some humanitarian or antiwar sentiment among viewers, though the war raged on for three years after the photo was published. Despite this, as Schwenkel (2009) reflects, even while news photographs “may heighten moral awareness and public criticism,” they often concomitantly risk “objectifying and depoliticizing” their subjects (p. 56). Zelizer (2010), too, recognizes that images like “Napalm Girl” invite “public engagement with human suffering and death without insisting that people pay heed to each tragedy on its own terms” (pp. 311–312). My argument here is that the subjectivity of Kim Phúc should be read on its own terms. It should not be displaced by her deployment as a symbol of the violence or “terror” of war. Her embodied experience was the focus of the document, the photograph. Her experience matters.

It matters, too, that it was a girl child whose nakedness and physical torment was exposed to the world. The representation of suffering is gendered: the vulnerability of women and girls is depicted far more easily than that of men and boys, and the fact that this was a South Vietnamese girl whose naked body was determined to be newsworthy by a largely White male news establishment exemplifies the power dynamics at the core of news

values. In the endless replication of the image on front pages worldwide, over the course of half a century, the child was not a human being whose representation might traumatize her or her family members. While it is true that the image prompted awareness of the violence of the war, as well as the motives and rewards reaped by those promoting and profiting from it, the child herself was not a person whose wellbeing called for concern or consideration. As she herself has said, she was just “news.”

### **Ethics, News Photography, and the Entailments of Embodied Vulnerability**

The heartlessness of news values is tempered, to some degree, by professional codes of ethics, which do recognize that journalistic practice can have profoundly deleterious effects on subjects of the news. The Society for Professional Journalists’ (SPJ, 2014) Code of Ethics admonishes reporters to “minimize harm” and remember that sources are “deserving of respect” (paras. 26–27). The SPJ Code advocates balancing “the public’s need for information against potential harm or discomfort” (SPJ, 2014, para, 29). Noting that “pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness,” the code urges journalists to “show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage,” especially children (SPJ, 2014, para. 30). It also recommends considering “the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication” (SPJ, 2014, para. 36). Similarly, the National Press Photographers Association (2019) observes that photographs “can cause great harm if they are callously intrusive,” and it guides photographers to “treat all subjects with respect and dignity,” giving “special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy” (para. 11). Neither of these codes, nor any other of which I am aware, speak to the issue of intervention in a crisis. At what point should a photographer, as Nick Ut did, drop the camera and help a vulnerable person in a “newsworthy” situation? While this has been the topic of much scholarly and popular discussion, there is no codified guidance on this for newswriters. Only the photographer’s conscience determines this course of action.

Moreover, a news photograph of embodied vulnerability can have an impact on its subject that extends far beyond the moment in which the photo is taken, and this long reach is unaddressed in either news values or codes of ethics. Even the issue of “long-term implications” in the SPJ Code seems to focus more on misinformation than care for the subject. The so-called napalm girl, Kim Phúc, endured considerable psychological and emotional trauma as a result of the photograph’s prominence and unrelenting public visibility. “I didn’t like that picture at all,” she said in an interview. “I felt like, why he took my picture when I was agony, naked, so ugly? I wish that picture wasn’t taken” (PBS Newshour, 2020, 1:20)

Analysts of the photo argue that Kim Phúc’s very nakedness contributed to the photograph’s impact, as it was so shocking according to the mores of the time (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003). Nakedness is the quintessential mode of embodied vulnerability: Prisoners are strip-searched, concentration camp victims were sent naked to the gas chambers, the “Hottentot Venus” Saartje Baartman was caged naked for the contemptuous voyeuristic gaze of White Victorians. Forcible nakedness is a form of humiliation, an act of subjugation, an expression of dominance, bound up in the intersections of race, class, nation, gender, and sex. While there may be sexual overtones at play, in all these instances the naked person is unequivocally among the damned. When the “Napalm Girl” photograph was first viewed by AP editors in 1972, they debated whether to release it at all, given the strict publishing laws and policies of the era. More recently, in 2016, “Napalm Girl/The Terror of War” made headlines

again when Facebook declared it to be pornographic and banned it from its social media site (the company later reversed its decision).

Just this year, in a *New York Times* op-ed, Kim Phúc wrote, “I grew up detesting that photo” (Phan Thi, 2022, p. 7). The photo’s growing fame over time, she wrote, made it harder for her to maintain a private emotional life:

I sat through endless interviews with the press and meetings with royalty, prime ministers and other leaders, all of whom expected to find some meaning in that image and my experience. The child running down the street became a symbol of the horrors of war. The real person looked on from the shadows, fearful that I would somehow be exposed as a damaged person. (Phan Thi, 2022, p. 7)

Growing up bound to that image, Kim Phúc experienced PTSD, shame, self-hatred, suicidal ideation, revolted by the public experience of her nakedness and torture (Chong, 2000). It was only as an adult that she finally found healing and fulfillment. She has made peace with the image, understanding it now “as a reminder of the unspeakable evil of which humanity is capable” (Phan Thi, 2022, p. 7). But the photograph damaged her life almost as much as the napalm had, though it served a greater good.

“Napalm Girl,” the picture and the person, remind us that there are multidimensional relationships at work in any news photograph of embodied vulnerability. Images of embodied vulnerability, in particular, involve connections between the photojournalist and the subject, the photojournalist and the institution of journalism, the photojournalist and the audience, the photograph and the audience, and the subject of the photo and the image, all operating synchronously and asynchronously; and these are connections fraught with power, emotion, competing goals, and moral weight.

Within this complex web of relationships, the scholarly literature has focused most often on the relationship between the image and the audience—asking, for instance, whether an image can move an audience to feel empathy or engage in humanitarian activism. But in fact the relationships linking the photographer, the subject, and the image call for thoughtful analysis. In many ways, the photographer and the subject are bound together by the image: Nick Ut will always be linked to Kim Phúc, just as Nilüfer Demir will always be linked with Alan Kurdi. In that linkage lies an ethical imperative to question how capturing an image of a child’s embodied vulnerability will affect the child, or the child’s family and community, over the course of time. It is also important to question how an image might affect a photographer, for journalists too suffer the emotional and psychological consequences that first responders and soldiers experience when they have been on the scene of catastrophic events. Nick Ut had nightmares and insomnia, post-traumatic stress reactions, after seeing Kim Phúc flayed alive in Trang Bàng (Chong, 2000, p. 307).

Finally, the image itself has a living relationship with its subject and its maker. The image made Nick Ut and Kim Phúc famous, but it nearly destroyed Kim Phúc. She has been unable to escape the endless reiteration of her childhood agony and vulnerability. The news photograph had an indelible impact on her psyche; indeed, she almost lost her life to it. As Denise Chong (2000) has noted, “Kim’s life was shaped by others wanting to pull her back into focus” (p. xiv). In the half-century since the initial publication of the photograph, care for the “napalm girl” herself was not a concern of either journalists or audiences. Ut, too, describes suffering post-traumatic stress

triggered by his role as a war journalist: He could not forget the burning child or the war. “I had nightmares all the time,” he recalled. “I couldn’t get myself to see a war movie. Whenever I’d hear a helicopter fly over my home, I jumped out of bed” (Fernandes, 2021, para. 22). Within the institution of journalism, care for either the child or the journalist was unimaginable in terms of the schema of news values or even codes of ethics.

The concept of care, writes the philosopher Margaret McLaren (2001), involves both attending to the wellbeing of particular others *and* “demands that we pay attention to social and political conditions” (p. 112). The feminist philosophy of care ethics rejects the claim that abstract reasoning and emotional detachment, of the kind found in news values, is less biased and more likely to achieve impartiality in ethical decision-making; on the contrary, caring feelings generate more rigorous ethical reflection and action. The ethics of care is a cornerstone of feminist philosophy that burgeoned out of Gilligan’s (1982) interrogation of rationale philosophy; the overarching concept of care ethics focuses on the significance of relationships and the moral imperatives of “the activities and practices of care and relationship maintenance that sustain webs of connections and minimize harm as best as possible” (Hamington & FitzGerald, 2022, p. 2). “The ethics of care,” writes the feminist philosopher Virginia Held (2006), “focuses on attentiveness to context, trust, responding to needs, and offers narrative nuance; it cultivates caring relations in both personal, political, and global contexts” (p. 157).

Following this conceptualization, photojournalism is a practice that connects the personal, the political, and in many cases, the global. “Napalm Girl/Terror of War” exemplifies these intersecting strands, as well as additional dynamics of race, gender, and embodiment. In shooting and publishing the photo “Napalm Girl/The Terror of War,” the photographer and the news outlets demonstrably cared about informing audiences of the world, especially the global North, of the impact of the war on the Vietnamese people, particularly children. In real time, the photographer Nick Ut cared for the child by ensuring she got immediate medical attention. Yet an overall ethics of care was neither a value nor a practice according to normative journalistic guidelines for practice. Ut’s care for the child actually violated the news value of timeliness: He disregarded his deadline to drive Kim Phúc to the hospital and waited to make sure she was admitted. And then, once it went out on the AP wire, the mediation of the photograph itself contributed to long-term trauma for Kim Phúc as well as for Ut.

From yet another angle, we know nothing of the impact of this image, or other images of the war, upon Vietnamese viewers. Azoulay (2008) notes that certain vulnerable people insist that photographers document their suffering in the belief that dissemination of such images will provoke action against atrocities. Notable examples are Mamie Till-Mobley’s resolute insistence that photographs of her murdered child’s body be published to expose the horror of lynching (Till-Mobley & Benson, 2003); or the dissemination of the “Caesar” photographs of tortured Syrian prisoners that provide “irrefutable proof that the Syrian government had truly detained and tortured thousands who disappeared” and allow families to know the truth about their loved ones’ deaths (Al-Khalidi, Ashawi, & Nasr, 2020, para. 23). But such images are made and distributed with the consent of the subjects or their families; nonconsensual representation of suffering, which is often the case in news photography, raises very different ethical issues.

Linfield (2010) has pondered the use of nonconsensual images in photojournalism, querying, “What would solidarity with the people in such photographs mean?” (p. xvi). For her, photography is a means of redressing injustice; she writes,

Every image of suffering says not only, “This is so,” but also, by implication: “This must not be”; not only, “This goes on,” but also, by implication: “This must stop.” Documents of suffering are documents of protest: they show us what happens when we unmake the world. (Linfield, 2010, p. 33)

And yet she realizes that representation alone cannot move viewers to compassion or humanitarian action: “Seeing does not necessarily translate into believing, caring, or acting. That is the dialectic, and the failure, at the heart of the photograph of suffering” (Linfield, 2010, p. 33). Undoubtedly, there is value in documenting embodied vulnerability and suffering if the outcome is mobilizing solidarity and humanitarian action—but these outcomes are never guaranteed. The uses of social media today mean that videos and images are circulated in ways that cannot be controlled by the creator of the image: From citizen journalism to child pornography, images of embodied vulnerability are disseminated without the guardrails of concern for the viewers or subjects of the images. Jessica Roberts (2019) calls this “the erosion of ethics” (p. 409). Such documentation carries with it real and damaging fallout that is only now being given serious ethical consideration.

We are increasingly aware of the harrowing impact of war photography on both the journalists and members of war-torn communities. Jonisová (2022) writes about the post-traumatic stress experienced by photographers as well as soldiers viewing violent war imagery from Slovakia and Ukraine: “Brutal images . . . have an indisputable impact on the percipients” (p. 83). In recent times, Black media audience members have written about the retraumatizing effects of seeing the recorded 2020 murder of George Floyd replayed endlessly in the media. “I now believe that circulating videos of Black and brown death at the hands of police reinforces white supremacy. It does not deter it,” writes the USC journalism scholar Alissa Richardson (2021, para. 14).

The point of view of the communities whose suffering makes the news has, in the past, been elided; we are only now becoming more aware of the importance of their perspective. Chouliaraki (2006) argues that most visual media representations of suffering people reinforce differences of power and inequality, despite the best intentions of journalists, whose aims may be altruistic and mobilized by an earnest desire to help those whose images they circulate. The journalists likely believe that their work could benefit the communities they cover, but Chouliaraki’s (2006) analysis demonstrates how news routines and norms and “the values embedded in news narratives [define] who the ‘others’ are and how we should relate to them” (p. 11). The representation of embodied vulnerability is often predicated on power hierarchies in which the suffering of less powerful people—marked as such by their race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, or ability—becomes a spectacle for those with greater social power. When photographs or video of embodied vulnerability are circulated in the news, the impact of the images on the sufferers’ communities is typically not a criterion for ethical editorial decision-making. Care for audience members belonging to the same community as the subject of the image is thus irrelevant to news values and journalistic codes of ethics.

## **The Promise and Possibility of an Ethics of Care in Photojournalism**

To introduce an ethics of care into photojournalistic (and journalistic) practice would require reevaluating news values in light of vulnerability. Such a reevaluation would seek to engage more fully with the ethical codes that endorse consideration for the impact of the news upon the subject of the news, for his/her/their community, and for the journalist. It would recognize the ongoing and permanent relationship of the newsmaker, news content, and the person whose story constitutes the news. For the art scholar John Roberts (2014), these relationships constitute a social ontology “in which representation of self, other, ‘we,’ and the collective are brought to consciousness as part of the everyday social exchange and struggle” (p. 5). Particularly in the case of photographs, the potential violations that could follow the representation of embodied vulnerability as “news” must be taken into account: as in Kim Phuc’s experience, representation might constitute a reviolation of the person, repeated even as the image is reproduced. “Violation,” observes Roberts (2014), “is in a sense, built into the photographic reproduction of appearances” (p. 2); or in Sontag’s (1977) words, “There is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera” (p. 7). Photography’s violations are embedded in “power relations and material interests external to the act of photography itself” (Roberts, 2014, p. 2). Whether these violations are predicated on existing social differentials that render some bodies more violable than others must be considered in journalistic “values”: The role of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability and other identity locations need to be taken into account when decisions are made to disseminate images of embodied vulnerability as “news.” Do these images reassert the power hierarchies that created the vulnerability in the first place? If the images need to be made public, how should they be contextualized so that this analytics of power is made clear? And how best can the subject of the image be supported and protected from ongoing trauma?

These are not easy questions to answer. I pose them in the spirit of heuristic inquiry for those of us who care about photojournalism and journalism and recognize their vital role in societies. As Linfield (2010) observes, “photographs . . . bring us close to those experiences of suffering in ways that no other form of art or journalism can” (p. xv). The idea of integrating service to the public good with an ethics of care challenges photojournalism to engage more fully with its impact, as discussed in this example of “Napalm Girl/The Terror of War.” Linking an ethics of care to the concept of vulnerability, especially embodied vulnerability, calls for acting to “reduce human beings’ susceptibility or exposure to harm, needs, loss, coercion, domination, and other unwanted conditions or events” (Engster, 2018, p. 106), including those brought on by mediation. Reflecting on this, if there is a humanitarian impulse at the core of photojournalistic practice, then the multiple dimensions of journalism-as-care must be integrated into news values and codes of ethics.

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