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Toronto Star Photo Department Code of Ethics

Article

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Star photographers are journalists. They share the goals of all journalists at the paper. They must report and convey the news with honesty and accuracy, through a universal medium that captures a fleeting sliver of time yet can speak volumes of truth, share the good and expose the ugly, break down barriers and make the misunderstood understandable.

That same medium can also be misused, abused and cause harm. Photographs taken without sensitivity toward those being photographed can be invasive. Pictures can be manipulated, both during the making and afterwards. They can be displayed without context. Images can lie.

Star photojournalists and the *Star* are committed to the making and publishing of documentary pictures — images captured as events unfold and as unfettered as possible by the presence of the photographer.

Documentary photography establishes and maintains credibility and builds readers' confidence that what they are seeing and reading is fair and representative of events as they occurred. Photographs of staged or re-enacted events have no place on news or business pages, the sports section, nor should they ever appear in photo essays. Such photographs shall not be orchestrated by any *Star* journalist.

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A good "spec" or enterprise photograph — often the result of a photographer's foresight, patience and/or luck — can make for a front-page picture, leave a lasting smile on readers' faces and touch many. A *Star* photojournalist must respect the moment. If the moment passes without being recorded, it should not be re-staged in order to make a photograph.

Photographers must ensure caption information is comprehensive, accurate, fair and representative of what the photographer witnessed. If an otherwise peaceful protest resulted in one arrest, say so. If a caption is necessary to explain that the content is not real, then we should not use the image.

The *Star* will clearly identify all photo illustrations. Captions and byline credits should not be used to mitigate false impressions created by either a documentary picture or a photo illustration.

In most circumstances, documentary photography is preferable to photo illustration. If the latter is chosen to accompany a story, it should involve the input of photographers and photo, design and word editors. It is imperative that readers not be left with the impression that what they are seeing was a genuine, spontaneous moment.

Altering the content of documentary photographs through technology is not allowed. The moving of a pyramid or the moon, or the merging or erasing of portions of photographs, does photojournalism irreparable harm. What may seem innocuous to some inevitably leads to an erosion of public confidence.

Manipulation aimed at correcting technical deficiencies, such as burning, dodging, spotting for dust, noise reduction, contrast and colour balancing, are acceptable. That said, these adjustments and enhancements should be used with great care and should not alter the integrity of the image.

Picture editors and/or the Photo Editor should be consulted if there are concerns over the manipulation of a photograph, regardless of the source of the photo.

These policies apply to all photographic content in the *Star*, including freelance images, handouts provided by outside sources — readers or others — and images purchased from wire services and image banks. (The *Star's* photography policies are the result of staff input and incorporate materials sourced from the *Austin American-Statesman*, *NPPA*, *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, *St. Petersburg Times* and *The Washington Post*)

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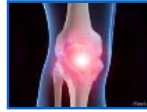
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