Protests in Colombia: photography as a tool for social protesting

Colombian photojournalists were at the front line of social protests registering both the collective action of the protesters and the repression by the law enforcement forces. Photographer and audiovisual producer, Manuel Rodríguez, was present in the protests that took place in Bogota, and his extensive photographic coverage became viral on Instagram and other social media platforms.

By Manuel Rodríguez - June 1st, 2021
Photography is similar to light. Light is aligned with time. Photographers generate peaks: an image at a moment in time. Photographers have the ability to freeze time.

A photographer works for society. His or her job is to register what is going on. To witness an event. Our commitment to the people is to show the reality that surrounds us through our photographs.
Why showing? For posterity. If rights are violated, a photograph can be used as evidence to help those affected.

Photography is a tool used in the search for justice and truth.

From this perspective, photography is passion. We leave a footprint of our time.
During these protests, photography helped us show the repression experienced in the cities. However, it may also be a double-edged sword: when content becomes viral, it may also generate fear. We become afraid of protesting.

Fortunately, press photographers and journalists have not faced any problems as regards repression. We have been respected. Taking into account the internal turmoil, we do not want the government to limit our freedom of speech.
From a psychological standpoint, in these kind of protests, lower social classes feel they do not have anything left to lose. On the contrary, the middle class considers they have more material goods to hold on to and, thus, they do not usually take to the streets.

As in other moments in history, we can observe that people who died as a consequence of repression are part of the lower classes since they are the ones who clash with the State’s law enforcement forces.
In this repression, it can be overserved that the law enforcement forces are employing the same strategies and techniques used by paramilitary groups against agricultural workers and indigenous peoples in rural areas. This affects those Colombians who live in the cities more deeply.

Once again, fear will fade away. The needs of our people will encourage us to continue fighting.