

# *44 Days: Iran and the Remaking of the World*

Photography by David Burnett

Exhibition reflection essays by

Omid Furutan, Assistant Professor of Management

Juli Minoves-Triquell, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Irene Carlson Gallery of Photography

October 21 through December 13, 2013

David Burnett

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On working in photojournalism ...

Like so many photojournalists working today, I am essentially a self-taught photographer. Having started photography in High School as a way to add “extra curricular activities” to my college application, I quickly became enamored of the alchemy represented of a piece of Kodabromide photographic printing paper slowly developing in a tray of Dektol developer. That magic has never diminished, even with the modernity of digital cameras which let a photographer see immediately whether the picture was as good as hoped for – or not. I continue to believe that there is something special about having to learn step by step, the traditional photographic process, and to share the sense of dread and delight that NOT knowing can provide when shooting. I often tell students that in the long run they will be better photographers if they tape over their camera screens and simply work as if it was 1960 all over again. That worry and acknowledgment of the unknown – “did I get the shot? ... or not?” was a very important part of the formation of photographers of my generation, and I think much good would come from neophyte photographers letting that sense of the unknown help guide their work.

The work in the “44 Days” show represents an attempt by one photographer to tell a story that in its own way was monumental. Trying to piece together the various aspects of that story, like any big project, necessarily forces one to make choices. But in the end you hope that the pictures will help draw the public into the story, to help create in them the desire to see more and more. This project took place when TV was still shooting film instead of video, and magazines, both in the US and Europe & Asia, were keen to use work, generally over many pages. That world has been replaced by the Internet and web-based pages, and as we go forward, I am hoping that the web will become a viable source of interest, curiosity, and funding. I have recently published two stories based on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coup d'état against President Salvador Allende, and the subsequent military junta, in the website “[RoadsandKingdoms.com](http://RoadsandKingdoms.com),” and I hope this may be a sign of what journalism will go in the future.

-David Burnett  
October 21, 2013

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About Mr. Burnett...

David Burnett was born on September 7, 1946, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. While earning a degree in political science at Colorado College, he launched his photographic career in 1967 as an intern at Time. He assigned himself to cover the war in Vietnam -- as a freelance photographer -- in 1970, spending two years covering the war. While there, he joined the weekly LIFE magazine as a contract photographer. When LIFE ceased publishing in 1972, he then joined the French agency Gamma before co-founding Contact Press Images with Robert Pledge in New York in 1976.

His coverage of the aftermath of the 1973 Chilean Coup d'Etat earned him his first major award, the Overseas Press Club of America's prestigious "Robert Capa Gold Medal" shared with Raymond Depardon and Chas Gerretsen for "outstanding photography demonstrating exceptional courage and enterprise from abroad." Other awards would follow, including the 1979 World Press Photo "Premier Award" for his documentation of Cambodian refugees, the 1984 Overseas Press Club of America's Olivier Rebbot Award for "Best Reporting From Abroad in Magazines and Books," and the 1986 American Society of Magazine Photographers (ASMP) "Philippe Halsman Award" for his contribution to photojournalism over the previous decade. His picture of Mary Decker's anguished fall at the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games has likewise earned numerous awards. Burnett also pioneered one of Contact's hallmarks: the in-depth color feature shot on slow but color-rich Kodachrome 64 film. Longer to process, but with finer grain, color and tone, the use of this film in addition to traditional black-and-white Tri-X to cover news signaled the agency's philosophy of combining speed and quality, occasionally sacrificing immediate publication for something more permanent. For the last decade his gear has included an eclectic mix of cameras from new generation digital to WW2 vintage Speed Graphic 4x5 press cameras.

In a career that has spanned 40 years, David Burnett has visited more than eighty countries. He has covered stories as diverse as the French and American presidential elections from 1972 to the present; the famine in Sahel in 1974 and in Ethiopia in 1984; the Iranian revolution and the Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Tehran in 1979 and subsequent takeover of the government. He's covered every Summer Olympics since 1984, and photographed every U.S. president from John F. Kennedy to Barack Obama.

Burnett authored a book of his photographs on the reggae icon Bob Marley, "Soul Rebel" (Insight Editions, 2009), and published "44 Days: Iran and the Remaking of the World" (National Geographic/FocalPoint, 2009), in both photographs and words, chronicling the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the return to power of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Burnett's work includes stints as Special Photographer on the sets of and producing movie posters for "The Outsiders", "Havana", "The Babe", and "Scent of a Woman" and "In The Name Of The Father."

Burnett's work is regularly published in ESPN Magazine, The New York Times Magazine, The Telegraph Magazine (England), FAZ and Stern (Germany).

While traveling over the world, David Burnett calls New York home.

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Reflections on the Exhibition  
Omid Furutan, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Management

The day after Christmas of 1978, David Burnett arrives in Iran unaware that he will be living the revolution in Iran and burning it on the pages of history through his pictures. In 1978 there were no Twitters or Facebook. People did not have cell phones that took pictures or recorded videos. At the time, there were very few Western photojournalists in Iran. Despite the extreme hatred for the government of the United States, and Americans in general, David Burnett put himself in extreme danger to capture a real-time account of the first six-weeks of the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1978 that changed everything.

At the time, I was 13 years old and had just gone to England to study the English language. I did not fully understand the magnitude of these events. I remember that we were watching the BBC news' coverage of Ayatollah Khomeini's arrival to Tehran on Air France, and I turned to my mother to ask her a question and saw that her cheeks were soaked with tears. I asked her "why are you crying maman?" Maman is a term of endearment we use in the Persian language to address our mothers. She turned to me and said, "Nothing will ever be the same again my son." At the time I did not know why, but my heart broke. I felt my maman's deep sadness, and the images of Khomeini disembarking from Air France were forever burned in my mind. It is amazing to me that after 35 years, coming face to face with David Burnett's pictures of the same event, I felt a profound sense of sadness that took me back to that cold February of 1979.

It is important that I share why my maman was so sad. My parents are members of the Baha'i Faith. The Baha'i Faith is a world religion that was founded in 1844 in Iran. Although the Baha'i Faith is known for tolerance and brotherly love, since its inception, it has been subject to extreme persecutions in the land of its birth. In its early days, over 20,000 Baha'is were executed by the authorities and mobs led by the Islamic clergy, who viewed the Baha'i Faith as a heresy to Islam. The persecution of the Baha'is in Iran continued until the Pahlavi Dynasty. Under the Reza Shah's regime, the Baha'is were tolerated. Reza Shah's motivation for the secular Western ideas of freedom of worship was "a way of showing mullahs who was boss." However, in 1955, when Reza Shah's son, Muhammad Reza, needed clerical support for fear of losing power, the persecution of the Baha'is was encouraged once again by the Islamic clergy. As an example, in 1955, with the blessing of the government the Baha'i national center in Iran was demolished by the Islamic clergy. In 1979, after the Islamic revolution in Iran, the persecutions of the Baha'is in Iran became an official government policy. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, more than 210 Baha'is have been executed and several hundreds have been imprisoned under false pretenses. Tens of thousands of Baha'is in Iran have lost their jobs, pensions and businesses. Baha'i children are deprived of educational opportunities, holy places have been confiscated and vandalized, and Baha'i cemeteries have been destroyed and graves have been desecrated.

The definition of art is "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power." By definition, emotional power is relative to the observers view point and perception. My view point and perception of David Burnett's pictures is from a persecuted community's view point of an event that "changed everything" for us. I asked a photography professor why he thought David Burnett decided to capture these images in black and white. He very wisely mentioned that we should ask this question from Mr. Burnett himself, but thought that perhaps black and white pictures capture events in precise focus with limited distortion. Not to mention that it is easier to develop. But to me these black and white images symbolize the spirit of the time in Iran. Everything was viewed as black or white, good or evil, life or death. This dichotomy was well documented through Burnett's pictures that feel like a changeless time warp. I am fascinated that the pictures do not feel or look old. They feel as if they were taken yesterday, or at least my impression of Iran as an Iranian American is that everything changed in 1979 and nothing has changed since. Forty-four days have been stretched to thirty-five years and Burnett's pictures brilliantly capture this changeless moment.

-Omid Furutan  
October 15, 2013

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Reflections on the Exhibition  
Juli Minoves-Triquell, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Political Science  
Former Foreign Minister of Andorra and Ambassador to the United Nations

I have been moved by the intensity and immediacy of David Burnett's photographs of the change of regime in Iran in 1979. Although I was growing up in Europe at the time, I was very aware of what was going on in the world, probably because the transition in Spain from Franco to a constitutional democratic parliamentary monarchy under King Juan Carlos had sparked my curiosity about political events. And I remember seeing images of the Shah and of the Ayatollah Khomeini on TV. But Burnett's photography offers a direct access into that revolution. He is there from the beginning, photographing the two men who embody the situation. The Shah looks frail and isolated while talking to the press in what appears to be cold weather; the Ayatollah in his school office already projects the power that was about to be his—the ubiquitous beard disappearing so we focus on his eyes filled with determination.

David Burnett's photos not only document events but create a story laced with death and sorrow. He lets us see the human and the political sides of this conflict. On the political side, we observe the Shah's new government and the Ayatollah's arrival on an Air France plane, injecting the complexity of international politics into the narrative. On the human side, we see the faces of women, covered and uncovered, crying and protesting, and the bodies of men energized with a sense of purpose, although their direction escapes us. Light is never more effective than in the photograph of women, covered by chadors that produce new colored shadows, their heads and arms lifted towards the sky, reaching towards an unknown future. Burnett mixes color with black and white, creating a tapestry of images that tells more than what our eyes see. He makes us feel the *fin de règne* in the sad chromatisms of the Shah and his Empress at a press conference in the palace grounds. The darkness of violence surfaces in black and white depictions of streets and tanks. But the cars are in color. And so is a close-up of the Ayatollah that paradoxically makes him seem almost modern.

As a political scientist I am used to analyzing political events in a methodical way, looking at probable causes, predicting possible outcomes. Like Picasso in his interpretation of the bombing of Guernica, but through a series of images rather than a single composition, Burnett captures a political moment, a few weeks but a single event, a revolution in which the past is erased yet the future remains uncertain. No causes or outcomes are shown here, but the photographs convey with great elegance and feeling the importance that politics have in our lives. This exhibit will be hard to watch for those who lived through the Iranian revolution because it renders the poignancy afresh. For those like me, who watched it from afar, these images make it real. For our students, who were not even born and who grew up in the era of video games and intelligent phones, Burnett's brilliant photography will catch their attention and reach their hearts, inspiring them to research further a historical event that changed the world as we knew it.

Juli Minoves-Triquell  
October 19, 2013

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Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi with President Richard Nixon at the State Arrival Ceremony, South Lawn, White House. Washington, D.C., July 24, 1973



Demonstrators in the funeral cortege of Karan Nejayatollahi, the 27-year-old professor killed during a sit-in strike the day before, face off against the army. Tehran, December 27, 1978



Evacuation of the wounded from 24 of Esfand Square. Tehran, December 27, 1978



A young soldier is seized by demonstrators in 24 of Esfand Square after the army opens fire on the funeral cortege of a 27-year-old professor killed the day before. Tehran, December 27, 1978

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Mourners in Behesht e Zahra, Tehran's main cemetery during the funerals for those killed in 24 of Esfand Square the day before. December 28, 1978



Crowds examine the torture apparatus in a house formerly used by SAVAK. December 31, 1978



The shah emerges from Niavaran Palace to meet the press. Tehran, January 1, 1979



A public reception room inside Niavaran Palace. On the table is a bust of the Empress Farah Diba. Tehran, January 1, 1979

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Foreigners at Mehrabad Airport waiting on flights to leave Iran.  
Tehran, January 2, 1979



The mutilated bodies of soldiers lie in the morgue. Meshad,  
January 3, 1979



Anti-Shah demonstration in Ahwaz. January 8, 1979



Near the central market after Friday prayers. Tehran, January  
12, 1979



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The crowd at Tehran University listens to a speech by the Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani. January 13, 1979



Soldiers join the anti-Shah protestors during the Tehran University demonstration. January 13, 1979



Soldiers join the revolutionaries. Tehran, January 15, 1979



A reporter at the Intercontinental Hotel works by emergency light in the hallway during a power outage. Tehran, January 15, 1979

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Marchers hold aloft posters of the Ayatollah Khomeini after the Shah's departure. Tehran. January 16, 1979



The tail of the Shah's Boeing 707 taxis down the runway at Mehrabad Airport, taking the monarch into exile. January 16, 1979



Downtown celebrations after the announcement of the Shah's departure result in huge traffic jams. Tehran, January 16, 1979



At home Ayatollah Shariat-Madari, Iran's senior religious figure, receives money donated by his followers. Qom, January 23, 1979

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Pro-Khomeini supporters attack “Pro-Constitutionalists” Shah supporters. Tehran, January 24, 1979



Followers of the shah and Prime Minister Bakhtiar hold a “pro-Constitution” rally. The sign held by the man above reads, “We respect the law.” Tehran, January 24, 1979



A pro-Khomeini demonstrator dons a jacket decorated with photographs of victims of the shah’s repression and a hat that reads “crown of the martyrs.” Tehran, January 19, 1979

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A woman at the Shahyad Monument awaits the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Tehran, January 26, 1979



Iranian military guarding the prime minister's office express support to pro-Bakhtiar demonstrators outside. Tehran, January 28, 1979



The army opens fire on pro-Khomeini demonstrators at 24 of Esfand Square. Tehran, January 28, 1979



A protester near the university displays the blood of the latest "martyr." Tehran, January 31, 1979.

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The Ayatollah Khomeini disembarks from an Air France 747 jet at Mehrabad Airport. Tehran, February 1, 1979



Ayatollah Khomeini greets supporters at the Refah School. To his right is his aide Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Tehran, February 2, 1979



Ayatollah Khomeini during a press conference at the Refah School. Tehran, February 2, 1979



Supporters strain to catch a glimpse of the Ayatollah Khomeini. at the Refah School. Tehran, February 3, 1979

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Ayatollah Khomeini greets male followers at the Refah School.  
Tehran, February 4, 1979



Khomeini greets the multitudes at the Refah School. Tehran,  
February 5, 1979



A contact sheet shows Khomeni in his room at the refah School  
having tea, speaking with his advisers, then greeting his  
followers. Tehran, February 5, 1979.



Ayatollah Khomeini is served tea in his room at the Refah  
School by Sadegh Khalkhali, who later became known as “the  
hanging judge.” Tehran, February 5, 1979

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Militants assault the U.S. Embassy. Tehran, February 14, 1979



Militants assault the U.S. Embassy. Tehran, February 14, 1979



Gunmen search for arms in the U.S. Embassy. Tehran, February 14, 1979



Gunmen escort a marine out of the U.S. Embassy. Tehran, February 14, 1979