

A Lament for Labor Day: What Happens When Unemployment Happens to You

By [Danny Schechter](#)

Global Research, September 03, 2010
3 September 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

When your life and your work is as entwined as mine has been—fusing the personal and the political over all these years, it may be stretching things to consider yourself unemployed but that's what I am as Labor Day approaches.

Most of the media focuses on the big companies that have slashed their work forces (even as they hoard cash.) But small companies are also suffering, cutting back, and closing. They don't get the subsidies or bailouts or the attention.

Companies like ours!

Last May, we decided to close our Globalvision office when the lease was up. Our costs remained too high while revenues had dropped. We realized that we ourselves had become victims of the economic calamity that I had been warning about, and urging who ever would listen to respond to. It was, suddenly, not about someone else's problems. They had literally come home.

There was no escaping it: after nearly 24 years in a business that sometime seemed more like a crusade, the handwriting was on the wall as the coffers shrank and threatened to become a coffin.

Like most of our countrymen and women, we had lost confidence in the economy. Taking on a new lease would have meant personally guaranteeing it. That seemed like a road to bankruptcy.

Our option: go virtual with a post office box (POB 677, New York 10035) while revamping the Globalvision.org website.

It took us a month to pack up our lives, our gear, edit rooms, tapes and archive. There were also our awards and memorabilia, and other artifacts of a video production company that was always churning new videos and films. The market for what we had always done seemed to have vanished; the foundations that sometimes bankrolled our work had lost millions in the markets and had turned to new flavors of the week.

Our story was considered old. We may have been the last believers.

The busyness of wrapping it all up was exhausting over the course of a month. A patrimony which we always believed had value was moved into boxes, and then into storage, packed away in large warehouse structures, crammed behind steel doors with only a number on the door. It had the feel of a prison.

We moved back into to apartments we had for years left early in the morning and returned to late at night. Sometimes they didn't feel much like homes because to keep a small, undercapitalized company alive for decades demanded long hours on a treadmill with no margins for failure.

I remembered a summer cab ride years ago when we drove through Central Park on the way to the airport. The place was packed with people having fun. It was a shock to be confronted with how much we were missing while staring into TV screens in dark edit rooms.

Soon, I was setting up a home office, but why-was I doing it? Could it be I just I didn't know what else to do? I put in a new phone only to watch it not ring. It was the hottest summer in recent times and at points I felt like I was working in an oven. I became addicted to club soda, cases of the stuff.

We were media independents in a world where everyone is forced to be dependent—on jobs, clients and grants. By necessity, we had to become hustlers, doing more for less, undercutting competitors and working our asses off. The joys of being entrepreneurs became playing at capitalism without capital. It left us little time for development or to cultivate funders and even, at times, sustain friendships.

We may have been well-known in the “business” but sometimes lost touch with ourselves.

All work and no play....

Driven by passion, mission and perhaps illusion, I made a film a year, sometimes more. I was always multi-tasking, cutting corners, doing more than I should. I wrote blogs, sometimes compared to Dead Sea scrolls because they rivaled them in length.

I wrote books, eleven of them if you can believe, while doing everything else. I was constantly in motion but without a lot of movement. We didn't realize how many in the industry we aspired to work in were threatened by our values and political choices, or just ignored us because we were not commercial enough.

There was always the hope that somewhere, somehow, manna would fall from heaven or perhaps from a patron or two.

Sometimes it happened, more than you would believe, as we enchanted a French Countess, an English visionary and an Italian publisher. Being Global had its rewards as my frequent flyer miles piled up, and globetrotting intensified.

It was a whirlwind of activity, and I haven't thought about it deeply enough yet to regret it. We didn't achieve all our goals but I, for one, am proud of having tried. We achieved far more than we ever thought possible.

When it all tapered off, not by choice but necessity, I was not really prepared for the suddenness of being alone, feeling cast off without a daily agenda, or schedule. I suddenly had nowhere to go. The emails shrunk, the requests turned into a trickle as new generations of producers took their rightful place in what sun there was shining.

It seemed like everyone now was a producer, and many of the “kids” could afford to work for nothing. Suddenly, we had become too pricey, too newsy, too much.

I was soon having moments of despair, perhaps even pangs of depression but I have not succumbed. It was time to make a change. I had no choice but to persevere. Long ago, we had been branded “heroes of downward mobility.”

I am sure many people who are out of work can identify with our sense of loss and insecurity.

My first nights were sleepless, consumed by anxiety. What would I do? Is there an Act 3 for an aging workhorse? Did our dream die? Were we fools to believe we could challenge, much less compete, with BIG media.

I liked the idea of working collaboratively but now I was forced to become a lone ranger, alone, without a womb-like office refuge that had sheltered me for so long. We are trying to keep Globalvision alive but if it was hard to do with an office, It may be impossible without one.

It's not that I have been just laying around. I have been spending my time trying to promote my film Plunder The Crime Of Our Time which came out at the end of April. I've been appearing on many media interviews but major media outlets still seem uninterested in the multi-trillion dollar crimes of Wall Street. They prefer to react to celebrity droppings and whatever contrived hot-button issue on the right-wing agenda like the Mosque that may never be built at Ground Zero. Thank goodness for outlets like Democracy Now, Grit TV, The Real News Network, Free Speech TV and Link TV. Many alternative media outlets have been very kind.

In the meantime, I have also become a shipping department, packaging DVDs and book orders received over our website and trekking to the Post Office where the clerks are tired of seeing my face. There's always something wrong with a zip code or scribbled address. If I have any talent, this is not one.

Paypal is not my pal.

I also began to feeling like a failure even as I kept imploring whoever who would listen to act on economic issues. I thought I was persuasive but was having little observable impact. Given the lack of leadership at the top and the well-funded opposition on the right, It seems like the economy will bring down the Democrats and even more of our livelihoods. There is no mass movement to fight for jobs, economic justice, and a moratorium on foreclosures. Sometimes, I feel like I am just pissing in the wind in my efforts to stir a fractured and fragmented progressive movement.

For many it seems so much easier to ridicule Sarah Palin and Glenn Beck than fight Wall Street. Their icons are out organizing; “ours” are just bitching..

I have done many promotional media appearances but the summer is known for low viewing and listening. The networks I used to work for were trapped in predictable coverage routines, not open to my input.

The one surprise I have had is the interest in international broadcasters in what I have to say. Your news dissector is now appearing with some regularity on Iran's Press TV, Russia Today and Al Jazeera as opposed the Daily Show and MSNBC. Strange. The only consolation is they may have more viewers.

The other day South Africa's Ambassador in Sweden called after he saw me commenting on Glenn Beck's Sermon From The Steps Of The Lincoln Memorial on Al Jazeera. There I was, via satellite, from a studio here to his set in Stockholm.

Globalvision by other means!

So, the irony is I have been in the media more after shuttering our media office than ever.

Is it having an impact? Hard to know. Instead of blogging daily. I am writing weekly commentaries. I am tweeting and Face Booking, "Trying " is the operative word but as my income declines, the precariousness of my longer-term situation becomes more evident.

I am hanging on, and hanging out.

Yet, when I look at realities in Haiti, or Pakistan or even back in the Bronx I came out of, I count my blessings. I am, knock, knock, not living on the edge of desperation like so many, not yet anyway, and still relatively healthy.

I know that joblessness is a killer for many, leading to family breakups, personal breakdowns, and sickness, physical and mental. We now have a million homeless kids in our schools.

I grew up in a Labor movement working class family. I believe in unions although I would prefer the old militancy of May Day to the barbeques on Labor Day.

I have gone from the 60's into my 60's Let's face it, getting older sucks, but it happens to all of us.

Yes, I have more time to relax, see more movies, even do more walking. I seem to be watching the world more and more from my window. At the same time, I try to contain my own fears, check my political frustration and remain positive even during hot summer days of disorientation and feeling down.

When that happens, I think of Richard Farina's novel from my college years, actually written about the town, Ithaca New York, where I went to College . (It's Mythica to me now.) The book: "Been Down So Long, It Looks Like Up To Me."

Unemployment for me is not necessarily as bad as it could be but I don't have kids to support. I am not facing foreclosure. I am not totally trapped in the Debt Trap. I am not under the severe pressure so many others are facing. I am so alarmed by the lack of real stimulus job creation and benefit extension programs. Where is FDR when we need him?

The economic prognosis is not good.

I am still trying to marry money and meaning. I am also still getting invitations to travel. I'll be speaking in London in September and in Tashkent later this fall, if you can believe.

So. yes again, I am happy to be here, to be alive, to have a roof over my head, to have some forum for my ideas.

I have to count my diminishing blessings. Isn't that what it always comes down to? I may have done more than I ever thought I ever would but nothing lasts forever.

I think of all the media companies I worked for. Many are no longer around. I outlasted them.

When I voted for change last November, I didn't realize how my own circumstances would change so radically and force me to navigate in more turbulent waters. I know I am not alone. Many in the Indy Media sector are in the same leaky boat.

So I am out of work on this Labor Day weekend, laboring to keep going, hoping my luck will turn, hoping OUR luck will rebound.

I am trying to look ahead, not back. The challenge: I still care, maybe too much.

What's next?

Uncertainty is the only certainty.

News Dissector **Danny Schechter** directed the film *Plunder About the Crimes of Wall Street*. (PlunderTheCrimeOfOurTime.com) Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

NEW BOOK FROM GLOBAL RESEARCH

Special Offer

[The Global Economic Crisis](#)



Michel Chossudovsky
Andrew G. Marshall (editors)

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Danny Schechter](#), Global Research, 2010

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Danny Schechter](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants

permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca