

EMPOWERING YOUTH SINCE 1994

YOUTH JOURNALISM

youthjournalism.org

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Promoting a free press, worldwide

YJI educates young people on every continent – and helps them tell their stories

Passionate about using journalism to promote democracy and a free press, Jackie Majerus is the perfect choice for this year's Press Freedom Teaching Award. She's educated and mentored young journalists worldwide for three decades, inspiring them to develop their skills and engage with the issues of the day. She is a tireless advocate for young people, journalism and a brighter future for everyone.



To understand Jackie, you first have to know something about Youth Journalism International, a U.S.-based NGO.

Mission Statement

Youth Journalism International connects student writers, artists and photographers with peers around the globe, teaches journalism, fosters cross-cultural understanding, and promotes and defends a free youth press.

How it began

Determined to help create a new generation of journalists who understand their crucial role in a democracy, Jackie Majerus co-founded Youth Journalism International in 1994.

It was a small, in-person group in the U.S. state of Connecticut.



From the start, YJI students aimed high

They covered an astonishing range of difficult, serious topics. And they did all of it well.

Here are some of the topics they wrote about:

- Teen pregnancy
- Teen suicide
- Depression
- School violence (*starting with the shooting at Columbine High School*)
- Child labor
- War
- Terrorism
- Sexual assault
- Natural disasters, including Hurricane Katrina
- The environment and climate change

How does YJI find the kids?
The truth is, they find us.
YJI accepts a diverse,
talented staff from among
the 1,200+ students who
apply each year.





They come from all over the world.



Yes, even Antarctica.



YJI focuses on both the importance of journalism and the risks involved in doing the work.

In April 2023, a YJI student interviewed a courageous Brazilian reporter.

In 2014, YJI students honored James Foley, killed on the job in Syria, and shared the #RememberingJim hashtag. And in 2002, they ached for Daniel Pearl, killed in Pakistan while chasing a story. They wrote about him, too.

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ABOUT US CONTEST

News - Top
Facing attacks and threats from Brazil's president, she kept reporting

April 3, 2023 - Add Comment - By Nicole Luna



YJI has had students reporting from dangerous places, including Syria, Iran, Myanmar and Moscow. It keeps their identities secret to keep them safe.

**Everything in YJI
happens because
of Jackie.**



Since 2011, Jackie has worked every day, from morning to night, as a volunteer for YJI. She works tirelessly for students with no compensation beyond the satisfaction of a job well done.

Jackie with YJI students in Istanbul in 2022.

Jackie is at the heart of a worldwide network of students and YJI alumni who value a free press and look out for one another as well.



The education that Jackie provides to students is invaluable. But it doesn't cost them anything. To make sure every young person can participate, **YJI has always been, and will always be, free.**

**Let's let YJI students
and alumni tell you
why Jackie deserves
this honor.**



“Jackie has taken students into her family’s home, helped them secure internships and jobs at newspapers, and put her time, money and more importantly her heart into making YJI what it is today. When she looks around her and sees what began with a handful of Connecticut teenagers now flourishing as an international group of young people dedicated to her dream, I can see in her eyes and hear in her voice the enormous gratification. But, because it’s Jackie, I can also sense something else – anticipation of what’s to come and the desire to do more and do it better.” – Joe Killian, a YJI alum who is an award-winning reporter in North Carolina

“Ever since I joined Youth Journalism International, Jackie has always been there for me to offer thoughtful feedback and constructive criticism on my writing. But what sets Jackie apart from other people is her genuine care and concern for her students both as journalists and individuals. Jackie has been a source of inspiration who always encourages us to better ourselves. Whether you need compassion in difficult times or a good laugh, Jackie is always there for you. Jackie has instilled in me the importance of a free press and a strong democracy. Jackie consistently reinforces how journalism is not just about reporting the news, but about holding those in power accountable and giving a voice to the voiceless. Jackie has taught me what it truly means to be a journalist: to be curious, skeptical and compassionate. Beyond journalism, Jackie has also taught me valuable life lessons that I will carry with me always. Jackie’s unwavering dedication to her work, her kindness and her empathy towards others as well as Jackie’s unwavering commitment to truth and justice have all been incredible inspirations to me.”

-- Anjola Fashawe (YJI student in London, England)



“Through YJI and through Jackie, I have been enlightened in the field of free press like never before. Despite being a lifelong American resident as well as a student in an American government class, the most I have learned from press freedom and democracy have come from her. Jackie teaches us YJI students about the true indispensability of free press by setting up a free press of our own at YJI. She not only lets us write about whatever we want, she empowers us to dig deeper into our passions and interests by helping us with research, interviews, press passes, or anything that needs to be done in order to publish the stories that us students want published. Jackie always puts students first, and it really shows. As students, we are the first ones she comes to for insight about how to modernize YJI or how to better enrich the journalistic experiences of other students. It’s been a joy and a privilege to get to know Jackie over the past year and a half or so, and I can’t sing her praises loud enough.”

-- Baylee Krulewitz (YJI student in Connecticut, USA)



Baylee Krulewitz with Jackie in Washington, DC



Naz Mergen with Jackie in Istanbul in 2022

“I’ve been in YJI for almost a year now and it has been an incredible journey. Everyone was really helpful and sweet but the most important person in here was my editor, my friend Jackie. She has been there for me whenever I needed her with my articles or even with my family and stress problems. She is a very kind soul who will do her best to make you happy in any way she can and I can’t thank her enough for that. I had the chance to meet Jackie face to face for our conference and she was even kinder and funnier in real life. It has been a blessing to get to know her and I think anyone who has met Jackie would think the same.”

-- Naz Mergen (YJI student in Istanbul, Turkiye)



“I was in my last year of high school, undecided about my future career but afraid of the risks related to it, when I got into Youth Journalism International as a junior reporter. Brazil is one of the countries that most attacks and kills journalists of the world. Despite how journalism is so essential for our country, the government and powerful people have threatened this career and our freedom of speech. From a lack of recognition to bad working conditions, I had many reasons to give up on journalism.

But Jackie showed me the other side of it. She made me realize how critical journalism is in the middle of so much misinformation and how much our society needs professional journalists passionate about this career and committed to revealing the truth.

She not only teaches us journalism, but also how to fight for democracy while providing us with an opportunity for growth that we would never have otherwise.

Since Jackie started to mentor me, I have improved my writing and communication skills. I had the chance to interview many inspiring people and learn from their experiences. Jackie taught me how to connect with people and spread their voices. She also shared with me the importance of respecting individual privacy and protecting the freedom of expression.

I wholeheartedly consider Jackie Majerus-Collins as the best educator of the world. She is a great journalist and an inspiring person who believed in me when the world around me did not.”

-- Nicole Luna (YJI student in Brazil)

“Since I started out in journalism for the first time, Jackie has been there to guide me in journalism writing. But also I’m feeling confident to even talk to people and write about the issues I care about. She makes all of the YJI students feel like we can do anything we set our minds to. It doesn’t matter how old you are, whether you are an experienced writer, or whether you live in a place with restricted press or more free press. Anybody and everyone has a voice and Jackie has amplified that for all her students throughout the last four years I have known her. I have grown not only as a journalist but also as a person who is able to have difficult conversations and fight for what I believe in. And a huge part of this has been because of YJI and Jackie.”

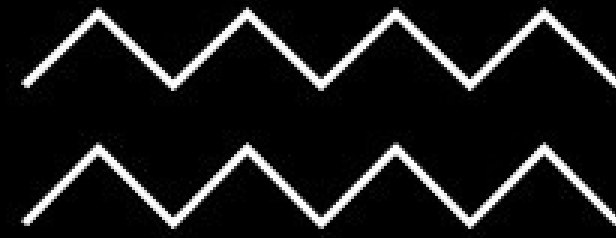
-- Lyat Melese (YJI student in Virginia, USA)





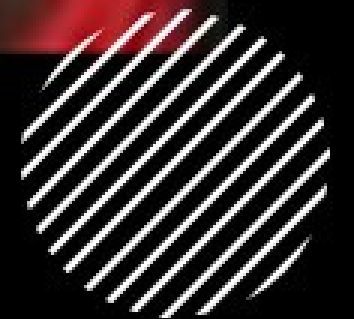
“I knew very little about journalism when I joined YJI, just that I liked writing and wanted to make my voice heard. Jackie has been a stellar teacher and mentor throughout my time as a reporter. She is passionate about promoting a free press and always offers her patient and constructive criticism. Jackie truly makes YJI what it is.”

-- Rosie Evans (YJI student in England)



“Jackie taught me the importance of writing captions on my photojournalism. I learnt from her that the message of the image isn't complete without captions and won't be delivered correctly to the audience. She used to give me advice on how to be better photojournalistic. She was always a supporting and motivating person. We wouldn't be good journalists without her support, guidance and kindness.”

-- Yasser Alaa Mobarak (a YJI alumni from Egypt)





“I have come to know and learn a lot from Jackie, she’s the type that never gets fed up with me. She’s always ready to help and assist me in whatever I’m doing. She taught me how to write stories and I learn through her editing how to edit. She has taught me how to use quotes and also understand what they mean. She makes YJI a living paradise and a very educative yet fun place to be. She tried as much as possible to get me engaged in anything that was happening. She keeps me updated about news and events. Jackie taught me that journalism is not just about writing news stories but understanding the content of news stories. She taught me to be objective when writing and reporting. She always talks about safety when covering events. Jackie is truly a phenomenal leader, reporter, editor, and who deserves any kind of award to come her way.”

– Mariama Barry (YJI student in The Gambia)

“Immediately after my first conversation with Jackie, I knew she was an extraordinary person. The way she speaks with us, her students, makes us feel special and bright. She’s always cheerful and happy to see us and I can ask her for anything without any concern. Jackie opened my eyes and has helped me to evolve and explore new fields in journalism and beyond. Her always-present positive mood and creativeness inspire me every day.”

-- Renata Pernegrová (YJI student in Czechia)





Jackie has inspired me immensely as a young journalist. Having always lived in a relatively free country in terms of the press, I underestimated just how difficult yet important it is to have your voice be heard as a young person, particularly in other parts of the world. Jackie connected me with so many people of my generation from all different backgrounds wanting to use their voice for good. Before I met her and joined YJI, I never even thought my perspective could matter on a bigger scale. Even living in a press free country, I felt scared to use my voice because it meant opening myself up to potential scrutiny from other people. But with Jackie's encouragement to push myself to get out there, investigate and question things with my own worldview, I've felt so deeply empowered. Throughout my time under Jackie's supervision, I have learnt much about the hardship journalists face but also about the opportunities there are on a local and global scale to get involved in the world and make a difference by expressing myself. Without Jackie's insight, I might not have been fortunate enough to discover my own potential but also that of the other incredible young people in this world who, despite the stifling societies they find themselves in, have the courage to share their worldview and speak truthfully about the issues that truly matter.

-- Nargis Babar (YJI student in Sweden)



“Jackie has played the role of a mother and editor to us young, keen and inexperienced journalists. Introducing us to our wild world with guidance on how to get round in it and still have hope, and to bring hope to those without through our stories. She, of course, taught us how to spot a story and bring it to life.”

-- Joshua Mulema (YJI student in Botswana)

“I'll never forget one of my first meetings as a YJI student. After introducing myself to the rest of the students, Jackie asked each of us how we were doing in our separate corners of the world. While everyone chatted about school, extracurriculars, their families and friends, and the weather, I sat wondering what any of this had to do with news or journalism. But as the conversation continued, the connection began to become clear. The heavy snow in one student's city became a commentary piece about the effects of climate change. A college visiting trip became an opportunity to cover a protest for a news story. Through YJI, I've learned that journalism is the reporting and analysis of today- what is happening to real people, right now in our everyday lives. Jackie's expertise and mentorship has sparked a passion in me for journalism, writing, and learning and telling the stories of others.”

– Jasmine Zhen (YJI student in Washington, USA)





“Jackie shaped me as a human being and the professional I have become starting 27 years ago - all voluntarily. Thanks to her and YJI I got to express my opinions to the world, no matter what they were. I learned how to write better, gained confidence in interviewing and just talking to people. I am now an attorney and help people at a courthouse.

Jackie sees the humanity in all by welcoming everyone globally through YJI, both the young journalists and the consumers. Jackie has consistently taught press freedom to youth globally for decades to students who never had to pay for it.”

-- Hila Yosafi (Connecticut, USA)



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