Endurance: Earthquake Nepal

a photo book by

Omar Havana

With a foreword by Bernardo Bertolucci

in collaboration with

FotoEvidence Press

A statue of a smiling Buddha sits amidst the rubble of a temple in Bhaktapur, April 26, 2015.

Omar Havana is an award-winning photojournalist, represented by Getty Images, who was living in Katmandu on April 25th 2015 when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake turned many parts of the country to rubble. His work from the immediate aftermath of the earthquake was published more than 1000 times around the world. He followed the story long after media interest waned, taking trips around the country to document both the destruction and the recovery as a testimony to the endurance of the Nepali people. Contact: omarhavana@omarhavana.com

FotoEvidence was founded in 2010 to publish books for documentary photographers working on long-term projects focused on human rights and social justice. Contact: dstuart@fotoevidence.com

Endurance at Kickstarter
“Endurance” is Born

On April 25th, 2015 an earthquake of 7.8 magnitude shook Nepal. Almost 9,000 people died, more than 22,000 people suffered injuries and more than half a million houses were destroyed. For months aftershocks rocked the country. People occupied the streets and open spaces in fear. Chaos dominated daily life.

One night, after running all day, photographing, as aftershocks struck repeatedly, I finally fell asleep, hugging my cameras. Someone touched me. I immediately thought they might want to steal my cameras but I turned to find an old woman, a woman who had lost everything, covering me with her quilt. She said, “We need to take care of you. You are telling the world the situation in our country. At that moment, I began “Endurance.”

At first the world was interested and the media published a river of pictures showing the destruction but within weeks other stories took the headlines. Nepal vanished little by little from the news while the Nepali people continued their struggle, fighting as they did from day one, to help each other and rebuild out of the devastation. “Endurance” tells their story.

Being There

I witnessed the earthquake first hand. I hit the streets of Kathmandu minutes after the first tremor, racing down six flights of stairs with my wife and neighbors. On our way down the walls started to break apart around us. I was filled with fear and had no idea what was happening but, as we emerged onto the street, I felt sure that we were some of the lucky people.

For days we all slept on the streets, sharing fear but also love and care for each other. As a foreigner living in Nepal, I felt I should give everything I had inside to tell the world what happened. My love for the country, especially for the people, made me push beyond my strength and helped me overcome my fear.
Moments of Joy

Days passed with the small airport overloaded before international rescue teams could arrive in Kathmandu. Hope had faded. The number of people confirmed dead increased significantly.

When rescuers did arrive, an occasional ray of light pierced the darkness of devastation and sorrow. At the ruins of a guesthouse, where dozens of people had perished, Pemba Lama, a 15 year-old boy, was rescued alive by Nepali Army and international rescue teams.

He had survived for five days, surrounded by the dead bodies of his guesthouse work colleagues, drinking little drops of water condensing on a t-shirt hanging over him in the pile of debris.

After Pemba, several more people were found alive, examples of the strength and persistence of the people of Nepal.

Every person found was celebrated as a victory over the rage of mother earth. Little by little life was coming back to Nepal, as bodies were being cremated day and night, accompanied by the tears of those who had survived them.

The cremation of the dead went on day and night in Kathmandu.
Inspired By My Subjects

The plight of the Nepali people inspired me, not only to be a better photographer but to ask what I could do to be a better person. I asked myself, “how can they still smile after all that has happened?” I wanted to understand what spirit made this possible, to understand what was behind their resilience and to capture it with my photography.

For several months I traveled around Nepal, a country I loved, discovering stories like that of Pemba Lama, who survived five days under the rubble, or Pawn, whose mother hugged and lay over him as the earthquake began. She died but he survived with injuries only to his legs.

Pawn Prajapati, 15 years old, sits on a bed while his aunt massages his back and his legs, which were badly injured during the earthquake.

From Bhaktapur to Gorkha, from Kathmandu to Sindhupalchowk, everywhere I went, the fight of those who I found impressed me. People were asking me to enter their homes, to share a tea, to pose for photos. “Endurance” little by little became a reality.

As I came to grips with my own trauma, the stories of those I met served as a kind of therapy, helping me realize that my trauma was shared. My love for Nepal grew as the people made me feel part of a country suffering the same trauma. I cried, smiled, felt the pain of those who were sharing a moment with me. I could not let their stories be forgotten. I felt more and more that it was my duty to give them voice. To alert the world to the depth of their struggle and the spirit with which they fought to rebuild their country.

Residents salvage a wardrobe through the roof of their home on April 29, 2015 in Bhaktapur.

The People Not the Government

While the Government of Nepal was still searching for the right way to respond to such a massive disaster, the population did not think. They went to work. With their bare hands they were pulling damaged buildings down with ropes, recovering bricks and wooden planks to rebuild their homes, to rebuild their country. Again and again I heard people say, “We will rise again. We will rise again.”

More than 4 billion dollars were pledged by the international community to the Nepali Government to help the country but, to this day, Nepal is still waiting to see the funds being invested in those who need it the most.

International and local organizations are helping those in need with medical care, food,
water, rebuilding schools, educating children in displacement camps but, over all, it was the people of Nepal, who were working extremely hard day and night to rebuild their nation.

Sukhman Tamang holds one of his youngest relatives after landing at his village in the Himalayas with his wife and daughters, two months after being evacuated.

**Endurance, The Book**

A colleague once told me, “If the story is not told, it does not exist.” I want the story of the Nepali people’s response to the earthquake to be remembered. “**Endurance**” will be a humble tribute to and a legacy for those who are working hard to see their nation rise again.

“**Endurance**” will include over 70 black and white photographs shot across Nepal, immediately after the earthquake and in the months following. It will be printed in a hardbound edition, measuring 20 x 30 cm.

Film director **Bernardo Bertolucci**, who used images from “**Endurance**” for a fundraising campaign in Rome to help Nepal, will write a foreword. Other contributors include: South African photographer **Gareth Bright**, AFP Nepali journalist **Paavan Mathema** and **Amir Thapa**, Senior Program Officer for International Medical Corps Nepal.

Renown around the world for its extraordinary Himalayan landscape, Nepal should really be recognized for its extraordinary people. “**Endurance**” tells the story of their resilience, the story of a life spirit that spreads, like the smiles on their faces, over the streets filled with debris and the ruins of their homes.

*A displaced girl studies on a hill in front of the Bode displacement camp on in Bhaktapur. More than 1000 people who lost their homes lived in the camp in August of 2015.*
The Kickstarter Campaign
In order to publish *Endurance* FotoEvidence and I need to raise $27,000. We are mounting a crowd funding campaign at Kickstarter to make this enduring testament to strength and spirit of the people of Nepal a reality. If we exceed our goal even modestly we be able to distribute *Endurance* to libraries and community organizations in Nepal.

We welcome direct backing for the campaign but you can also help us reach our goal by sharing the project personally with others who you think might have an interest and through your social network.

Visit [Endurance at Kickstarter](#).

About Omar Havana
Omar Havana was born in Spain in 1975. He is represented by Getty Images and since 2008 he had been living in Asia. He moved to Nepal in October 2014 where he had been covering a wide spectrum of stories, mostly focused on the human dramas, achievements and fight to improve the situation of the country.

His photos during the earthquake were published by dozens of the most important publications around the world, including front pages in The New York Times. He has also shown his work in the 2015 Visa Pour L’Image Festival in Perpignan and 2015 Photoreporter Festival, both in France. Some of his photos during the earthquake have been chosen among the best of the year by international media such as The Atlantic and his agency Getty Images. Omar and his wife Juliette have also given conferences in France and Spain on how to help Nepal weeks after the earthquake hit the country. His commitment to Nepal is much more than as a photographer: he is part of Nepal, a country that he loves and he called home.

Omar Havana’s website: [http://omarhavana.com](http://omarhavana.com)

Endurance Instagram account: [https://www.instagram.com/endurance_oh/](https://www.instagram.com/endurance_oh/)


Omar Havana in the Press
The story behind the photos of Nepal’s devastating Earthquake. [TIME Magazine](https://www.time.com/)


Nepal smiles in face of earthquake in Omar Havana’s photos. [RFI International](https://www.rfi.fr/en)

Omar Havana alerta ante el olvido tras el terremoto. [The Huffington Post](https://www.huffingtonpost.com) (Spanish language)

A photographer’s tribute to Nepali quake survivors’ strength and resilience. [South China Morning Post](https://www.scmp.com)

About FotoEvidence
FotoEvidence was founded in 2010 by Svetlana Bachevanova with the intention of publishing the work of documentary photographers working on long-term projects that focus on social justice and human rights. In addition, each year the FotoEvidence Book Award publishes a book for one photographer whose project demonstrates courage and commitment in the pursuit of human rights.

FotoEvidence’s website: [FotoEvidence.com](http://fotoevidence.com)

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