

**Scott Lewis**

**Grant Recipient, September 2005**

### **Winning Project: Spiritual and Secular Rituals in American Faith Communities**

In the United States, the world's faiths – Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Pagan, Sikh - are on track to soon outnumber Protestants, the primary religious identity of the country since its founding. The face of faith in American is changing rapidly. At the same time, politicians have discovered that using faith to garner attention and support is politically expedient. The re-election of George W. Bush has energized and empowered the political might of Conservative Christians, who have made religion a tool of divisiveness and effectively used the power of the public arena to broaden exposure of their views. A clash of cultures and values is imminent.

But common to all faiths are rituals - acts that bind practitioners to a system of beliefs, values, morality and community.

With the benefit of the Getty Images grant, Lewis will explore the intimate daily acts of faith that provide spiritual solace and communal bonding to followers while examining the current, aggressive insertion of religion into politics and America's media culture. Through this project, Lewis aims to provide vision to an issue at the heart of American cultural life.

### **Biography**

Scott Lewis was born in New York City in 1968. Raised in Dallas, Texas, Lewis received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Missouri. In 1996, he was the founding photographer for Copley's Sun Publications and in 1999 he became a staff photographer for *The News & Observer* in Raleigh, North Carolina. During the last six years, Lewis has covered daily life at home and abroad including two NCAA Final Four basketball tournaments, four hurricanes and events in Israel and the West Bank. His work was part of two Pulitzer Prize nominations - one for his staff coverage of Hurricane Floyd and another last year for his work on faith with two other photographers. Lewis has also worked on assignment and had work published in prestigious publications such as *National Geographic*, *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Stern*, and *L'Express*.

Lewis has been the recipient of more than 40 photojournalism awards for photography and editing. In 1997, he was honored as the National Press Photographers Association Region 5 Photographer of the Year. The following year, Lewis received the Community Awareness Award in the 55th NPPA/University of Missouri Pictures of the Year competition and later received First Place in the People in the News category of the 2003 World Press Photo contest for his image of Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat, emerging from his besieged compound after a tense standoff with Israeli soldiers.

Lewis has spoken and judged several state photojournalism conferences including the Atlanta Photojournalism Seminar, and has taught documentary photography as an adjunct professor at the University of North Carolina.



*Portfolio Images Courtesy of Scott Lewis*