

Michael Petrou
Graduated: 1998
Currently: Freelance Journalist, foreign correspondent

CV: BA Canadian Studies, Queen's University, 1998 /
DPhil, Modern History, University of Oxford, 2006

On September 11, 2001, Canadian media outlets were desperately seeking reporters with insight on, and contacts in, Afghanistan and the Middle East. Fortunately for Michael Petrou—25 years old, a rookie journalist, and an intern at the *Ottawa Citizen*—he'd just spent the autumn of 2000 in Pakistan.

"A friend and I had been travelling through these tribal areas, which were the incubators for al-Qaeda and the Taliban, though we didn't know it at the time," says Petrou. "So when 9/11 happened, I was one of the few Canadian reporters who'd seen Afghanistan." That initial visit to the Middle East, which a year later provided a sudden and entirely unexpected jolt to his career, was initially driven by little more than raw curiosity—the chance to see and do something he never had before.

Petrou's CV speaks to a career built on that kind of curiosity: he's been a radio reporter in Goose Bay, a foreign correspondent, a reporter and researcher for the BBC World Service, and a three-time National Magazine Award winner. He's the author of two acclaimed books: a work of historical scholarship entitled *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War*

"It was a really positive experience, and a lot had to do with the quality of the professors," he says. "It