"What if photographs depict what should not have been?" – Jacqueline Goldsby

I have been inconsistent in my relationship with and treatment of moving and still photographic images that depict what should not have been. In this lecture I will first briefly describe two projects in which visual documentation of premature violent death played a central role in the effort to organize evidence for political persuasion. Then, after showing the fragility of the projects’ underlying assumptions, I will explore social features and uses that shaped and shadowed the democratization of photographic image-making. Finally I will offer the outlines of a counter-narrative to highlight how we might usefully consider the co-constitutive interdependencies of consciousness, historical geography, and the machine, in the process of materializing objects that inspire subjects in struggle.