

# CCS NOTES

Official Newsletter of the Cultural & Critical Studies Division of AEJMC

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## Keeping Passion Alive During Challenging Times – the work of Cultural and Critical Studies is more important than ever

*A Note from Division Head Ruth DeFoster*

As I write this update in November, winter has come to Minnesota, and the city of St. Paul is blanketed with snow. This season of Northern cold and darkness is always difficult, but the routine challenges of this season have been exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic and the aftershocks of a bitter and vitriolic election season.

To call this year “unprecedented” or “exceptional” has become a trite cliché, but the reality is that the past nine months have upended all of our lives in ways that we couldn’t have imagined just a year ago.

I frequently tell my students that simply getting through this semester is an accomplishment. I would like to extend that

affirmation to all of you: It’s okay to feel disillusioned, frustrated and tired during this season. The struggles of adapting to new online teaching modalities, the relentless drumbeat of an out-of-control pandemic in the U.S., and the shameful, borderline seditious behavior of the now



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lame-duck Trump administration: it's a lot to process. It's okay to feel these losses and these frustrations, and to grieve for the loss of lives, the loss of decency in political leadership, the loss of our communities and face-to-face interactions with students. Simply getting through this semester is an achievement to be proud of.

Even amid these trying circumstances, I remain inspired and invigorated by the truly excellent work many of our colleagues in the Cultural and Critical Studies Division have continued to produce during this difficult year. Our own Chelsea Reynolds, CCSD's Teaching Chair, wrote an article titled "Building Theory from Media Ideology: Coding for Power in Journalistic Discourse," which was chosen by the division's journal, *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, as their top article of the year. Former CCSD Heads, Peter Glociczki and Katie Foss, were also chosen by JCI to spearhead a special issue, titled "Considering COVID: Critical Media Scholarship in an Uncertain Time." Our Research Chair, Krishnan Vasudevan, has a number of exciting upcoming studies forthcoming on the precarity of contract labor, the gig economy and the advertising market. Our Secretary, Errol Salamon, has been offered a contract from the University of Illinois Press to publish his upcoming book, "Digital Media Workers: Organizing to Democratize Journalism."

Our members and colleagues continue to do the difficult, important work of researching and writing about systems of power and representation, and the equally important work of teaching a new generation of young people how to become engaged, media literate world citizens.

For this, and for the work of all our colleagues across the globe, I am immensely proud and grateful. Thank you to every critical scholar who continues to show up for this crucial work. Your roles as educators have never been more important than they are now.

I would like to share two exciting new projects with our members this fall. First, as Perry Parks and I stepped into the leadership roles at CCSD this year, we took time to discuss our hopes and vision for the division. One thing that we want to work on and highlight this year is the division's relationship with our journal, *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. The relationship between JCI and CCSD is a long-standing partnership that offers a multitude

## 2020-2021 CCS Officers

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**Special thanks** to Jess Maddox (2019/2020 Newsletter Editor), Khadija Ejaz (2019/2020 Secretary), and Camille Reyes (2019/2020 Web Editor) for their excellent service.

## Send us your news!

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Your articles and news are welcomed for future editions of CCS NOTES.

Please submit your updates to Scott Memmel ([memm0005@umn.edu](mailto:memm0005@umn.edu)). Attach text in MS Word doc or docx format. Send photos in jpeg format.

of wonderful opportunities for our members. JCI recently voted to begin a “Forum” section in the journal highlighting current events and research, and we encourage CCSD members to submit to this new section, as well as to upcoming JCI special issues.

We are also excited to announce a new podcast that the division has launched this fall. You can listen to the first two episodes of the podcast, “Media and Culture,” on the [CCSD website](#). The first episode featured a discussion with our own Perry Parks and Shaheed Nick Mohammed regarding their research on the “carnavalesque” elements of the Trump presidency. In the second episode, I interview noted scholar Robert McChesney about political economy – what it is, why students and critical scholars should care about it, and why ownership and systems of power matter now more than ever.

Our goal for this podcast is to create a thoughtful, timely, bite-sized exploration of topics that are relevant to cultural and critical scholarship. We intend this podcast to highlight current and timely research, and to make this work accessible. Please feel free to share the podcast with friends and colleagues, and to use it as a pedagogical tool in your teaching. I extend my grateful thanks to former CCSD Head Bob Trumpbour, who helped get this podcast up and running and edited the episodes.

As we approach the end of what has been a wild and challenging year, I want to encourage all of you to be kind to yourselves and your colleagues, to take care of yourselves, and to be proud of the important work you all continue to do. In this season of isolation, I see the work that our members are doing – on their own, without fanfare – and I am grateful to be in the company of such thoughtful scholars and educators.

Ruth DeFoster,

Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Minnesota

Head, Cultural & Critical Studies Division - AEJMC

\* \* \*

## Stay connected!

**Web:** [www.aejmc.us/ccs](http://www.aejmc.us/ccs)

**Facebook:** Cultural and Critical Studies Division @ AEJMC  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/513737665319124>

**Twitter:** @aejmc\_ccs

**ListServ:** Join our email list by contacting Ruth DeFoster:  
[defos002@umn.edu](mailto:defos002@umn.edu)

Have any **announcements** you'd like shared in the newsletter? Email newsletter editor Scott Memmel at [memm0005@umn.edu](mailto:memm0005@umn.edu)

# Panel Programming and Division Engagement: New Opportunities

*Perry Parks, CCS Vice-Head and Program Chair*

It's been a real whirlwind since I joined the leadership team as Vice Head in August. Under Ruth's leadership, we've been busy planning 2021 conference panels, reaching out to our affiliate journal, ramping up our online and social media presence, and launching an occasional research podcast to extend the division's outreach.

As you all know, we begin winding up our next year's conference scheduling even as the current-year conference is winding down. Calls for panel proposals were circulated in mid-August and due in mid-September. We received a half-dozen strong proposals from our members and found co-sponsoring divisions for five of them, in addition to signing on with three other divisions' panels. Our panel lineup is highly diverse and extremely topical, with sessions scheduled on improving news coverage of Native Americans, teaching about sexual harassment in mass communication classes, discussing the challenges of reporting on prison populations, examining the unionization of newsrooms, exploring the use of memes in political communication, looking at advertisers' appropriation of Black Lives Matter messages, deconstructing "cancel culture," and assessing authoritarian states' communication practices around Covid-19.



Our lineup this year is heavy on research panels (4) and lighter on teaching (1), but this year's AEJMC president, Tim Vos, has expressed ambition for the association to amp up its research focus, so this emphasis helps us move in that direction. I think the ambition for a heightened research presence can also be a priority for the division over the next couple of years. I get the sense that

## Submit to the Midwinter Conference!

Submissions are now being accepted for the **2021 AEJMC Midwinter Conference**, hosted by the University of Oklahoma!

March 5-6, 2021

In the event that the midwinter conference has to move virtual/online because of COVID-19, we plan to communicate this to participants by early January 2021 (before participants start to register for the conference).

The AEJMC Midwinter Conference is an annual forum for the presentation of research and debate in areas of relevant to the AEJMC groups (divisions, interest groups, and commissions) sponsoring the event. The conference provides a platform for presentations and extended discussions in a relaxed setting. Paper abstract submissions: Authors are invited to submit research paper abstracts of 600 and 800 words (word count excludes author information and references) appropriate to one of the Divisions of Interest Groups represented at the conference. Abstracts should give a clear sense of relevant literature, research objectives, methodological approach, stage of research project (conceptual, data gathering, data interpreting), findings, and conclusions.

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cultural and critical studies occupies a rarefied corner of AEJMC's research awareness, and I propose that we work toward becoming front and center in the association's consciousness.

As I mentioned, I'm delighted with the panel slate we ended up with, but I was surprised that only about half a dozen non-CCS proposals listed our division as a potential co-sponsor. Everyone should be itching to collaborate with our members because of the interesting and essential work that we do, and collectively we should be pushing critical sensibilities into the mainstream of AEJMC's intellectual orientation. Cultural and critical perspectives should be central to research on race, gender, sexuality, politics, and economics in media, and it's our job to put them there. Ruth and the leadership team's initiatives to expand and energize our website, be more active on social media, and mutually reinforce our relationship with the Journal of Communication Inquiry – which could also use an influence boost – are steps in this direction.

I'd also like us to consider more engagement activities, leadership opportunities, and membership incentives to keep the division active throughout the year. We might consider, for instance, launching a dissertation award to recognize new cultural/critical scholars and help establish membership relationships with early-career researchers. The division should also be celebrating and amplifying the successes of its members as often as possible. To do this, we need broader communication channels and wider sharing of news, which means we need all our members to be involved. And we need to be recruiting and encouraging new members through these communication channels. If you're interested in pursuing any of these ideas, let me know. A handful of folks responded to the interest survey I sent around in August, and I owe some of you a return email with some things to work on.

Here's our Twitter account: @aejmc\_ccs

And our Facebook page, which anyone can post to after joining: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/513737665319124>

The past few years have really underscored the significance of cultural and critical work in explaining media phenomena. The time is ripe for us to leverage our theoretical and conceptual tools toward building more generative and socially just media worlds.

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## Submit to the Midwinter Conference!

Submissions should be done online and by the **December 1, 2020 deadline** at: <http://bit.ly/Midwinter2021> or the full link: <https://cmt3.research.microsoft.com/AEJMCMW2021/>

When submitting, follow these steps:

- Go to the conference website (listed above).
- In the “AEJMC Midwinter 2021 Login” box, click on “Sign up here” as new user if you have not used this service before. Otherwise, just log in using your existing login.
- It will take you to a sign-up wizard, which is self-explanatory and guided. Finish signing up by confirming your email address.
- Once the account is set up, sign in using your email address and password.
- To submit the abstract, click on “Create a new Paper Submission”, and select the division/interest group you want to submit your abstract to.
- The next step will require you to provide the title of the paper, an abstract (9,000 characters maximum). If your abstract’s character count exceeds 9,000 characters, you can also attach it as a Word doc or PDF file. However, you cannot leave the abstract box empty, write a brief abstract or keywords for your paper if you choose to upload it as an attachment.

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# International Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic Can be an Engaging Research Adventure

*Errol Salamon, CCS Secretary*

As an academic who’s used to traveling often, I didn’t know what to expect when traveling internationally during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the expected travel anxieties, I was inspired to reflect on critical-cultural studies methodology after landing in Canada. How did I get to that point? Let’s take a look back.

Before I left Minneapolis, I had started my new job remotely at the University of Huddersfield over the summer. But my hometown, Toronto, was going to be my pandemic work bubble—at least temporarily.



When I arrived at Pearson International Airport in Toronto in September, I was invited to participate in the voluntary “COVID-19 border study” of arriving international travelers after providing informed consent. Doctors and scientists from McMaster HealthLabs (MHL) were conducting the study. Their aim was to examine the effectiveness of different quarantine periods for international travelers.

The MHL study could generate useful data for researchers at the School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. It could also inform federal government decision-making regarding quarantine periods.

As a study participant, I got (a) three free COVID-19 tests, (b) a lesson on the virus, and (c) the ability to participate in an impactful research project. A MHL research representative took my sample to test for COVID-19 before I exited the airport. MHL collected two additional samples after seven days and 14 days, respectively, coinciding with the Government of Canada’s mandatory 14-day quarantine order. The MHL study gave me

## Submit to the Midwinter Conference!

- Next you can add additional authors, if there are any. You can add as many authors as you need.
- Finally, click the submit button to upload the abstract.
- You will get a confirmation message once the submission is completed.
- You can log in to the site at any time to check the status of your submission or if you need to edit something. You can only do this up to the submission deadline of December 1, 2020, 11:59 p.m. Central Time. You would not be able to make any changes to your submission after the deadline.
- **Please do not submit full papers.** Acceptances will be sent by email in mid-January 2021.

For more information, please contact Elanie Steyn, Conference Site Host (elanie@ou.edu).

peace of mind about my health, as all my tests came back negative.

But I also thought about the importance of what my critical-cultural studies colleagues and I have referred to as engaged scholarship in our book *Journalism in Crisis: Bridging Theory and Practice for Democratic Media Strategies in Canada*. Engaged scholarship links researchers to the communities and policy-makers who can apply rigorous research to key social issues of the day, educate the public and contribute to meaningful change in society. Even if MHL researchers didn't explicitly identify their project as engaged research, it's arguably implied in their study.

Overall, my trip wasn't your typical academic travel experience. Yet it was still an opportunity to learn, participate in research and help address an aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

\* \* \*

## Critically Examining Capitalism Through the Study of Private Equity and Design

*Krishnan Vasudevan, CCS Lead Research Chair*

Journalism like labor unions and government regulations are inertial forces that stand in the way of frictionless, globalized markets. In forthcoming research, I examine the ways in which capital in the form of private investment firms and gig economy platforms seek to erode these frictions respectively, through acquisitions and persuasive design. As Penelope Muse Abernathy's research (<https://www.usnewsdeserts.com>) reveals, private investment firms most notably Alden Global Capital have purchased thousands of regional and local newspapers across the United States. Treating



## We need reviewers!

Curious about upcoming research in the division? Need to bolster your CV? Do all that when you volunteer to review abstracts for the AEJMC Midwinter 2021 conference.

Remember, you'll only be reviewing abstracts and not full-length papers.

To sign up to be a reviewer for the Midwinter Conference, please visit:

[2021 AEJMC CCSD Reviewer Signup \(Midwinter Conference\)](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/12qsDu3WpZDzRFofp-fyGFwUfdmX2y1-a-rrdP-1ddDw/viewform?edit_requested=true)

([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/12qsDu3WpZDzRFofp-fyGFwUfdmX2y1-a-rrdP-1ddDw/viewform?edit\\_requested=true](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/12qsDu3WpZDzRFofp-fyGFwUfdmX2y1-a-rrdP-1ddDw/viewform?edit_requested=true))

To sign up to be a reviewer for the Annual Conference, please visit:

[2021 AEJMC CCSD Reviewer Sign Up \(Annual Meeting\)](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18x3nb8YmfQSo4qSwq2mrbhlgwntF7RNwnYSgCt6axx8/edit)

(<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18x3nb8YmfQSo4qSwq2mrbhlgwntF7RNwnYSgCt6axx8/edit>)

newspapers purely as investment vehicles, newspapers owned by these firms have laid off thousands of workers, centralized news operations and increased the production of formulaic news, while diminishing the production of high-quality investigations. Developing upon this premise, in an upcoming book chapter I explore the impact of private investment firms on digital media companies. In the wake of Great Recession, venture capital and private equity firms poured over a billion dollars into companies such as Vox, BuzzFeed and Vice believing that they would soon go public. However, as Facebook and Google have cornered the advertising 85% of the digital advertising market, these companies have failed to meet lofty expectations leading to the layoffs of hundreds of journalists and the consolidation of competing firms such as Vice Media and Refinery29. As the case of the sports blog Deadspin suggests, the desperate chase for advertising dollars not only shapes the business models of digital media companies owned by investment firms but also their editorial output.

In a second study, myself and a co-author, investigate how firms such as Uber, Lyft and Amazon employ video game design to develop preferred behaviors and skillsets from precarious contract workers. As Natasha Schüll and Adam Alter have detailed respectively in their books, *Addiction by Design* and *Irresistable*, gambling machines and video games are designed to empower players through instantaneous audiovisual feedback, while surveillance runs in the background to determine what features will maximize the time people spend within a game. This provides a context for understanding how gig economy companies present labor as a real-world game, in which workers can “unlock” rewards, “reach their goals,” and “earn points,” while teams of behavioral scientists, developers and designers constantly test the most effective feedback mechanisms to maximize their labor hours. While applications such as Amazon Flex are designed to give workers a sense of autonomy, we argue that ultimately they nudge players towards behaviors that ultimately benefit gig economy companies, often at the detriment of workers. As the number of contract workers has grown during the COVID pandemic, it necessitates that scholars examine how workers are being exploited while being given the illusion of choice and empowerment through design.

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# Toxic Conversations Don't Have to be the Norm

*David Wolfgang, CCS Co-Research Chair*

As we've all seen this fall, 2020 has been a banner year for toxic political discourse and vitriol. But it is online news discussions that have me concerned. Over the past decade, I've focused my research on understanding how journalists consider their online audiences and navigate new roles and relationships around commenting. And while progress has been made toward building better conversations, the next steps will involve committing journalists to the task of managing discussions and taking responsibility for what happens on their sites.



Journalists have a responsibility to build inclusive spaces for quality discussion about the most critical issues facing society. But many news organizations are abandoning their obligation to moderate discourse and fringe groups are increasingly using forums to spread misinformation and hate. Journalists are stuck in an unenviable position between protecting democratic norms, professional values, and the public good. To what extent can journalists continue to strain themselves to both produce valuable journalism, while also ensuring quality discourse?

While we are continually learning more with new research on incivility and discourse, a few things are already clear: online incivility is prevalent and news organizations lack the resources to manage it. While some are working on creative tech solutions, what we really need are journalists willing to build quality relationships with their public. Recent high-profile failures by large tech companies on issues like misinformation and political advertising show us how critical it is for journalists to take an active role. Gone are the days when journalists can merely put up a forum and just walk away because some of the worst incivility happens when journalists abandon their obligation to the public. But building better forums isn't just about improving journalism

## AEJMC 2020 CCSD Top Paper Award Winners

### First Place

**Erica Ciszek** (University of Texas at Austin), **Richard Mocarski** (University of Nebraska at Kearney), & **Elaine Almeida** (University of Wisconsin-Madison): "Capital and Legitimacy: Trans\* Communicators as Cultural Intermediaries"\*

### Second Place

**John Vilanova**, Lehigh University: "Critical Embellishment: Rolling Stone and Pitchfork Pans as Journalistic Signaling"

### Third Place

**Jiachun Hong**, Southern Illinois University: "Documentary Maker as Worker: Precarity in the Chinese Television Documentary Industry"

\*Ciszek, Mocarski and Almeida received the Jim Murphy Award for Top Faculty Paper

and building trust. Forums are increasingly coopted for attacks on journalists and minority communities. White nationalists, for instance, take advantage of poorly moderated forums to create sanctuaries of hate on mainstream news sites, helping to legitimize hate and dangerous ideas. And when marginalized communities are threatened to the point of retreating from public discourse, we all lose.

If we are ever to achieve the kind of inclusive public discourse that serves all of society, we'll need journalists to prioritize active moderation, training in de-escalation and conflict management, and new tools and strategies for managing user comments. While there have been some recent successes, high-profile failures have brought increased attention to the urgent need for new approaches.

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## This is Fine: Teaching online while California burns

*Chelsea Reynolds, CCS Teaching Chair*

I received an e-mail this week that stopped me in my tracks. My student wrote, "My city is being evacuated with the fires. Would it be possible to ask for an extension?" I almost spit out my coffee.

Out here in Southern California, we've been surviving spooky orange skies, ashfall, and hazardous air quality. Neighbors bond by watching Fire Department helicopters carry water into the mountains.

Physically, the fires make you feel like you've been run over by a truck. Emotionally, they're unpredictable and terrifying. You can see flames crawling up the hillsides at night, smoke coloring sunrises like Lisa Frank paintings.



On Monday, my student magazine editor texted to say he couldn't

## AEJMC CCSD 2020 Top Student Paper Award Winners

### First Place

**Jeffrey Duncan & Taylor Voges**,  
University of Georgia: "EULAs as  
Unbalanced Contractual Power  
Between an Organization and its  
(Unannounced and Underage)  
Users: A Mobile Game Textual  
Analysis"\*

### Second Place

**Alyvia Walters**, Rutgers  
University: "Modern Mourning:  
The Violence and Potentialities  
of Public Grief Online"

### Third Place

**Lourdes Mirian Cueva Chacón**,  
University of Texas at Austin  
(affiliation will change to San  
Diego State University): "A  
'Gentlemen's Agreement:' How  
News Discourse Helps to  
Perpetuate Segregation"

\*Duncan and Voges received the  
James Carey Award for Top  
Student Paper

attend our Zoom meeting because his power and WiFi were out during 80-mile-per-hour Santa Ana winds.

My T.A. Slacked me at 1 a.m. to say she'd been forced to leave her family home in Orange County and seek refuge with a cousin in Santa Clarita. That's a two-hour drive though our winding freeway system, even in the middle of the night during a pandemic.

Despite the climate-induced catastrophes we're facing out West -- and that all of us will eventually face -- my students inspire me with their work ethic and perseverance. They're not looking for handouts or easy As. When they text or e-mail in the wee hours, they're genuinely confused as to whether their late work will be accepted or their absences excused.

Given that the academy has normalized high productivity during the "new normal" of COVID-19 lockdown, I guess I shouldn't be surprised that undergraduates aren't sure whether life-threatening events qualify as extenuating circumstances.

From my students' accounts, some professors aren't making any concessions during wildfire season or for the pandemic. That fits with our field's obsession with professionalism and deadlines. It might work for newsrooms, but frankly, it's terrible pedagogy.

I'm opting for flexibility and compassion instead. The most useful line I've added to my syllabus is what I'll call the 12-Hour Rule:

"If your assignment will be submitted late, you must contact me at least 12 hours before the deadline. I will work with you develop a plan for submitting your assignment. If there is an emergency, you must contact me within 12 hours of missing the assignment.

Failure to contact the professor about a late submission will result in a 0 for the assignment."

Although my Type A side weeps a little each time I wiggle the rules, I'm learning to extend the same grace to myself as I am to my students.

The smoke was bad here again today, and I had a pounding headache all afternoon due to poor air quality. While I usually would've popped a few Advil and powered through, I closed the windows and took a long nap instead.

\* \* \*

## Previous PF&R Award Winners

- 1979 – The Columbia Journalism Review
- 1980 – George Seldes
- 1981 – Erwin Knoll (Editor, *The Progressive*)
- 1982 – Robert Greene (of *Newsday*)
- 1983\* – Ben Bagdikian or University of Missouri Freedom of Information Center
- 1984\* – Ben Bagdikian or University of Missouri Freedom of Information Center
- 1985 – Claude Sitton (VP and Editor, *Raleigh Observer*)
- 1986 – Penny Lernoux
- 1987 – Molly Ivins
- 1988 – Randy Shilts
- 1989 – I.F. Stone
- 1990 – Eric Utne and *Utne Reader*
- 1991 – Noam Chomsky
- 1992 – Bill Kovach and Nieman Foundation
- 1993 – Anne Nelson and Committee to Protect Journalists
- 1994 – Lilianne Pierre Paul
- 1995 – Nina Totenberg
- 1996 – Christopher Hitchens
- 1997 – Studs Terkel

\*Award recipient was either/or Ben Bagdikian or University of Missouri Freedom of Information Center in 1983 and 1984, not to both in each year

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## Lila LaHood, Michael Stoll and The San Francisco Public Press Receive 2020 PF&R Award, Selection of 2021 Recipient Underway

*Jeanne S. Criswell, CCS Professional Freedom & Responsibility Chair*

Lila LaHood, Michael Stoll and The San Francisco Public Press were presented the Cultural and Critical Studies Division's 2020 Professional Freedom and Responsibility (PF&R) Award at the AEJMC national conference in August. LaHood is the publisher and Stoll is the executive director

and editor of the SFPP, a nonprofit alternative to San Francisco's legacy media, which CCS members honored for work in numerous areas. The award, presented on August 6 of AEJMC's virtual conference, was part of the PF&R panel session "Telling Lies in America: Are Today's Journalists Watchdogs, Lapdogs, or Something Else?" during which LaHood and Stoll also served as presenters.



According to its website (<https://sfpublicpress.org/about>), the SFPP is a local nonprofit, noncommercial news organization that enriches civic life in San Francisco by delivering public-interest journalism to broad and diverse audiences through print and interactive media not supported by advertising. Through its website and quarterly newspaper, and partnerships with other public media and civic groups, the SFPP reports on local issues — including environment, education, housing, homelessness, labor and elections — and frequently hosts public events. Since 2009, the SFPP has established a reputation in the community for producing high-impact, in-depth reporting

## Previous PF&R Award Winners

1998 – Hanno Hardt

1999 – Herbert Schiller

2000 – Dan Perkins (Tom Tomorrow)

2001 – Marcia Ann Gillespie

2002 – No award given

2003 – James W. Carey

2004 – No award given

2005 – Ronnie Dugger

2006 – Grade the News

2007 – Bill Moyers and Mark Goodman

2008 – Carol Marin

2009 – Sut Jhally and the Media Education Foundation

2010 – John Stout (Free Speech TV) and Monte Whaley (*Denver Post*)

2011 – Robert McChesney (UIUC, FreePress) and Charles & Rose Klotzer (*St. Louis Journalism Review*)

2012 – The Center for Media & Democracy (Madison, WI) & Lisa Graves

2013 – Sunlight Foundation

2014 – Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher

2015 – Dani McClain

2016 – Jill Burcum

2017 – Charlene A. Carruthers and the Black Youth Project 100

2018 – Leonard Pitts Jr.

2019 – Henry Giroux

Note: Jean Otto was awarded a prize; date unclear

projects on a wide range of topics, explaining complex local policy issues in an accessible way, investigating problems and reporting on ideas for tangible solutions. The SFPP's goal is to do for print and online news what public media have done for radio and television; and in the fall of 2010, SFPP won an award from the Society of Professional Journalists for explanatory journalism for a series of pieces published online and in print about plans to develop San Francisco's Treasure Island ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SF\\_Public\\_Press](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SF_Public_Press)). The newspaper is celebrating its 10th anniversary, and the SFPP recently launched a companion low-power community radio station, KSFP (<https://sfpublicpress.org/ksfp>), its audio initiative, which also includes podcasts and streaming.

LaHood, Stoll and the SFPP joined some 43 past recipients of the annual PF&R Award, which CCS has for more than four decades presented to individuals and organizations demonstrating dedication, courage, leadership or achievement in one or more areas of (1) free expression, (2) ethics, (3) media criticism and accountability, (4) racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness, (5) public service, and (6) equal opportunities for students. (More information on these areas is available on the AEJMC Web site at <http://www.aejmc.org/home/2011/03/ethics-prf/>).

Past winners of the award have included Ben Bagdikian, Molly Ivins, Noam Chomsky, Nina Totenberg, Studs Terkel, James Carey, Bill Moyers, Leonard Pitts Jr. and many others.

The selection process for the 2021 PF&R Award is well underway, and the recipient will be honored at next year's conference currently scheduled to be held in New Orleans. A call for nominations went out Sept. 3 and closed in October. From a slate of nominees, CCS members vote each year for one recipient, and the winner is invited to participate in a special Professional Freedom and Responsibility Award session at the conference.

\* \* \*

# Starting a Job Hunt During a Pandemic

*Steven Wang, CCS Graduate Student Outreach Chair*

Long before I started job seeking, my advisor warned that it would be the “most demoralizing process one could possibly go through.” That was before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Given the shrunk number of job vacancies, I’ve found weird comfort in the thought that it would not be entirely my fault if I didn’t get anything. Partly,

the stress is about competing with 100+ candidates for every single post while dealing with health concerns and writing a dissertation. But the other part is about sharply feeling the opposing pulls between the reality and the ideal of



academy. The ways academic institutions react to the pandemic have exposed in a rather relentless manner, they don’t necessarily stand up for what they claim believing.

It becomes increasingly clear that what I do and who I am do not meet the imagined candidacy of a tenure-track job, when the budget holes tear down the make-up universities wear to show others that they are not profit-driven enterprises. I’m not talking about qualifications like teaching, research, and disciplinary expertise. It is my positionality that does not fit comfortably into the scope of job market. I’m a non-white, not-rich international student who prioritizes community ties when doing research.

What’s the issue of that? In the past few months, the U.S. government has been putting forward policies that severely restrict the mobility of international students, that create unmanageable bureaucratic hurdles for us to maintain legal residency, and that made it extremely costly for any employer to hire us—all in the name of protecting the country during a crisis the country fails to contain. This makes international students marketable only when they position themselves as the

entrepreneurial minds who are highly efficient to transform investment into tangible utility.

My apologies. It just feels climatic to whine in self-pity as the Midwest transitions into winter during a pandemic. I'm ready to do this job-hunting thing. I have a few publications, five-year practice in teaching, and a great support network of peers and mentors. I always feel inspired when my references are willing to write many words of good things about me in their letters.

Good luck to all the warriors on the job market right now. The world, you, and I all need a little bit of luck until things do get better.

\* \* \*

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