

# COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES THE 105<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL PULITZER PRIZES IN JOURNALISM, LETTERS, DRAMA AND MUSIC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Megan Mulligan, mem72@columbia.edu

New York, NY (June 11, 2021) – The 105<sup>th</sup> annual Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism, Letters, Drama and Music were announced today.

The winners in each category, along with the names of the finalists in the competition, follow:

## A. PRIZES IN JOURNALISM

### 1. PUBLIC SERVICE

For a distinguished example of meritorious public service by a newspaper or news site through the use of its journalistic resources, including the use of stories, editorials, cartoons, photographs, graphics, videos, databases, multimedia or interactive presentations or other visual material, a gold medal.

Awarded to The New York Times for courageous, prescient and sweeping coverage of the coronavirus pandemic that exposed racial and economic inequities, government failures in the U.S. and beyond, and filled a data vacuum that helped local governments, healthcare providers, businesses and individuals to be better prepared and protected.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: The Courier-Journal, Louisville, Ky., for its unflinching, comprehensive and impactful coverage of the killing of Breonna Taylor and the legacy of systemic racism in the police force and other civic institutions in Louisville, which helped to spur important reforms; and ProPublica for aggressive, insightful and influential coverage of the coronavirus pandemic that repeatedly exposed flaws and shortcomings in the ways federal and state agencies and corporate America handled the crisis, prompting fast government response.

### 2. BREAKING NEWS REPORTING

For a distinguished example of local reporting of breaking news that, as quickly as possible, captures events accurately as they occur, and, as time passes, illuminates, provides context and expands upon the initial coverage, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to the Staff of the Star Tribune, Minneapolis, Minn., for its urgent, authoritative and nuanced coverage of the death of George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis and of the reverberations that followed.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Staff of The Courier-Journal, Louisville, Ky., for exclusive coverage that contradicted police narratives in the killing of Breonna Taylor, and for its sensitive and innovative coverage of the aftermath; and Helen Branswell, Andrew Joseph and the late Sharon Begley of STAT, Boston, Mass., for their prescient, expert and accessible coverage of the emergence of COVID-19, sounding the alarm on the potential spread and potency of the virus.

### 3. INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

For a distinguished example of investigative reporting, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Matt Rocheleau, Vernal Coleman, Laura Crimaldi, Evan Allen and Brendan McCarthy of The Boston Globe for reporting that uncovered a systematic failure by state governments to share information about dangerous truck drivers that could have kept them off the road, prompting immediate reforms.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Dake Kang and the Staff of Associated Press for a penetrating investigation of China's state secrecy and its fatal consequences, reflected in the country's early response to the coronavirus outbreak and in human rights abuses against the Uighurs; and Margie Mason and Robin McDowell of Associated Press for their compelling examination of the abusive practices of international palm oil producers, including forced labor targeting women and children, culminating in congressional oversight and an import ban.

### 4. EXPLANATORY REPORTING

For a distinguished example of explanatory reporting that illuminates a significant and complex subject, demonstrating mastery of the subject, lucid writing and clear presentation, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Two Prizes of \$15,000 each:

Awarded to Ed Yong of The Atlantic for a series of lucid, definitive pieces on the COVID-19 pandemic that anticipated the course of the disease, synthesized the complex challenges the country faced, illuminated the U.S. government's failures and provided clear and accessible context for the scientific and human challenges it posed.

and

Awarded to Andrew Chung, Lawrence Hurley, Andrea Januta, Jaimi Dowdell and Jackie Botts of Reuters for an exhaustive examination, powered by a pioneering data analysis of U.S. federal court cases, of the obscure legal doctrine of "qualified immunity" and how it shields police who use excessive force from prosecution.

Also nominated as a finalist in this category was: Megha Rajagopalan, Alison Killing and Christo Buschek of BuzzFeed News, New York, for a series of clear and compelling stories that used satellite imagery and architectural expertise, as well as interviews with two dozen former prisoners, to identify a vast new infrastructure built by the Chinese government for the mass detention of Muslims. (Moved by the Board to the International Reporting category, where it was also entered.)

## 5. LOCAL REPORTING

For a distinguished example of reporting on significant issues of local concern, demonstrating originality and community expertise, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Kathleen McGrory and Neil Bedi of the Tampa Bay Times for resourceful, creative reporting that exposed how a powerful and politically connected sheriff built a secretive intelligence operation that harassed residents and used grades and child welfare records to profile schoolchildren.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Jack Dolan and Brittney Mejia of the Los Angeles Times for exposing failures in Los Angeles County's safety-net healthcare system that resulted in months-long wait times for patients, including some who died before getting appointments with specialists; and Staff of The Post and Courier, Charleston, S.C., for an ambitious look at how water levels in the city were rising faster than previously thought that also explored the broader social, environmental and regulatory challenges posed by climate change.

## 6. NATIONAL REPORTING

For a distinguished example of reporting on national affairs, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Staffs of The Marshall Project; AL.com, Birmingham; IndyStar, Indianapolis; and the Invisible Institute, Chicago, for a year-long investigation of K-9 units and the damage that police dogs inflict on Americans, including innocent citizens and police officers, prompting numerous statewide reforms.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Staff of The New York Times for detailed reporting on how the Trump administration consistently failed to respond properly or adequately to the coronavirus threat, including downplaying its seriousness; and Staff of The Wall Street Journal for its series of stories documenting how nursing home residents were hit particularly hard by the coronavirus pandemic, partially because of improper decisions made by government officials.

## 7. INTERNATIONAL REPORTING

For a distinguished example of reporting on international affairs, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Megha Rajagopalan, Alison Killing and Christo Buschek of BuzzFeed News, New York, for a series of clear and compelling stories that used satellite imagery and architectural expertise, as well as interviews with two dozen former prisoners, to identify a vast new infrastructure built by the Chinese government for the mass detention of Muslims. (Moved by the Board from the Explanatory Reporting category, where it was also entered and nominated.)

Nominated as finalists in this category were: BuzzFeed News, New York, and International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, Washington, D.C., for a massive reporting project that yielded sweeping revelations about the ongoing role of some of the world's biggest banks in facilitating international money laundering and the trafficking of goods and people, corruption that continues to frustrate regulators across the world; Staff of The New York Times for a masterful synthesis of stellar writing, powerful images and engaging interactives that illustrated how the world was unprepared for a fast-moving global pandemic — and failed to contain it; and Staff of The Wall Street Journal for an authoritative and deeply reported portrait of China's nationalist leader Xi Jinping and his increasingly authoritarian control of the state, its economy, and politics, conducted even after the news organization was expelled from the country.

## 8. FEATURE WRITING

For distinguished feature writing giving prime consideration to quality of writing, originality and concision, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Two Prizes of \$15,000 each:

Awarded to Nadja Drost, freelance contributor, The California Sunday Magazine for a brave and gripping account of global migration that documents a group's journey on foot through the Darién Gap, one of the most dangerous migrant routes in the world.

and

Awarded to Mitchell S. Jackson, freelance contributor, Runner's World for a deeply affecting account of the killing of Ahmaud Arbery that combined vivid writing, thorough reporting and personal experience to shed light on systemic racism in America.

Also nominated as a finalist in this category was: Greg Jaffe of The Washington Post for deeply reported stories that powerfully depict the suffering and dislocation endured by Americans who lost their jobs after the sudden collapse of South Florida's tourist economy in the pandemic.

## 9. COMMENTARY

For distinguished commentary, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Michael Paul Williams of the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch for penetrating and historically insightful columns that guided Richmond, a former capital of the Confederacy, through the painful and complicated process of dismantling the city's monuments to white supremacy.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Melinda Henneberger of The Kansas City Star for tenacious and deeply reported columns on failures in the criminal justice system, forcefully arguing how systemic problems and abuses affect the larger community; and Roy S. Johnson of Alabama Media Group, Birmingham, for evocative columns on race and remembrance written with style, urgency, and moral clarity.

## 10. CRITICISM

For distinguished criticism, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Wesley Morris of The New York Times for unrelentingly relevant and deeply engaged criticism on the intersection of race and culture in America, written in a singular style, alternately playful and profound.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Craig Jenkins of New York magazine for writing on a range of popular topics, including social media, music and comedy, contending with the year's disarray and exploring how culture and conversation can both flourish and break down online; and Mark Swed of the Los Angeles Times for a series of critical essays that broke through the silence of the pandemic to recommend an eclectic array of recordings as entertainment and solace essential to the moment, drawing deep connections to seven centuries of classical music.

## 11. EDITORIAL WRITING

For distinguished editorial writing, the test of excellence being clearness of style, moral purpose, sound reasoning, and power to influence public opinion in what the writer conceives to be the right direction, using any available journalistic tool, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Robert Greene of the Los Angeles Times for editorials on policing, bail reform, prisons and mental health that clearly and holistically examined the Los Angeles criminal justice system.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Lee Hockstader of The Washington Post for a series of editorials that pushed for accountability in the shooting and killing of an unarmed man by U.S. Park Police three years earlier; and Alan Wirzbicki and Rachelle G. Cohen of The Boston

Globe for editorials that addressed a controversial local zoning fight, centering the legacy of restrictive housing laws in America's ongoing conversation about equity, inclusion and opportunity.

## 12. EDITORIAL CARTOONING

For a distinguished portfolio of editorial cartoons or other illustrated work (still, animated, or both) characterized by political insight, editorial effectiveness, or public service value, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

No award.

Nominated as finalists in this category were: Lalo Alcaraz, Andrews McMeel Syndicate, for cartoons drawn from an unabashedly specific Latino point of view that target the hearts and consciences of all Americans; Ken Fisher, drawing as Ruben Bolling, for "Tom the Dancing Bug," Andrews McMeel Syndicate, for an effective example of the alternative cartooning form that uses multiple panels to create a layered satirical take on contemporary political issues; and Marty Two Bulls Sr., freelance cartoonist, for innovative and insightful cartoons that offer a Native American perspective on contemporary news events.

## 13. BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

For a distinguished example of breaking news photography in black and white or color, which may consist of a photograph or photographs, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to the Photography Staff of Associated Press for a collection of photographs from multiple U.S. cities that cohesively captures the country's response to the death of George Floyd.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Hassan Ammar, Hussein Malla, and Felipe Dana of Associated Press for a series of images documenting the uncertainty and devastation following a seaport blast that rocked Beirut; and Joshua Irwandi, freelance photographer, National Geographic, for a starkly haunting photograph of a solitary coronavirus victim in an Indonesian hospital, wrapped in plastic and awaiting a body bag.

## 14. FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

For a distinguished example of feature photography in black and white or color, which may consist of a photograph or photographs, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Emilio Morenatti of Associated Press for a poignant series of photographs that takes viewers into the lives of the elderly in Spain struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Staff of Getty Images for thorough coverage of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global community; and Tyler Hicks of The New York Times for searing images that capture the toll of the coronavirus deep in Brazil's Amazon, and how it ravaged the region's indigenous people.

## 15. AUDIO REPORTING

For a distinguished example of audio journalism that serves the public interest, characterized by revelatory reporting and illuminating storytelling, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to Lisa Hagen, Chris Haxel, Graham Smith and Robert Little of National Public Radio for an investigative series on “no compromise” gun rights activists that illuminated the profound differences and deepening schism between American conservatives.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: Staffs of the Invisible Institute, Chicago; The Intercept and Topic Studios for “Somebody,” a dogged and searing investigation of the murder of a young Black man in Chicago and the institutional indifference surrounding it; and Staff of National Public Radio for courageous on-the-ground reporting on the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani and its implications around the globe.

## B. LETTERS AND DRAMA PRIZES

### 1. FICTION

For distinguished fiction by an American author, preferably dealing with American life, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to “The Night Watchman,” by Louise Erdrich (Harper), a majestic, polyphonic novel about a community's efforts to halt the proposed displacement and elimination of several Native American tribes in the 1950s, rendered with dexterity and imagination.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: “Telephone,” by Percival Everett (Graywolf Press), a novel of narrative ingenuity that includes both a heartbreaking illness and a crime story in its exploration of discontent, loss and the possibility of redemption; and “A Registry of my Passage Upon the Earth,” by Daniel Mason (Little, Brown and Company), a collection of stories with themes of class division, the artist's role in society and our need for love and belonging, reflecting a prowess with language and a mastery of the short form.

### 2. DRAMA

For a distinguished play by an American author, preferably original in its source and dealing with American life, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to “The Hot Wing King,” by Katori Hall, a funny, deeply felt consideration of Black masculinity and how it is perceived, filtered through the experiences of a loving gay couple and their extended family as they prepare for a culinary competition.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: “Circle Jerk,” by Michael Breslin and Patrick Foley, a contemporary satire featuring outrageous situations and language repurposed from the internet to skewer online culture and question what identities we have permission to claim; and “Stew,” by Zora Howard, an intimate, tightly constructed drama about three generations of Black women over the course of one day, and the violence they are forced to live with, absorb and attempt to overcome.

### 3. HISTORY

For a distinguished and appropriately documented book on the history of the United States, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to “Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America,” by Marcia Chatelain (Liveright/Norton), a nuanced account of the complicated role the fast-food industry plays in African-American communities, a portrait of race and capitalism that masterfully illustrates how the fight for civil rights has been intertwined with the fate of Black businesses.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: “The Deviant's War: The Homosexual vs. The United States of America,” by Eric Cervini (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), a painstakingly researched and engagingly written study of the pre-Stonewall fight for gay rights in America, told through the life and unprecedented legal efforts of astronomer Franklin Edward Kameny; and “The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West,” by Megan Kate Nelson (Scribner), a lively and well-crafted Civil War narrative that expands understanding of the conflict’s Western theaters, where pivotal struggles for land, resources and influence presaged the direction of the country as a whole.

### 4. BIOGRAPHY or AUTOBIOGRAPHY

For a distinguished and appropriately documented biography or autobiography by an American author, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to “The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X,” by the late Les Payne and Tamara Payne (Liveright/Norton), a powerful and revelatory account of the civil rights activist, built from dozens of interviews, offering insight into his character, beliefs and the forces that shaped him.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: “Red Comet: The Short Life and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath” by Heather Clark (Alfred A. Knopf), a profoundly researched and illuminating portrait of the influential poet whose life and art mirrored the intellectual, political and sexual awakenings of the era; and “Stranger in the Shogun’s City: A Japanese Woman and her World” by Amy Stanley



(Scribner), an exquisitely written profile of a 19th century Japanese woman, reconstructed from hundreds of documents, that captures not only the arc of one life, but the society of the Edo period in transition.

## 5. POETRY

For a distinguished volume of original verse by an American author, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to “Postcolonial Love Poem,” by Natalie Diaz (Graywolf Press), a collection of tender, heart-wrenching and defiant poems that explore what it means to love and be loved in an America beset by conflict.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: “A Treatise on Stars,” by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge (New Directions), a book of meditative and expansive poems that illuminate the interconnectedness of life forms and the spirituality of our natural environment; and “In the Lateness of the World,” by Carolyn Forché (Penguin Press), narrative lyrics resonant with imagery of beauty and horror that transcend the personal to offer a larger vision of our global condition.

## 6. GENERAL NONFICTION

For a distinguished and appropriately documented book of nonfiction by an American author that is not eligible for consideration in any other category, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to “Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy,” by David Zucchino (Atlantic Monthly Press), a gripping account of the overthrow of the elected government of a Black-majority North Carolina city after Reconstruction that untangles a complicated set of power dynamics cutting across race, class and gender.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: “Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning,” by Cathy Park Hong (One World/Random House), a captivating and insightful essay collection that provides an emotional consideration of racial consciousness, compelling readers to interrogate their own ideas about our common humanity; and “Yellow Bird: Oil, Murder, and a Woman's Search for Justice in Indian Country,” by Sierra Crane Murdoch (Random House), a richly-layered story with an imperfect yet memorable protagonist battling corruption, greed and intergenerational trauma when a fracking oil boom collides with reservation life in North Dakota.

## C. PRIZE IN MUSIC

For distinguished musical composition by an American that has had its first performance or recording in the United States during the year, Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

Awarded to “Stride,” by Tania León, premiered on February 13, 2020 at David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City (Peermusic Classical), a musical journey full of surprise, with powerful brass and rhythmic motifs that incorporate Black music traditions from the US and the Caribbean into a Western orchestral fabric.

Also nominated as finalists in this category were: “Place,” by Ted Hearne, recording released on April 3, 2020, a brave and powerful work, marked by effective vocal writing and multiple musical genres, that confronts issues of gentrification and displacement in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Libretto by Hearne and Saul Williams; and “Data Lords,” by Maria Schneider, recording released on July 24, 2020 by the Maria Schneider Orchestra, an enveloping musical landscape of light and shadow, rendered by the many personalities of a large jazz ensemble, reflecting the promise of a digital paradise contrasted by a concentration of power and the loss of privacy.

#### D. SPECIAL CITATION

A special citation to honor Darnella Frazier for courageously recording the murder of George Floyd, a video that spurred protests against police brutality around the world, highlighting the crucial role of citizens in journalists' quest for truth and justice.

The Pulitzer Prize Board met at Columbia University on June 7 and 8 to select the 2021 winners.

Neil Brown, Tommie Shelby and Nicole Carroll were re-elected to membership on the board.

The members of the Pulitzer Prize Board are: President Bollinger; Elizabeth Alexander, president, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Nancy Barnes, senior vice president of news and editorial director, National Public Radio; Katherine Boo, author and journalist, Washington D.C.; Neil Brown, president, Poynter Institute for Media Studies; Nicole Carroll, editor-in-chief, USA Today; Steve Coll, dean, Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University; Gail Collins, op-ed columnist, The New York Times; John Daniszewski, vice president and editor at large for standards, Associated Press; Stephen Engelberg, editor-in-chief, ProPublica; Aminda Marqués Gonzalez, vice president and executive editor, Simon & Schuster; Kelly Lytle Hernandez, professor of history, African American studies & urban planning and Thomas E. Lifka chair of history, University of California, Los Angeles; Carlos Lozada, associate editor and nonfiction book critic, The Washington Post; Kevin Merida, executive editor, Los Angeles Times; Viet Thanh Nguyen, university professor, Aerol Arnold chair of English and professor of English, American studies, and ethnicity and comparative literature, University of Southern California; Emily Ramshaw, co-founder and CEO, The 19th; David Remnick, editor and staff writer, The New Yorker; and Tommie Shelby, Caldwell Titcomb professor of African and African American studies and professor of philosophy, Harvard University.

In any category in which board members have an interest due to the action of the various nominating juries, those members do not participate in the discussion and voting and leave the room until a decision is reached in the affected category. Similarly, members of nominating juries do not participate in the discussion of or voting on entries in which they have an interest.

6.11.21