

# WALLACE HOUSE JOURNAL

Wallace House Center for Journalists  
Home of the Knight-Wallace Fellowships and the Livingston Awards

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Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey  
Authors and *New York Times* Journalists

## Partnering for Public Discourse

BY ANNE CURZAN & CELESTE WATKINS-HAYES



**On a Monday evening in late November, throngs of University of Michigan students, faculty, staff, and Ann Arbor residents waited expectantly outside the Michigan Theater to attend the premier showing of the film, “She Said.”**

The movie chronicles the reporting of New York Times journalists Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, credited with successfully revealing decades of sexual misconduct by film producer Harvey Weinstein and igniting the #MeToo movement. When the film ended and the two reporters walked onto the stage, the packed audience stood for an extended standing ovation and students lined up in the aisles to ask questions.

In March, campus and community members converged again, this time at Rackham Auditorium, for An Evening with CNN



Anchor Chris Wallace and Governor Gretchen Whitmer, with an opening welcome by U-M President Santa Ono. Hundreds of student tickets were claimed within 15 minutes, despite the fact that the students were on spring break when they were announced. Whitmer and Wallace engaged with each other and the audience on topics important to the student body—from gun legislation in Michigan, to funding for mental health services on campus, to the responsibility of media to combat disinformation and to allay, not fuel, polarization.

The two events were quite different. But each featured journalists prompting incisive conversation on difficult topics across points of social and political difference. As deans of the School of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) and the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy respectively, we take seriously our responsibility to serve the public good by bringing diverse groups together to grapple with important issues. Through these conversations, in partnership with the Wallace House Presents series, it is our hope that we all might be inspired and energized to make positive change in our communities.



FROM THE DIRECTOR



“Bringing together an alumni network as vibrant as ours offers the chance to encourage and facilitate great storytelling and document history.”

Lynette Clemetson

Fellows Past, Present and Future

In 1973, 15 fellows arrived at the University of Michigan for an experimental year intended to expand their horizons. Among them was the Hong Kong bureau chief of the Baltimore Sun who came to study Japanese language and urban economics; the executive editor of The Republican-Courier in Findlay, Ohio, who studied the relationship between the U.S. and developing countries; a radio commentator, columnist and reporter for WCHB and the Black Audio Network who was interested in Afro-American literature, playwriting and film; and a reporter and anchor for WMAL-TV in D.C. who came to study political and legal dynamics of the American city and who would go on to become a household name as anchor of “Good Morning America” and “World News” on ABC.

So much in journalism has changed in 50 years. I won’t wallow in what’s been lost. From my perch I am lucky to witness how journalists have responded to wave after wave of disruption with ingenuity and resolve, incorporating changing platforms and methods while bringing along new generations of journalists eager to push the industry forward.

In 2023, the 19 fellows arriving on campus come as proud benefactors of that first experiment, eager to strike out on paths that are wholly their own. They include a banned Hong Kong filmmaker interested in the power of visual storytelling to address collective social trauma; a magazine writer and author chronicling changes in reproductive healthcare following the overturning of Roe v. Wade; a Chicago-based education reporter studying efforts to reengage young people who left school and the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic; and a former TikTok and Instagram director at National Geographic eager to help journalism survive in era of AI growth and algorithms that disfavor facts and serious news.

Think about that arc. Think about the hundreds of journalists who have gathered in Ann Arbor to chase similarly weighty, quirky, mind-bending and thorny pursuits. Think about what this magical year has inspired and empowered so many gifted journalists to go on to do.

50 years is worthy of a big bash. And we’re planning just that. A rolling, weekend-long celebration of all of the alumni who have built this program into a formidable force for good.

As registrations come in for our golden anniversary fellowship reunion, we’re increasingly excited about the prospect of five decades of alumni converging to revel in both distinct memories and shared experience, a year like no other that many remember as one of the best, most rewarding years of their life.

The first impulse for most alumni who are coming back is to reconnect with their class. But reunions are also about celebrating ties to institutions. One of the most wonderful things about this program is that whether you were a fellow when most Americans still had newspapers delivered to their homes; or when people connected to the internet with that long AOL beep; or when you were encouraged to cultivate followers on social media to become an individual brand; or now, with Chat GPT and other AI presenting intriguing opportunity and impending doom, there is a common and recognizable experience of the fellowship year, a familiar warmth and possibility that drives us all to want to return and reminisce.

Bringing together an alumni network as vibrant as ours offers the chance to encourage and facilitate great storytelling and document history. *We’ll have video and audio spaces set up to record your memories—individually and in small groups, between old friends and between people from different classes who are meeting for the first time.*

If you’re an alumni of the fellowship, we look forward to seeing you this fall. Registration information follows in these pages. We are hoping to welcome back representatives from all 50 years. These cross-cohort connections, we know, will prove invaluable in times of continuing change across our industry. And they will spark new collaborations and ideas that extend the fellowship’s reach and impact.

A golden anniversary, of course, isn’t just significant for alumni. For supporters of any organization, a milestone anniversary also functions as a mark of longevity, of adaptability, and dynamism. And it is an opportunity to envision and co-create the way forward, to ensure that the next 50 years are as vital and transformative in the lives of journalists as the last.

We look forward to a year of celebration.

KNIGHT-WALLACE ALUMNI  
50<sup>TH</sup> REUNION

SEPTEMBER 29–OCTOBER 1  
Friday evening through Sunday afternoon

We look forward to welcoming  
50 classes of fellows to Ann Arbor!

Weekend Highlights

**Friday, September 29 | 4–7 pm**  
Kick things off at The Big House with a reception in the Jack Roth Stadium Club and access to the locker rooms and football field. #GoBlue!

**Saturday, September 30 | Afternoon and evening**  
Fellowship Showcase: A private fairway highlighting your books, photos, and other work with ample space to network, build skills, and hang out.

Followed by Reception and Dinner Gala in the evening.

**Sunday, October 1 | 10 am–1 pm**  
Family brunch in the Wallace House garden.


 Video and audio recording spaces will be available to preserve both individual memories and those between old friends and fellows.

TIME TO REGISTER


There is a registration fee to cover a portion of the reunion costs, including signature reunion events, an opening reception at The Big House, a gala dinner on Saturday, and Sunday brunch for the whole family.

**Now–August 1: Registration is \$125 per adult**  
**August 2–September 1: Registration is \$200 per adult**

Children are invited to the Friday reception at The Big House and the Sunday brunch at Wallace House. There is no registration fee for children.

 **Go to our reunion website at: <https://cvent.me/405G3d>**  
Register to attend and find information on schedule, hotels, parking, attire, attendees, FAQs, and everything else you need to know to plan your weekend.

*Plus a gallery of class pictures that you’ll want to scroll through. So much style and fashion!*

 For additional questions, please email us at: [KWFR reunion@umich.edu](mailto:KWFR reunion@umich.edu)

A weekend celebration  
of 50 years of fellowship





# 2023-2024 KNIGHT-WALLACE FELLOWS

We look forward to welcoming next year’s class.



- 1

**Elizabeth Aguilera**  
Independent multimedia journalist, Zócalo Public Square, Next Gen Radio  
[Altadena, California](#)  
*Project: When Climate Change and Environmental Racism Converge: Who Will Be Left Behind?*
- 2

**Roberson Alphonse**  
Head of national news, Le Nouvelliste  
[Port-au-Prince, Haiti](#)  
*Project: Helping Haitian Journalists Navigate an Increasingly Volatile Press Environment*
- 3

**Rustin Dodd**  
Senior reporter, The Athletic  
[Brooklyn, New York](#)  
*Project: America’s Love Affair with Sports Gambling and the Implications for Sports Media*
- 4

**Sharif Hassan**  
General assignment reporter, The Canadian Press News Agency  
[Ghazni, Afghanistan](#)  
*Project: Strengthening Reporting on Canada’s Environmental and Sustainability Challenges*
- 5

**Peter Hoffman**  
Independent documentary photographer, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, NPR, CNN  
[Ann Arbor, Michigan](#)  
*Project: Southeast Michigan’s Watersheds: A Microcosm of Larger Environmental Issues*
- 6

**Yunhee Kim**  
Politics editor, Munhwa Ilbo  
[Gapyeong, South Korea](#)  
*Project: Strengthening Korean Presidential Election Coverage in a Hyper-Polarized Political Climate*
- 7

**Mila Koumpilova**  
Senior education reporter, Chalkbeat Chicago  
[Chicago, Illinois](#)  
*Project: Out of School, Out of Work: Seeking Solutions to America’s Youth Disconnection Problem*
- 8

**Efrat Lachter**  
Investigative correspondent, Channel 12 News and “Friday Studio”  
[Herzliya, Israel](#)  
*Project: Exploring Ways to Preserve Journalistic Integrity in Unstable Political Atmospheres*
- 9

**Victor Kai Shing Law**  
Senior reporter, AM730  
[Hong Kong, China](#)  
*Project: Charting a Future for Hong Kong’s Independent Media in a Time of Growing Censorship*
- 10

**Kyrylo Loukerenko**  
Executive director and co-founder, Hromadske Radio  
[Kyiv, Ukraine](#)  
*Project: Looking Back and Looking Ahead: Strengthening Ukrainian Public Media*
- 11

**Jaime Lowe**  
Author, Independent journalist, Los Angeles Times, The New York Times Magazine, ESPN  
[Brooklyn, New York](#)  
*Project: High-Risk Healthcare: How Doctors and Patients Navigate Pregnancy in the Post-Dobbs Midwest*
- 12

**Iuliia Mendel**  
Journalist, political commentator and opinion writer, The Washington Post, The New York Times, Politico Europe, CNBC  
[Kyiv, Ukraine](#)  
*Project: The War for Hearts and Minds: Populism’s Battle with the Media*
- 13

**Kwan Ling Mok**  
Visual journalist and filmmaker, Ming Pao Weekly, Stand News  
[Hong Kong, China](#)  
*Project: Trauma and Protest: How Can Hong Kong Recover from China’s Crackdown?*
- 14

**Josh Raab**  
Media strategist and former director of Instagram and TikTok for National Geographic  
[Washington, D.C.](#)  
*Project: Rewarding “Undelightful” Content: Helping Journalism Survive an Algorithmic Future*
- 15

**Tamanna Rahman**  
Investigative journalist and documentary filmmaker, BBC Channel 4 and VICE  
[Manchester, United Kingdom](#)  
*Project: Global Food Security: Pricing, Supply and the Role of Commodities Traders*
- 16

**Joshua Sharpe**  
Journalist, San Francisco Chronicle  
[Oakland, California](#)  
*Project: Identifying Patterns and Remedies in Wrongful Convictions*
- 17

**‘Fisayo Soyombo**  
Founder and editor-in-chief, Nigeria’s Foundation for Investigative Journalism  
[Abeokuta, Nigeria](#)  
*Project: Reverse Prison Break: Contextualizing Nigeria’s Criminal Justice Reform Needs*
- 18

**Ben Steverman**  
Reporter, Bloomberg News  
[New York, New York](#)  
*Project: Strategies for Reviving American Nightlife and Community in a Digital Age*
- 19

**Doris Truong**  
Senior director of teaching and diversity strategies, Poynter Institute of Media Studies  
[St. Petersburg, Florida](#)  
*Project: Helping Journalists Mitigate Unconscious Bias in Their Reporting*

# 2023 LIVINGSTON AWARD WINNERS

for work published in 2022

The Livingston Awards honor outstanding achievements by professionals under the age of 35. Winners are recognized as the best young talent in local, national and international reporting. The 2023 winners were honored on June 13 at our annual ceremony in New York City. All winning stories and videos can be found at [wallace/house.edu/livingston-awards/winners/](#)



## LOCAL REPORTING

### Anna Wolfe

Mississippi Today

Anna Wolfe, 27, of Mississippi Today for “The Backchannel,” a multiyear investigation into Mississippi’s federal welfare funding that uncovered text messages between then-Governor Bill Bryant, state officials and Bryant’s friends, including NFL football legend Brett Favre, and helped unravel the largest public fraud in Mississippi’s history.



Photo Credit: Earl Wilson/The New York Times

## NATIONAL REPORTING

### Caitlin Dickerson

The Atlantic

Caitlin Dickerson, 33, of The Atlantic for “We Need to Take Away Children,” a masterful examination of the U.S. government’s child separation policy revealing how officials at every level heedlessly and often deceptively advanced policy that defied the country’s most basic stated values.



## INTERNATIONAL REPORTING

### Vasilisa Stepanenko

The Associated Press

Vasilisa Stepanenko, 22, of The Associated Press for “A Year of War,” a series of harrowing videos exposing the atrocities against civilians committed by Putin’s army in Ukraine and laying bare the devastating human toll of war.

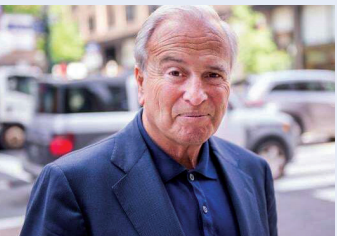


Photo Credit: David Hall/Ad Age

## SPECIAL TRIBUTE

### Ken Auletta

Author, media and communications writer for The New Yorker and Livingston Awards judge from 1983 to 2022

This year the Livingston Awards honored Ken Auletta with a special tribute for his enduring commitment to the program and the careers of young journalists. Anna Quindlen, author and Livingston Awards judge from 2009 to 2022, presented Auletta with the award and introduced a video with tributes from his fellow Livingston Award judges and past Livingston Award winners.

In a written tribute to Auletta, Charles Eisendrath, founding director of the Livingston Awards, remembered Auletta’s reluctance to join the judging panel in 1983, the third year of the program. “I felt obliged to recite the gleaming board of [judges] names and how these prizes would play a role in lifting the next generation of journalists. Auletta reversed field, and the Livingston Awards got an impeccably attired, perfectly spoken force of nature for the next 40 years.”

Auletta became indispensable to the program, recruiting new judges—including Anna Quindlen and Kara Swisher—and proposing the idea of the Richard M. Clurman Award for mentorship of young journalists. Auletta’s most meaningful legacy, however, is in the lives and careers of journalists whom he helped transform. Kara Swisher said in the video tribute, “There’s an expression. Anything that can shine does. Ken shines a light on the things that shine, which is really important when it comes to young reporters.”

A video tribute honoring Ken Auletta can be found at [wallacehouse.umich.edu/livingston-awards/special-tribute](#)



One of the many remarkable things about the University of Michigan is the caliber of public events that the university sponsors on campus and in the community. Together we lead Democracy & Debate, a university-wide educational initiative that encourages students, faculty, staff, and community members to

**Universities are central to thriving democracies. Journalists and journalism are essential as well. Excellent works of journalism bring facets of enormous, unwieldy issues into sharper focus.**

explore the exchange of ideas and free speech; the responsibilities of members of a democratic society; structural inequalities in our democratic systems; the power of the individual voter; and democracy from a local to a global perspective. Now finishing its second year, it has prompted projects and collaborations spanning numerous departments and disciplines.

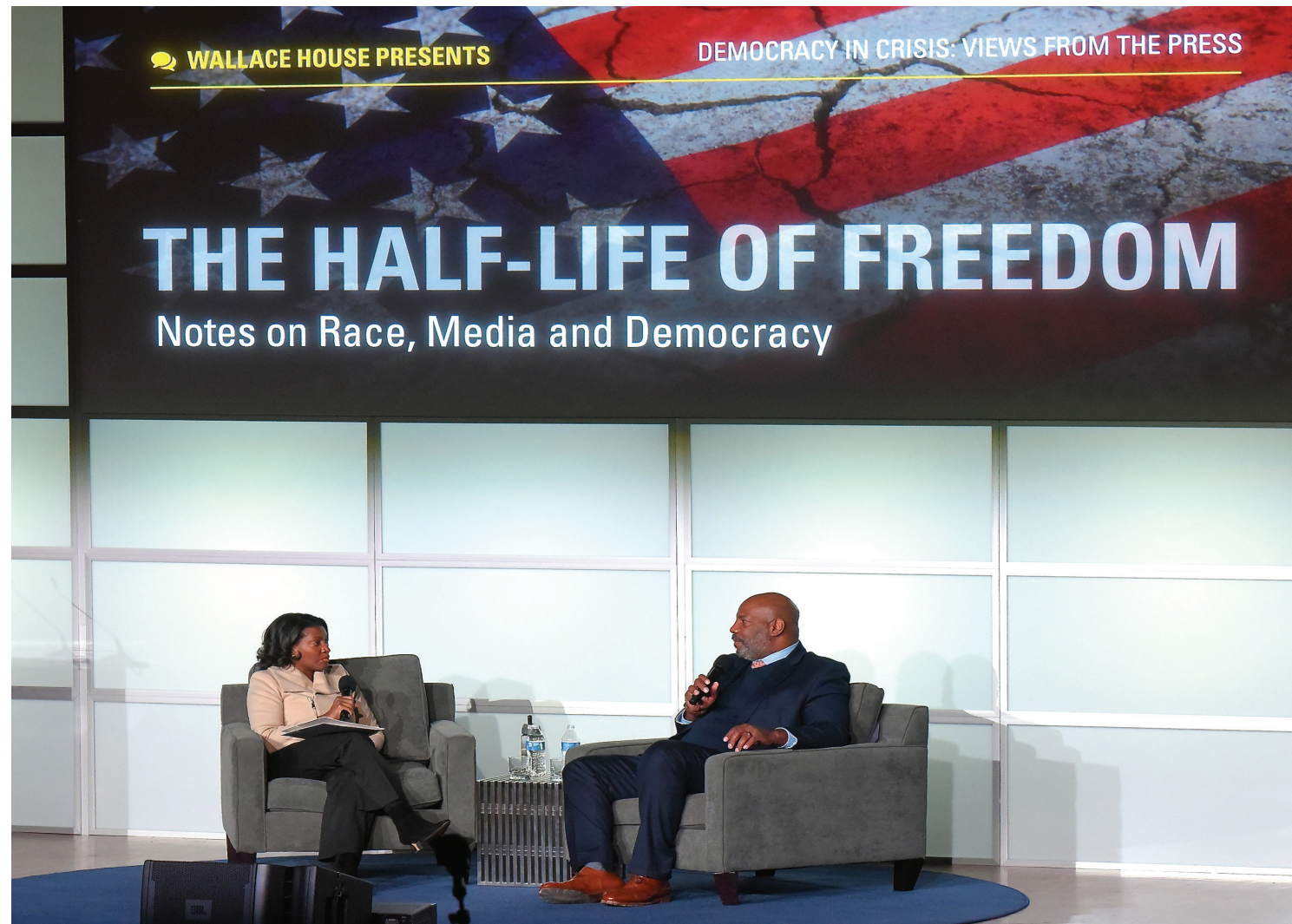
Universities are central to thriving democracies. Journalists and

journalism are essential as well. Excellent works of journalism bring facets of enormous, unwieldy issues into sharper focus. Rather than accepting that the stories we see, hear and read every day function as mere background noise or posts to scroll past, scholars and journalists share a desire to capture people's attention with evidence, analysis and humanity and to turn consumption of information into a conscious act.

Democracy & Debate and Wallace House Presents are well-suited partners in this endeavor. And it has been gratifying to bring our scholarly and journalistic styles together for interesting pairings.

Celeste, who founded the Ford School's Center for Racial Justice, interviewed Jelani Cobb, dean of the Columbia Journalism School and staff writer for The New Yorker. The conversation, titled The Half-Life of Freedom: Notes on Race, Media and Democracy, examined how historic challenges to democracy are reflective of a long history of fissures and contradictions in our democratic ideals.

From his unique vantage point as a journalist and historian, Cobb powerfully reminded us that the question of who America is for has yet to be resolved and that U.S. social justice movements are collective attempts to challenge our country to live up to its



**Celeste Watkins-Hayes and Jelani Cobb exchange ideas regarding the collective challenges the country faces while trying to live up to its democratic ideals.**

democratic ideals. He took a topic that could intimidate and distance an audience and provided relatable points of entry and even humor.

Anne, a linguist and host of the weekly podcast and Michigan Radio segment on language, "That's What they Say," interviewed journalist and best-selling author Anna Quindlen about the importance of personal writing. While the discussion focused on Quindlen's book, "Write for Your Life," the conversation captured the fundamental role written language plays in shaping not only our individual experience, but our history and collective memory.

The lively exchange urged audience members increasingly conditioned to process their days through texts to consider the long-term value of contemplative daily writing—whether in a journal, on a notepad, or in a phone. Quindlen, with all of her accolades as a writer of fiction and non-fiction, was wise, funny, and deeply human, as she shared with us the joys (those "aha!" moments) and challenges (reading feedback from editors) we all face when we put words to paper, whether we are students or professional writers.

The goals of the Wallace House Presents series are to highlight the vital role journalists play in our society; to bring transparency to how journalists pursue their work; to extend the reach of the issues they examine; and to foster civic engagement and civil debate—on campus, in the classroom, and in the broader community.

These goals resonate with key aspects of both our schools' missions: the rigorous pursuit of knowledge and truth; the humanizing of large-scale problems, as well as the process of understanding and addressing them; the commitment to democratic values, including academic freedom and the freedom of the press; and respectful, well-informed debate.

As deans, we worry that the issues we collectively face are so big and so pressing that people will become numb to them. Difficult topics are so loud in our rapid, repetitive information cycle, that people can inadvertently, or self-protectively, stop listening and thinking about them.

But our experience with university events demonstrates that, when given meaningful opportunities, people lean in and engage. The "She Said" screening, which was also co-sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and the College of Engineering, drew one of the largest audiences the Michigan Theater had seen since before the pandemic. We were particularly inspired by the number of women student journalists who asked questions about how to use journalism to effect social change and how to navigate



**As part of the Wallace House Presents series, CNN anchor Chris Wallace and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer took turns answering topical questions posed by university students.**

the numerous assaults on the profession. The event was one of the most memorable evenings of both of our academic years.

We are grateful to work alongside Lynette Clemetson and the Wallace House Center for Journalists to bring signature events like these to campus. And we look forward to continuing the



**Anna Quindlen and Anne Curzan engage the audience in a lively conversation on the importance of personal writing.**

important work of ensuring that democratic ideals, principles, and institutions continue to thrive on the University of Michigan campus and beyond.

***Anne Curzan** is dean of the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and serves on the Wallace House Executive Advisory Board.*

***Celeste Watkins-Hayes** is the Joan and Sanford Dean of the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, founding director of the school's Center for Racial Justice and serves on the Wallace House Executive Advisory Board.*



# Getting the Word Out in the Face of Disaster

BY MARÍA ARCE '22

**Launching my career in a disrupted media landscape, I became skilled in multimedia news.** As a senior digital editor, I helped journalists learn how to embrace technological advances, to tell stories in new ways to audiences who expect news delivered to their ever-changing hand-held devices.

But another disruption shaped my career and life, one wrought by climate change and increasingly extreme weather. When Hurricane María devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, eventually causing more than 2,900 deaths and nearly \$100 billion in damages, it left many newsrooms, mine included, in shambles. What good is all the technology in the world when the power grid and internet are knocked offline for up to six months? What do you do when whole regions of your audience are entirely cut off from communications and desperately need information to save their lives?

## Could journalists use ham radios to get our stories to the public when we lose our beloved internet?

We were forced to adapt and get information to those in need. We improvised and launched successful text-based versions of our websites, making the news easier for audiences with limited internet to download.

Later, I realized that few newsrooms have comprehensive editorial and operational plans for natural disasters—especially small and medium-sized newsrooms already working with scarce resources because of the financial challenges facing journalism. So, I applied to the Knight-Wallace Fellowship to address this problem and to create guidelines for newsrooms affected by the devastating natural disasters they must cover.

After diving into the 24,000 courses offered at the University of Michigan, I began auditing a course called “Extreme Weather in a Changing Climate.” Professor Perry Samson helped me understand the recipe for hurricanes and how to better forecast which areas will be affected by storm surges in order to plan where to deploy reporting teams. He introduced me to the five wind tunnels at the university. I became particularly fascinated with one used to simulate tropical storms. I also discovered dozens of online resources to help me and the journalists I would marshal better cover the next natural disaster.

I learned about nuclear winter and geomagnetic storms, a “sneeze” from the sun that can destroy all communications across the planet for months. Each class was simultaneously mind-blowing and amazingly straightforward. I cringed each time Prof. Samson pointed out simple mistakes committed by newsrooms, such as journalists using the wrong hurricane symbol.



**María Arce presents best practices so reporters can continue to disseminate life-saving information while in the midst of a natural disaster.**

I was eager to share what I was learning with others. Working with Wallace House, I convened “Covering Natural Disasters: A Newsroom Preparedness Symposium.” We invited a group of select reporters and editors from Michigan, Texas, California, and Florida to come to Ann Arbor and join my class of Knight-Wallace Fellows for a day of collaborative learning with extreme weather experts. The symposium ended with us breaking into small groups and workshopping best practices for bringing together operational and editorial processes. I am now turning these ideas into a set of guidelines for newsrooms.

Among my biggest fascinations from the year was a paper I found about the historical role of radio amateurs in helping devastated communities during natural disasters. I learned that Herbert V. Akerberg, a student in Michigan, gave birth to emergency radio after a disastrous flood in Ohio in 1913.

That story of a young radio amateur whose mother brought him meals so he could continue broadcasting during the night stuck in my mind. Could journalists use ham radios to get our stories to the public when we lose our beloved internet?

The answer is yes, we can. Although several amateur radio programs exist, I could not find any that actively partnered with newsrooms. In March, I became certified as a spotter for the Skywarn program to report to the National Weather Service and city emergency offices about extreme weather conditions.

Satellites, as it turns out, can’t see everything. If a family has difficulty getting out of a house in the middle of a flood, there is no way for a satellite to know. Nor can a satellite identify when a tornado knocks down a line of 10 or 20 trees. But people in communities connected by radio can get the word out.

I knew immediately that the fellowship had opened a new door for me: to become an amateur radio journalist. I won’t be the first. I met a fellow amateur radio journalist living in Michigan. After I finish writing my emergency guidelines, my next step as an experienced digital leader will be to ensure that multiplatform news outlets understand the analog skills they still need to survive.

***María Arce** is Editorial Coach for Latin America at Global Press, where she leads learning and professional development for a team of reporters in the region. She also accepted a Reynold’s Journalism Institute Fellowship where she will continue her Knight-Wallace Fellowship work and develop and launch a training and resource guide on how journalists can work with ham radio operators.*

# Q&A Get to Know Associate Director Ashley Bates

BY LYNETTE CLEMETSON '10

*Ashley Bates recently joined Wallace House Center for Journalists as its associate director. She comes with diverse experiences in university administration, nonprofit management and investigative journalism. Ashley has also been a long-time friend to Wallace House—facilitating connections, getting to know our fellows and regularly attending our public events. She is hard at work supporting our new fellows as they prepare to move to Ann Arbor.*

## Lynette Clemetson: We like to introduce our fellows to hidden gems across town. What is your favorite spot to get work done on campus?

**Bates:** There are so many beautiful spots. Two of my outdoor favorites are the garden patio at the Law School and the rooftop deck at Trotter Multicultural Center. Both are gorgeous settings where you can enjoy the hustle and bustle of campus. A lesser known indoor space is the lovely, book-filled Hopwood Room on the first floor of Angell Hall. It’s open on weekdays and offers free tea to all visitors.

## Clemetson: What is something people are surprised to learn about you?

**Bates:** People are sometimes surprised that I speak Arabic. I studied Arabic during college and was immersed in the language as a Peace Corps volunteer in Salt, Jordan, and later as a journalist in the West Bank and Gaza. People are also sometimes surprised to learn that my partner is originally from Israel, and that he and our two young children speak Hebrew.

## Clemetson: What do you like to do for fun?

**Bates:** My family and I enjoy many Ann Arbor outdoor activities—biking the B2B Trail, strolling in the Arb, swimming at Pickerel Lake, kayaking down the Huron River, picnicking at Summerfest and befriending the kangaroos at the Creature Conservancy. During the long pandemic winter, my daughter and I learned to knit hats; it is an incredibly calming little hobby, once you get the hang of it.

## Clemetson: What is your favorite travel destination?

**Bates:** When I vacation domestically or internationally, I like to be immersed in nature. I especially love multi-day backpacking and camping adventures. For the past two summers, I have hiked for a week with my eight-year-old daughter along New Hampshire’s White Mountain section of the Appalachian Trail. Overseas, one of my favorite destinations is the remote trails outside of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra—especially the 16-mile loop trail from Petra to Jabal Haroun (“Aaron’s Mountain”). In addition to breathtaking panoramas, the hike offers opportunities to interact with traditional Bedouin families who

live along the trail. I actually first hiked this trail with a dozen badass, hijab-wearing Jordanian teenage girls who were training with me for Jordan’s annual Dead Sea Marathon. All of these girls conquered the trail—and the marathon!

## Clemetson: Tell me about an investigative story you worked on as a journalist in Gaza.

**Bates:** A story that I wrote for the Jerusalem Post Magazine in 2010 looked at the Gaza–Egypt tunnel industry. Israelis and Americans often think of tunnels as primarily avenues for weapons smuggling. My reporting showed how, with legal border crossings to Israel and Egypt effectively closed, tunnels were becoming a sort of underground humanitarian “border.” Despite extreme dangers of collapse, electrocution and bombings, tunnels were used daily to transport anything and everything—from food



staples to even an anesthetized zoo lion. Tunnels were also used by civilians seeking medical treatment in Egypt that was not available in Gaza. The most devastating scene I witnessed as part of this reporting project was a public demonstration against child labor in the tunnels, which was proliferating at the time. About 200 youngsters marched through the streets of a border town called Rafah, carrying homemade toy corpses and signs that said things like: “Tunnel owners: let our children live their childhoods.”

## Clemetson: You’ve had so many interesting jobs. What drew you to Wallace House?

**Bates:** I have had my eye on Wallace House ever since my family arrived in Ann Arbor seven years ago. I knew it was *the* place on campus whose mission I supported most deeply and personally. This is a time of great challenges for the news industry, and journalists are on the front lines. As someone who has worked as a journalist myself, I know that the pressures and potential for burnout are intense. It is a dream and an honor to be tasked with helping journalists to build skills and support networks that enable them to keep on keeping on. I believe in the power of our collective efforts to lift up journalists and journalism—and to strengthen democratic values in the process.



# Finding My Flow and Form

BY JARRAD HENDERSON '23

“Be formless, shapeless, like water.” – Bruce Lee

In the past, I did my best thinking alone in a dark room with only the luminous glow of my computer screen to keep me company. I was raised in journalism to be the one-person band our industry predicted all multimedia journalists would need to be. I became self-sufficient and found a way to do the work I wanted to do.

In recent years, I’ve had my boots on the ground at numerous major news events. The coronavirus pandemic; multiple protests over the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor; the contentious 2020 presidential election, and police



Jarrad Henderson (front and center) working with students in south-west Detroit teaching them to create their own documentaries, telling the stories of people in their own communities.

retaliation for whistleblowing: I experienced it all on the front lines through the viewfinder of my camera. But along the way, I often felt emotionally and professionally isolated. I was in a tightly wound, thinly stretched container doing my best work, and doing my best to keep it together.

I had applied to the Knight-Wallace Fellowship once before and had not been accepted. Through the encouragement of friends, I applied again, focused in a way I had not been the first time. And I was selected to join the 2022-2023 class. Instantly, my mission became to resolve all my commitments and make space for whatever came after I moved to Ann Arbor. I hadn’t taken more than a four-day vacation since I began working at age 15.

Bruce Lee said that to flow like water you have to “empty your mind.” And I was ready.

Given the chance to think about how I might best use the resources and wealth of knowledge available to me at the University of Michigan, I decided to pursue an idea that I had spoken about with Daphne Duret, a 2021 fellow. I wanted to explore who gets access to quality journalism education—and who doesn’t. The industry

was talking a lot about the importance of diversity, but many of the efforts for change seemed thin. I wanted to interrogate and improve systems to recruit, train, and develop visual journalists of color.

“Visual media doesn’t have a pipeline issue, it has an access issue,” I told the fellowship director, Lynette Clemetson, during our first one-on-one meeting. “Young people don’t even know where the doors are to walk through to get started.” She connected me with Jerry Davis, faculty director for Business+Impact at the U-M Ross School of Business. Jerry introduced me to the +Impact Studio, a home for social entrepreneurs across disciplines at the university. I applied to their Founders Program as a Knight-Wallace Fellow—me, a journalist who had never taken a business class in my life—and amazingly, I was accepted.

“You put it into a teapot, it becomes the teapot.” – Bruce Lee

Those first two months participating in the university-wide meet-and-greets and fellowship seminars helped me slowly pour myself out of that tightly wound container. I stopped checking my phone every five minutes and became less worried about what was trending on Twitter. My thoughts, previously consumed by Zoom meeting reminders and leadership responsibilities, began to be replaced by hours lost in the Duderstadt Center and collaborating with social innovators on the second floor of Blau Hall. By September, I realized that I had never had a chance to collaborate at that level before. The University of Michigan became the biggest teapot I could ever pour myself into.

The +Impact Studio provided me with structure, resources, and staff to guide my idea from conception to prototype. I founded Pop Up Docs™, a mobile documentary film and video editing studio (on wheels) taking skills-building workshops to aspiring documentary storytellers from traditionally underrepresented populations. We aim to democratize storytelling by leveraging technology and person-to-person interactions to deliver educational experiences for young people disconnected from traditional journalism pathways.

In March, with the support of +Impact Studio, I partnered with Capturing Belief, a grassroots Detroit non-profit, for a two-day “Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking” workshop in southwest Detroit. Ten students left with mini documentaries about people at their local grocery store, barbershop, laundromat and bakery, all while learning fundamental ethics and journalistic approaches to visual storytelling. It was an incredible experience.

I’m not sure what comes next. I am recruiting board members, finishing paperwork to become a 501(C)3 organization, applying for grant funding, compiling a team, and forging connections for partnerships with companies in tech, education, and media to help bring Pop Up Docs™ to more communities.

I am no longer the same person who does his best thinking alone in the dark. I am a journalist and entrepreneur who thrives in brightly lit rooms, collaborating with diverse communities. I am a creator and problem solver changed by this experience. And if I were asked to offer a single piece of advice to the 50th class of Knight-Wallace fellows, I’d lean on Bruce Lee and say, “Be water, my friend.”

Jarrad Henderson is a filmmaker, educator, storytelling coach, and visual journalist. During his 2022-2023 Knight-Wallace Fellowship, he founded Pop Up Docs™, a mobile documentary film and video editing mobile studio which provides skill-building workshops for aspiring documentary storytellers from traditionally underrepresented populations.

# Fellows Are Back At It in Northern Michigan

After three years, Knight-Wallace Fellows once again enjoy the beauty and tranquility that can only be found in northern Michigan. While the trip is typically scheduled in the fall to take advantage of the vibrant colors, this year the adventure was held in early April, for the last blast of snow!



Fellows made their way to Camp Michigania on Walloon Lake where the snow may have blanketed the ground, but it didn’t stop the archery shoot. Left, fellows Antoni Slodkowski (foreground) and Asadullah Timory try their hands with bows and arrows. Below, left: Longtime Knight-Wallace Director Charles Eisendrath and his wife Julia host fellows and their families in their sugar shack, where the process of making Lake Charlevoix maple syrup is explained and taste-tested. There’s no such thing as a free lunch at a working farm, as these children found out: Geeoh Min (center) replaces the sap-collecting bucket on a tree, while Kai Rytter (right) hauls wood.



Above, walking the muddy, rutted paths at the farm proves to be difficult, so many a fellow opt for an alternate form of transportation while waving to those left behind. Bottom left, several of the group ventured out from the cozy fire in the camp community center to trek the shoreline of Walloon Lake. Pictured (left to right) are Mary Cuddehe, Elaine Cromie, Chris Marquette, Ellis Clemetson, Lynette Clemetson, Maria Arce and Meg Martin.



Photos by Meg Martin and Maria Arce





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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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# ALUMNI UPDATE



## Patricia Gaines '90

Honored by the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project for her Washington Post work that garnered national attention and led to the involvement of the Innocence Project.



## Helen Maynard '15

Named news editor for the non-profit Signal Cleveland.



## Rona Kobell '09

Named a visiting SNF Agora Fellow at Johns Hopkins University for the 2023-24 academic year.



## Laura Starecheski '14

Won a Peabody Award as part of the team for This American Life episode "The Pink House at the Center of the World," documenting the day Roe v. Wade was overturned.



## Arno Kopecky '17

Won the 2022 Dave Greber magazine award for "Three Days in the Theater of Fairy Creek," in collaboration with The Tyee and Hakai Magazine, and also second place at the 2022 Society of Environmental Journalists.



## Challen Stephens '07

Won a Pulitzer Prize in Local Reporting as editor and part of the team investigating predatory policing for AL.com in Alabama. He was also the editor for Kyle Whitmire's "State of Denial," the Pulitzer winner in commentary this year.



## Tracie Mauriello '20

Named communications manager for International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

Send updates about your new jobs, fellowships, appointments, awards to **wallacehouse@umich.edu** so we can include your news in our next issue.

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Wallace House Center for Journalists

University of Michigan

620 Oxford Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104-2635

Telephone: 734-998-7666; FAX: 734-988-7979

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