

**PRESS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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The American Journalism Historians Association has announced David Stephen Bennett of the University of North Florida as the winner of the 2021 Margaret A. Blanchard Dissertation Prize.

Bennett, who completed his dissertation at Michigan State University under the direction of Michael Stamm, was recognized for “Framing Atlanta: Local Newspapers’ Search for a Nationally Appealing Racial Image (1920-1960).”

“The AJHA is one of the most important voices in contextualizing the media’s relationship with our society,” Bennett said. “When I began my doctoral studies, I set out to contribute to this discussion, and I am awed and emboldened by the AJHA’s recognition of my scholarship.”

AJHA has granted the Blanchard Prize to the best doctoral dissertation dealing with mass communication history annually since 1997.

Three other scholars received honorable mention from the Blanchard Dissertation Prize Committee.

Rosalyn Narayan has been recognized for “Slavery in Print: Slaveholding Ideology and Anxiety in Antebellum Southern Newspapers, 1830-1861,” completed at the University of Warwick under the direction of Tim Lockley.

“My fascination with the southern newspaper press of the antebellum period increased significantly as my research progressed throughout my doctoral studies, and the AJHA has played an important role in strengthening my interests,” said Narayan. “I look forward to publishing further articles and a monograph from my doctoral research.”

Marama Whyte earned her Honorable Mention for “The Press for Equality: Women Journalists, Grassroots Activism, and the Feminist Fight for American Media,” completed at The University of Sydney under the direction of Michael A. McDonnell.

“I am delighted to have my dissertation recognised by the AJHA,” said Whyte. “The activism which women journalists undertook to reshape the news media during the 1970s was meaningful and significant, and it is gratifying to have this research commended by an association that has fostered such important work in histories of women in media.”

Stephan R. Pigeon earned his award for “Scissors-and-Paste: The Labour, Law, and Practice of Circulating Journalism in the British newspaper and Periodical Press, 1842-1911,” completed at McGill University under the direction of Elizabeth Elbourne and Jason Opal.

“Scissors-and-paste journalism was commonplace throughout the press but it is nevertheless a challenging phenomenon to capture beyond the fact of textual reuse,” Pigeon said. “To really understand what this practice was all about, my methodology has been to identify ‘flashpoints’ – where the disagreement over a particular use of scissors-and-paste journalism was substantial enough to generate debate among journalists, the reading public, and lawmakers – and use them as case studies.”

Bennett explained that he began his study with a desire to understand how American media “has framed our discussions of race within our public spaces.”

“Many scholars talk about Jim Crow as the physical segregation of our communities, but segregation has left a major fingerprint on our media industry as well,” he added. “Our country has a long and shameful history of silencing discussions about racial issues in the media, and framing Black arguments to meet white audience expectations.”

Bennett said that one of the most disturbing things he learned when he began exploring the history of Atlanta’s urban racial images was how invested the city’s media was in obscuring local racist attitudes. He saw that in the original imagining of the Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial during the 1920s.

“Atlanta’s major media industry professionals were some of the first to sign on to the project, and they were integral in shaping the memorial’s problematic public relations campaign,” he said. “The same thing happened again for 'Gone With the Wind,' from the local media industry’s coverage of the novel and film to the city’s racist and Lost Cause-inspired memorial plaque campaign. In many ways, Atlanta’s white media professionals played a key role in shaping our national debate on race by laying the groundwork for a false, middle-ground ‘white moderate’ rhetoric which still exists today and which consistently undermines the true achievement of full Black equality.”



Founded in 1981, the American Journalism Historians Association seeks to advance education and research in mass communication history. Members work to raise historical standards and ensure that all scholars and students recognize the vast importance of media history and apply this knowledge to the advancement of society. For more information on AJHA, visit <http://www.ajhaonline.org>.

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