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Two Freelance Journalists Awarded \$100,000 Each for Groundbreaking Coverage, Attention to America's Underrepresented Communities

Cerise Castle and Carvell Wallace Recipients of Prestigious 2023 American Mosaic Journalism Prize

Los Altos, Calif. (February 15, 2023)—The Heising-Simons Foundation announced today that freelance journalists Cerise Castle and Carvell Wallace are the recipients of the [2023 American Mosaic Journalism Prize](#), which includes an unrestricted cash prize of \$100,000 for each winner. This is the largest dollar amount given annually for a journalism prize in the United States.

The prize is awarded for excellence in long-form, narrative or deep reporting about underrepresented and/or misrepresented groups in the United States. It recognizes journalism's ability to foster understanding and aims to support freelance journalists. The prize is based on confidential nominations invited from more than 150 leaders in journalism throughout the country. A panel of 10 judges—including journalists from NBC News, *The New Yorker*, *Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post*, among others—selected the recipients.

Castle and Wallace join a distinguished group of freelance journalists, alongside past winners Ryan Christopher Jones, Julian Brave NoiseCat, Jaeah Lee, Valeria Fernández, Abe Streep, Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, Rebecca Nagle, Darcy Courteau, David Dennis Jr. and Michelle García.

About Cerise Castle:

Castle is a freelance journalist currently based in Los Angeles, California. In the wake of the George Floyd protests of 2020 and after more than six months of investigative research, Castle wrote "[A Tradition of Violence](#)," the first history of deputy gangs inside the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the largest local law enforcement agency in the United States.

The investigation was published as a 15-part reporting series for *Knock LA* exposing 18 gangs, 19 documented murders (all of whom were people of color) and over \$100 million dollars in lawsuits paid for by the people of Los Angeles. Castle continued to report on this topic late in 2021 and well into 2022, with pieces that were reviewed by the prize judges such as "[KKK-Themed Deputy Gang Allegedly Led By Violent LASD Deputy](#)" and "[Deputy Angel Reinoso Says He Attempted to Whistleblow Before He Was Fired.](#)"

Castle's work has appeared in *The Daily Beast*, *The Los Angeles Times* and MTV, among other outlets. She has produced podcast series for Audible, iHeartMedia and Wondery, as well as segments for VICE News, NPR's "All Things Considered" and "Marketplace."

In 2022, Castle received the American Journalism Online Award for "Best Use of Public Records" for her series on L.A. deputy gangs. She was also the recipient of the International Women in Media Foundation's Courage in Journalism Award, which honors "brave journalists who report on taboo topics, work in environments hostile to women, and share difficult truths."

“All too often, the issues that affect low-income, Black and Brown communities are severely under-covered and ignored by newsrooms,” said Castle. “People need to know that these stories—our stories—are valid and deserve to be told. As a child, I grew up hearing about deputy gangs in L.A. They’ve existed since the early 1960s, yet very few reporters were writing about them. It’s stories like these that reveal broader trends and uncomfortable realities that impact us all.”

About Carvell Wallace:

Wallace is a writer and podcaster based in Oakland, California. As a magazine contributor, he has written profiles in *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Glamour*, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*.

Throughout his career, Wallace has explored complex and difficult topics and writes about them with empathy and compassion. The prize judges reviewed pieces such as “[What if my mother had an abortion: Who might she have been?](#),” in which he questions the trajectory of his mother’s life and how it may have been less tragic had she not given birth as a teenager, and “[Justin Williams can see the future](#),” written about one of the nation’s few Black bike racers, which takes an in-depth look at a man who is challenging the lack of cultural, economic and racial diversity in the sport of cycling.

A skilled memoirist, Wallace coauthored the 2019 bestselling book, *The Sixth Man*, with Golden State Warrior’s forward Andre Iguodala. He also writes often about race in popular culture, such as in “[Don’t Go in the Basement](#),” published in *The Atlantic*, where he analyzes the adaptation of the 1992 cult horror film, *Candyman*, and how the horror genre has traditionally exploited Black characters’ suffering and pain. Previous work also includes “[Won’t You Be My Neighbor](#),” in which Wallace meditates on the radical goodness and politics of Fred Rogers, and “[In Memory of Ms Gloria Jean Watkins aka bell hooks](#).”

Before beginning his writing and freelance reporting career, Wallace spent 15 years in the nonprofit sector doing direct case management and program design for incarcerated and foster care youth. He is currently working on a memoir, *Another Word For Love*, on childhood trauma and recovery, and co-creating a podcast with Resham Mantri about intimacy and liberation called “Everyone Is Dying: a Podcast about Love.”

“I’ve long thought that the only thing that really matters is how we treat each other,” said Wallace. “I view everything through this lens, whether it’s sports, culture, politics, art or film. It’s why I focus my writing on our shared humanity, and the struggles we go through to find love and liberation.”

For more information about the American Mosaic Journalism Prize, visit <https://www.hsfoundation.org/prize>.

The Heising-Simons Foundation launched the American Mosaic Journalism Prize in 2018 as part of its work supporting journalism as an essential arm of U.S. democracy. It is part of a portfolio of journalism grants supporting and elevating underrepresented voices, groups and content in journalism, which includes support of [TransLash](#), [Futuro Media](#), [Journal-isms](#), [The 19th](#), [Our Body Politic](#) and the [Racial Equity in Journalism Fund](#), among others.

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The 2023 American Mosaic Journalism Prize Judges

Katherine Boo
Author and *The New Yorker Magazine* Editor

Antonia Hylton
Correspondent, NBC News

Tracy Jan

Deputy Health and Science Editor
The Washington Post

Wesley Lowery

Journalist, Author, and Correspondent

Perla Trevizo

Reporter
ProPublica – Texas Tribune Investigative
Initiative

Stephanie Foo

Author and Freelance Journalist

Jaweed Kaleem

Foreign Correspondent, *Los Angeles Times*

Farai Chideya

Journalist/Host, *Our Body Politic*

Graham Lee Brewer

Investigative Reporter, NBC News

Daniella Zalcman

Documentary Photographer and Founder,
Women Photograph

About the Heising-Simons Foundation

The Heising-Simons Foundation is a family foundation based in Los Altos and San Francisco, California. The Foundation works with its many partners to advance sustainable solutions in climate and clean energy, enable groundbreaking research in science, enhance the education of our youngest learners, and support human rights for all people. For more information, visit www.hsfoundation.org.