

Columbia Journalism School and the Nieman Foundation Announce the 2023 Shortlists for the J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project Awards

#LukasPrizes

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:00 AM ET on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Columbia Journalism School and the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University are pleased to announce the 2023 shortlists for the **J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Awards**, the **J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize**, and the **Mark Lynton History Prize**. The Lukas Prize Project, established in 1998, honors the best in American nonfiction writing.

The winners and finalists of the 2023 Lukas Prizes will be announced on Tuesday, March 21, 2023. The awards will be presented at a ceremony at Columbia Journalism School on Wednesday, May 3, 2023.

J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Awards Shortlist

- Jesselyn Cook, *The Quiet Damage: QAnon and the Destruction of the American Family* (Crown)
- Mike Hixenbaugh, Uncivil: One Town's Fight over Race and Identity, and the New Battle for America's Schools (Mariner Books)
- Rebecca Kelliher, *Guerrilla Pills: The Abortion Drug Underground* (Beacon Press)
- Megan Kimble, *City Limits: Infrastructure, Inequality, and the Future of America's Highways* (Crown)
- Jessica Pishko, *The Highest Law in the Land: How the Growing Power of Sheriffs Threatens Democracy* (Dutton)

J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize Shortlist

• Rachel Aviv, *Strangers to Ourselves: Unsettled Minds and the Stories That Make Us* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

- Lyndsie Bourgon, *Tree Thieves: Crime and Survival in North America's Woods* (Little, Brown Spark)
- Jack Lowery, It Was Vulgar & It Was Beautiful: How AIDS Activists Used Art to Fight a Pandemic (Bold Type Books)
- Robert Samuels and Toluse Olorunnipa, *His Name Is George Floyd: One Man's Life and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Viking)
- Linda Villarosa, Under the Skin: The Hidden Toll of Racism on American Lives and on the Health of Our Nation (Doubleday)

Mark Lynton History Prize Shortlist

- Deborah Cohen, Last Call at the Hotel Imperial: The Reporters Who Took on a World at War (Random House)
- Beverly Gage, *G-Man: J. Edgar Hoover and the Making of the American Century* (Viking)
- Kerri K. Greenidge, *The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family* (Liveright/W.W. Norton)
- Pekka Hämäläinen, *Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America* (Liveright/W.W. Norton)
- Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire, & Revolution in the Borderlands* (W.W. Norton)

ABOUT THE PRIZES:

Established in 1998, the Lukas Prize Project honors the best in American nonfiction writing. Co-administered by the <u>Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism</u> and the <u>Nieman</u> Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, and sponsored by the family of the late Mark Lynton, a historian and senior executive at the firm Hunter Douglas in the Netherlands, the Lukas Prize Project presents four awards annually.

J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Awards (two \$25,000 prizes):

The J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Awards are given annually to aid in the completion of significant works of nonfiction on American topics of political or social concern. These awards assist in closing the gap between the time and money an author has and the time and money that finishing a book requires. Judges this year: Paul Golob (chair), Alia Malek, and Paige Williams.



Photo credits: Kyle Gager; NBC News; courtesy of the author; courtesy of the author; Benedict Evans

2023 J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress shortlisted authors, from left to right: Jesselyn Cook, Mike Hixenbaugh, Rebecca Kelliher, Megan Kimble, Jessica Pishko

Jesselyn Cook, *The Quiet Damage: QAnon and the Destruction of the American Family* (Crown)

- Jesselyn Cook is an Atlanta-area journalist whose reporting focuses on online dangers, including weaponized conspiracy theories and other disinformation. Prior to working as an investigative tech reporter at NBC News, she was a senior reporter on the national enterprise desk at HuffPost and an adjunct journalism professor at the University of La Verne. She received her master's degree in international relations and journalism from New York University.
- *The Quiet Damage* examines the psychological draw of QAnon and adjacent conspiracy theories, their devastating toll on American families, and the power of divisions that could last for generations in American life. It follows five everyday families torn apart at the seams, intimately chronicling their stories from the perspectives of both those lost down ideological rabbit holes and their loved ones looking on as they try to find a way back to each other.

Mike Hixenbaugh, Uncivil: One Town's Fight over Race and Identity, and the New Battle for America's Schools (Mariner Books)

Mike Hixenbaugh is a senior investigative reporter for NBC News. After graduating from the University of Akron in 2007, he went to work at newspapers in Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, and Texas, where his reporting uncovered deadly failures in the U.S. military, abuses in the child welfare system, and safety lapses at major hospitals. His reporting with Antonia Hylton on the battle to restrict classroom discussions on race, gender, and sexuality won a Peabody Award and was named a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize. Hixenbaugh lives in Houston with his wife and four children.

Uncivil takes readers inside the Christian nationalist campaign to take control of

public education in the U.S., placing this movement in historical context while illuminating the harrowing stories of students and teachers whose lives have been upended. Hixenbaugh anchors the narrative in a wealthy Texas suburb where a conservative backlash against the racial reckoning of 2020 becomes a national model—or cautionary tale, depending on who you ask—in the new battles over critical race theory and LGBTQ inclusion that have since spread to every corner of the country. *Uncivil* pulls back the curtain on the powerful forces driving this crusade and traces the rise of a new resistance movement led by a diverse coalition of student activists, fed-up educators, and parents. Hixenbaugh connects this moment with past fundamentalist campaigns to censor classroom lessons on racism deemed un-godly or un-American, and in doing so, reveals what's at stake when public schools become the frontline of our nation's most foundational divisions.

Rebecca Kelliher, Guerrilla Pills: The Abortion Drug Underground (Beacon Press)

- **Rebecca Kelliher** is a freelance journalist covering reproductive health, gender, and higher education. She graduated from Columbia Journalism School and Barnard College. Kelliher is a Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting Fellow based in New York. Her work has appeared in such publications as *Slate* and *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. Before journalism, she worked for nearly a decade in higher education.
- *Guerrilla Pills* traces the cross-continental history behind mifepristone and misoprostol, better known as the abortion pills, from their invention to their quickly growing dispersal networks today. This timely narrative follows how major players, from executives to doctors to activists to everyday people, have been fighting for decades around the globe to place the pills in pregnant people's hands—or to stop them. By unraveling how mifepristone and misoprostol came to be, we may be able to make better sense of America's post-Roe present and the lessons different countries offer. While the wider American public may only now be talking about the pills, these medications tell a longer history of biases in medicine and law—and of resistance galvanized by the millions of women's lives that remain at stake.

Megan Kimble, *City Limits: Infrastructure, Inequality, and the Future of America's Highways* (Crown)

Megan Kimble is an Austin-based investigative journalist, author, and editor. Formerly the executive editor at the *Texas Observer*, a statewide nonprofit news outlet, she's written about housing and transportation for *The New York Times*, *Texas Monthly, The Guardian*, and Bloomberg's *CityLab*. Kimble is the author of *Unprocessed: My City-Dwelling Year of Reclaiming Real Food*, a memoir of her year-long journey of eating only whole, unprocessed foods, intertwined with a journalistic exploration of what "unprocessed" really means, why it matters, and how to afford it. She holds an MFA in creative nonfiction from the University of Arizona.

Seventy years ago, planners sold highways running through urban centers as progress, essential to our future prosperity. Instead, highways divided cities, displaced people from their homes, chained us to our cars, and locked us into an increasingly higher-emissions future. And the more highways we built, the worse traffic got. Nowhere is this more visible than in Texas. In Houston, Dallas, and Austin, residents and activists are fighting against massive, multi-billion-dollar highway expansions that will claim thousands of homes and businesses and entrench segregation and sprawl. In *City Limits*, Megan Kimble weaves the troubling history of America's urban highways with the stories of ordinary people fighting for a more just, connected, and sustainable future.

Jessica Pishko, *The Highest Law in the Land: How the Growing Power of Sheriffs Threatens Democracy* (Dutton)

- **Jessica Pishko** is an independent journalist and lawyer who has been writing about the criminal legal system for a decade with a focus on the political power of law enforcement officials. Previously, Pishko was a fellow at the Rule of Law Collaborative at the University of South Carolina, researching sheriff accountability. She has received grants from the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting and Type Investigations and is a 2023 New America Fellow. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times* op-ed section, *Politico, Slate, The Atlantic,* and The Appeal. In addition, her newsletter on sheriffs and their political power has been recognized by the NYU American Journalism Online Awards.
- *The Highest Law in the Land* is a deeply reported and historically informed work of nonfiction tracing the history and political power of sheriffs from the end of the Civil War to the present day. Through convict leasing and Jim Crow in the South, to frontier-building and the posse comitatus movements in the West, and, finally, through the contemporary age of mass incarceration, sheriffs play an important role in normalizing jail as a cure for society's ills, and have become a flashpoint in the current politics of toxic masculinity, guns, white supremacy, and rural resentment.

J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize (\$10,000):

The J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize recognizes superb examples of nonfiction writing that exemplify the literary grace, commitment to serious research, and original reporting that characterized the distinguished work of the award's namesake, J. Anthony Lukas. Books must be on a topic of American political or social concern published between January 1 and December

31, 2022. Judges this year: Jessica Bruder (chair), Emily Bazelon, Shereen Marisol Meraji, and Vann R. Newkirk II.



Rachel Aviv, *Strangers to Ourselves: Unsettled Minds and the Stories That Make Us* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

- **Rachel Aviv** is a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, where she writes about medicine, education, and criminal justice, among other subjects. In 2022, she won a National Magazine Award for Profile Writing. A 2019 national fellow at New America, she received a Whiting Creative Nonfiction Grant to support her work on *Strangers to Ourselves*. She lives in Brooklyn.
- Strangers to Ourselves poses fundamental questions about how we understand ourselves in periods of crisis and distress. Drawing on deep, original reporting as well as unpublished journals and memoirs, Rachel Aviv writes about people who have come up against the limits of psychiatric explanations for who they are. She follows an Indian woman celebrated as a saint who lives in healing temples in Kerala; an incarcerated mother vying for her children's forgiveness after recovering from psychosis; a man who devotes his life to seeking revenge upon his psychoanalysts; and an affluent young woman who, after a decade of defining herself through her diagnosis, decides to go off her meds because she doesn't know who she is without them. Animated by a profound sense of empathy, Aviv's gripping exploration is refracted through her own account of living in a hospital ward at the age of six. Aviv asks how the stories we tell about mental disorders shape our lives—and our identities. Challenging the way we understand and talk about illness, her account is a testament to the porousness and resilience of the mind.

Lyndsie Bourgon, *Tree Thieves: Crime and Survival in North America's Woods* (Little, Brown Spark)

Lyndsie Bourgon is a writer, oral historian, and 2018 National Geographic Explorer based in British Columbia. She writes about the environment and its entanglement

with history, culture, and identity. Her features have been published in *The Atlantic*, *Smithsonian*, *The Guardian*, *Oxford American*, *Aeon*, *The Walrus*, and *Hazlitt*, among other outlets.

In Tree Thieves, Lyndsie Bourgon takes us deep into the underbelly of the illegal timber market. As she traces three timber poaching cases, she introduces us to tree poachers, law enforcement officials, forensic wood specialists, the enigmatic residents of former logging communities, environmental activists, international timber cartels, and indigenous communities along the way. Old-growth trees are invaluable and irreplaceable for both humans and wildlife, and are the oldest living things on earth. But the morality of tree poaching is not as simple as we might think: stealing trees is a form of deeply rooted protest, and a side effect of environmental preservation and protection that doesn't include communities that have been uprooted or marginalized when park boundaries are drawn. As Bourgon discovers, failing to include working class and rural communities in the preservation of these awe-inducing ecosystems can lead to catastrophic results. Featuring investigative reporting, fascinating characters, logging history, political analysis, and cutting-edge tree science, Tree Thieves takes readers on a thrilling journey into the intrigue, crime, and incredible complexity sheltered under the forest canopy.

Jack Lowery, It Was Vulgar & It Was Beautiful: How AIDS Activists Used Art to Fight a Pandemic (Bold Type Books)

- **Jack Lowery** is a writer whose work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and on The Awl. He has taught in the Undergraduate Writing Program at Columbia University, where he also completed his MFA in nonfiction writing. He lives in Brooklyn.
- In the late 1980s, the AIDS pandemic was annihilating queer people, intravenous drug users, and communities of color in America, and disinformation about the disease ran rampant. Out of the activist group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), an art collective that called itself Gran Fury formed to campaign against corporate greed, government inaction, stigma, and public indifference to the epidemic. In *It Was Vulgar & It Was Beautiful*, Jack Lowery examines Gran Fury's art and activism, offering a complex, moving portrait of a collective and its members. Gran Fury and ACT UP's strategies are still used frequently by the activists leading contemporary movements. In an era when structural violence and the devastation of COVID-19 continue to target the most vulnerable, this belief in the power of public art and action persists.

Robert Samuels and Toluse Olorunnipa, *His Name Is George Floyd: One Man's Life and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Viking)

- **Robert Samuels** is a national political enterprise reporter for *The Washington Post* who focuses on the intersection of politics, policy, and people. He previously wrote stories about life in the District for the *Post*'s social issues team. Samuels joined the *Post* in 2011 after spending nearly five years working at the *Miami Herald*. **Toluse Olorunnipa** is the White House bureau chief for *The Washington Post*. He joined the *Post* in 2019 and has covered three presidencies. He previously worked at Bloomberg, where he reported on politics and policy from Washington and Florida.
- The video recording of George Floyd's death set off the largest protest movement in the history of the United States, awakening millions to the pervasiveness of racial injustice. *His Name Is George Floyd* tells the story of a beloved figure from Houston's housing projects as he faced the stifling systemic pressures that come with being a Black man in America. Placing his narrative within the context of the country's enduring legacy of institutional racism, this deeply reported account examines Floyd's family roots in slavery and sharecropping, the segregation of his schools, the overpolicing of his community amid a wave of mass incarceration, and the callous disregard toward his struggle with addiction—putting today's inequality into uniquely human terms. Drawing upon hundreds of interviews with Floyd's closest friends and family, his teachers and coaches, civil rights icons, and those in the highest seats of political power, Robert Samuels and Toluse Olorunnipa offer a poignant and moving exploration of George Floyd's America, revealing how a man who simply wanted to breathe ended up touching the world.

Linda Villarosa, Under the Skin: The Hidden Toll of Racism on American Lives and on the Health of Our Nation (Doubleday)

- Linda Villarosa is a professor at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY with a joint appointment at the City College of New York, as well as a contributing writer at *The New York Times Magazine*, where she covers the intersection of race and health. She has also served as executive editor at *Essence* and as a science editor at *The New York Times*. Her article on maternal and infant mortality was a finalist for a National Magazine Award. She is a contributor to The 1619 Project.
- In *Under the Skin*, Linda Villarosa lays bare the forces in the American health care system and in American society that cause Black people to "live sicker and die quicker" compared to their white counterparts. Today's medical texts and instruments still carry fallacious slavery-era assumptions that Black bodies are fundamentally different from white bodies. Study after study of medical settings

show worse treatment and outcomes for Black patients. Black people live in dirtier, more polluted communities due to environmental racism and neglect from all levels of government. Most powerfully, Villarosa describes the new understanding that coping with the daily scourge of racism ages Black people prematurely. Anchored by unforgettable human stories and backed by definitive proof, *Under the Skin* is dramatic, tragic, and necessary reading.

Mark Lynton History Prize (\$10,000):

The Mark Lynton History Prize is awarded to the book-length work of narrative history, on any subject, that best combines intellectual distinction with felicity of expression. Books must have been published between January 1 and December 31, 2022. Judges: Elizabeth Taylor (chair), Deirdre Mask, and William G. Thomas III.



Deborah Cohen, Last Call at the Hotel Imperial: The Reporters Who Took on a World at War (Random House)

- **Deborah Cohen** is the Richard W. Leopold Professor of History at Northwestern University. Her previous books include *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* and *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain.* She writes for *The Atlantic, The New York Review of Books,* and *The Wall Street Journal.* She lives in Chicago.
- They were an astonishing group: glamorous, gutsy, and irreverent to the bone. *Last Call at the Hotel Imperial* is the extraordinary story of the American foreign correspondents John Gunther, H.R. Knickerbocker, Vincent Sheean, and Dorothy Thompson. In the tumultuous years between the world wars, they landed exclusive interviews with Hitler, Mussolini, Nehru, and Gandhi, and helped to shape what Americans knew about the world. Unable to separate themselves from the global turmoil, they broke longstanding taboos about proper subjects for reporting. Over doubles knocked back late at night, they argued about love, war, sex, death, and everything in between. Told with the immediacy of a conversation overheard, this revelatory book captures how the global upheavals of the 20th century felt up close.

Beverly Gage, G-Man: J. Edgar Hoover and the Making of the American Century (Viking)

- **Beverly Gage** is professor of 20th century American history at Yale. She is the author of *The Day Wall Street Exploded*, which examined the history of terrorism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She writes frequently for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post, The New York Times Magazine*, and *The New Yorker*, among other publications.
- J. Edgar Hoover transformed a failing law-enforcement backwater into a modern machine. He believed in the power of the federal government to do great things for the nation and its citizens. He also believed that certain people-many of them communists or racial minorities or both-did not deserve to be included in that American project. In G-Man, Gage shows how Hoover was more than a one-dimensional tyrant who strong-armed the rest of the country into submission. As FBI director from 1924 through his death in 1972, he was a confidant, counselor, and adversary to eight U.S. presidents. Hoover was not above blackmail and intimidation, but he also embodied conservative values ranging from anticommunism and white supremacy to a crusading, politicized interpretation of Christianity. He staved in office for so long because people from the highest reaches of government down to the grassroots supported what he was doing, thus creating the template that the political right has followed to transform itself. G-Man places Hoover back at the center of American political history and uses his story to explain the trajectories of governance, policing, race, ideology, political culture, and federal power as they evolved over the course of the 20th century.

Kerri K. Greenidge, *The Grimkes: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family* (Liveright/W.W. Norton)

- Kerri K. Greenidge is a historian at Tufts University and the author of *Black Radical: The Life and Times of William Monroe Trotter*, winner of the 2020 Mark Lynton History Prize, among other honors. She lives in Westborough, Massachusetts.
- The Grimke sisters, Sarah and Angelina, have been highly revered figures in American history, lauded for leaving behind their lives as elite, slave-owning women on a plantation in South Carolina to become firebrand abolitionists in the North. Yet the focus on their story has obscured the experiences of their Black relatives, the progeny of their brother, Henry, and one of the enslaved people he owned, a woman named Nancy Weston. In *The Grimkes*, Kerri K. Greenidge recovers the larger Grimke clan, demonstrating that the Black Grimke women—including Angelina Weld Grimke and Charlotte Forten—created a vast network of friends, kin, and lovers as they reimagined Blackness and womanhood

in terms far more radical than their white relatives would have allowed. A stunning counternarrative, *The Grimkes* shows that, just as the Hemingses and Jeffersons personified the racial myths of America's founding generation, the Grimkes embodied the legacy—both traumatic and generative—of those myths.

Pekka Hämäläinen, *Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America* (Liveright/W.W. Norton)

- **Pekka Hämäläinen** is Rhodes Professor of American History at Oxford University and the author of *The Comanche Empire*, winner of the Bancroft Prize, and *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power*. He lives in Oxford, England.
- In Indigenous Continent, historian Pekka Hämäläinen presents a counternarrative that shatters some of the most basic assumptions about American history. Shifting our perspective away from Jamestown, Plymouth Rock, the Revolution, and other well-trodden episodes on the conventional timeline, he depicts a sovereign world of Native nations whose members, far from helpless victims of colonial violence, dominated the continent for centuries after the first European arrivals. From the Iroquois in the Northeast to the Comanches on the Plains, and from the Pueblos in the Southwest to the Cherokees in the Southeast, Native nations frequently decimated white newcomers in battle. Even as the white population exploded and colonists' land greed grew more extravagant, Indigenous peoples flourished due to sophisticated diplomacy and leadership structures. Hämäläinen ultimately contends that the very notion of "colonial America" is misleading, and that we should speak instead of an "Indigenous America" that was only slowly and unevenly becoming colonial. The evidence of Indigenous defiance is apparent today in the hundreds of Native nations that still dot the United States and Canada. Indigenous Continent restores Native peoples to their rightful place at the fulcrum of American history.

Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire, & Revolution in the Borderlands* (W.W. Norton)

- Kelly Lytle Hernández holds The Thomas E. Lifka Endowed Chair in History and directs the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA. A 2019 MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient, she is the author of the award-winning books *Migra!* and *City of Inmates*. She lives in Los Angeles.
- **Bad Mexicans** tells the dramatic story of the *magonistas*, the migrant rebels who sparked the 1910 Mexican Revolution from the United States. Led by a brilliant but ill-tempered radical named Ricardo Flores Magón, the *magonistas* were a motley band of journalists, miners, migrant workers, and others, who organized thousands of Mexican workers—and American dissidents—to their cause.

Determined to oust Mexico's dictator, Porfirio Díaz, who encouraged the plunder of his country by U.S. imperialists such as Guggenheim and Rockefeller, the rebels had to outrun and outsmart the swarm of U.S. authorities vested in protecting the Díaz regime. They lived in hiding, wrote in secret code, and launched armed raids into Mexico until they ignited the world's first social revolution of the 20th century. Taking readers to the frontlines of the *magonista* uprising and the counterinsurgency campaign that failed to stop them, Kelly Lytle Hernández puts the *magonista* revolt at the heart of U.S. history. Long ignored by textbooks, the *magonistas* threatened to undo the rise of Anglo-American power, on both sides of the border, and inspired a revolution that gave birth to the Mexican-American population, making the *magonistas'* story integral to modern American life.

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For more information, please contact:

Abi Wright, Professional Prizes Columbia Journalism School <u>awright@columbia.edu</u> | 212-854-5047

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Columbia Journalism School 🛥

About Columbia Journalism School

For more than a century, the school has been preparing journalists in programs that stress academic rigor, ethics, journalistic inquiry, and professional practice. Founded with a gift from Joseph Pulitzer, the school opened its doors in 1912 and offers Master of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Science in Data Journalism degrees as well as a joint Master of Science degree in Computer Science and Journalism, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Communications. It houses the Columbia Journalism Review, the Brown Institute for Media Innovation, the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, and the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. The school also administers many of the leading journalism awards, including the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, the Maria Moors Cabot Prizes, the John Chancellor Award, the John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism, the Dart Awards for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma, the Paul Tobenkin Memorial Award, and the Mike Berger Award.

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About the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard educates leaders in journalism, promotes innovation and elevates the standards of the profession. More than 1,700 journalists from 100 countries have been awarded Nieman Fellowships since 1938. The foundation also publishes Nieman Reports, a website and print magazine covering thought leadership in journalism; Nieman Journalism Lab, a website reporting on the future of news, innovation and best practices in the digital media age; and Nieman Storyboard, a website showcasing exceptional narrative journalism and nonfiction storytelling.

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