

## In this together, for better or worse

By Wency Leung

By late summer of 2021, well into the second year of the pandemic, my world had shrunk considerably. The number of individuals I regularly saw in-person had shrunk from hundreds to the two with whom I share a home. I travelled no farther than a five-kilometre radius from my living room office. Even my mind had become myopic, stubbornly fixating on vaccination rates, ICU numbers and signs of the next Covid wave.

So in September, when I started the journalism fellowship at Massey, it was a marvel to encounter so many brilliant fellows whose worlds seemed so very different from mine. One junior fellow was specializing in the impact of Indigenous language on architecture. Another was working on engineering kidney tissue. And yet another was studying something I admit, I couldn't quite understand, but had to do with women, labour and video game live-streaming.

At the time, my thoughts had become so narrowly focused on covering the pandemic as a health reporter, I didn't even recognize how confined I'd become in my own little bubble until my first meeting with senior fellow Bob Johnson, the academic advisor to the journalism fellows. Our chat lasted no more than 30 minutes, but traversed from the pitfalls of academic labour to the impact of the Cold War on Southeast Asia. It was the first lengthy conversation I'd had about anything other than Covid-19 in months.

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"We're all in this together." That was the slogan appearing online and on posters tacked to street-facing windows in the spring of 2020. For a brief while it actually felt that way. Until we weren't. And the delicate unified front society had put up against a new and deadly virus now shattered into countless fragments.

The haves were pitted against the have-nots. Opportunists seized their moment to hoard toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Mask wearers clashed against those who refused. Those wanting protection scrambled to be the first to receive vaccines. Meanwhile, others chose to put themselves and others at risk of infection rather than trust doctors and public health officials.

We each retreated to our own camps.

But over the past eight months at Massey, I have learned, in various ways, that whether we want to or not we are, in

fact, all in this together. Or to put it another way: as long as we look after only ourselves, inevitably, none of us will escape the consequences.

"In a world where war in Europe creates hunger in Africa; where a pandemic can circle the globe in days and reverberate for years; where emissions anywhere mean rising sea levels almost everywhere – the threat to our collective prosperity from a breakdown in global co-operation cannot be overstated," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said in an April speech, as reported by the Associated Press.

The concept of interconnectedness, which plays out from a macro level to the molecular, should be obvious and it's easy enough to understand. Yet it took David Burman, the instructor of my third-year Indigenous Health and Healing class, to spell out for me that the health of any single human depends on the health of the air, the water, the soil, their community and the animals, plants and microbes that live in and among them. The earth and all life are our relations,







he said. And it is when we become disconnected – disconnected from the land, disconnected from our community, and even disconnected from our own selves, treating our hearts as strangers to our rational thoughts – that illness emerges.

I encountered this idea again, but in a different form, at the Massey Grand Rounds 2021 Janet Rossant Lecture in November. In her presentation, appointed lecturer Dr. Samira Mubareka, a microbiologist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, emphasized the importance of animal husbandry and environmental stewardship in keeping diseases at bay.

Nature is not a threat, she said. Rather, the opposite is true; it's human activity that drives much of the spillover of infectious pathogens from animal reservoirs into human populations. Unless we recognize this, and adopt a "One Health" model that encapsulates human, animal and environmental or ecological health, she said, "it will be very difficult to prevent the next pandemic." (It may, she suggested, even make it difficult to tackle this current one, as SARS-CoV-2 spreads into wildlife, such as white-tailed deer, where it could potentially mutate and spread back into the human population in an uglier, more wily form.)

A One Health approach is not just the domain of biology or ecology, it requires the involvement of social sciences, governance, law and policy-making, Dr. Mubarak explained. "We need all of these to work together," she said. "A multidisciplinary approach that takes multiple perspectives is really critical."

In other words, we are all in this together.

During the journalism fellows' April trip to Berlin, our discussions with diplomats, journalists, activists and think-tank analysts revealed an urgency for like-minded nations to reaffirm allyships, even as Cold War-era divisions re-emerge and a global climate catastrophe looms. From the comfort of our homes in Canada,



separated by a vast ocean and at least six time zones, Russia's attacks on Ukraine can still feel very far away. Yet in Germany, their impact on everyday life seemed palpable; one could sense the ripples making their way across the globe. If it wasn't clear previously, it became so during our trip: isolating ourselves and shutting out the rest of the world is impossible.

Back at Massey, the small ways in which we break out of our bubbles and dismantle silos through multidisciplinary and multigenerational panel discussions, workshops, seminars and informal chitchat also create their own

ripples. Thanks to this fellowship, my own world has become bigger than ever. My brain, no longer stuck in a rut, now seeks to make connections. I am invested in what is happening beyond my four walls.

One of the happiest memories I will carry from the fellowship is sitting around a cozy dining room table in Bob Johnson's home, surrounded by my fellows, Emily Mockler, coordinator of the journalism fellowship program, Bob and his wife, Laura. Fuelled by Bob's delicious home cooking, a warm atmosphere of camaraderie and many thimblefuls of vodka, our conversation wove seamlessly from one topic to the next, creating a rich and colourful tapestry imbued with our diverse understandings, experiences, pasts, beliefs and hopes. Sure, we had our differences, but even those we debated joyfully. Bob made us feel at home.

Will it be possible to ever solve the pandemic, or, for that matter, any of the enormous crises we face today? Maybe. Maybe not. But in our struggle to survive them, the fellowship has emphasized, we cannot forget each other. And whether these problems are solvable or not, we must try, while remembering to enjoy ourselves in the attempt.

Because we're all in this together. What alternative is there?

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photo credits: Patrick Egwu, Rebecca Collard

# At 60, Southam Fellowships still giving journalists what they crave most: time

By Jonathan Montpetit

Early in the fall of 1962, the first cohort of journalism fellows at Massey College was summoned by Claude Bissell, then president of the University of Toronto.

Bissell wanted to discuss arrangements for the exams he expected the fellows would write for the courses they were taking at the university.

"The four of us fellows were shocked. 'We have exams?'" said Claude Tessier, a reporter at Quebec City's Le Soleil newspaper who was part of that inaugural group of journalism fellows.

"Our response was instantaneous. 'We didn't come to Toronto to write exams!'"

Tessier and his cohort took a principled stand. They told Bissell no and were prepared to argue that writing exams amounted to violation of their press freedoms,

Tessier recalled, laughing.

A precedent was set that has been cherished by every subsequent fellow in the program.

The William Southam Journalism Fellowships at Massey College celebrate their 60th anniversary this year. A big part of the program's enduring appeal has been the precious reprieve it offers journalists from the hurly burly of the news cycle.

Fellows have used that reprieve in very different ways. Some focus on acquiring specific skills, while others launch new projects. Many leave the program having altered their career arc.

John Ibbitson, best-selling author and writer-at-large for the Globe and Mail, had been covering city hall politics for the Ottawa Citizen when he was awarded a Southam fellowship in 1994.

*"I left Massey a sharper journalist than I was before," Ibbitson said. "I was able to write about politics with more confidence."*

His undergraduate degree was in English drama, but by then he knew he wanted to devote his professional life to writing about politics. So he spent his time at

*“As reporters, we’re often looking into a mirror. But a mirror offers hindsight. What we need now is foresight,” said Tessier, when asked why the Southam Fellowships remain relevant.*

Massey taking graduate courses in the political science department.

“I left Massey a sharper journalist than I was before,” Ibbitson said. “I was able to write about politics with more confidence.”

Within a year of finishing the program, he was assigned to the Queen’s Park beat. Before long, he was hired by the Globe and Mail, going on to serve as the paper’s bureau chief in Washington and Ottawa.

Marina Jimenez said when she was awarded a fellowship in 2009, she was looking for a chance to reflect on her career after more than two decades covering foreign affairs for the National Post and Globe and Mail.

“I felt like I’d won the lottery,” Jimenez said in an email exchange.

Her cohort travelled to Berlin, Helsinki, Copenhagen, and Mexico City, where they met with famed writer Carlos Fuentes.

“This rich year gave me life-long friendships – and the courage to change my career trajectory,” Jimenez added. After the fellowship, she became an editorial writer at the Globe and Mail. She eventually left journalism to head the Canadian Council for the Americas. More recently, she worked in communications for the University of Toronto and the University Health Network.

It’s not uncommon for journalism fellows to use the fellowship to branch out into new fields.

Avril Benoit has said in past interviews that studying international development during her fellowship (2004-05) prompted her to leave journalism and pursue this newfound passion. She’s now the executive director of Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières in the United States.

Martha Troian worked on an investigative project about water contamination in First Nations communities during her fellowship year in 2019-20. But she also

surprised herself by writing a children’s book, which she hopes to publish soon.

Despite the popularity and prestige of the program among Canadian journalists, it has faced its share of challenges over the years.

The program lost its main sponsor in 2000, when the Southam newspaper chain was sold to Canwest. John Fraser, then head of Massey College, immediately embarked on a fundraising campaign that secured new sources of funding.

The global pandemic of 2020 also unsettled many of the best-known features of the program, including the off-the-record lunch series and international travel.

And Massey itself, with its Oxbridge traditions and elite connections, can be intimidating to journalists, especially those coming from minority or immigrant backgrounds.

Nazim Baksh, a fellow in the 2006-07 academic year and an award-winning producer with CBC’s Fifth Estate, recalled being puzzled by the gowns worn at formal dinners and High Tables.

“These were the trappings of the society I grew up having disdain for. I wondered: ‘Do I really belong here?’” said Baksh, who was born and raised in Guyana before coming to Canada in 1980.

“That high-brow aspect puts off a lot of people who aren’t accustomed to it.”

Baksh said he nevertheless enjoyed his time at Massey. CBC was going through a period of upheaval, marked by labour strife and job cuts; the fellowship gave him a break that allowed him to focus on his interest in national security issues.

“It broadened my horizons,” said Baksh, who is now regarded as one of the best national security journalists in the country.

Even though much has changed in the media industry since 1962 – the deadlines are tighter, the news cycle more vicious – the value of the fellowship hasn’t.

“As reporters, we’re often looking into a mirror. But a mirror offers hindsight. What we need now is foresight,” said Tessier, when asked why the Southam Fellowships remain relevant.

“We need to look forward and try to grasp events as they happen, every day, at incredible speeds.”

# Meet Me at Massey

The events and meetings organized by the journalism fellows are a valuable and enriching part of the fellowship program. In 2021-22, the journalism fellows held several formal events, including a film night, the biannual Press Club Nights and two-part book publishing seminar, as well as informal meetings, such as workshops on digital privacy and digital verification.

Weekly Thursday lunches are an integral part of the fellowship program, an opportunity to bring in guests from a broad range of disciplines to have off-the-record conversations about their areas of expertise. Junior fellows are welcome to attend these lunches and engage in the discussions.

**Below is a list of guests invited by the 2021-22 journalism fellows to share their knowledge and expertise.**

## Press Club Nights:

Covering the Fringe: How do we report from Canada's social edges?

- Nam Kiwanuka, journalist and host at TVO
- Craig Silverman, reporter for ProPublica
- Sylvia Stead, public editor at the Globe and Mail

Watch Your Language: Navigating Linguistic Taboos in Today's News Media

- Denise Balkissoon, Ontario bureau chief of the Narwhal
- Heather Mallick, columnist at the Toronto Star
- James McCarten, Washington, D.C. correspondent for the Canadian Press and editor of the Canadian Press Style Guide

## Book publishing seminar – Part 1

- Patrick Crean, publisher and editor-at-large of Patrick Crean Editions, HarperCollins Canada
- Semareh Al-Hillal, president of House of Anansi Press and Groundwood Books

- Jen Knoch, senior editor of ECW Press
- Richard Ratzlaff, editor at McGill–Queen's University Press

## Book publishing seminar – Part 2

- Mark Medley, deputy editor of the Globe and Mail's Opinion section and author of The Believers.
- Ann Hui, journalist at the Globe and Mail and author of Chop Suey Nation

- Sofi Papamarko, Toronto columnist and author of Radium Girl

## Virtual workshops:

- Craig Silverman, co-author and editor of the Verification Handbook: A Definitive Guide to Verifying Digital Content for Emergency Coverage

- Ronald Deibert, director of the Citizen Lab

## Thursday Lunch Series:

- Sir Graham Watson, distinguished visiting fellow at the Munk School of Global Affairs and former member of European Parliament for SW England
- Asante Haughton, mental health advocate and co-founder of the Reach Out Response Network
- Dr. Anthony Feinstein, psychiatrist at Sunnybrook Hospital specializing in journalists and conflict reporting and trauma
- Dr. Nir Lipsman, neurosurgeon at Sunnybrook Hospital and director of the Harquill Centre for Neuromodulation
- Tai Huynh, founder and editor-in-chief of The Local
- Thomas Schultze, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Toronto
- Reverend Dr. Cheri DiNovo, former MPP, author of The Queer Evangelist, and minister of Trinity St-Paul's Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts
- Dave Meslin, democracy activist and author of Teardown: Rebuilding Democracy from the Ground Up
- Valerie Tarasuk, principal investigator at PROOF, a research team focused on food insecurity, and University of Toronto professor in the school of public health
- Haroon Siddiqui, editor emeritus from the Toronto Star
- Bhante Saranapala, Buddhist monk, mindfulness and meditation teacher and Buddhist chaplain to the University of Toronto
- Nathan Englander, short-story author, novelist and Pulitzer Prize finalist, whose works include What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank
- Corey Mintz, food writer and author of The Next Supper
- Steven Hoffman, director of the Global Strategy Lab and professor of global health, law and political science at York University
- Omar Mouallem, writer and author of Praying to the West
- Janet Morassutti, managing editor of West End Phoenix
- Stephen Marche, writer and author of The Next Civil War
- Dr. Angela Cheung, clinician-scientist and internal medicine physician at UHN and co-lead of CANCOV, a major national study of long-COVID
- Sandra Hudson, founder, Black Lives Matter Canada
- Pamela Klassen, University of Toronto professor and chair in the department for the study of religion
- Simon Coleman, professor, associate chair and undergraduate coordinator for the department for the study of religion at University of Toronto
- Stephen Gaetz, professor in the faculty of education at York University and director of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the Homeless Hub
- Bianca Wylie, open technology advocate, activist and head of the Open Data Institute Toronto





## For the Love of Skating *How I found magic in winter in the depth of a Toronto winter*

By Rebecca Collard

photo credit: Rebecca Collard

When I saw the Kijiji post, my heart fluttered a little. There they were: shiny black, Austrian-made, with long blades of carbon-coated tempered steel and a fanning pick at the toe. WIFA. Really, the best figure skates you could own.

When I got to Toronto in September, I said I hated winter. For more than a decade I had avoided it. Living and reporting in the Middle East meant few cold days and a summer that started in late February. I saw snow once in Damascus, it was lovely and fleeting—lovely because it was fleeting. I remembered the cold, wet and greyness of my childhood winters on Vancouver Island where I grew up. Toronto promised even colder temperatures and longer winters.

When things began to freeze late in the fall, I noticed people gliding over frozen bodies of water and community outdoor rinks around Toronto. It had been more than 15 years since I'd been ice skating, but the urge began to grow inside me. The truth is, despite so many years having passed, I still thought about skating. There were certain songs, like the sombre ballads of

Sarah McLachlan and the pep of Jann Arden, that would make me daydream of spinning, jumping, and gliding on the ice, the way I did as a child at the Sooke Arena. Every time I walked in High Park, I'd pass gleeful skaters on Grenadier Pond—small ones, shuffling on the ice and big ones gracefully gliding and dancing. (Others with hockey sticks, pucks, and nets, but yuck. I blocked that out.)

So, I messaged the Kijiji ad, and a few minutes later I was biking frantically to Little Portugal and handing over \$120 (an amount I refused to spend on winter boots because it seemed ridiculous and unnecessary).

The next day I was sitting on the sloping dirt at the edge of Grenadier Pond in High Park lacing up my skates, with another journalism fellow, Jonathan (turns out his great, great grandfather was the hockey legend Joe Malone and he's a pro-level skater who can do the ice-spraying side-stop thingy). It was perfect. The sun was bright and warm, and the ice was smooth and expansive, bordered by banks with trees and houses we will never afford.

Rising to my feet, I suddenly felt much

less sure about realizing my dream to skate again. My legs wobbled. The blades slipped back and forth in a way not in my control. Jonathan looked concerned. I thought about sitting back down and finding a rink with those training push bars for kids.

Slowly, I slide one skate forward at a time. The feeling that I was about to fall faded. My blades were cutting through the ice. I felt the cold air breeze through my hair, the sun on my face. Soon I was picking up speed.

I started going almost every evening to the pond, skating on a small patch of ice that neighbourhood people had cleared near the shore. Often, I was the only one there. I would listen to my high school favourites and practice some small spins and modest dancing. It was magic each day as the sun set on the pond. Maybe I don't hate winter, I thought.

But then came the first big snow dump. It was thigh-deep in the backyard, and I stood at the top of the stairs wondering how I would possibly make it through the snow. I still didn't have winter boots.



# Surviving Canadian Winter

By Patrick Egwu



There's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing," said Alan Wainwright in his 1973 book, *Coast to Coast Walk*. A Canadian I met at an event a month after I arrived in Toronto in September 2021, echoed these words to me.

I have never experienced a proper winter. My trips to Europe have been during spring or summer. Most of Africa has hot temperatures all year round, except for a few countries in the Northern Hemisphere. Unlike in Canada and other European countries with four seasons — winter, summer, spring and fall — Nigeria has only wet and dry seasons. The wet season runs from April to October while the dry season runs from November to March. It is usually hot during dry seasons with temperature rising above 34°C in the day and 27°C in the night.

Before leaving for Canada, I heard stories about the weather – how scary and extremely cold it is and how the sun hardly comes out. I could sense pity from my friends and colleagues when I told them I was travelling to Canada. I think my almost-two-year stay in South Africa was somewhat different and didn't prepare me for Canada's harsh winter. In Toronto for example, it sometimes lingers between -1°C and -20°C. In the Prairies, temperatures can dip to -40°C. South Africa's winters are cold, rainy and windy with temperatures of between 3 and 20°C. Some cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town could be extremely cold during winters.

I arrived in Toronto toward the end of summer last year. Two weeks after I had arrived and settled in, I went shopping for some winter clothes with the stipend provided to me by Massey College.

In December last year, I traveled home to Nigeria to spend Christmas with my family and only returned in the second week of January. Upon arrival at the Pearson airport in Toronto, the weather was extremely cold with a chilly wind at 0°C. I had forgotten my jacket back in Nigeria and only had a T-shirt on.

On January 17, Canada experienced unprecedented winter storms with over 55 centimetres of snow falling for more than 15 hours. Schools were closed, cars were damaged, power lines and the transport systems were affected and sidewalks remained impassable.

I was mostly indoors during this time. Three days after the snow storm, I would sometimes brave the weather to step out for essential groceries. My winter clothes – gloves, underpants and neck warmers — helped a lot. My colleagues bought additional thermal underwear for me. In fact, I had all I needed to keep warm.

On January 18, more than 20 of the residents at the college decided to organize a snowball fight inside the quadrangle. It was -10°C. Despite the cold, I needed to

experience more of winter and left my room well kitted, ready to get soaked inside the fun. I had barely stepped inside the quadrangle when snowballs started raining down on me as though like an ambush. I recall Jonathan Monpetit, my colleague during the fellowship, charging toward me and pushing me to the ground. His repeated attempts to get me buried under the thick snow failed. It was a fun and noisy day. Those who couldn't join in only peeped through their windows.

Unlike other provinces in Canada where it is extremely cold all winter, Ontario is different. Toronto's winter is mild but also extreme some other days. It's a mix of both. There were days when the sun would come out and Torontonians would decide to take a walk, although well kitted for the weather. Each time I stepped out to buy groceries, my teeth would clang and become sensitive while my hands felt dead. I couldn't feel anything despite my gloves. But I always found warmth inside my room. I had a fireplace in addition to the central heating system of the residence. On some nights, my colleagues and I would gather to make some fires in the quadrangle and chat while drinking some beers and Jonathan's bottle of whisky. Winter never felt so good.

On April 18, Toronto saw its last snowfall. It was nothing compared to previous months, especially in January and February when we had snowfalls of up to a foot and temperatures of about -5 and -15 degrees Celsius. Finally, spring is here and we are looking forward to summer – the most beautiful seasons.

But can anyone feel completely prepared for Canada's winter and extreme weather conditions? I don't think so. But, with Wainwright's suitable clothing advice, I survived it and you could, too.



Left: Patrick Egwu during a snowball fight inside the quadrangle at Massey College. Above: Jonathan Montpetit and Patrick Egwu at the quadrangle during the snowball fight. Photo credits: Jonathan Montpetit





1. Journalism Fellows during a trip to Newfoundland in October 2021 2. With Emily Mockler (third from left) outside Der Tagesspiegel in Berlin 3. Inside the JCR. 2 credits: 1. Rebecca Collard 2. Vincent Bozek 3. Christine Tran

# Dancing with Tears in My Eyes

By Michael Barclay

Imagine spending your final two years of school under lockdown. Online classes. Limited social life. Ever-present existential dread. And then, during a short window of possibility on the cusp of graduation, you find yourself in a packed basement room with all your colleagues, a booming sound system, and you're singing together—singing! together!—and grinning like you haven't in months and months while belting the words:

“Now that it's raining more than ever / Know that we'll still have each other / You can stand under my umbrella (ella, ella)”

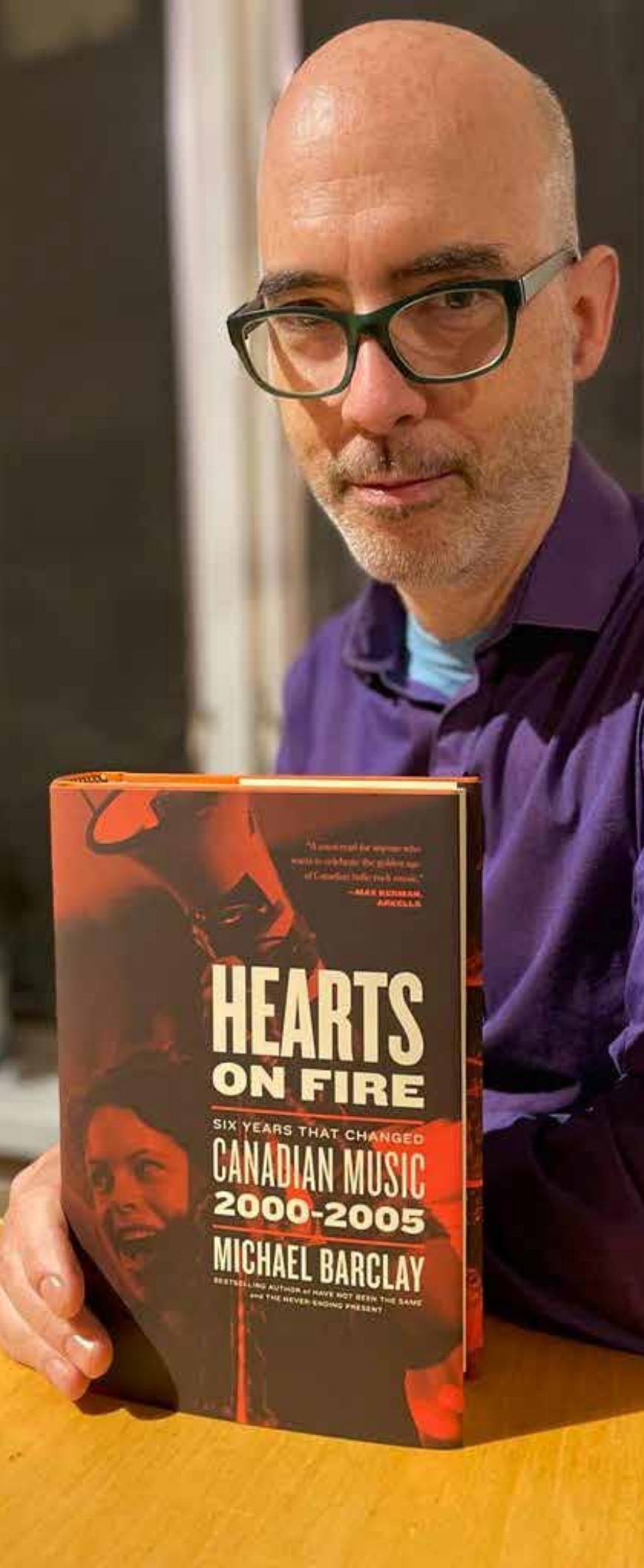
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Open. Shut. Open. Shut. Open. What? That was the perpetual cycle of the past eight months, never knowing whether or not it was safe to gather in any numbers, if at all. High Tables were cancelled. Low tables were cancelled. So in late March, when things were suddenly open again, the journalism fellows were surprised to learn that it was their turn to host a low table. A mere 48 hours beforehand, there was talk of bumping it to after our Berlin trip. But by then many students' classes would be finished and they'd be leaving campus. On top of that, this low table was the night of the convocation High Table.

Our party would essentially be prom night. So it was on.

We were one fellow short: Jonathan Montpetit came down with Covid. Wency Leung boldly took the reins, figuring out that we should fund an open bar in the JCR for post-dinner mingling, and then throw the real party in the PCR. I was deemed to be the DJ. I am a music critic, after all. But I'm also a 50-year-old man throwing a party for people literally half my age, and I haven't done a proper DJ set for almost a decade.

The low tables earlier in the year usually featured someone's laptop left open and people picking songs somewhat at random. Crowd-sourced DJing. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. I didn't want to leave things to chance.





I assembled 100 tracks to choose from and started devising sets: nothing random about it. The lost art of curation. I researched charts from 10 years ago, knowing those were the formative high school years for most junior fellows. I threw in a few personal faves of an apocalyptic flavour that I had a strong urge to hear at high volume: “99 Luftballons,” “Life During Wartime,” “Ball of Confusion.” The DJ’s dark prerogative, to be indulged early in the evening before things start pumping.

I was petrified of getting Covid, especially right before we were scheduled to leave for Berlin. I kept my mask on all night. Everyone else—not so much. This ephemeral moment was between the waves; the next outbreak wasn’t until weeks later. We danced with the devil and came out breathing just fine.

As the room slowly filled, one junior fellow told me, “If you want to get this crowd moving, you need to play ‘Dancing Queen.’”

“Really? I’m a lifelong, unapologetic ABBA fan but the one song I never need to hear again in my life is “Dancing Queen.”

“Trust me.”

“Look, I will play literally any other ABBA song with glee, but not ‘Dancing Queen.’”

“Trust me,” he repeated, now surrounded by a half-dozen women nodding in agreement.

Who am I to say? It was their party, not mine. Get over yourself, old man. And so it was that with the opening piano glissando of the song in question, the dance floor immediately filled. It stayed that way for more than three hours. I snuck in an ABBA deep cut later, “On and On and On,” where people did some kind of engineering-faculty line dance to a song with the lyrics, “People care for nothing / No respect for human rights / Evil times are coming / We are in for darker nights.” Good times!

The late 2000s proved surprisingly popular: Lady Gaga, Nelly Furtado, Black-Eyed Peas. Flo-Rida’s “Low” is an obvious Low Table anthem. Much to my delight, Le Tigre’s “Deceptacon” still kills. Cypress Hill’s “Insane in the Brain”—does not. The Weeknd’s 2021 smash “Blinding Lights” segues perfectly into a-ha’s “Take On Me,” a song the kids actually knew. The request for “Jai Ho!” was one of the biggest hits of the night. I got to play Bjork’s “Big Time Sensuality” and it didn’t totally flop.

What did totally flop was my surrender to three people’s insistent and bizarre request to play Nancy Sinatra’s “Bang Bang,” a beautiful but beatless ballad with a directed tempo—in other words, a dead-stop dancefloor drainer. That meant two minutes and 42 seconds of DJ agony and catcalls from the crowd. But that did allow for a segue into another insistent request, for Spirit of the West’s “Save This House,” an ancient and unlikely choice that wouldn’t fit into the flow unless the night was already at a standstill. It went over like gangbusters, like it has at almost every Canadian wedding of the last 30 years. Thanks, “Bang Bang.”

And while it felt odd to play Boney M’s “Rasputin” at the height of a Russian-driven global conflict, it too was a smash hit that inspired conga lines and Cossack drop-kicks. Oh, those Russians.

Then there was the spectacle of witnessing a room full of 25-year-olds singing along to Katy Perry’s “Firework” at the top of their lungs, a song where every chorus has an almost interminable 16-bar beatless buildup to an orgasmic release: “Coz baby, you’re a firework / Come on, show ‘em what you’re worth ... You’re gonna leave ‘em all in awe, awe, awe.” Yes you will, class of 2022, yes you will.

As the night began to wind down, I threw on David Bowie and Queen’s “Under Pressure.” During the pandemic it had been covered by Karen O and Willie Nelson, in an

acoustic version that illuminated the lyrics and reduced me to a puddle almost every time I heard it. Playing the original version at full volume in the basement that night was something I’ll never forget for as long as I live: witnessing these beautiful people, these builders of tomorrow, coming of age in this incredibly dark and divisive period of history, finally released from their cages, uncertain of any future, singing a song written 15 years before they were born: “It’s the terror of knowing what the world is about / Watching some good friends screaming ‘Let me out!’ / Pray tomorrow gets me higher... This is our last dance / This is ourselves / under pressure.”

Look: I often get choked up at concerts, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes listening to a record or the radio. But never at a dance party, never out of pure joy, channelling the bliss and the energy of the crowd.

I’ve had plenty of life-changing moments experiencing live music before; rarely, if ever, during a DJ set. But you know that song “Last Night a DJ Saved My Life”? That night in the Massey College basement, those junior fellows saved mine.



Photo credits: Jonathan Montpetit and Rebecca Collard







# What We Learned

The fellows reflect, in bullet-point form

It's a gift of a lifetime to be given the time and freedom to not produce any work, but simply learn. The lessons we are taking away from this fellowship are, of course, too many to fit on a page. Here are some of the more informal ones:

## Rebecca Collard

- Twentysomething grad students can be a lot more inspiring than I ever imagined.
- The floor of the Berlin Parliament has a long and complicated history.
- Having weekends and a stable salary is amazing.

## Wency Leung

- Climbing to the very top of a mountain may demonstrate how mighty you are. But knowing when not to climb it requires appreciating its true supremacy.
- To paraphrase Stacey LaForme, chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, climate change isn't something we can solve. Rather, healing the planet starts with loving Mother Earth. Everything else follows.
- As much as others who are far smarter and more well-read than you will tell you how brilliant Dostoevsky is, you may not find *Tales from Underground* pleasurable to read. And you would be right.
- Even when the news reflects a world in an utter dumpster fire, there is room for laughter, joy, music and dancing.

## Michael Barclay

- The "Newfoundland favourites" section of the Cornerbrook grocery store features ethnic treats such as Minute Rice, canned spaghetti, and Vienna sausages. Also: despite having access to the freshest supply possible in a restaurant by the ocean, Newfoundlanders still insist on deep frying their fish. But whatever. Gros Morne is freakin' stunning.
- Cataclysmic German history from 80 years ago (or 33 years ago) that has fascinated you your whole life can seem less interesting when you arrive in Berlin at the height of several global crises and potentially epochal changes.
- One should always accept dinner invitations from a Cold War scholar who infuses his own vodka and cooks a scrumptious Georgian feast. Especially if that scholar's name is Bob Johnston.
- Five perfect strangers can in fact become fast friends, people you can't imagine ever not knowing.

## Jonathan Montpetit

- Toronto is a more vibrant, creative and exciting city than Montrealers give it credit for.
- Not everyone enjoys discussing liberal democracy as much as I do.
- I actually do know the lyrics to Jann Arden's "Insensitive."
- Eight months goes by fast when you're hanging out with four of the smartest, most exciting journalists in the field.

## Patrick Egwu

- Some Canadian towns look deserted. When I traveled with my colleagues to Newfoundland on a bonding trip in October 2021, I thought we had lost our coordinates. We drove for 30 minutes and I saw nobody, except for one or two cars that drove past us. Woody Point, a small fishing town where we went to eat seafood after hiking the Gros Morne Mountain, has a population of 265 per the 2021 census conducted by Statistics Canada.
- Toronto is an amazing, diverse city with lots of opportunities but it is extremely expensive. You could break the bank trying to get a studio apartment.
- Before moving to Toronto, I had heard how Canadians were some of the amazing people you'd ever meet. That's completely true. While living at Massey, I vibed with four amazing Canadian journalists while also sharing spaces with some of the brightest young minds from diverse backgrounds.
- Attention: Canadian winter is extremely cold but not as scary as it seems. I survived it. You could, too.



# Book-publishing for Beginners

By Wency Leung

**G**ot ambitions to write a book? Who in academia or journalism doesn't?

In discussions amongst ourselves and with junior fellows, we journalism fellows realized many of us at Massey have ideas or notes or manuscripts that we'd love to turn into books one day. But with the exception of Michael Barclay, who has now authored three of them — including his latest, *Hearts on Fire: Six Years that Changed Canadian Music 2000-2005*, few of us knew how to make that happen.

To demystify the book publishing process, we organized a two-part seminar series, inviting industry experts to share what they felt aspiring authors ought to know. Here are just some of the tips they shared:

**1** The competition is extremely fierce, so you've got to have a good idea to begin with, according to Patrick Crean, publisher and editor-at-large of Patrick Crean Editions at HarperCollins Canada. What are you going to say to really capture people's attention and turn heads? Who are the readers you want to reach? And why should they read your work? Why is it important? Whatever your idea is, "it needs to be fresh, original and crackle with energy," said Crean.

**2** Spend time researching publishers' websites, advised Semareh Al-Hillal, president of House of Anansi Press and Groundwood Books. (A list of publishers provided by the Association of Canadian Publishers, [www.publishers.ca](http://www.publishers.ca), is a good place to start.) Their sites will give a good indication of what types of works they publish. Take a look at their backlists, particularly from the past three to five years, said Al-Hillal. Would your work fit? Review their submission guidelines, and follow their instructions.

**3** If you're looking to write an academic book, Richard Ratzlaff, acquisitions editor at McGill-Queen's University Press, recommended picking up a copy of *The Book Proposal Book: A Guide for Scholarly Authors* by Laura Portwood-Stacer (Princeton University Press, 2021)

**4** Keep in mind editors get an enormous number of submissions. Make it easy for them, said Jen Knoch, senior editor at ECW Press. That means writing "SUBMISSION" in all-caps in your email heading, keeping all your chapters in one document rather than in separate files, addressing your submission to the right person, and mentioning that you've met before if that's the case.

**5** Position your book proposal as an elevator pitch, said Al-Hillal: something that's brief and snappy and focused. Even better, you need to be able to talk about your book in one sentence, added Crean. This single sentence will be needed to convince an agent to represent you, for the agent to persuade an editor to take on the book, for the editor to persuade a sales and marketing team to get behind the project, and for the sales and marketing team to get book retailers on board, and finally, to sell the book.

**6** If it's fiction, send the whole thing, said Al-Hillal. But be careful: don't submit it until you're absolutely sure you've nailed it, said Crean. Make sure to workshop it beforehand because an editor can tell from the first page—arguably, from even the first sentence—whether it's worth it.



photo credit: Emily Mockler

**7** If it's non-fiction, write your proposal first and find a publisher before you write the entire book, said Ratzlaff. You don't want to be spending years working on your manuscript, only to have no one interested in publishing it. Your proposal should include the aforementioned elevator pitch, giving a concise description of what the book will be about, an outline or a table of contents and at least a few chapters so a publisher can get a sense of your writing.

**8** In your submission, follow up a tight paragraph on what your book is about with a tight paragraph on who you are, said Knoch. Mention whether you've been published before in magazines, literary journals, newspapers or books, or whether you're involved in activities or communities related to your book proposal.

**9** Your involvement on social media is important. But the experts had differing views about the extent. Crean said your presence and following on social media play a huge part in publishers' decisions. Knoch, on the other hand, said you needn't be a TikTok star per se: "What we're looking for is you have ways to be in touch with your audience; that you know who they are and they know who you are."

**10** Use your own voice. Use quotations sparingly, Ratzlaff said. Do not use a secondary source to support any major claim you make. If you're relying on others to make your argument for you, why should an editor wish to publish your work? Make your own claims in your own voice.

**11** Literary agents can be helpful, but whether you need one depends on where you're shopping your

book around. Most small and mid-sized Canadian publishers accept unsolicited proposals, and university presses prefer not deal with agents altogether. But to get a foot in the door at a larger house like Crean's, having an agent is very important. An agent can be your business manager, confidante and help you access the broader English-language market, beyond Canadian borders, he added.

**12** Don't be dissuaded if you're not inclined to think about the business side of books and prefer to simply concentrate on the craft of writing. "No matter what I say or my colleagues say, all that matters is what's in front of you – that's all that matters, really," said Crean. "That is where the act of creation and the originality and the excitement and the importance of what you're doing occurs. All this other stuff is there, but it should not impinge on the creation of your work."

# Sharing the Story of Struggle

By Mujtaba Haris

**I**t shocked me when the Taliban took over Kabul in August 2021; like millions of other Afghans, I was forced to become a refugee. I began my journey in Canada in October 2021.

After losing everything—identity, job, home, country, and friends—I joined the William Southam Journalism Fellowships at Massey College. Meeting new people and learning from their experiences motivated me to work harder and stand stronger during those hard days.

I am an Afghan researcher, journalist and youth advocate. I have spent 15 years working in major cities — Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e Sharif — and rural areas in Logar province. In that time, I looked into public sentiments about human rights, the years-long peace process and issues facing the Afghan Army.

In my journalism, I have written reports for international outlets such as Al Jazeera English, Business Insider, The New Arab, TRT World, One Young World, as well as local newspaper 8 AM. These stories covered everything from educational challenges in the Western province of Farah to the Taliban's struggles to fight off the so-called Islamic State in the North and the plight of female judges after the Taliban takeover of the country.

I have also researched the overall security situation in Afghanistan, dealing with domestic and international terrorism, advancing human rights, and extending access to education.

I am a co-founder of Generation Positive, a nonprofit organization that focuses on ending extremism, advocating for fundamental human rights, and empowering youth

through research and dialogue. We have conducted more than 400 dialogues and conferences in Kabul, Balkh, Herat, and Bamiyan provinces for the past five years and have helped more than 20,000 youth all over the country. We trained more than 100 female journalism graduates in Kabul on reporting, research and public speaking.

I realize that by now, for much of the world, we Afghans have become faceless numbers, statistics blurted out by UN officials. But we are not. Each of us has a story worth hearing and a life worth living in dignity and safety.

After my country fell, as an Afghan journalist I am responsible for sharing the story of struggling, starvation, injustice, censorship, and persecution.



# Safe Landings

By Jalal Nazari

Eight months ago, when I got to the Kabul airport after three days of unsuccessful approaches, I had no idea where I was headed. I was born in a small, beautiful village in Ghazni province, Afghanistan. I did my undergraduate in English language and literature at Balkh University and worked as a translator/interpreter for several years. Five months after fleeing Kabul, I found myself in the middle of a new city, in the ground floor of a dorm-like building at Massey College. When I arrived, I was immediately attracted by the small water fountains, a tiny half-frozen pool, four benches beside each other in the courtyard, and beautiful lighting at night.

I was working for the Wall Street Journal as a local reporter in its Kabul bureau when the country fell to the Taliban on August 15, 2021. The Journal kindly offered to evacuate me and other local staff to a safer place. My first stop was Kyiv, where I applied for an asylum visa for Canada.

During my three-month stay in Kyiv, the Journal also enrolled me in the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana Fellowship in Global Journalism. When I flew to Toronto in November, my first home was an airport hotel. But Rob Steiner, who heads the Dalla Lana program, suggested that I move to Massey and, with the help of Nathalie Des Rosiers, the college's principal, and Catherine Fowler, the college's chief administrative officer, I was able to move in in early February.



Massey has been a place where I've met many well-educated people from almost any profession. I have had conversations with prominent authors, experienced journalists, award-winning researchers and, most important, many great human beings.

Meeting the William Southam Journalism fellows for lunch every Thursday was definitely a great experience. As a journalist, I am lucky to have had the opportunity to learn from the fellow journalists and guests and listen to their experiences.

All in all, being part of this community is an amazing and life-changing experience. I just hope I can make the most of all the resources available to me.



photo credits: Najibullah Musafir, Anrike Visser

# The Making of Nigerian Jollof Rice

By Patrick Egwu

Jollof rice is one of Nigeria's most popular dishes. It is always served at weddings, parties, family gatherings, graduation ceremonies and other social events. In fact, a party in Nigeria is incomplete if jollof rice is not served. The popularity also extends to the whole of West Africa, but each country has a special way of preparing the meal. There have been growing arguments and counter-arguments over which country on the continent makes the best jollof rice. Each country claims supremacy in what is now known as the jollof war, in which Nigeria and Ghana always go head-on. Former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, and American rapper Cardi B have all been dragged into the jollof war during their separate visits to Nigeria and Ghana. Without sentiments, I'd say Nigerian jollof rice tastes better. But whichever of the divide you support, making jollof is simple, less complicated and inexpensive. Below are the ingredients and steps for making a Nigerian jollof.

## Ingredients:

3/4 cups of long grain rice  
3 red bell peppers  
3 large-sized tomatoes [sliced]  
4 tablespoons of tomato paste  
2/3 Scotch bonnet [You could add more if you like your meal spicy]  
1 large onion bulb, diced  
6 tablespoons of vegetable cooking oil  
1 tablespoon of grated ginger  
3 cloves of garlic  
1 teaspoon of curry powder and thyme each  
2 cups of chicken/beef stock  
2/3 chicken cubes or any other seasoning cubes you prefer  
3 bay leaves  
Salt to taste

## Cooking instructions:

- Parboil rice for 5-10 minutes.
- Preheat the cooking oil in a frying pan and add the diced onions. Once added, fry for about 3 minutes.
- Add your tomatoes, fry and stir for five minutes.
- Add ginger, garlic and bay leaves and cook for 3 minutes.
- The blended peppers [red bell and Scotch] come next.
- Add seasoning cubes, chicken stock, curry powder and thyme and salt to taste.
- Allow to cook for five minutes before adding the parboiled rice and stir until it mixes properly with the sauce.
- Allow to cook for 15 minutes and reduce heat to medium-low until the rice is soft and tender
- After this time, turn off the heat and your smoky jollof is ready to serve.

Best served with either chicken, turkey or beef, fish, plantain, chilled drinks, salad [coleslaw], and vegetables.



photo credits: Patrick Egwu



# Congratulations to the 2022-2023 William Southam Journalism Fellows



CJFE / Massey College Fellow, Zuhal Ahad  
(Afghanistan)

Zuhal Ahad is a journalist from Afghanistan who has worked as a multimedia Women's Affairs journalist with the BBC in Afghanistan. Prior to this, she has worked as a trainer and Assistant Director to the Afghan Women Journalists Union where she delivered and coordinated different training programs for provincial Afghan women journalists about report writing, ways of gathering information for writing reports, anti-harassment law, and access to information law. In addition, she worked as a research officer with a consultancy company for more than 2 years. During her studies, she also worked as an English language instructor. Zuhal holds two bachelor's degrees; a major in business administration; focusing in management from the American University of Afghanistan and bachelors in communication and journalism from Kabul University. After the changes in Afghanistan, Zuhal fled Afghanistan to Dubai and then to Toronto, Canada. She is currently working as a freelance journalist who has published articles on the Guardian and Al Jazeera.

Elizabeth Wanja Gathu, Gordon N. Fisher / JHR Fellow  
(Kenya)

Wanja Gathu is a Kenyan Journalist with over 15 years experience, working with both local and international media. She is a passionate human rights defender and a strong advocate for social justice and peace building. She aspires to a world where people's rights are respected and protected – a world free from injustice and all forms of discrimination. She has written and published hard-hitting articles that speak truth to power and calling out government excesses in her home country Kenya. Elizabeth holds a Diploma in Mass Communication from the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication and is an avid student of Peace building and Conflict Transformation. She the mother of two teenage sons. She enjoys travelling, reading and writing.



Webster McConnell Fellow, Hannah Hoag (Canada)

Hannah Hoag is a Toronto-based science journalist and editor. She is the deputy editor and the energy and environment editor at The Conversation Canada, was the founding managing editor of Arctic Deeply, covering circumpolar issues, and is part of the group that wrote The Science Writers' Handbook, a guide to the craft and business of popular science writing. She has covered science, medicine and the environment for 20 years, freelancing for the New York Times, the Globe and Mail, Maclean's, the Atlantic, Wired, Science and Nature, among others.



## William Southam Journalism Fellow, Natasha Grzincic (Canada)

Natasha Grzincic, is the deputy editor at VICE News, where she oversees newsroom development and leads coverage on the climate crisis and social justice. Previously, Natasha was Madame Deputy at VICE Canada, put the mother in Motherboard (as senior editor), and was digital news lead at the Toronto Star. She fiercely advocates for the newsroom and is proud of negotiating three percent annual raises and saving jobs as union co-chair. She's also a co-founder of Canadian Journalists of Colour, a networking group for racialized journalists.

## CBC / Radio-Canada Fellow, Omayra Issa (Canada)

Omayra Issa is a senior reporter for CBC News. She co-created and co-produced CBC's Black on the Prairies, that brought to life stories detailing Black lives past, present, and future in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. She reports on all major stories in Saskatchewan for a national audience, including COVID-19, the Humboldt Broncos bus crash tragedy, and the shooting of Colten Boushie. She is a YWCA Women of Distinction Award nominee. She sits on the board of the Canadian Association of Journalists and mentors early career journalists. She is fluent in five languages.



## St. Clair Balfour Fellow, Valérie Ouellet (Canada)

VALÉRIE OUELLET is a bilingual investigative reporter who specializes in data-driven journalism. Her exclusive stories for the CBC News Investigative Unit often explore women's health, social injustice and systemic inequalities. She has won the Amnesty International Media Award for documenting COVID cases in Canadian jails (2021) and the RTDNA Dan McArthur Award for shedding light on Ontario's broken school violence reporting system (2020). She teaches data journalism at the Toronto Metropolitan University and is a proud mentor with the CAJ mentorship program. She holds a master's degree in Journalism from the University of King's College in Halifax.





The Journalism Fellows during a Thursday lunch with Professors Pamela Klassen and Simon Coleman at Massey College.

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We had an incredible programme because of the amazing support we received from the Principal of Massey College, Nathalie Des Rosiers; Director, Programs and Partnerships, Emily Mockler and our academic adviser, professor Robert Johnson. Thank you for enriching our experiences.

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