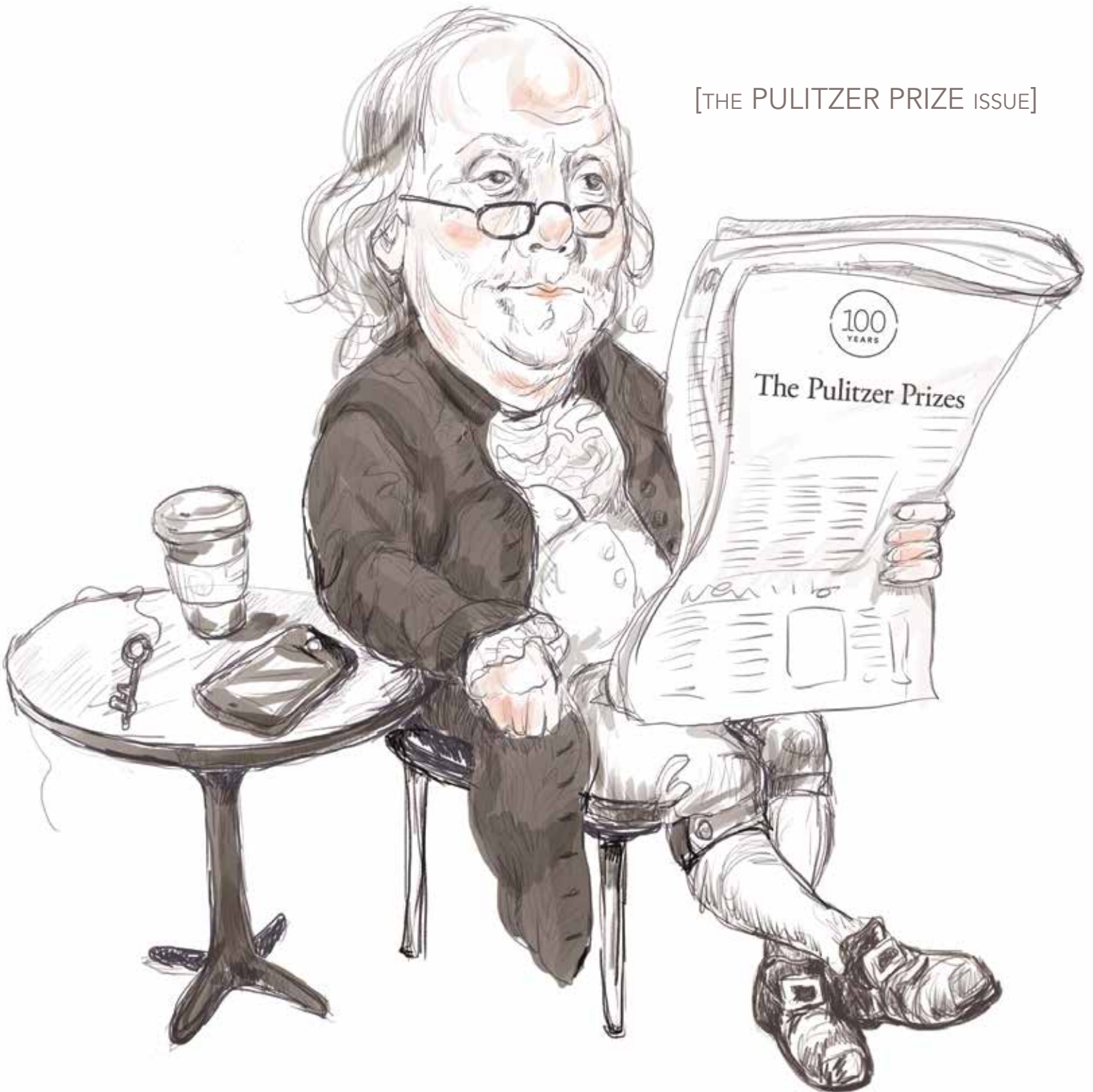


# on **SECOND THOUGHT**

A publication of the North Dakota Humanities Council

Fall 16

[THE PULITZER PRIZE ISSUE]



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## THOUGHT- PROVOKING NEWS

**I often hear people lambast the media for the ills of the world.** The media is too liberal or too conservative. The media has an agenda. The media blows up stories that aren't important. The media ignores important issues.

The media is easy to blame, in part, because it doesn't exist—meaning there is no monolithic entity that controls the news. In fact, you control the news you consume more than “the media” ever could. In a Facebook world we curate our news experience to fit our worldview. We seek out and distribute the news we agree with regardless of its source. In doing so, we shield ourselves from having to challenge long-held assumptions. In short, we get the media we deserve. That's not how it's supposed to work. Good journalism—like a good humanities program—should provoke you. It should make you uncomfortable because it challenges you to re-evaluate and articulate your position on critical issues. Most importantly, good journalism exposes us to complexity, diversity, and change—three critical elements we must all learn to deal with in our modern world.

You control the news you consume more than “the media” ever could.

I'm proud to support the 100-year tradition of honoring excellence in journalism and the arts represented by the Pulitzer Prizes. Our GameChanger ideas festival on September 24, 2016, will encourage people to reflect on the critical role of our free press and the pivotal events of our history. We have invited Pulitzer Prize-winning historians and journalists to share their groundbreaking work and engage in dialogue with our audience. We have selected winners whose work focuses on current issues our country is struggling with, including America's troubled nuclear arms program; the legacy of racism in America; immigration reform; discovering the history of America's first peoples; and accountability and abuse of power in our government. The event will highlight the vital importance of access to high-caliber journalism and research and the public duty to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports and information sources.

I hope you will join us.

**Brenna Daugherty Gerhardt**  
Executive Director



Photo by Joleyn Larson, Mandan, ND

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Cover art by Maria Witham.

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ON SECOND THOUGHT is published by the North Dakota Humanities Council. Brenna Daugherty Gerhardt, Editor  
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# HISTORY OF THE PULITZER PRIZES

By Seymour Topping with Sig Gissler

In the latter years of the 19th century, Joseph Pulitzer stood out as the very embodiment of American journalism. Hungarian-born, an intense, indomitable figure, Pulitzer was the most skillful of newspaper publishers, a passionate crusader against dishonest government, a fierce, hawk-like competitor who did not shrink from sensationalism in circulation struggles, and a visionary who richly endowed his profession.

His innovative *New York World* and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reshaped newspaper journalism. Pulitzer was the first to call for the training of journalists at the university level in a school of journalism. And certainly, the lasting influence of the Pulitzer Prizes on journalism, literature, music, and drama is to be attributed to his visionary acumen.

## PULITZER'S FLEXIBLE WILL

In writing his 1904 will, which made provision for the establishment of the Pulitzer Prizes as an incentive to excellence, Pulitzer specified solely four awards in journalism, four in letters and drama, one for education, and five traveling scholarships. Initially, three of the scholarships were awarded on the recommendation of the faculty of journalism at Columbia to graduating students; two of the scholarships—in art and music, respectively—were administered externally by a jury comprised of faculty from the Columbia Department of Music and the Institute of Musical Art (music) and the National Academy of Design (art). Like the other awards, the latter two scholarships were open to all music and art students in America. (Currently, five scholarships of \$7,500 are awarded to graduating students from the School of Journalism.)

In journalism, prizes were to recognize “the most disinterested and meritorious public service rendered by any American newspaper during the preceding year” (a gold medal worth \$500 with no monetary component); “the best editorial article written during the year, the test of excellence being clearness of style, moral purpose, sound reasoning, and power to influence public opinion in the right direction” (\$500); and “the best example of

a reporter’s work during the year, the test being strict accuracy, terseness, the accomplishment of some public good commanding public attention and respect” (\$1,000). (A \$1,000 prize for the best history of services rendered to the public by the American press in the preceding year was only awarded once; similarly, a \$1,000 prize for a paper on the development of the School of Journalism was never awarded due to a dearth of competitors.) In letters, prizes were to go to an American novel (\$1,000), an original American play performed in New York (\$1,000), a book on the history of the United States (\$2,000), and an American biography (\$1,000).

But, sensitive to the dynamic progression of his society, Pulitzer made provision for broad changes in the system of awards. He established an overseer advisory board and willed it “power in its discretion to suspend or to change any subject or subjects, substituting, however, others in their places, if in the judgment of the board such suspension, changes, or substitutions shall be conducive to the public good or rendered advisable by public necessities, or by reason of change of time.” He also empowered the board to withhold any award where entries fell below its standards of excellence. The assignment of power to the board was such that it could also overrule the recommendations for awards made by the juries subsequently set up in each of the categories.

Thus, the Plan of Award, which has governed the prizes since their inception in 1917, has been revised frequently. The board, later renamed the Pulitzer Prize Board, has increased the number of awards to 21 and introduced poetry, music, and photography as subjects, while adhering to the spirit of the founder’s will and its intent. □

# BIOGRAPHY OF



By Seymour Topping



**Joseph Pulitzer** was born in Mako, Hungary, on April 10, 1847, the son of a wealthy grain merchant of Magyar-Jewish origin and a German mother who was a devout Roman Catholic. His younger brother, Albert, was trained for the priesthood but never attained it. The elder Pulitzers retired in Budapest, and Joseph grew up and was educated there in private schools and by tutors.

## EARLY YEARS

Restive at the age of seventeen, the gangling six-foot-two youth decided to become a soldier and tried in turn to enlist in the Austrian Army, Napoleon's Foreign Legion, for duty in Mexico, and the British Army for service in India. He was rebuffed because of weak eyesight and frail health, which were to plague him for the rest of his life. However, in Hamburg, Germany, he encountered a bounty recruiter for the U.S. Union Army and contracted to enlist as a substitute for a draftee, a procedure permitted under the Civil War draft system.

At Boston he jumped ship and, as the legend goes, swam to shore, determined to keep the enlistment bounty for himself rather than leave it to the agent. Pulitzer collected the bounty by enlisting for a year in the Lincoln Cavalry, which suited him since there were many Germans in the unit. He was fluent in German and French but spoke very little English. Later, he worked his way to St. Louis. While doing odd jobs there, such as muleteer, baggage handler, and waiter, he immersed himself in the city's Mercantile Library, studying English and the law.

## BEGINNING OF A CAREER

His great career opportunity came in a unique manner in the library's chess room. Observing the game of two habitués, he astutely critiqued a move and the players, impressed, engaged Pulitzer in conversation. The players were editors of the leading German language daily, *Westliche Post*, and a job offer followed.

Four years later, in 1872, the young Pulitzer, who had built a reputation as a tireless enterprising journalist, was offered a controlling interest in the paper by the nearly bankrupt owners. At age 25, Pulitzer became a publisher and there followed a series of shrewd business deals from which he emerged in 1878 as the owner of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and a rising figure on the journalistic scene.

## PERSONAL CHANGES

Earlier in the same year, he and Kate Davis, a socially prominent Washingtonian woman, were married in the Protestant Episcopal Church. The Hungarian immigrant youth—once a vagrant on the slum streets of St. Louis and taunted as "Joey the Jew"—had been transformed. Now he was an American citizen and as speaker, writer, and editor had mastered English extraordinarily well. Elegantly dressed, wearing a handsome, reddish-brown beard and pince-nez glasses, he mixed easily with the social elite of St. Louis, enjoying dancing at fancy parties and horseback riding in the park. This lifestyle was abandoned abruptly when he came into the ownership of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

Putting aside his serious health concerns, Pulitzer [became] a "one-man revolution"...

James Wyman Barrett, the last city editor of the *New York World*, records in his biography *Joseph Pulitzer and His World* how Pulitzer, in taking hold of the *Post-Dispatch*, "worked at his desk from early morning until midnight or later, interesting himself in every detail of the paper." Appealing to the public to accept that his paper was their champion, Pulitzer splashed investigative articles and editorials assailing government corruption, wealthy tax-dodgers, and gamblers. This populist appeal was effective, circulation mounted, and the paper prospered. Pulitzer would have been pleased to know that in the conduct of the Pulitzer Prize system which he later established, more awards in journalism would go to exposure of corruption than to any other subject.

## FAILING HEALTH

Pulitzer paid a price for his unsparingly rigorous work at his newspaper. His health was undermined and, with his eyes failing, Pulitzer and his wife set out in 1883 for New York to board a ship on a doctor-ordered European vacation. Stubbornly, instead of boarding the steamer in New York, he met with Jay Gould, the financier, and negotiated the purchase of the *New York World*, which was in financial straits.

Putting aside his serious health concerns, Pulitzer immersed himself in its direction, bringing about what Barrett describes as a "one-man revolution" in the editorial policy, content, and format of the *World*. He employed some of the same techniques that had built up the

## He waged courageous and often successful crusades against corrupt practices in government and business.

circulation of the *Post-Dispatch*. He crusaded against public and private corruption, filled the news columns with a spate of sensationalized features, made the first extensive use of illustrations, and staged news stunts. In one of the most successful promotions, the *World* raised public subscriptions for the building of a pedestal at the entrance to the New York harbor so that the Statue of Liberty, which was stranded in France awaiting shipment, could be emplaced.

### MORE DIFFICULTIES

The formula worked so well that in the next decade the circulation of the *World* in all its editions climbed to more than 600,000, and it reigned as the largest circulating newspaper in the country. But unexpectedly Pulitzer himself became a victim of the battle for circulation when Charles Anderson Dana, publisher of the *Sun*, frustrated by the success of the *World* launched vicious personal attacks on him as "the Jew who had denied his race and religion." The unrelenting campaign was designed to alienate New York's Jewish community from the *World*.

Pulitzer's health was fractured further during this ordeal and in 1890, at the age of 43, he withdrew from the editorship of the *World* and never returned to its newsroom. Virtually blind, having in his severe depression succumbed also to an illness that made him excruciatingly sensitive to noise, Pulitzer went abroad frantically seeking cures. He failed to find them, and the next two decades of his life he spent largely in soundproofed "vaults," as he referred to them, aboard his yacht, *Liberty*, in the "Tower of Silence" at his vacation retreat in Bar Harbor, Maine, and at his New York mansion. During those years, although he traveled very frequently, Pulitzer managed, nevertheless, to maintain the closest editorial and business direction of his newspapers. To ensure secrecy in his communications he relied on a code that filled a book containing some 20,000 names and terms.

### WAR YEARS

During the years 1896 to 1898 Pulitzer was drawn into a bitter circulation battle with William Randolph Hearst's *Journal* in which there were no apparent restraints on sensationalism or fabrication of news. When the Cubans rebelled against Spanish rule, Pulitzer and Hearst sought to outdo each other in whipping up outrage against the Spanish. Both called for war against Spain after the U.S. battleship *Maine* mysteriously blew up and sank in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898. Congress reacted to the outcry with a war resolution. After the four-month war, Pulitzer withdrew from what had become known as "yellow journalism."

The *World* became more restrained and served as the influential editorial voice on many issues of the Democratic Party. In the view of historians, Pulitzer's lapse into "yellow journalism" was outweighed by his public service achievements. He waged courageous and often successful crusades against corrupt practices in government and business. He was responsible to a large extent for passage of antitrust legislation and regulation of the insurance industry.

In 1909, the *World* exposed a fraudulent payment of \$40 million by the United States to the French Panama Canal Company. The federal government lashed back at the *World* by indicting Pulitzer for criminally libeling President Theodore Roosevelt and the banker J.P. Morgan, among others. Pulitzer refused to retreat, and the *World* persisted in its investigation. When the courts dismissed the indictments, Pulitzer was applauded for a crucial victory on behalf of freedom of the press.

In May 1904, writing in the *North American Review* in support of his proposal for the founding of a school of journalism, Pulitzer summarized his credo: "Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know the right

and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself. The power to mould the future of the Republic will be in the hands of the journalists of future generations."

### 1912 TO PRESENT

In 1912, one year after Pulitzer's death aboard his yacht, the Columbia School of Journalism was founded, and the first Pulitzer Prizes were awarded in 1917 under the supervision of the advisory board to which he had entrusted his mandate. Pulitzer envisioned an advisory board composed principally of newspaper publishers. Others would include the president of Columbia University and scholars, and "persons of distinction who are not journalists or editors." Today, the 19-member board is composed mainly of leading editors or news executives. Four academics also serve, including the president of Columbia University and the dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. The dean and the administrator of the prizes are non-voting members. The chair rotates annually to the most senior member. The board is self-perpetuating in the election of members. Voting members may serve three terms of three years. In the selection of the members of the board and of the juries, close attention is given to professional excellence and affiliation, as well as diversity in terms of gender, ethnic background, geographical distribution and size of newspaper. □

This biography was written by Seymour Topping, former administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes and now San Paolo Professor Emeritus of International Journalism at Columbia University. The three-part work was adapted from his foreword to *Who's Who of Pulitzer Prize Winners* by Elizabeth A. Brennan and Elizabeth C. Clarage © 1999 by the Oryx Press. Used with permission from The Oryx Press, 4041 N. Central Ave., Suite 700 Phoenix, AZ 85012.

From 1993 to 2002, Topping administered the Prizes and was San Paolo Professor of International Journalism at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism. After serving in World War II, Topping worked for the Associated Press as a correspondent in China, Indochina, London, and Berlin. In 1959, he joined the *New York Times*, where he remained for 34 years, serving as a foreign correspondent, foreign editor, managing editor, and editorial director of the company's regional newspapers.

Topping's three-part work was updated in 2013 by Sig Gissler, who succeeded Topping as administrator from 2002 to 2014.

## PULITZER'S GOLD

The iconic Pulitzer Prize Gold Medal is awarded each year to the American news organization that wins the Public Service category. It is never awarded to an individual. However, through the years, the Medal has come to symbolize the entire Pulitzer program.

In 1918, a year after the Prizes began, the medal was designed by sculptor Daniel Chester French and his associate Henry Augustus Lukeman. French later gained fame for his seated Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. One side of the medal displays the profile of Benjamin Franklin, apparently based on the bust by French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. Decorating the other side is a husky, bare-chested printer at work, his shirt draped across the end of a press. Surrounding the printer are the words: "For the most disinterested and meritorious public service rendered by an American newspaper during the year...."



The name of the winning news organization is inscribed on the Franklin side of the medal. The year of the award is memorialized on the other side.

The medal, about two and three-quarter inches in diameter and a quarter-inch thick, is not solid gold. It is silver with 24-carat gold plate and presented to the winning newspaper in an elegant cherry-wood box with brass hardware.

# NORTH DAKOTA AND THE PULITZER PRIZES

By Mike Jacobs

## North Dakota has a remarkable record with the Pulitzer Prizes.

Three prizes were earned in North Dakota; another three were earned by journalists raised or educated in North Dakota. One prize winner moved to North Dakota—to teach—after receiving his award. North Dakotans have won for drama and fiction. The last two prizes, in history, involved North Dakota subjects.

That makes ten prizes. Add two named finalists, one in North Dakota and another who moved here, also to teach. Finalists aren't quite prize winners, but they are close. Their work stood out enough to be recognized. They are honorees.

That brings the count to thirteen for winners or finalists with North Dakota connections. Of these, three were newspapers, not individuals.

## NEWSPAPERS

The three prizes earned in North Dakota went to daily newspapers. Two were for Public Service. This is “the most prized Pulitzer,” says Roy Harris Jr. in his book *Pulitzer's Gold*.

The *Bismarck Tribune* won in 1938 and the *Grand Forks Herald* in 1998. The *Forum* of Fargo-Moorhead won a Pulitzer for Local Reporting in 1958.

It is important to remember that prizes are awarded for work published in the previous year. Journalism honored in 1938, for example, was published in 1937. This is the case with the *Bismarck Tribune's* Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

The *Tribune's* Pulitzer was for a series called “Self-Help in the Dust Bowl.” This was conceived and executed by George Mann, editor and publisher of the *Tribune*, but he died before the prize was awarded. As it happens, the *Tribune* was not an automatic winner. “Jurors called it a tie in 1938,” Harris wrote. The other contender was the *San Francisco News*, which had embarked on a crusade against vice and corruption. The judges decided that the Dust Bowl project was more timely. The *Tribune* had actually underplayed the series, giving it front page play but without the big headlines and huge photographs that came to characterize American newspaper journalism. The story count on the *Tribune's* front page of July 22, 1937, was twenty-three—that is, twenty-three separate stories. An article that was part of the *Tribune's* entry is the third “play story” among



The *Bismarck Tribune* won in 1938 and the *Grand Forks Herald* in 1998. The *Forum of Fargo-Moorhead* won a Pulitzer for Local Reporting in 1958.

these, appearing below articles about a court case and an arms build-up in the Far East. The headline on the Dust Bowl story was understated. “Tenacity Is Trait of North Dakotans,” it said.

North Dakota’s other Public Service prize was a prize for tenacity. Here is the citation: “To the staff of the *Grand Forks Herald* for its sustained and informative coverage vividly illustrated with photographs that helped hold its community together in the wake of flooding, a blizzard and a fire that devastated much of the city, including the newspaper plant itself.” In other words, the prize was as much for the act of publishing as it was for the quality of the journalism.

As it happens, I was involved in the *Grand Forks Herald’s* Pulitzer, as editor at the time of the flood, but I didn’t win the prize. This prize was the result of a team effort, and not just of the journalists who worked for the *Herald*. The circulation department faced enormous challenges in delivering the paper, and printers, advertising sales people, the business office staff—everyone who worked for the *Herald*—contributed to producing the newspaper every day, even though most had significant flood issues, including damaged homes and displaced families. The total number of prize winners at the *Herald* would be about 120—closer to 200 when “helpers” from other Knight-Ridder papers and the community are included. When the prize was announced the *Herald* produced certificates for each of these people. These were labeled “A Piece of the Pulitzer” and had the name of everyone who contributed.

The photo staff of the *Herald* also was a named finalist for the prize in Spot News Photography the same year. A word about the process of awarding the prizes here: a jury made up of journalists, many of them winners of earlier prizes, reviews the entries and selects those to forward to members of the Pulitzer Prize Board (often referred to as judges) for a decision. Usually there are three nominees. When the prizes are awarded, the finalists that didn’t win the prize are noted. They become what are called “named finalists.” This is a secondary but still significant honor.

The *Forum* won its Pulitzer in 1958, for coverage of a tornado that devastated a neighborhood called Golden Ridge on the northwest edge of the city. The tornado struck about 8 p.m. By 11 p.m., the *Forum’s* news team had assembled coverage, including names of the dead and photographs of the damage.

Subscribers picking the paper off their stoops in the morning saw a front page dominated by news of the tornado, including photographs—a significant advance in the twenty years that had elapsed since the *Tribune’s* Pulitzer. Forty years later, the *Grand Forks Herald* front pages were dominated by huge headlines and colored pictures. The *Herald* also offered flood coverage on the Internet—testimony to the change in newspaper technology as well as in the public’s reading habits.

#### NORTH DAKOTAN JOURNALISTS

The prizes that went to the North Dakota papers belong to an unofficial category that journalists call “Disaster Pulitzers.” Of course, disaster challenges journalists, and in each of these cases, North Dakota journalists rose to meet the challenges.

The same is true of two Pulitzers won by North Dakotans working outside the state.

The first of these occurred in 1965, when Mel Ruder won. Ruder grew up in Bismarck and graduated from the University of North Dakota (UND). With his newly minted degree, Ruder started a weekly newspaper in Columbia Falls, Montana. He called it the *Hungry Horse News*. When flood waters overwhelmed the community in the summer of 1964, he turned his newspaper into a daily; circulation grew from a few thousand to more than thirteen thousand. And he won the Pulitzer Prize for spot news reporting—news on deadline, so to say. The citation reads, “For his daring and resourceful coverage of a disastrous flood that threatened his community, an individual effort in the finest tradition of spot news reporting.”

In 2002, William Ketter was editor and publisher of the *Lawrence Eagle* in Massachusetts. He directed a staff that won the Pulitzer in 2003 for “detailed, well-crafted stories of the accidental drowning of four boys in the Merrimack River.” A native of Fisher, Minnesota, Ketter also graduated from UND.

The third Pulitzer won by a North Dakotan working outside the state is more recent—2015—and falls into a different category. Rob Kuznia, a graduate of Red River High School in Grand Forks, was part of a team that won for Local Reporting. At the *Daily Breeze* in Torrance, California, an Orange County town, he led a team of three investigating a local school board. The Pulitzer judges cited their work “for inquiry into widespread corruption in a small cash-strapped school district, including impressive use of the paper’s website.”

A year after his prize was announced, Kuznia spoke in Grand Forks at UND’s annual Hagerty Lecture in Contemporary Media Issues. He characterized himself as “the poster child for the state of a troubled industry.” Kuznia had left the *Daily Breeze* before the Pulitzer was announced. He now works for the University of Southern California’s Shoah Institute, focusing on Holocaust history and genocide studies.

#### AWARD-WINNING EDUCATION AND HISTORY

Two Pulitzer winners—a prize winner and a named finalist—came to UND to teach after their careers in journalism. Richard Aregood won the prize for Editorial Writing in 1985, and Mark Trahan was a named finalist for National Reporting in 1989. At the time, Trahan worked for the *Arizona Republic*. Aregood’s prize was earned at the *Philadelphia Daily News*.

North Dakota is the setting for two of the most recent Pulitzer Prizes for history.

T. J. Stiles won in History in 2016 for *Custer’s Trials*. To be fair, George Armstrong Custer, his subject, was assigned to Fort Abraham Lincoln in Dakota Territory for less than three years, despite his central place in the state’s history and consciousness. Plus, he spent much of that time away from the state, politicking in Washington and speculating in New York. Nevertheless, Custer had a full experience of the country that was to become North Dakota. He was trapped in a blizzard between Fargo and Bismarck, and he enjoyed a camping experience on the Little Heart River, a dozen miles south of Mandan.

Stiles manages to end his book without mentioning the journalistic scoop that ensued. Had the Pulitzer been awarded in 1877, Clement Lounsbury likely would have won one. He transcribed reporter Mark Kellogg’s notes of the battle and sent them to the *New York Herald Tribune*. That’s how the world learned of Custer’s defeat at Little Bighorn.

The History prize for 2015 went to Elizabeth Fenn for *Encounters at the Heart of the World*. Fenn teaches history at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Her prizewinning book is a history of the Mandan people, among the first North Dakotans, and her scholarship broadens and deepens our understanding of these people. Much of Fenn’s research was done in North Dakota, and she has been a frequent lecturer in the state. She’ll be part of the program at the North Dakota Humanities Council’s GameChanger ideas festival in September.

#### LITERARY EXCELLENCE

We can’t discuss the legacy of North Dakota and its influence on writers without mentioning Louise Erdrich. Arguably one of our state’s most talented and renowned authors, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Louise was raised in Wahpeton and her heritage and upbringing are visibly influential factors throughout her work. In 2009 she was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in *Fiction for The Plague of Doves*, a novel set in North Dakota that focuses on the tangled history of Native Americans and whites inhabiting the same space. Her growing number of awards, including the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award presented in 2013 by North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple, marks her as one of our contemporary treasures.

### PRAIRIE PLAYWRIGHT

Finally, the first of North Dakota's Pulitzer Prizes.

This came in 1933, the seventeenth year of the prizes. It was in Drama, and it went to Maxwell Anderson.

Anderson was born in Pennsylvania but his family drifted west, reaching Jamestown, North Dakota, in 1907. Anderson graduated from high school there and enrolled at UND. As an undergraduate, he tired of journalism, working on the night copy desk at the *Grand Forks Herald*. His degree was in English literature, earned in 1911. He married a classmate; the ceremony was held in Bottineau, North Dakota. He became the principal and English teacher at the high school in Minnewaukan. He taught English in a high school in San Francisco, then chaired the English department at Wittier College in California.

After working as a journalist in Palo Alto and San Francisco, he went to work for the *New Republic* in 1921, founded a poetry journal, and began life as a playwright. In all, he wrote more than forty plays and a number of film scripts. Perhaps the best known and the most durable is *Anne of a Thousand Days*, one of several works set in Tudor England. But it was a thoroughly American play that won the Pulitzer Prize. Now little remembered, *Both Your Houses* has a political theme. The scene is Capitol Hill, and the plot involves an appropriation for dams and reservoirs in Nevada. The bill is burdened with "addendums." We would call these "earmarks" in our day.

Anderson's last commercial success was *The Bad Seed*, an adaptation of a novel by William March. He also wrote the script for the first film of *Cry the Beloved Country*, Alan Paton's anti-apartheid novel.

His professional life was busy, even chaotic, and his personal life was complicated and often tragic. None of this lessened his loyalty to North Dakota. This was expressed in 1958, on the University of North Dakota's seventy-fifth anniversary. Anderson wrote what he called "Love Letter to a University." He wrote, he said, "in grateful appreciation to my alma mater, thanking it for being there when I needed it so badly, and for supplying hope to the current crop of youngsters as they come to it from the windy plains."

Anderson died in 1959, less than year after writing his "Love Letter." The letter makes plain, though, that North Dakota, and especially the university, were important in his success.

This makes thirteen Pulitzers for North Dakota—a remarkable record, but one that is not complete.

### A CONTINUING STORY

Have these prizes made a difference in North Dakota? Or for North Dakotans?

Here I can only speak for myself.

My answer is "Yes!"

I arrived at the University of North Dakota in 1965, only seven years after Maxwell Anderson wrote his "Love Letter." It was comparatively recent news at UND then. Its themes of hope and change resonated with me. In those days—the late '60s—UND's journalism department had a lecture series, always on Friday afternoons. Mel Ruder made the trip from Columbia Falls to Grand Forks. His message to us students was simple: you can win a Pulitzer if you're ready in the right place at the right time. I have known Aregood, Ketter, and Trahan as friends. When he left Grand Forks, Aregood dropped a cat on my wife and me. The beast is watching as I write.

So, yes, I believed in the possibility of future Pulitzer Prizes.

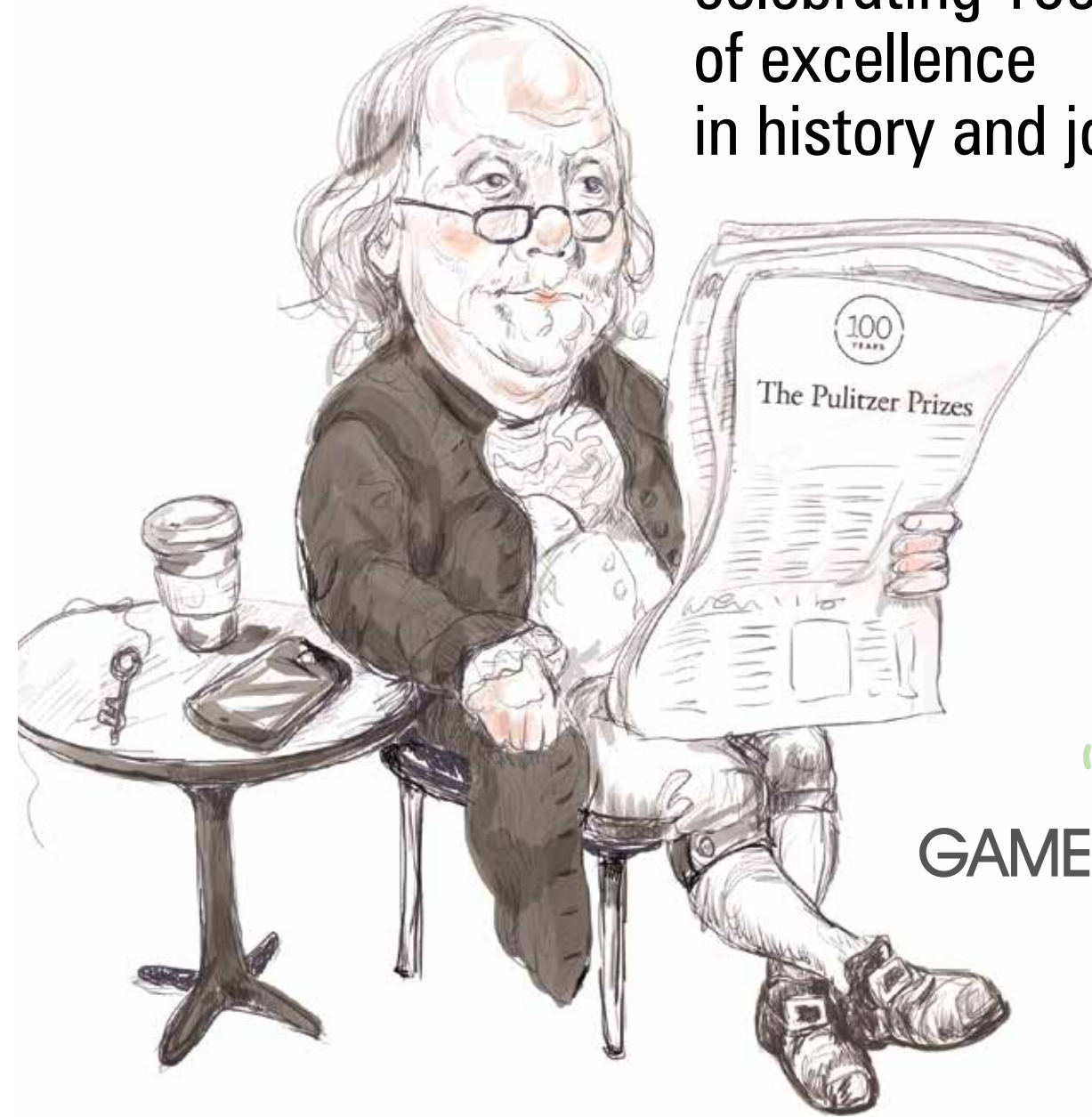
The *Herald's* Pulitzer Prize was a gift of the river, of course. But it was a gift that we of the *Herald* staff were ready to open, ready to receive, and ready to relish.

This makes thirteen Pulitzers for North Dakota—a remarkable record, but one that is not complete. There are Pulitzers ahead, for those who are ready. □

MIKE JACOBS grew up in Mountrail County, graduated from high school in Stanley and from the University of North Dakota, and has worked at newspapers in Grand Forks, Mandan, Dickinson, and Fargo, and in St. Louis. He is retired and lives near Gilby, North Dakota, with Suezette Bieri, his high school classmate and partner of 45 years.

# PULITZER PRIZE EDITION

## celebrating 100 years of excellence in history and journalism



## GAMECHANGER

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2016**  
**BISMARCK, ND**  
**gamechangernd.com**

FEATURING: SEYMOUR HERSH, ELIZABETH FENN,  
ERIC SCHLOSSER, SONIA NAZARIO,  
JACQUELINE JONES AND MORE.

In 2016, the GameChanger ideas festival is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Pulitzer Prize. We have invited Pulitzer Prize winning historians and journalists to share their groundbreaking work and engage in dialogue with our audience. We have selected winners whose work focuses on current issues changing the face of our world, including: America's troubled nuclear arms program; the legacy of racism in America; immigration; and accountability and abuse of power.



# SEYMOUR HERSH

| 2016 GAMECHANGER IDEAS FESTIVAL  
| KEYNOTE SPEAKER

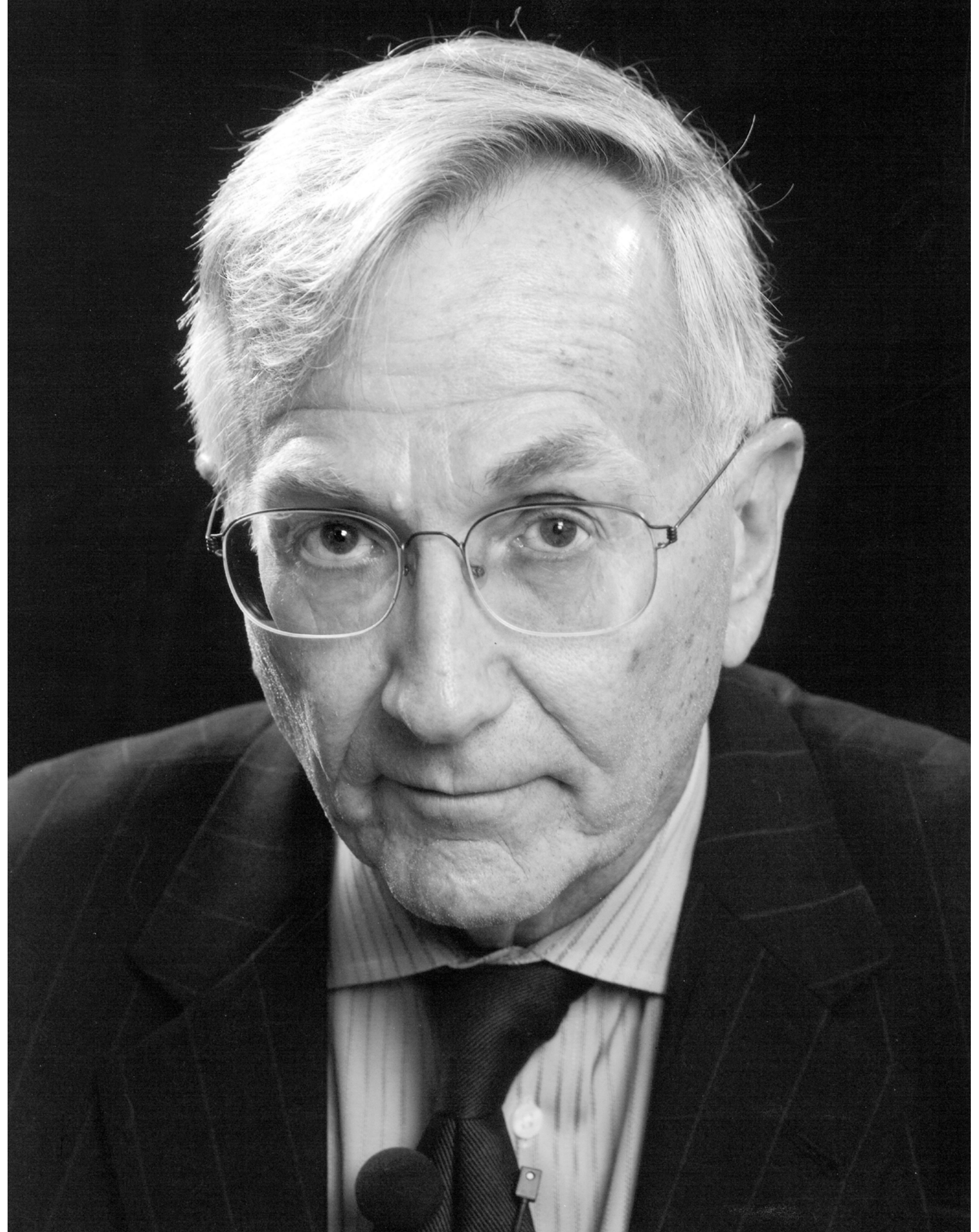
1970 Pulitzer Prize winner in International Reporting for his exclusive disclosure of the Vietnam War tragedy at the hamlet of My Lai.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist SEYMOUR HERSH has helped expose some of the biggest cover-ups of our time, from My Lai to Abu Ghraib. The legendary Sy Hersh deftly analyzes current US foreign policy and issues pertaining to military intelligence, national security, and the press.

His work is a bracing reminder of the power of the press to challenge corruption and to hold accountable those who knowingly abuse power. *New Yorker* editor David Remnick calls him, “quite simply, the greatest investigative journalist of his era.” From the covert bombing of Cambodia, to Henry Kissinger’s authorization of the wiretapping of White House aides and newsmen, to the Bush administration’s use of “selective intelligence” to justify the war in Iraq—Hersh has often been first to break the most crucial stories of the modern era. His most recent report, “The Killing of Osama bin Laden” in the *London Review of Books*, contests the official narrative surrounding Osama bin Laden’s death.

In addition to his Pulitzer Prize, Hersh has won the National Book Critics Circle Award and five George Polk Awards. His bestselling books include *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, *The Dark Side of Camelot*, and, most recently, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*.

In April 2016, his controversial book, *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*, based on his reports of the same name, was made available.





# THE KILLING OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

By Seymour M. Hersh

The reportage in my new book, *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*, has a common theme—false steps by an American president who came to office in 2009 after a brilliant campaign in which he spoke of “hope” and “change we can believe in.”

Political words are just words, as people everywhere in the world have come to understand, but Barack Obama’s rhetoric—the first African-American president of the United States—seemed to strike a chord after eight years of George Bush and Dick Cheney. In his first inaugural address, Obama emphasized the rule of law and the rights of man, declaring, “Those ideals still light the word, and we will not give them up for expedience’s sake.”

Yet he is a president who told the world a series of lies about the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, some of which recklessly put an ally at risk; who in August 2013, sought congressional approval to bomb Syria, while concealing the fact he had been put on notice that the nerve agent allegedly used by Assad didn’t match any of those known to be in Syria’s arsenal; who secretly authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to set up a backchannel flow of arms and ammunition, including anti-aircraft missiles, from chaotic post-Qaddafi Libya via Turkey to Syrian rebels, many of them fanatic Islamists; who ignored repeated US and allied intelligence reports throughout early 2013 depicting the Turkish government, led by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as a vital, and hidden, supporter of al-

Nusra and ISIS, two extremist militias then engaged in all-out war against Syria. The White House’s refusal to deal with reality led the Pentagon’s Joint Chiefs to find a way, through America’s military partners, to get intelligence and targeting information to the Syrian military—without Obama’s knowledge.

Obama’s lapses in judgment and integrity in his foreign policy are all the more confounding because he once promised a very different kind of leadership. He spoke elegantly and passionately on issues ranging from racial prejudice and the need for universal health care to the importance of resolving the festering Middle East crisis and closing America’s grotesque prison at Guantánamo. He was not a pacifist, as he said many times in different words, but opposed to the rash use of military might. He spoke of ending “the mindset that causes war.” In an era of money-driven politics and venal, cynical politicians, he was seen by some as the brightest and best president America could hope for.

How can one explain a politician who put so much energy in pushing through a health care program

## I learned early in the Obama presidency that he was prepared to walk away from first principles.

and a revolutionary nuclear agreement with Iran while taking the deceitful steps mapped out in this book? How could such a high-

minded person endorse, as Obama has, the compilation of hit lists made up of suspected terrorists around the world, including American citizens, to be targeted and killed without judicial process?

It's now evident, fifteen years after the 9/11 attacks, that Obama's foreign policy has maintained many of the core elements of the Global War on Terror initiated by his predecessor—assassinations, drone attacks, heavy reliance on special forces, covert operations and, in the case of Afghanistan, the continued use of American ground forces in combat. And, as in the years of Bush and Cheney, there has been no progress, let alone victory, in the fight against terrorism. ISIS has succeeded al-Qaida as the United States' most feared terrorist enemy, one that now reaches deep into Africa and sends shockwaves into Western Europe and America. Obama still views Russia, a nation sharing the same international terrorist enemies as Washington, as an evil empire that must be confronted rather than as an ally. Since 9/11 I have had access to some of the thinking inside the White House on the War on Terror. I learned early in the Obama presidency that he was prepared to walk away from first principles. His first public act as president took place on January 22, 2009, two days after his inauguration, when he announced that he was returning the nation to the "moral high ground" by signing an executive order calling for the closing, "as soon as practical," of Guantánamo. As of this writing, that has yet to happen, and more than ninety prisoners continue to fester there, with no due process and no accountability, to America's shame.

Obama has described Afghanistan as "the right war" during his campaign and talked about the need for more troops on the ground there. Many of his supporters were not listening, or chose not to hear. I was told that within three weeks of taking office he informed his senior advisors at a secret National Security Council meeting of his plan to send an additional 17,000 American troops to join the 47,000 already stationed there. This outcome was not the product of an interagency staff decision, but a unilateral action taken by Obama and retired marine general James Jones, the national security adviser at the time. Obama and Jones were said to believe that the focus of American foreign policy needed to be on Pakistan, a nuclear power supporting and harboring the Taliban troops that had become the main opponent in Afghanistan after al-Qaida's retreat. There was much hubris and—as usual in new administrations—not

much consideration of what had gone before. Furthermore, I was told by someone in a position to know that Jones had explained at one meeting,

in essence, that "Afghanistan is not in our national security interest, but we don't want to betray the good men who went there before. We will not abandon Afghanistan, but we will not let it get worse."

Obama would spend much of his first year discussing what to do about Afghanistan. The debate was not about whether to expand the war there but how many troops to commit to what would become America's longest and least successful war. The president, who would spend the rest of his time in office cracking down on press leaks and internal dissent, stood aside as a group of American generals staged what amounted to a public debate over the number of troops needed to "win" the Afghan war. At one point, a highly classified internal request from Army General Stanley McChrystal, an expert on special operations and commander of US forces in the Afghan war, was leaked to the *Washington Post* within a week of its delivery to the White House, with no significant protest or sanction from Obama. McChrystal had asked permission to deploy as many as 80,000 more troops.

Obama eventually committed a first tranche of 30,000 additional American soldiers. It was a decision marketed as a compromise between a reluctant president and a gung-ho Pentagon. There was at least one senior member of Congress who had reason to suspect that Obama, despite his resentment of the military's public posturing, had wanted these higher troop numbers all along.

By 2009, David Obey, a Democratic lawmaker from Wisconsin, was chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, one of two committees responsible for funding all government programs, including secret military and intelligence activities. Elected to Congress in 1969, at the height of the anti-Vietnam War protests, Obey was an outspoken liberal. He had dared to take on George Bush and Dick Cheney over aspects of their war on terror that—as Obey and others in Congress believed—were not being shared with, and perhaps were not even financed by, Congress, as stipulated by the Constitution. Obey got nowhere with his protests, but his efforts in early 2005—including a little-noted speech on the House floor and the solicitation of a rush of unfulfilled promises from the Bush White House to provide greater communication—were remarkable simply for having taken place. He told me at the time that "disquieting" actions

had been taken in secret and "Congress has failed in its oversight abilities."

Obey stunned his colleagues in 2010 by announcing his retirement. He and I had talked on and off during the Bush years—he would listen but say little. Six or so months after he left the Congress he was more forthcoming. He told me of a presidential meeting he and a few other congressional leaders had attended at the White House in March 2009. The issue was Afghanistan, and Obama wanted them to know he was going to make a significant troop commitment to the war there. "He said he was being told by a lot of people that he ought to expand the war and then asked all of us, one by one, what we thought. The only word of caution came from [Vice President] Joe Biden, who raised a question about the cost. When it came to me, I said, 'Mr. President, you could have the best policy in the world but you need to have the tools to carry it out—and the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan are pretty lousy tools. If you did a surge in Afghanistan you will have to face the fact that it would crowd out large portions of your domestic program—except perhaps health care.'" (A later in-house estimate put the cost of the war, if 40,000 additional troops were committed, at \$1 trillion over the next ten years, as much as the president's health care proposal.)

At the end of the meeting, according to Obey, he had a private chat with the president, and asked him whether he had ever spent time listening to the broadcasts of President Lyndon Johnson's telephone conversations, in particular his discussions about expanding America's commitment to the war in South Vietnam. Johnson had taped more than 9,000 of his telephone calls while in office. They created a sensation in Washington upon their public release in 2003—just as President Bush was expanding America's war in Iraq. Obama said he had. "I then asked Obama if he recalled listening to the conversation with Richard Russell when they both talked about how upping the American effort in Vietnam wouldn't help," Obey said. "My point was that Johnson and Russell were making a decision to go ahead when they were telling themselves privately that it would not work."

Senator Russell was a segregationist and arch conservative from Georgia, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and a longtime Johnson confidant. The conversation in question took place in May 1964, fourteen months before Johnson would make a major commitment of American troops to the war. It remains one of the most riveting and instructive of the presidential recordings. Both men agreed that any American escalation would lead to

## There was reason to suspect that Obama wanted these higher troop numbers all along.

a major war with China, with untold consequences. "I'll tell you," Russell told Johnson, "it'll be the most expensive adventure this

country ever went into." Johnson answered, "It just makes the chills run up my back...I haven't the nerve to do it, but I don't see any other way out of it."

Obey then asked a third question: "Who's your George Ball?" Ball, a high-ranking member of the State Department in the Kennedy years, was renowned as the only senior official in the government to argue again and again—at great personal cost—against Kennedy's decision to escalate the American presence in South Vietnam. Obama did not answer. "Either the president chose not to answer, or he didn't have one," Obey told me. "But I didn't hear anyone tell the president that he ought to put on the brakes in Afghanistan."

In a review of my interviews about Obama's early decision to raise the ante in Afghanistan, one fact stood out: Obama's faith in the world of special operations and in Stanley McChrystal, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan who worked closely with Dick Cheney from 2003 to 2008 as a director of the Joint Special Operations Command. JSOC's forces include elite Navy SEALs and the Army's Delta Force, and they have won fame in countless books and movies since 9/11 for their nighttime operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan and the jihadists in Iraq. It was a JSOC SEAL team that killed bin Laden at his redoubt in Pakistan in early 2011. There is no ambivalence about the skills and determination of those special operators who took part in Obama's renewed nighttime war against the Taliban in 2009 and thereafter. But, as I was told at the time, there is another side to the elite units. "You've got really good guys who are strongly motivated, and individual initiative is the game," a former senior military official said. "But JSOC's individualism also breeds a group of childish men who take advantage of their operational freedom to act immaturely. 'We're special and the rules don't apply.' This is why the regular army has always tried to limit the size of the special forces. McChrystal was not paid to be thoughtful. He was paid to let his troops do what they want with all the toys to play with they want." This former senior official, who has been involved in war planning since 9/11, was pessimistic at the time about Obama's reliance on special operations. "The intersection between the high-mindedness of Obama and the ruthlessness of Dick Cheney is so great that there is a vacuum in the planning. And no one knows what will happen. My own beliefs is that over time we're going to

## Democracy—a word that has dwindling appeal and little relevance for many Afghans.

do the Afghanization of the war”—trying, as in Iraq, to finance and train an Afghan Army capable of standing up to the Taliban—and the same thing will happen to them as happened to our South Vietnamese Army allies. In the end, the Taliban, disciplined and motivated, will take the country back.”

McChrystal was cashiered in June 2010, after he and his aides were quoted in *Rolling Stone* making a series of derogatory remarks about the president and others in the White House. Among other comments, McChrystal said an early face-to-face meeting with the president was inconsequential and trivial—little more than a “10 minute photo op.” By then, there was much concern about a major aspect of McChrystal’s approach to the war, which was to find and kill the Taliban. I was visited that June by a senior official of the International Committee of the Red Cross whose humanitarian mission is to monitor, in secret, the conditions of civilians and prisoners of war in an effort to insure compliance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The ICRC was even granted limited access to the prison at Guatánamo, among other facilities in the War on Terror, with the understanding that its findings were not to be made public. The official who sought me out did not want to discuss the prison system in Afghanistan, about which there have been many public revelations. His issue was the Obama administration’s overall conduct of the war. He had come to Washington in the hope of seeing Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other senior State Department officials, but had been shunted aside. His message was blunt: McChrystal’s men were killing the wrong people. “Our inspectors are the only visitors from a secular institution who are tolerated by the Taliban leadership, and you Americans are killing those who support our activity,” he said. “You are killing those Taliban who are not jihadists—who don’t want to die and don’t give a shit about bombing Times Square. They have no grudge against America.” The indiscriminate targeting of all who are Taliban, he said, “is reaching a point of no return, and the more radical and extreme elements are picking up momentum.”

At one point, he said, there had been a heated internal debate among the Taliban leadership about the use of chemical weapons in an attack on Kabul, the Afghan capital, and the moderates won. The ICRC wouldn’t say how it learned of the debate, but the official added, “The guys who prevented that use have been smoked out”—assassinated by JSOC operators—“by the Americans. The moderates are going down.”

A longtime consultant to the special operations community depicted the mindless killing in Afghanistan as a “symptom

of the weakness in the US policy for combatting terrorism: It’s all about tactics and nobody, Republican or Democrat,

has advanced a strategic vision. The special ops guys are simply carrying out orders, like a dog eager to get off the leash and run in the woods—and not think about where it is going. We’ve had an abject failure of military and political leadership.”

The American-led coalition unilaterally declared an end to the Afghan war at the close of 2014. And, as widely predicted, the Afghanistan Army, supported at an annual cost of billions by the Obama administration, continues to be riddled with corruption and lacks leadership and motivation. Obama again decided last year to send over more troops, under the guise of advisers, and, inevitably, they have been drawn into combat. They kill and are killed in the name of democracy—a word that has dwindling appeal and little relevance for many Afghans.

Did any of the dozens of analyses and estimates put forward as the president reviewed the options in 2009 and in 2015 estimate the number of innocent lives that would be lost as a consequence of the American surge? Were those presidential advisers skeptical of the capability and motivation of an upgraded and modernized Afghan army able to find a place at the White House planning table? Is there an American soldier who wants to be the last to die in Afghanistan?

It is not too early to dwell on Obama’s legacy, a deepening concern for any president as the end of his tenure approaches. It would be easy to say it will be mixed—on the plus side there was the health care bill and America’s recovery from the economic shambles left by the Bush administration. He faced an unbridgeable congressional impasse caused by an increasingly radical Republican opposition. But Obama, whatever his private thoughts, still speaks of American exceptionalism and still believes, or acts as if he does, that the War on Terror, a war against an ideology, can be won with American bombers, drone attacks and special forces. There is no evidence yet for that belief. □

Modified from the Introduction to Seymour M. Hersh, *The Killing of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2016). Reprinted here by permission of the author.

Seymour Hersh will give the keynote address at the GameChanger ideas festival on September 24, 2016. Learn more at [gamechangernd.com](http://gamechangernd.com).

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## The REAL story about newspapers:

# 83%

of North Dakota adults read their LOCAL NEWSPAPER every week!

- 73% of 18-24-year-olds
- 73% of 35-44-year-olds
- 74% of 25-34-year-olds
- 89% of 45-54-year olds
- 91% of those 55+

SOURCE: Newton Marketing and Research, 2014

The newspaper tells us where we need to be, what time we need to be there, and why we ought to care.

**Cecile Wehrman**  
Journal Publishing  
Crosby & Tioga



The newspaper plays a very important role in peoples’ every day lives.

**Jessica Wald**  
The Homestead  
Napoleon



Even as newspapers can make things difficult for public officials by holding them accountable, they make things easy for citizens by keeping them informed.

**Tom Monilaws**  
Traill Co. Tribune  
Mayville



I see our role as transforming and connecting communities . . . and it’s a vital role in today’s society.

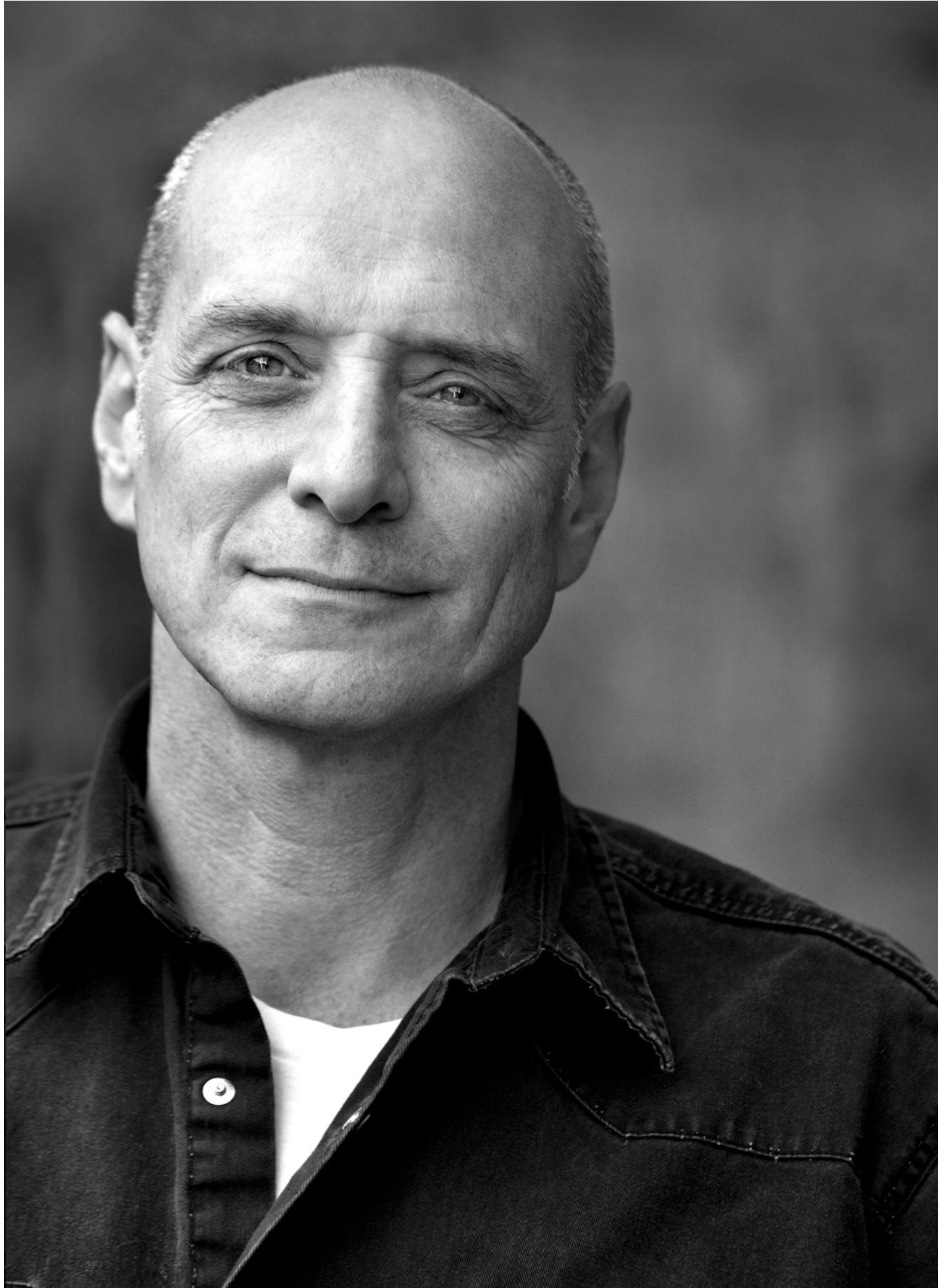
**Bill Marcil Jr.**  
Forum Communications  
Fargo



For the rest of the REAL story about newspapers see our video at [www.ndna.com](http://www.ndna.com)



NEWSPAPERS: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow



2014 Pulitzer Prize finalist in History for *Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident and the Illusion of Safety*—a chilling history of the management of America’s nuclear arsenal, exploring the fateful challenges and chronicling the “near misses” that could have triggered a cataclysm.

## ERIC SCHLOSSER

As an investigative journalist, **ERIC SCHLOSSER** tries to explore subjects ignored by the mainstream media and give a voice to people at the margins of society. Over the years he’s followed the harvest with migrant farm workers in California, spent time with meatpacking workers in Texas and Colorado, told the stories of marijuana growers and pornographers and the victims of violent crime, gone on duty with the New York Police Department Bomb Squad, and visited prisons throughout the United States. His aim is to shed light on worlds that are too often hidden. And his work defies easy categorization, earning praise not only from liberal publications like *The Nation*, but also from *Fortune*, the *Financial Times*, and the *National Review*.

Schlosser’s first book, *Fast Food Nation* (2001), helped start a revolution in how Americans think about what they eat. It has been translated into more than twenty languages and remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for two years. His second book, *Reefer Madness* (2003), looked at America’s thriving underground economy. It was also a *New York Times* bestseller. His most recent book, *Command and Control* (2013), examines the efforts of the military, since the atomic era began during World War II, to prevent nuclear weapons from being stolen, sabotaged, or detonated by accident. *Command and Control* was a *New York Times* Notable Book, a *Time* Top 10 Nonfiction Book, was a finalist for the 2014 Pulitzer Prize (History) and also received the Gold Medal Award (Nonfiction) from the 2013 California Book Awards.

Eric Schlosser is currently producing a documentary, directed by Robert Kenner, titled *Command and Control* based on his book.

Before writing nonfiction, Schlosser was a playwright and worked for an independent film company. In recent years he’s returned to those fields. Two of Schlosser’s plays have been produced in London: *Americans* (2003) at the Arcola Theatre and *We the People* (2007) at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre. Schlosser served as an executive producer and co-wrote the feature film *Fast Food Nation* (2006), directed by Richard Linklater. Schlosser was an executive producer of *There Will Be Blood* (2008), directed by Paul Thomas Anderson. He was a co-producer and the co-narrator of the award-winning documentary *Food, Inc.*, directed by Robert Kenner.

# ERIC SCHLOSSER: THE PEOPLE WHO ARE THE MOST ANTINUCLEAR ARE THE ONES WHO KNOW MOST ABOUT IT

An interview by Ed Pilkington

*The American author tells Ed Pilkington about his six-year all-out immersion in the terrifying and surreal world of nuclear weapons for his latest book, *Command and Control*.*

In the autumn of 1999 Eric Schlosser was invited to Vandenberg Air Force base in California to witness the launch of a Titan II missile, the largest intercontinental ballistic missile America has ever built. At the time, he was a moderately well-known magazine writer, and *Fast Food Nation*, the book that would act as his personal rocket launcher propelling him into the literary stratosphere, was still two years away from publication.

"They let me go up into the tower and I found myself standing next to the missile. It was right there," he says, stretching out his hand as though to touch the missile's cool metal shell. "It was a deeply impressive thing." Schlosser was a child of the '70s and grew up with dire warnings of nuclear Armageddon ringing in his ears, largely dismissing them in his mind as fear-mongering

and make-believe. "But my God! Watching that missile take off, seeing it soar over the coast of Mexico—it was visceral. These are real! They work! That ICBM was more powerful than any cold war story I'd heard."

That shattering experience set Schlosser on a journey that has resulted, 14 years later, in *Command and Control*, his take on the terrifying and surreal world of nuclear weapons. The past six of those years have been spent in what he describes as "all-out immersion" in the subject. The writer is notoriously meticulous about his research, wearing out more shoe leather per book than most journalists do in a lifetime.

For *Fast Food Nation*, his exposé of what he called the "dark side of the all-American meal," he interviewed scores of laborers, meatpackers and ranchers, and visited countless abattoirs and factory farms. In a similar vein, he spent time with more than 100 bomber pilots, nuclear scientists and weapons designers for *Command and Control*, as well as reviewing thousands of pages of newly released official documents. "I really went

down the rabbit hole into the nuclear madness," he says when we meet in a coffee bar in Soho, New York. He speaks languidly, elongating his vowels like a West Coast hippie, even though he was born in Manhattan and spent part of his youth here.

Shoe leather aside, there's no instantly apparent theme that connects Schlosser's disparate subjects. From fast food he turned to the war on drugs in *Reefer Madness* (2003). His next book after *Command and Control* will be on America's prison system. Food-dope-nukes-slamers: where's the logic?

"Powerful systems of control that aren't being discussed and that work very hard to disguise how they operate," he answers. "It's not like I have a megalomaniacal 'I'm going to save the world' mentality, but what my work is designed to do is to provoke discussion. I want to produce not a diatribe or a rant but writing that is factually based and footnoted." (*Command and Control* certainly is footnoted—the notes and bibliography run to more than 100 pages.)

## We're brilliant at devising solutions to very immediate problems, but awful at seeing the consequences of those actions.

When he started on his nuclear researches, Schlosser conceived the book as something contained and compact. It would be the tale of one of the most serious accidents in the nuclear age, when, in September 1980, a Titan II missile, similar to the one he had witnessed taking off from Vandenberg, exploded in its silo in Arkansas following routine repair work that turned bad. The missile was carrying a thermonuclear warhead with a yield 600 times that of "Little Boy," the bomb dropped over Hiroshima. The warhead was blasted hundreds of meters into a ditch, but failed to detonate.

As he started digging his way down into the rabbit hole, he began stumbling on other examples of mistakes and near-misses. One led to another until he found himself sitting on a mushroom cloud of disturbing nuclear accidents. When he requested under the Freedom of Information Act the release of an official record of all the incidents that had befallen the American nuclear arsenal in the 10 years to 1967, he was astounded to find it extending to 245 pages.

The stories he came across suggest that nothing but a miracle has prevented an accidental Hiroshima or Nagasaki

taking place on US soil. In 1958 a Mark6 atom bomb was accidentally dropped into the backyard of the Gregg family in Mars Bluff, South Carolina. Three years later, two hydrogen bombs, with a combined power of more than 500 Hiroshimas, were accidentally dropped over North Carolina after a B-52 broke up in mid air. Neither bomb detonated when they landed in a meadow, but a later secret investigation concluded that in the case of one of the devices only a single low-voltage switch stood between the US and catastrophe. In 1966 a hydrogen bomb was dropped inadvertently over the coast of Spain, also from a stricken B-52; it took six weeks of intensive searching before it was found and retrieved from the ocean bed.

As the mass of detail piles up, an important lesson emerges from the book. The way Schlosser explains it to me is that "our ability to create dangerous things exceeds our ability to control them. We are talking about hubris—our lack of understanding of our own flaws and lack of humility in the way we approach technology."

At this point in our conversation, that elusive link between *Command and Control* and *Fast Food Nation*—nukes

and burgers—begins to reveal itself. The hydrogen bomb and the Chicken McNugget: two seemingly disparate creations that are both the product of brilliant engineering and human ingenuity, and which harnessed the power of nature. The hydrogen bomb unleashed the power of the atom to allow mankind to kill millions of people astonishingly quickly; the Chicken McNugget unleashed the power of animal protein to feed millions of people astonishingly quickly.

Yet in the process, both established systems of such centralized force and complexity that nobody—not even successive US presidents—was able to hold them back or even subject them to rational judgement. "In Britain," Schlosser reminds me, "for a while it was thought a good idea to feed cattle to other cattle—that was seen as efficient use of feed, until BSE came along."

In *Command and Control* he similarly reminds us that the United States, a country that prides itself in being the most rounded democracy in the world, devised an IBM computer program called QUICK COUNT that allowed war planners to identify "desired ground zeros" in Soviet cities so as to maximize the number of civilians killed in a nuclear strike. In 1961, the Pentagon instigated a war plan that would be unstoppable once the nuclear button was pushed, killing 220 million people in the Soviet Union and China within the first three days.

"The nuclear command and control system was so huge and complex it was almost impossible for one man to fully comprehend. Henry Kissinger's career was founded on his knowledge of nuclear weapons, yet, when he got into the White House and saw the war plan for the first time, he

was astounded. That happens again and again: we're brilliant at devising solutions to very immediate problems, but awful at seeing the consequences of those actions."

The strength of Schlosser's writing derives from his ability to carry a wealth of startling detail (did you know that security at Titan II missile bases was so lapse you could break into one with just a credit card?) on a confident narrative path. He admits that the demands he places on himself as a writer can drive him nuts at times. He sits for long hours in his study at home on the central Californian coast, grappling with enormous quantities of information. "I don't have any researchers, I don't have an assistant, not even a secretary. I just amass an insane amount of material and wade through it. In some ways my method is as crazy as the subjects I write about."

Do you factory farm yourself, I ask, forcefully chaining yourself to the desk? "No," he replies. "But a wonderful writer, a very-well known writer who I personally deeply respect, does tie himself to his chair. And not in a bondage creepy way, but literally to tie himself to his work." (If you're wondering who, forget it. Schlosser won't say.)

The other aspect of his approach to writing that stands out, apart from its masochistic attention to detail, is how unreconstructed it is. He is a beneficiary of the digital age, of course, able now, for instance, to search the Congressional Record in seconds when for *Fast Food Nation* he spent hours ploughing through paper volumes in the Library of Congress.

But he's also totally averse to social media, saying at one point, rather quaintly, "I do not Twitter."

"I'm not seeking followers, I don't have a website. I'm not writing diatribes that have a 10-point political program. I suppose it's an old-fashioned investigative goal of trying to expose."

To some extent, the subject of nuclear oblivion is itself retro. Hollywood no longer makes films like *Dr. Strangelove*, American and British homeowners no longer build concrete bunkers in their gardens to withstand nuclear fallout, and since the end of the cold war, the issue has receded into its own silo. Iran and North Korea raise anxieties, of course, but the threat they pose seems distant rather than imminent and personal.

That, though, is one of the things that drove him on to write *Command and Control*, Schlosser says. He sees the decline of interest in the nuclear issue as a matter of high urgency.

"This is the scary thing for me," he says. "The people for whom this is still a threat, the people who are most anti-nuclear, the people who are most afraid about this, are the ones who know most about it."

And yet, the pool of knowledge possessed by that elite group of weapons designers and scientists is fast drying up. "It's very disturbing that the number of people who have seen a nuclear weapon detonate is dwindling. Half the American population was not yet born or were young children when the Soviet Union disappeared. The most anti-nuclear people in the US today are 75, 80 years old."

Without their expertise to keep us alert, Schlosser fears, the world will be allowed to slide into a form of collective madness founded on denial, a death wish that sees nuclear weapons as no longer a problem.

Though both the US and Soviet Union have reduced their stockpiles dramatically, the US today still has 4,650 nuclear weapons, Russia about 3,500, China and France about 400 each and the UK 150. Should just one of those warheads go off, through an accident, or through systems infiltration by a hacker, the consequences would be unthinkable.

Despite that gloomy thought, Schlosser insists he is Pollyannaish about this, as about the subjects of all his books. Fast food still prevails in America, certainly, but there is a food movement now and Michelle Obama grows organic lettuces in the White House garden. The drug war persists, but Colorado and Washington state last November legalized marijuana.

"Social movements take a long time to have an effect," he says. "Change doesn't just happen. People have to make it happen, and the first thing they need before they can do anything is to be aware."

"I've spent six years in the most crazy nuclear shit imaginable, that at times made me question mankind. But I really do believe things can be done. I wouldn't have written this book if I thought we were doomed." □

This article originally appeared on [theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) on September 21, 2013. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/21/eric-schlosser-books-interview>

**Hear Eric Schlosser talk more about America's troubled nuclear program at the GameChanger ideas festival on September 24, 2016. Learn more at [gamechangernd.com](http://gamechangernd.com).**

**SONIA NAZARIO** is an award-winning journalist whose stories have tackled some of this country's most intractable problems—hunger, drug addiction, immigration—and have won some of the most prestigious journalism and book awards. She spent 20 years reporting and writing about social issues for US newspapers. She began her career at the *Wall Street Journal*, and later joined the *Los Angeles Times*. She is best known for “Enrique’s Journey,” her story of a Honduran boy’s struggle to find his mother in the US published as a series in the *Los Angeles Times*.

# SONIA NAZARIO

| In 1998, Nazario was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for a series on children of drug addicted parents.

Nazario, who grew up in Kansas and in Argentina, has written extensively from Latin America and about Latinos in the United States. “Enrique’s Journey” won more than a dozen awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing, the George Polk Award for International Reporting, the Grand Prize of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists Guillermo Martínez-Márquez Award for Overall Excellence. In 1998, Nazario was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for a series on children of drug addicted parents. And in 1994, she won a George Polk Award for Local Reporting for a series about hunger among schoolchildren in California.

When a national crisis erupted in 2014 over the detention of unaccompanied immigrant children at the border, Nazario returned to Honduras to report an article that was published in the *New York Times*. In her piece, she detailed the violence causing the exodus and argued that it is a refugee crisis, not an immigration crisis. After the article was published, she addressed the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Her humanitarian efforts led to her selection as the Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award recipient from the Advocates for Human Rights in 2015. She also was named a 2015 Champion for Children by First Focus, and a 2015 Golden Door winner by HIAS Pennsylvania.

She is a graduate of Williams College and has a master’s degree in Latin American studies from the University of California, Berkeley.





It is Friday morning, 8 A.M. I hear a key turn in the front-door lock of my Los Angeles home. María del Carmen Ferrez, who cleans my house every other week, opens the door. She walks into the kitchen.

Carmen is petite, intelligent, and works at lightning speed. At this early hour I am usually in a frenzy to get out the door and rush to my office. But on days when Carmen arrives, she and I shift gears. Carmen loiters in the kitchen, tidying things. I circle around her, picking up shoes, newspapers, socks—trying to give her a fighting chance at cleaning the floors. The ritual allows us to be in the same room and talk.

On this morning in 1997, I lean on one side of the kitchen island. Carmen leans on the other side. There is a question, she says, that she has been itching to ask. “Mrs. Sonia, are you ever going to have a baby?”

I’m not sure, I tell her. Carmen has a young son she sometimes brings to watch television while she works. Does she want more children? I ask.

Carmen, always laughing and chatty, is suddenly silent. She stares awkwardly down at the kitchen counter. Then quietly, she tells me about four other children I never knew existed. These children—two sons and two daughters—are far away, Carmen says, in Guatemala. She left them there when she ventured north as a single mother to work in the United States.

She has been separated from them for twelve years.

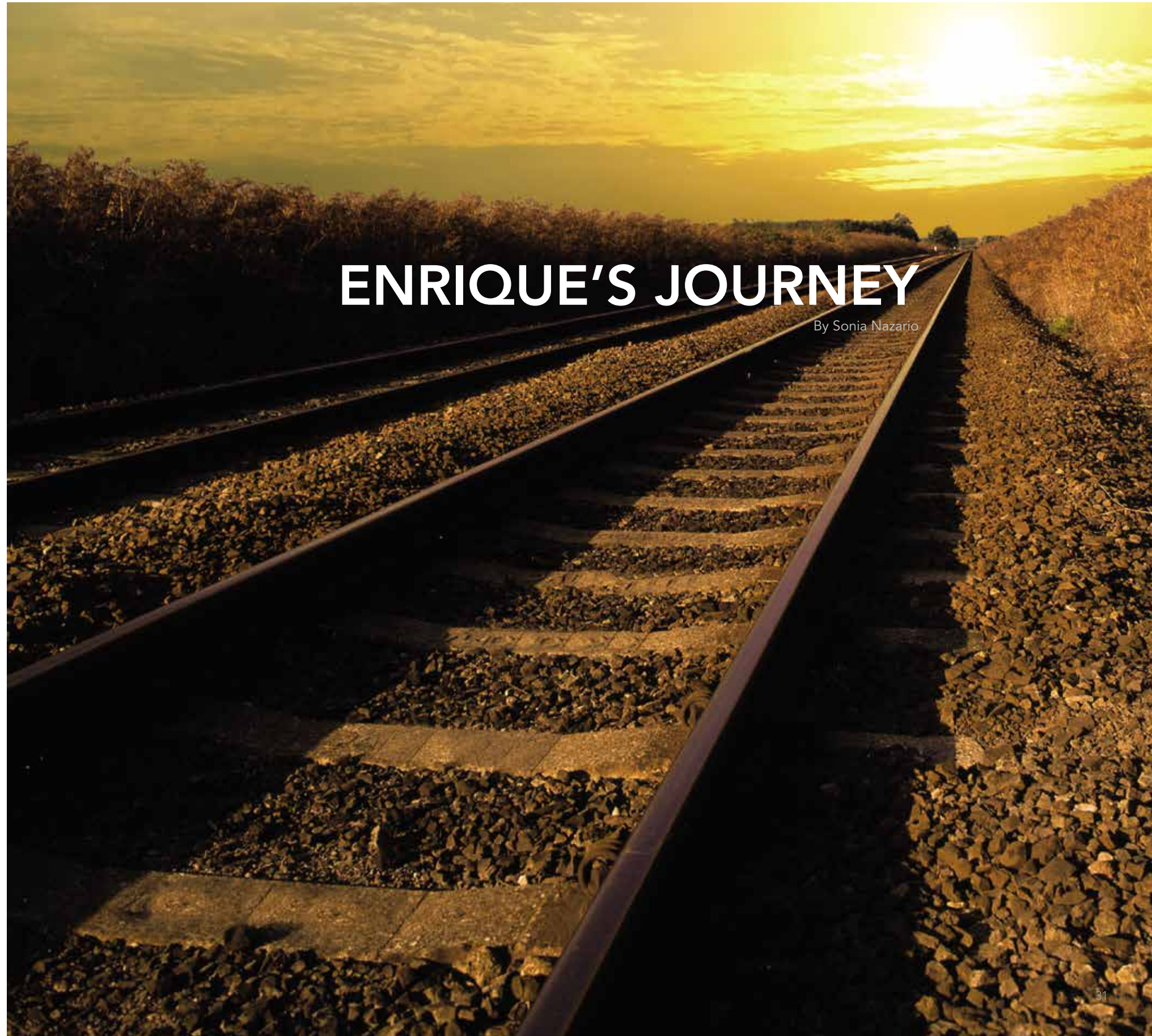
Her youngest daughter, Carmen says, was just a year old when she left. She has experienced her oldest boy, Minor, grow up by listening to the deepening timbre of his voice on the telephone. As Carmen unravels the story, she begins to sob.

Twelve years? I react with disbelief. How can a mother leave her children and travel more than two thousand miles away, not knowing when or if she will ever see them again? What drove her to do this?

Carmen dries her tears and explains. Her husband left her for another woman. She worked hard but didn’t earn enough to feed four children. “They would ask me for food, and I didn’t have it.” Many nights, they went to bed without dinner. She lulled them to sleep with advice on how to quell their hunger pangs. “Sleep facedown so your stomach won’t growl so much,” Carmen said, gently coaxing them to turn over.

# ENRIQUE’S JOURNEY

By Sonia Nazario



She left for the United States out of love. She hoped she could provide her children an escape from their grinding poverty, a chance to attend school beyond the sixth grade. Carmen brags about the clothes, money, and photos she sends her children.

She also acknowledges having made brutal trade-offs. She feels the distance, the lack of affection, when she talks with her children on the telephone. Day after day, as she misses milestones in their lives, her absence leaves deep wounds.

## They call it *El Tren de la Muerte*. The Train of Death.

Carmen hasn't been able to save enough for a smuggler to bring them to the United States. Besides, she refuses to subject her children to the dangerous journey. During her own 1985 trek north, Carmen was robbed by her smuggler, who left her without food for three days. Her daughters, she fears, will get raped along the way. Carmen balks at bringing her children into her poor, drug- and crime-infested Los Angeles neighborhood.

As she clicks the dishwasher on, Carmen, concerned that I might disapprove of her choice, tells me that many immigrant women in Los Angeles from Central America or Mexico are just like her—single mothers who left children behind in their home countries.

What's really incomprehensible, she adds, are middle-class or wealthy working mothers in the United States. These women, she says, could tighten their belts, stay at home, spend all their time with their children. Instead, they devote most of their waking hours and energy to careers, with little left for the children. Why, she asks, with disbelief on her face, would anyone do that?

The following year, in 1998, unannounced, Carmen's son Minor sets off to find his mother. Carmen left him when he was ten years old. He hitchhikes through Guatemala and Mexico. He begs for food along the way. He shows up on Carmen's doorstep.

Minor tells me about his perilous hitchhiking journey. He was threatened and robbed. Still, he says, he was lucky. Each year, thousands of other children going to find their mothers in the United States travel in a much more dangerous way. The children make the journey on top of Mexico's freight trains. They call it *El Tren de la Muerte*. The Train of Death.

### A COMMON CHOICE

I was struck by the choice mothers face when they leave

their children. How do they make such an impossible decision? Among Latinos, where family is all-important, where for women motherhood is valued far above all else, why are droves of mothers leaving their children? What would I do if I were in their shoes? Would I come to the United States, where I could earn much more money and send cash back to my children? This would mean my sons and daughters could eat more than sugar water for dinner. They could study past the third grade, maybe even finish high school, go on to university classes. Or I could stay by my children's side, relegating another generation to the same misery and poverty I knew so well.

I was also amazed by the dangerous journey these children make to try to be with their mothers. What kind of desperation, I wondered, pushes children as young as seven years old to set out, alone, through such a hostile landscape with nothing but their wits?

The United States has experienced the largest wave of immigration in its history. Between 1990 and 2008, nearly 11 million immigrants arrived illegally. Since 2001, each year, on average, a million additional immigrants arrive legally or become legal residents. This wave differs in one respect, at least, from the past. Before, when parents came to the United States and left children behind, it was typically the fathers, often Mexican guest workers called *braceros*, and they left their children with their mothers. In recent decades, the increase in divorce and family disintegration in Latin America has left many single mothers without the means to feed and raise their children. The growing ranks of single mothers paralleled a time when more and more American women began working outside the home. There is an insatiable need in the United States for cheap service and domestic workers. The single Latin American mothers began migrating in large numbers, leaving their children with grandparents, other relatives, or neighbors.

The first wave was in the 1960s and 1970s. Single mothers from a smattering of Caribbean countries—the West Indies, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic—headed to New York City, New England, and Florida to work as nannies and in nursing homes. Later, Central American women flocked to places with the greatest demand: the suburbs of Washington, D.C., Houston, and Los Angeles, where the number of private domestic workers doubled in the 1980s.

Carmen's experience is now common. In Los Angeles, a University of Southern California study showed, 82 percent of live-in nannies and one in four housecleaners are mothers who still have at least one child in their home country. A Harvard University study showed that 85 percent of all immigrant children who eventually end up in the United States spent at least some time separated from a

parent in the course of migrating to the United States. In much of the United States, legitimate concerns about immigration and anti-immigration measures have had a corrosive side effect: immigrants have been dehumanized and demonized. Their presence in the United States is deemed good or bad, depending on the perspective. Immigrants have been reduced to cost-benefit ratios. Perhaps by looking at one immigrant—his strengths, his courage, his flaws,—his humanity might help illuminate what too often has been a black-and-white discussion. Perhaps, I start thinking, I could take readers on top of these trains and show them what this modern-day immigrant journey is like, especially for children. "This," a Los Angeles woman who helps immigrants told me, "is the adventure story of the twenty-first century."

### FEAR

For a good while, I sat on the idea. As a journalist, I love to get inside the action, watch it unfold, take people inside worlds they might never otherwise see. I wanted to smell, taste, hear, and feel what this journey is like. In order to give a vivid, nuanced account, I knew I would have to travel with child migrants through Mexico on top of freight trains. A year later, I decided to move forward. I talked with dozens of children held by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in four jails and shelters in California and in Texas. Many had ridden the trains. So had students I had spoken with at a special Los Angeles high school for recent immigrants.

At a detention center in Los Fresnos, Texas, a talk with fifteen-year-old twins José Enrique and José Luis Oliva Rosa forced me to shred my initial plan. I realized that my first choice—to follow one boy from the beginning of his journey in Central America to the end with his mother in the United States—wasn't doable. The twins had left Honduras to find their mother in Los Angeles. During the months they spent running for their lives in Mexico, they were separated from each other four times. Only sheer luck had allowed them to find each other. I can't run as fast as a fifteen-year-old. I also can't rely on that level of luck. I had to find a boy who had made it to northern Mexico and follow him to his mother in the United States. I would have to reconstruct the earlier part of his journey.

Children at the Texas center also brought home the dangers I would face making such a journey. At the Texas center was Eber Ismael Sandoval Andino, eleven, a petite boy with dark eyes and machete marks crisscrossing his legs. The marks were from working in the coffee farms of Honduras since he was six years old. On his train rides through Mexico, he told me, he had witnessed five separate incidents where migrants had been mutilated by

the train. He'd seen a man lose half a foot getting on the train. He'd seen six gangsters draw their knives and throw a girl off the train to her death. Once, he'd fallen off the train and landed right next to the churning steel wheels. "I thought I was dead. I turned stone cold," he said. The director of the Texas center told me I'd be an idiot to attempt this train journey, that I could get myself killed. These kids, he said, motioning to the children around him, don't really understand the dangers they will face. They go into it with their eyes closed. They don't know any better. I understood the exact risks. I would be doing it out of sheer stupidity.

I am not a brave person. I grew up, in part, in Argentina during the genocidal "dirty war," when the military "disappeared" up to thirty thousand people. Often I walked to school with a friend, in case something should happen to one of us. My mother burned the family's books in a pile in the backyard to avoid trouble if the military ever came to search our Buenos Aires home. We kept the windows closed so neighbors could not hear any discussion that strayed from the mundane into anything vaguely political. Among the disappeared and murdered was a teenage friend, who we heard had been tortured,

## What kind of desperation pushes children as young as seven years old to set out, alone, through such a hostile landscape with nothing but their wits?

the bones in his face shattered. A relative was abducted by the military, tortured, and released many months later.

I redoubled my efforts to reduce my exposure while making the journey. I lay down one rule: no getting onto and off of moving trains (a rule I broke only once).

A newspaper colleague plugged into the Mexican government helped me get a letter from the personal assistant to Mexico's president. The letter asked any Mexican authorities and police I encountered to cooperate with my reporting. The letter helped keep me out of jail three times. It also helped me convince an armed Mexican migrant rights group, Grupo Beta, to accompany me on the trains through the most dangerous leg of the journey, the Mexican state of Chiapas. At the time, the government's Grupo Beta agents, who are drawn from different police groups, carried shotguns and AK-47s. They had not patrolled the train tops for fourteen months. Even with that firepower, they explained, it was too dangerous; in 1999, their patrols had come under

attack by gangsters four times. They agreed to make me an exception.

### FINDING ENRIQUE

The average child the Border Patrol catches who comes alone over the U.S.-Mexico border is a fifteen-year-old boy. I wanted to find a boy who was coming for his mother and had traveled on the trains.

In May 2000, I scouted out a dozen shelters and churches in Mexico along the 2,000-mile-long U.S. border that help migrants, including minors. I visited a few. I told each priest or shelter director what I was after. I called each place day after day to see if such a child had arrived. Soon, a nun at one of the churches in Nuevo Laredo, the Parroquia de San José, said she had a couple of teenagers who had come in for a free meal: a seventeen-year-old boy and a fifteen-year-old girl. Both were headed north in search of their mothers. She put Enrique on the telephone. He was a little older than the INS average. But his story was typical—and just as harrowing as those I had heard from children in the INS jails.

A few days later, I traveled to Nuevo Laredo and spent two weeks shadowing Enrique along the Rio Grande. I talked to other children but decided to stick with Enrique. In Nuevo Laredo, most of the children I spoke with, including Enrique, had been robbed of their mothers' telephone numbers along the way. They hadn't thought to memorize the numbers. Unlike the others, Enrique recalled one telephone in Honduras he could call to try to get his mother's phone number in the United States. He still had a shot at continuing his journey and, perhaps, reaching his mother.

From Enrique, I gleaned every possible detail about his life and trip north. I noted every place he had gone, every experience, every person he recalled who had helped or hindered him along the way.

Then I began to retrace his steps, doing the journey exactly as he had done it a few weeks before.

### FOLLOWING A DANGEROUS PATH

For months, as I traveled in Enrique's footsteps, I lived with the near-constant danger of being beaten, robbed, or raped. Once, as I rode on top of a fuel car on a rainy night with lightning, a tree branch hit me squarely in the face. It sent me sprawling backward. I was able to grab a guardrail and keep from stumbling off the top of the train. On the same ride, I later learned, a child had been plucked off the fuel tanker car behind mine by a branch. His train

companions did not know if he was dead or alive.

Even with the presence of the heavily armed Grupo Beta agents on trains as I rode through Chiapas, gangsters were robbing people at knifepoint at the end of our train. I constantly worried about gangsters on the trains. In Tierra Blanca in the Mexican state of Veracruz, during a brief train stop, I feverishly tried to get the local police to find and arrest a notoriously vicious gangster named Blackie, after learning he was aboard the train I was about to reboard. Nearby, a train derailed right in front of mine. Train engineers have described incidents where migrants have been crushed as trains derail and cars tip over.

At times, I came close to witnessing the worst the train had to offer. As I passed through the town of Encinar, Veracruz, I was riding between two hoppers with four other migrants. A teenage boy emerged from a raiiside food store to throw a roll of crackers to migrants on the train. A teenage migrant standing next to me was hungry. When the boy threw the roll toward the migrant beside me, it bounced off the train. As the migrant jumped off the hopper to run back for the crackers, he stumbled and fell backward. Both feet landed on the tracks. He had a split second to react. He yanked his feet back just before the wheels rolled over the track.

## He yanked his feet back just before the wheels rolled over the track.

Things weren't much safer by the side of the rails. I walked along the river that flows by the town of Ixtepec, Oaxaca. It seemed tranquil, a very safe public spot. Above me was the main bridge that crosses the river, busy with trains and pedestrians. The next day, I interviewed Karen, a fifteen-year-old girl who had been raped by two gangsters she had seen on the trains. Karen told me she had been raped right under the river's bridge. I had been alone one day before the rape at the very spot where Karen had been assaulted.

In Chiapas, I hung out with Grupo Beta agents near the dangerous "El Manguito" immigration checkpoint. It is thick with bandits who target migrants. Suddenly we were on a high-speed chase on a two-lane road, trying to reach three bandits in a red Jeep Cherokee who had robbed a group of migrants and driven off with one of them, a twenty-two-year-old Honduran woman. I was in the bed of Grupo Beta's pickup. The pickup pulled up alongside the Cherokee, trying to force it to stop. A Grupo Beta agent stood in the pickup bed. He locked and loaded his shotgun and aimed it at the bandits' vehicle. I was just feet from the

Cherokee. I prayed that the bandits wouldn't open fire. Farther north, human rights activist Raymundo Ramos Vásquez gave me a tour of the most isolated spots along the Rio Grande, places where migrants cross. We stumbled across a migrant preparing to swim north. He explained that the last time he had been here, municipal police officers had arrived. They had cuffed his hands behind his back, he said, and put his face in the river, threatening to drown him if he didn't disclose where he had his money. As the migrant described the abuse, two police officers walked down the dirt path toward us. Their guns were drawn—and cocked.

### TRAIN-TOP LESSONS

I thought I understood, to a great extent, the immigrant experience. My father, Mahafud, was born in Argentina after his Christian family fled religious persecution in Syria. My mother, Clara, born in Poland, emigrated to Argentina as a young child. Her family was fleeing poverty and the persecution of Jews. Many of her Polish relatives were gassed during World War II. My family emigrated to the United States in 1960. My father, a biochemistry professor working on genetic mapping, had greater resources and opportunities to conduct research here. He also wanted to leave behind a country controlled by the military, where academic expression was limited.

I understood the desire for opportunity, for freedom. I also understood, due to the death of my father when I was a teenager and the turbulent times my family experienced afterward, what it is like to struggle economically. Growing up as the child of Argentine immigrants in 1960s and 1970s Kansas, I have sometimes felt like an outsider. I know how difficult it is to straddle two countries, two worlds. On many levels, I relate to the experiences of immigrants and Latinos in this country. I have written about migrants, on and off, for two decades.

Still, my parents arrived in the United States on a jet airplane, not on top of a freight train. My family was never separated during the process of immigrating to the United States. Until my journey with migrant children, I had no true understanding of what people are willing to do to get here. As I followed Enrique's footsteps, I learned the depths of desperation women face in countries such as Honduras. Most earn \$40 to \$120 a month working in a factory, cleaning houses, or providing child care. A hut with no bathroom or kitchen rents for nearly \$30 a month. In rural areas of Honduras, some people live under a piece of tarp; they have no chairs or table and eat sitting on a dirt floor.

Children go to school in threadbare uniforms, often unable to afford pencil or paper or buy a decent lunch. A Tegucigalpa elementary school principal told me that many

of his students were so malnourished that they didn't have the stamina to stand up for long at school rallies or to sing the national anthem. Many Honduran mothers pull their children out of school when they are as young as eight. They have them watch younger siblings while they work, or sell tortillas on a street corner. Seven-year-olds sell bags of water on public buses or wait at taxi stands to make change for cabdrivers. Some beg on Bulevar Juan Pablo II.

Domy Elizabeth Cortés, from Mexico City, described being despondent after her husband left her for another woman. The loss of his income meant she could feed her children only once a day. For weeks, she considered throwing herself and her two toddlers into a nearby sewage canal to drown together. Instead, she left her children with a brother and headed to Los Angeles. Day after day, mothers like Domy walk away from their children, some of them just a month old, and leave for the United States, not knowing if or when they will see them again.

With each step north, I became awed by the gritty determination these children possess in their struggle to get here. They are willing to endure misery and dangers for months on end. They come armed with their faith, a resolve not to return to Central America defeated, and a deep desire to be at their mothers' sides. One Honduran teenager I met in southern Mexico had been deported to Guatemala twenty-seven times. He said he wouldn't give up until he reached his mother in the United States. I began to believe that no number of border guards will deter children like Enrique, who are willing to endure so much to reach the United States. It is a powerful stream, one that can only be addressed at its source.

The migrants I spent time with also gave me an invaluable gift. They reminded me of the value of what I have. They taught me that people are willing to die in their quest to obtain it.

Children who set out on this journey usually don't make it. They end up back in Central America, defeated. Enrique was determined to be with this mother again. Would he make it? □

This work has been excerpted from the introduction to Nazario's book *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother*. Reprinted here by permission of the author.

Meet Sonia Nazario at the GameChanger ideas festival on September 24, 2016. Learn more at [gamechangernd.com](http://gamechangernd.com).



# JACQUELINE JONES

**JACQUELINE JONES** is the Walter Prescott Webb Chair in History and the Ideas/Mastin Gentry White Professor of Southern History at the University of Texas at Austin; she also currently serves as history department chair. A former MacArthur Fellow and a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, she specializes in US southern, African-American, labor, and women's history.

She is the author of several books, including, most recently, *A Dreadful Deceit: The Myth of Race from the Colonial Era to Obama's America* (2013), which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; *Saving Savannah: The City and the Civil War* (2008); and *Creek Walking: Growing Up in Delaware in the 1950s* (2001). She has also coauthored a college textbook, *Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the American People* (4th edition, 2013).

The twenty-fifth anniversary edition, revised and updated, of her *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* was published in 2009; the original edition had also been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. She served as vice president for the professional division of the American Historical Association from 2011 to 2014.

Her current project is a biography of Lucy Parsons, the radical labor agitator.

2014 Pulitzer Prize finalist in History for *A Dreadful Deceit: The Myth of Race from the Colonial Era to Obama's America*, a deeply researched examination of how race as a social invention has retained its power to organize, mark, and harm the lives of Americans.

1986 Pulitzer Prize finalist in History for *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present*.



## THE MYTH OF RACE IN AMERICA

By Jacqueline Jones

Like countless other cultures and countries throughout the world, the United States has its own creation myth—its own unique, dramatic story intended to explain where we came from and who we are today. In the case of the United States, this story holds that the nation was conceived in “racial” differences and that over the last four centuries these self-evident differences have suffused our national character and shaped our national destiny. The American creation story begins with a violent, self-inflicted wound, and features subsequent incremental episodes of healing, culminating in a redemption of sorts. It is, ultimately, a triumphant narrative, one that testifies to the innate strength and moral rectitude of the American system, however imperfect its origins.

According to this myth, the first Europeans who laid eyes on Africans were struck foremost by their physical appearance—the color of their skin and the texture of their hair—and concluded that these beings constituted a lower order of humans, an inferior race destined for enslavement. During the American Revolution, Patriots spoke eloquently of liberty and equality, and though their lofty rhetoric went unfulfilled, they inadvertently challenged basic forms of racial categorization. And so white Northerners, deriving inspiration from the Revolution, emancipated their own slaves and ushered in a society free of the moral stain of race-based bondage. The Civil War destroyed the system of slavery nationwide, but new theories of scientific racism gave rise to new forms of racial oppression in the North

and South. Not until the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 did the federal government dismantle state-sponsored race-based segregation and thus pave the way for better race relations. Though hardly an unmitigated triumph, the election of Barack Obama as president in 2008 signaled the dawn of a post-racial society, and offered a measure of the distance the country had travelled since slavery prevailed in British North America.

Yet America’s creation myth is just that—a myth, one that itself rests entirely on a spurious concept. For “race” itself is a fiction, one that has no basis in biology or any longstanding, consistent usage in human culture. As employed in the popular rendition of America’s national origins, the word and its various iterations mask complex historical processes that have little or nothing to do with the physical make-up of the people who controlled or suffered from those processes.

The ubiquity of the term race in modern discourse indicates that early twenty-first-century Americans adhere to this creation myth with remarkable tenacity—in other words, that they believe that race is real and that race matters. In fact, however, like its worldwide counterparts, the American creation myth is the product of collective imagination, not historical fact, and it exists outside the realm of rational thought. Americans who would scoff at the notion that meaningful social or temperamental differences distinguish brown-eyed people from blue-eyed people nevertheless utter the term “race” with a casual thoughtlessness; consequently the word itself helps to sustain not only the creation myth but also all the human misery that the myth has wrought over the centuries. In effect, the word race perpetuates—and legitimizes—the notion that some kind of inexorable primal prejudice has driven history, and that, to some degree at least, the United States has always been held hostage to “racial” differences.

Certainly the bitter legacies of historic injustices endure in concrete, blatant form. Today certain groups of people are impoverished, exploited in the workplace, or incarcerated in large numbers in prison. This is the case not because of their “race,” however, but rather because at a particular point in US history certain other groups began to invoke the myth of race in a bid for political and economic power. This myth has served as a tool that one group can use to ratchet itself into a position of greater advantage in society, and a justification for the economic inequality and the imbalance in rights and privileges that result.

Perhaps the greatest perversity of the idea of race is how meaningless it truly is. Strikingly malleable in its contours, depending on the exigencies of the moment, race is a catchall term, its insidious reach metastasizing in response to any number of competitions—for political rights, scarce resources, control over cheap labor, group security. At times, within this constellation of “racial” ideas, physical appearance receded into nothingness—for example, when the law defined a person’s race according to his or her “reputation” or when a mother’s legal status as a slave decreed that her offspring would remain enslaved, regardless of their own skin color.

The indistinctness of this idea has given it a twisted trajectory. Throughout American history, members of the white laboring classes witnessed firsthand the struggles of their black coworkers and rivals and yet still maintained that “race” constituted a great divide between them. After the Civil War, on the campaign stump, white politicians charged that black people were incapable of learning, even while the descendants of slaves were rapidly gaining in literacy rates compared to poor whites. In the early twenty-first century, many Americans disavow the basic premise of racial prejudice—the idea that blacks and whites were somehow fundamentally different from each other—and yet scholars, journalists, and indeed

“Race” itself is a fiction, one that has no basis in biology or any longstanding, consistent usage in human culture.

Americans from all walks of life persist in categorizing and labeling groups according to those same, discredited principles.

My book *A Dreadful Deceit: The Myth of Race from the Colonial Era to Obama's America* is about the way that the idea of race has been used and abused in American history. It focuses on the contradictory and inconsistent fictions of "race" that various groups of people contrived for specific political purposes throughout American history. As deployed by the powerful, race serves as a rationale for brutality, and its history is ultimately a local one, best understood through the lives of individual men, women, and children. The stories I examine in the book range over time and space to consider particular, shifting processes of racial myth-making in American history: in mid-seventeenth-century Maryland; Revolutionary-era South Carolina; early nineteenth-century Providence, Rhode Island; post-Civil War Savannah, Georgia; segregationist Mississippi; and industrial and post-industrial Detroit.

The myth of race is, at its heart, about power relations, and in order to understand how it evolved, we must avoid vague theoretical and ahistorical formulations and instead ask, Who benefited from these narratives of racial difference, and how, where, and under what conditions? Race signifies neither a biological fact nor a primal prejudice, and it lacks the coherence of a robust political ideology; rather, it is a collection of fluid, contingent mythologies borne of (among other imperatives) fighting a war, assembling a labor force, advancing the designs of demagogues, organizing a labor union, and preserving voting and public schooling as privileges reserved for some, rather than as rights shared by all.

My book is about physical force flowing from the law, the barrel of a gun, or the fury of a mob; but it is also about the struggle for justice and personal dignity waged by people of African descent in America. Their fight for human rights in turn intensified policies and prejudices based on so-called "racial" difference. In fact, in the region that would become the United States, race initially developed as an afterthought or a reaction—an afterthought, because for several generations the exploitation of people of African heritage required no explanation, no justification beyond the raw power wielded by the captors; and a reaction, because a concerted project based on the myth of race eventually arose in response to individuals and groups such as abolitionists and civil-rights activists who challenged forms of state-sanctioned violence and legal subordination that afflicted enslaved people and their descendants.

For the first century and a half or so of the British North American colonies, the fiction of race played little part in the origins and development of slavery; instead, that institution was the product of the unique vulnerability of Africans within a roiling Atlantic world of empire-building and profit-seeking. Not until the American Revolution did self-identified "white" elites perceive the need to concoct ideas of racial difference; these elites understood that the exclusion of a whole group of native-born men from the body politic demanded an explanation, a rationalization. Even then, many southern slaveholders, lording over forced-labor camps, believed they needed to justify their actions to no one; only over time did they begin to refer to their bound workforces in racial terms. Meanwhile, in the early nineteenth-century North, race emerged as a partisan political weapon, its rhetorical contours strikingly contradictory but its legal dimensions nevertheless explicit. Discriminatory laws and mob actions promoted and enforced the insidious notion that people could be assigned to a particular racial group and thereby considered "inferior" to whites and unworthy of basic human rights. Black immiseration was part and parcel with white privilege, all in the name of—the myth of—race.

By the late twentieth century, transformations in the American political economy had solidified the historic liabilities of black men and women, now in the form of segregated neighborhoods and a particular social division of labor within a so-called "color-blind" nation. The election of the nation's first black president in 2008 produced an out-pouring of self-congratulation among Americans who heralded the dawn of a "post-racial" society. In fact, the recession that began that year showed that, although explicit ideas of black inferiority had receded (though not entirely disappeared) from American public discourse, African Americans continued to suffer the disastrous consequences spawned by those ideas, as evidenced by high rates of poverty, unemployment, home foreclosures, and incarceration.

My book takes its title from a recurring phrase used by David Walker in his brilliant, militant polemic, *Walker's Appeal*, first published in 1829. Walker, a native of North Carolina, had been born to a free mother and an enslaved father. By the 1820s he was living in Boston and playing a leading role in the fight against slavery. His *Appeal* draws from history, political theory, and Christian theology to expose the falsity of race. Walker argued that Europeans had devised a uniquely harsh system of New World slavery for the sole purpose of forcing blacks to "dig their mines and work their farms; and thus go on enriching them, from one generation to another with our blood and our tears!!!!" Gradually white

people, he wrote, concocted lies by which they "dreadfully deceived" themselves, ruses to keep blacks in ignorance and subjection—the idea that descendants of Africans "were not of the human family," that they were "void of intellect," and that enslavement was their "natural condition." These notions mocked the equality of all people before God and amounted to the greatest deceit of all—that blacks "are an inferior and distinctive race of beings."

Walker adamantly refused to identify himself as a member of "the negro race"; different skin colors did not imply useful or significant distinctions among groups of people, he noted. Enduring "reproach for our colour," blacks all over the country regardless of legal status remained victims of whites' avarice and fear. Even those free from the yoke of bondage encountered discriminatory laws that prevented them from getting an education and a decent job. Meanwhile, they had to suffer in silence as whites smugly dismissed their poverty as inevitable and eternal. Walker called on his black readers to throw off the cloak of servility and defend themselves against blows to the body and blows to the spirit—both kinds emanating from the myth of race. Prescient, he warned of a coming conflagration that would destroy the system of slavery; but, like other abolitionists of the time, he failed to anticipate that, although slavery would die, "race" would survive and mutate into new and hideous shapes.

In the early twenty-first century, the words "race," "racism," and "race relations" are widely used as shorthand for specific historical legacies that have nothing to do with biological determinism and everything to do with power relations. Racial mythologies are best understood as a pretext for political and economic opportunism both wide-ranging and specific to a particular time and place. If this explication of the American creation myth leads to one overriding conclusion, it is the power of the word "race" to distort our understanding of the past and the present—and our hopes for a more just future—in equal measure. □

Modified from the Introduction to Jacqueline Jones, *A Dreadful Deceit: The Myth of Race from the Colonial Era to Obama's America* (New York: Basic Books, 2013). Reprinted here by permission of the author.

Learn more about race in America from Jacqueline Jones at the GameChanger ideas festival on September 24, 2016. Learn more at [gamechangernd.com](http://gamechangernd.com).

Their fight for human rights in turn intensified policies and prejudices based on so-called "racial" difference.

# ELIZABETH FENN

2016 GAMECHANGER IDEAS FESTIVAL  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

2015 Pulitzer Prize winner in History for *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People*, an engrossing, original narrative illuminating the spectacular history of North Dakota's Mandan Indians.

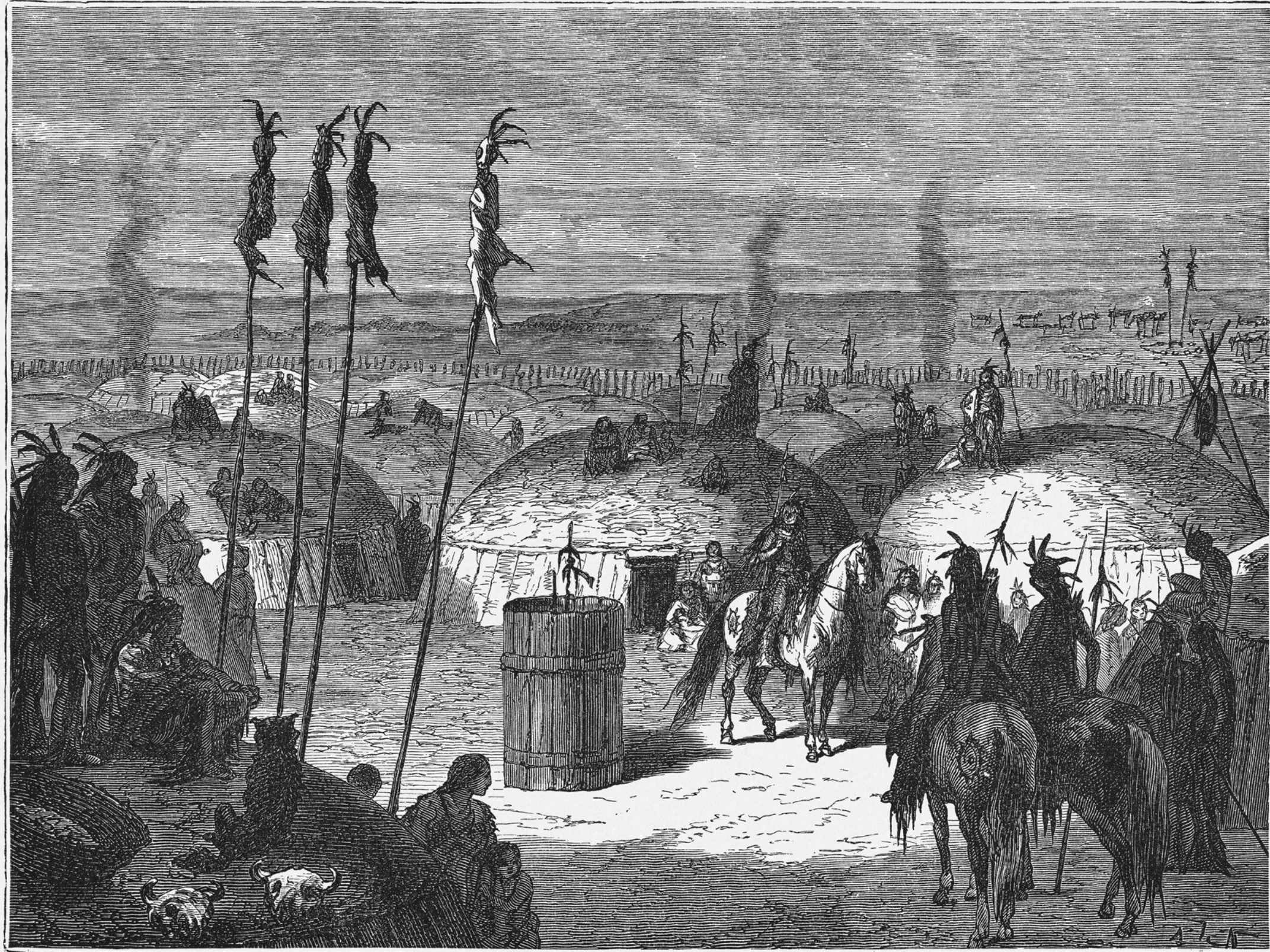
ELIZABETH A. FENN is the Walter and Lucienne Driskill Professor of Western American History at the University of Colorado Boulder. She is a distinguished scholar whose studies focus on the early American West, focusing on epidemic disease, Native American, and environmental history. Her aim is to develop a continent-wide analysis that incorporates Native Americans as well as African, British, Spanish, French, Dutch, and Russian colonizers into a narrative that reflects the demographic and geographic realities of the early contact era.

Her 2001 book, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, unearthed the devastating effects of a smallpox epidemic that coursed across the North American continent during the years of the American Revolution. After the September 11 attacks, she participated in several broadcast interviews about biological warfare. *Pox Americana* was awarded three prizes, including the 2002 James J. Broussard First Book Prize (Society for Historians of the Early Republic), the 2003 Longman-History Today Book of the Year award, and the 2004 Society of the Cincinnati Book Prize.

In 2014, Fenn published *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People*, which analyzes Mandan Indian history from 1100 to 1845. Widely known for hosting Lewis and Clark during the winter of 1804-05, the Mandans surmounted daunting challenges over many centuries. Among them were epidemics of smallpox, outbreaks of whooping cough, and invasions of Norway rats. The vibrant presence of Mandans today is a testament to their adaptability and resilience in the face of such challenges.

Fenn is now at work on an expansive biography of Sakagawea, using her life story to illuminate the wider history of the northern plains and Rockies.





Mandan

# ENCOUNTERS AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD

By Elizabeth A. Fenn

**The climate of North Dakota hardly ranks among North America's most hospitable.** Plains winters are long, windy, and bitterly cold. Rainfall is fickle, and summer temperatures fluctuate wildly. Yet for the Mandan people, this landscape is home. They have lived here, at the heart of the continent, for centuries, forging a compelling presence and an enduring lifeway in the face of serious obstacles. Many of their challenges have been military, diplomatic, or commercial in nature. But others, indeed the most daunting, have been ecological. Long before the arrival of Europeans and Africans from the so-called Old World, the Mandans and their forebears had learned to accommodate the vicissitudes of drought, climate change, and competition with others for coveted resources.

These challenges persist to the present day, but the arrival of strange peoples and species after 1492 added formidable new pressures to the mix. Among the foreign species, many of the most deadly were too small to be seen. These microscopic newcomers included the viruses that convey smallpox and measles, the bacterium that causes whooping cough, and possibly the bacterium that causes cholera. Other invisible pathogens, unidentified or unmentioned in the documentary record, may likewise have reached the Mandans in these years.

While the pathogens were invisible, their effects were not. People got sick, often with horrific symptoms, and died in large numbers. Indeed, the tragic effects of those pathogens can still be glimpsed near Bismarck and Mandan, North Dakota, where



the outlines of ancient Mandan settlements mark the landscape even today. Some of these town sites—once vibrant social and commercial hubs—were abandoned after epidemics had struck. Some likewise reveal a sequence of defensive ditches that contracted as populations diminished.

The visible species that remade the Mandan world included powerful horses and scurrying Norway rats. European horses arrived first, spreading north from Spanish New Mexico and the southern plains and reaching the Mandans in the early to mid-1700s. But horses did not alter the basics of Mandan existence as they did for itinerant peoples like the Sioux, Crows, Arapahos, Blackfeet, and Assiniboines. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the Mandans had simply, and profitably, added horses to the marketable goods they bartered with others. Norway rats arrived later, aboard U.S. army keelboats in 1825. The animals feasted on the great stores of maize that Mandans kept in underground caches. Multiplying rapidly, they demolished the villagers' prodigious corn supplies in a matter of years.

None of these diverse species arrived in isolation, and the consequences of Old World intrusions were mixed, numerous, and unpredictable. Horses, for example, invigorated travel across the continent's interior grasslands and increased interactions among plains peoples. But this also meant they helped to spread infectious diseases, since their riders sometimes carried microbial infections. Meanwhile, rats depleted Mandan corn supplies at the very time when other pressures—related to diverse factors including horses and steamboats—reduced the number of bison that grazed near Mandan towns. The result was a nutritional scarcity that may have made

the villagers more vulnerable when pathogens struck.

By 1838, the Mandan situation was dire: Their numbers had plummeted from twelve thousand or more to three hundred at most. That they survived is testimony to their resilience and flexibility on the one hand and their traditionalism on the other.

I am concerned in this my book with encounters at “the heart of the world”—the Mandan name for their homeland—in modern North Dakota, where the Heart River joins the Missouri River. The encounters include my own. For me, the first came during research I did some years ago on the continent-wide smallpox epidemic of 1775–82, which afflicted the Mandans as it did so many others. Reports of smallpox in the upper-Missouri villages had intrigued me. How could it be, I wondered, that I knew almost nothing about this once-teeming hub of life on the plains? Why do the Mandans appear in the broad history of North America only when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark spent the winter with them in 1804–1805? The accounts I read confirmed my suspicion that significant holes persisted in our knowledge of early America. Places we knew remarkably little about had once cradled prosperous human settlements. The more I learned, the more I sensed that the Mandan story provided an alternative view of American life both before and after the arrival of Europeans.

It nevertheless took a trip to North Dakota to convince me. How could I write about a place I had not yet seen? Geography, landscape, and natural history have always appealed to me; they creep inexorably into my

thinking and writing. So in August 2002 I went to North Dakota for the first time, just to see if it felt right.

In a grime-covered red Pontiac, I crisscrossed the western half of the state, where I was captivated by the rolling plains, the crumpled badlands, and the reassuring presence of the Missouri River, the geographic reference point to which I always returned. At Lake Sakakawea, formed by the completion of the Garrison Dam in 1953, I followed the Missouri's shoreline southeast across the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. “Fort B,” as the locals call it, is the modern-day home of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara peoples, officially designated the Three Affiliated Tribes. The center of tribal life is New Town, a sprawling community of wide streets, modest homes, and motley storefronts on the east shore of the lake. Here I filled my gas tank at the Cenex station and stocked up on groceries at the Super Valu market.

New Town was dusty and quiet on that first visit in 2002. Little did I know then that the community was about to face a twenty-first-century upheaval. Just a few years later, the steady rumble of tanker trucks along Main Street marked New Town's transformation into an edgy boomtown, with resources strained to the limit. Fracking—the extraction of underground oil by hydraulic fracturing—had come to Fort Berthold. But in 2002, there were few visible signs of this impending turn of fortune.

From New Town, I drove two miles west on Highway 23, past Crow Flies High Butte and across the rickety Four Bears Bridge, soon to be replaced by a more accommodating span of the same name. Bridge and butte alike honor the memory

of notable Indian leaders. On the far bank of the Missouri, really of Lake Sakakawea, I eyed the beige-and-brown tribal administration building from afar. Who was I to waltz in and announce I had come to write Mandan history? I wandered through the dim, boxy sprawl of the 4 Bears Casino, eerily animated by a cacophony of flashing lights and electronic sounds. I stayed longer at the nearby Three Affiliated Tribes Museum, where I studied an array of exhibits that as yet made only partial sense to me. I also met the museum's director, Marilyn Hudson, a steadfast guardian of her people's past and a font of living history.

My North Dakota travels took me off the reservation as well, to locations now designated state or national parks. Near the Montana–North Dakota border, I stopped at the Missouri–Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center. Its view of convergence of two great rivers prompted ruminations about the peoples who met at that site in times past: Assiniboines, Blackfeet, Crees, Crows, Lakotas, Hidatsas, Mandans, and an assortment of fur traders, not to mention the nomads who traversed the northern plains thousands of years before them. Small wonder that in 1828, just three miles away, the American Fur Company built Fort Union, a post that became a hub of commercial life as the fur trade rushed past the Mandans and toward the Rocky Mountains. Its reconstructed, whitewashed walls still beckon to travelers crossing the plains.

Back in the heart of Mandan country, below the Fort Berthold Reservation, I drove southeast through the little town of Hensler and nosed my rented car into Cross Ranch State Park. Here I hiked through wooded bottomlands,

## The Mandan story provided an alternative view of American life both before and after the arrival of Europeans.

glimpsed flourishing native prairie, and spent a marvelous, breezy night camped beside the Missouri River. But not all of my explorations were so idyllic. I later pitched my tent at Bismarck's General Sibley Park and passed a sweltering night listening to beer-infused merrymakers a few campsites away.

I also visited the great Mandan archaeological sites along the Missouri. I went to Huff Indian Village, where one can see the remains of a fifteenth century settlement first occupied and fortified a few decades before Columbus sailed. I went to On-a-Slant-Village, Chief Looking's Village, and Double Ditch Village, three sites that date roughly to the years between 1500 and 1782, when the Mandans reached their apogee. For all their earlier trials and adaptations, it was here that they really saw their world transformed.

There were some important locations I could not visit. Among these were the sites of Ruptare and Mitutanka, towns where Mandans were living when Lewis and Clark passed through. Ruptare now lies beneath the Missouri River's shifting currents, which long ago carried its remains downstream. Mitutanka suffered an even more prosaic fate. Gravel-pit operators obliterated most remains of the town in the 1950s while selling off pulverized rock. Soon thereafter, the

erection of an electrical power plant completed the destruction.

Unlike the Mandan settlements of Mitutanka and Ruptare, the remains of several neighboring towns inhabited by Hidatsas still survive just a few miles to the north. At the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, visitors can wander over the grass-covered remnants of three great settlements marked by large circular depressions in the soil. These shallow basins—thirty, forty, even sixty feet in diameter—were once earth lodges, stout wood-and-turf homes built and maintained by Mandan and Hidatsa women. Today the town sites are silent. How different it must have been when thousands of Native Americans welcomed Lewis and Clark to their villages.

My 2002 trip to North Dakota clinched it: I wanted to write the Mandan story. Unfortunately, desire and execution do not always converge. My eye-opening journey to the heart of the world also included encounters with the very sparse documentary record pertaining to the Mandans before 1800. The dearth of material was daunting, but it led me to explore alternative approaches to research and narrative. I found myself learning and writing about archaeology, anthropology, geology, climatology, epidemiology, and nutritional science—any area

of research that could give renewed substance to the Mandan past. The result is a mosaic I have pieced together out of stones from many quarries. Of course, such work of digging, weighing, and arranging is never complete; gaps remain for others to fill, using sharper eyes, fresh techniques, and different perspectives.

Given the obvious difficulties and limitations of the task I set myself, I decided from the start that it was far better to entertain possibilities than to ignore or dismiss them. Important pieces of the Mandan past continue to be elusive or downright inaccessible. But for me, the exploration of possibilities is an aspect of the historian's task that

kindles thoughtfulness, wonder, and apprehension alike. I hope this book, cobbled from such diverse materials, nonetheless has a feel of continuity and completeness, that there is a discernible design to the rocks and fragments I have assembled here. I realize, as I hope you will, that the writing of history is neither certain nor sanitary. It remains for scholars in the future to sort out what we misunderstand or cannot imagine today. I only hope that those scholars find the pursuit of Mandan history as affecting as I have. The creation of *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* has influenced me every bit as much as I have influenced it. □

Modified from the Preface to Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2014). Reprinted here by permission of the author.

Meet Elizabeth Fenn at the GameChanger ideas festival on September 24, 2016. Learn more at [gamechangernd.com](http://gamechangernd.com).

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In response to these challenges the North Dakota Humanities Council created GameChanger, an annual ideas festival focused on a major event or issue significantly changing the face of our world. We invite people close to the action to share their ideas for managing these changes in ways that will lead to a better, more prosperous world.

As we explore the ideas that will lead us into tomorrow,

our goal is to equip emerging leaders and everyday citizens with a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing us in the 21st century and the creative solutions we need to address them.

Most importantly, we believe in the power of every individual to make a difference in the world. Every GameChanger ideas festival explores a topic that affects the lives of everyday Americans. These are critical issues that we as citizens of a self-governing nation must address in order to continue to thrive. Our audience is composed of everyday people, like you, who aren't waiting for someone to rescue them or find a solution for them, but stepping forward, working together, and discovering how to build a brighter future. Knowledge is the first step in effective change-making, and we invite you to be part of the solution.



# The Pulitzer Prizes

**In 2016, GameChanger is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Pulitzer Prize Foundation by encouraging people to reflect on the critical role of our free press and the pivotal events of our history. We have invited Pulitzer Prize-winning historians and journalists to share their groundbreaking work and engage in dialogue with our audience. We have selected winners whose work focuses on current issues changing the face of our world, including America's troubled nuclear arms program; the legacy of racism in America; immigration; discovering the history of America's first peoples; and accountability and abuse of power. The event will highlight the vital importance of access to high-caliber journalism and research and the public duty to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports and information sources.**

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS GAMECHANGER IDEAS FESTIVAL

### PULITZER PRIZE EDITION: CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN HISTORY AND JOURNALISM



#### SEPTEMBER 24, 2016

Legacy High School 3400 E. Calgary Avenue Bismarck, North Dakota

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Beginning at 7:00 AM: Charge your mind for the day with breakfast and coffee from Dunn Brothers.

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#### 8:30 - 9:30AM: COFFEE & CONVERSATION COHORT

This discussion group is led by Professor Tayo Basquiat and offers a limited number of seats. This is the first of the day's three sessions. Pre-register for your place in the cohort during checkout when you purchase tickets online.

#### 9:40AM: WELCOME

**9:45AM:  
"IMPORTANCE OF NEWS LITERACY"**  
presented by Mike Jacobs, Editor and Publisher of the *Grand Forks Herald*, retired

**10:00AM:  
AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC SCHLOSSER**  
2014 Pulitzer Prize Finalist in History for *Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident and the Illusion of Safety*

**TOPIC:** How do we protect ourselves from the weapons meant to protect us? Schlosser's research takes a look at the chilling history behind the management of America's nuclear arsenal. From the cultural and political struggles that led to scientists developing this technology and the military's stockpiling of it, how does our command and control system (the delegation of who and when we decide to launch) operate in modern society? Our proximity to these aging and temperamental weapons, as well as the risk human error poses to the handling of them begs the question of their safety and necessity. When will our next "near miss" trigger a cataclysm?

#### 10:50AM: BREAK

#### 11:10AM: ELIZABETH FENN (MORNING KEYNOTE)

2015 Pulitzer Prize Winner in History for *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People*

**PRESENTATION:** The teeming, busy towns of the Mandan Indians on the upper Missouri River were, for centuries, at the center of the North American universe. We know of them mostly because Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1804-1805 with them, but why don't we know more? Who were they really? In this extraordinary talk based on her Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, Elizabeth A. Fenn retrieves their history by piecing together important new discoveries in archaeology, anthropology, geology, climatology, epidemiology, and nutritional science. Her boldly original interpretation of these diverse research findings offers us a new perspective on early American history, a new awareness of the American past.

#### 12:00 LUNCH

Food trucks are available in the parking lot with a variety of meal options

"Coffee and Conversation Cohort" midday session (For pre-registered participants only – Lunch will be served)

#### 1:00PM: A VISIT FROM BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Featured on the Pulitzer Prize medal, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was an individual who was, and is, many things to his time, and to ours: Printer, Writer, Businessman, Innovator, Athlete, Military Commander, Civic Leader, a World Famous Scientist, Philosopher, Arithmetician, Statesman, Ambassador, and Inventor who snatched the

lightning from the heavens and the scepter from tyrants... and much more. A man with only two years of formal education, a runaway, an owner of servants, and a contract breaker, a plagiarist, and—depending on your point of view—a cad, rebel, womanizer, and traitor...

Ben was a man who witnessed most of the 18th Century, a time of discovery, intrigue and change...and a man who helped bring about that change. From a time of Kings to that of Presidents, from Superstition to Science, Aristocracy to Republicanism, one man saw it from start to new birth. That man will be our guest, presenting a lecture on his life, followed by questions from you to him. It is our honor to host Dr. Benjamin Franklin.

Greg Robin Smith is nationally known for presenting his interactive Chautauqua performances across the country as Ben Franklin. Armed with his thorough research and a deep body of knowledge, each of his performances as Franklin is a singular creation where he mixes his deep understanding of Ben's character with an unqualified talent for performance. Combining these with a healthy dose of the audience's own energy, manifested through their questions and interactions, makes every one of his Ben Franklin shows unique.

**1:40PM: BREAK**

**2:00PM: AN INTERVIEW WITH SONIA NAZARIO**

2003 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Feature Writing for *Enrique's Journey* and 1998 Pulitzer Prize Finalist in Public Service

**TOPIC:** In our politically charged climate, immigrant rights has been at the top the list of incendiary issues with the public. Nazario's six-part series entitled "Enrique's Journey" followed the sojourn of Latin American children as they navigated risky and certainly deadly paths to reunite with their parents working in the United States. This migration attempt requires children to grow up quickly as they encounter unsavory situations and people along their travels which consists of riding on the tops of trains amidst hunger, thirst, sickness, exhaustion, gangs, and corrupt law enforcement. By 2006 Nazario transformed her series into a book, which also navigates the emotional issues of migrant workers reuniting with their children who feel resentment towards them, despite both looking for a better life. This heart-breaking cycle begs further investigation into our system of immigration law and how we perceive the motivation behind these journeys.

**2:50PM: BREAK**

**3:10PM: AN INTERVIEW WITH JACQUELINE JONES**

2014 Pulitzer Prize Finalist in History for *A Dreadful Deceit: The Myth of Race from the Colonial Era to Obama's America*

**TOPIC:** Jones has dedicated her research to understanding the concept of "race." She argues that it is a social invention which aids the powerful both politically and economically and harms our national identity. Looking at our self-constructed myth about our country's origins as a narrative based in collective imagination over fact, Jones sees race as an invocation tool for those seeking advantage rather than a biological issue. Where does this justification of privilege leave us today? She re-examines our history searching with a critical eye for the distortion of fact which continues to affect our modern-day legacy.

Interviewed by Mark Trahan, Charles R. Johnson Endowed Professor of Journalism at the University of North Dakota and finalist for the 1989 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting

**4:00PM: BREAK**

**4:20PM: SEYMOUR HERSH (AFTERNOON KEYNOTE)**

1970 Pulitzer Prize Winner in International Reporting

**PRESENTATION:** Seymour Hersh's work is a bracing reminder of the power of the press to challenge corruption and to hold accountable those who knowingly abuse power. From the My Lai massacre to Abu Ghraib, Hersh has often been the first to break the most crucial stories of the modern era. Drawing upon his lifetime of intimate experience reporting the ins and outs of American foreign policy, cover-ups, and international developments, Sy Hersh provides a stirring and frank analysis of the contemporary political milieu. Having covered the issues in Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, and the whole of the Middle East, he draws you into a complex world where our official foreign policy stance meets the reality of political power in other parts of the world.

Keynote followed by interview with Mike Jacobs

**5:30 PM: RECEPTION**

"Coffee and Conversation Cohort" closing session (for pre-registered participants only)

Book signings

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The North Dakota Humanities Council is a partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The humanities inspire our vision of a thoughtful, respectful, actively engaged society that will be able to meet the challenge of sustaining our democracy across the many divisions of modern society and deal responsibly with the shared challenges we currently face as members of an interdependent world.

“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be... Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe.”

— Thomas Jefferson



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