

UW-Madison: Washington Post report on child sex trafficking wins 2022 Anthony Shadid award for journalism ethics

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Jessica Contrera, a reporter at The Washington Post, has won the 2022 Anthony Shadid Award for Journalism Ethics from the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison for her stories on child sex trafficking in the U.S.

Contrera will accept the award May 17 in a ceremony at the University Club in New York City.

The event will also feature a moderated conversation on journalism ethics with NBC Nightly News Anchor Lester Holt and award-winning journalist and author David Maraniss.

Registration for the ceremony is now open here: <https://ethics.journalism.-wisc.edu/2022-shadid-award-ceremony/>

Named for UW–Madison alumnus and Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Anthony Shadid, the award honors the difficult ethical decisions journalists make when telling high-impact stories. Shadid, who died in 2012 while on assignment covering Syria, was a member of the Center for Journalism Ethics advisory board and worked to encourage integrity in reporting.

The Shadid Award judging committee lauded the extraordinary thoughtfulness and care Contrera demonstrated in working with survivors of sex trafficking and showing how highly touted anti-trafficking laws are not being enforced.

Lucas Graves, associate professor in the UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication and chair of the committee, said this year's winner edged out a strong pool of finalists.

"The care and nuance the Post exemplified in bringing out the stories of sex trafficking survivors stood out even among our exceptional group of finalists this year," Graves said. "The result was a project that challenges the categories our criminal justice system takes for granted, and the reporting is already building momentum for reform."

Graves also praised the other three finalists for the award:

- Ali Fowle, Drew Ambrose, Aun Qi Koh, Andy Mees, David Boyle, Jenni Henderson, Nick Olle, Liz Gooch and Sharon Roobol, Al Jazeera (101 East). Al Jazeera's team produced the first longform report about the protests in Myanmar after the military took control in February 2021.
- A.J. Lagoe, Brandon Stahl, Steve Eckert, Gary Knox, KARE 11. In their investigative series, "The Gap: Failure to Treat, Failure to Protect," the KARE 11 team uncovered that criminal suspects deemed too mentally ill to stand trial in Minnesota are often released without adequate treatment.
- Jesse Eisinger, Jeff Ernsthausen, Paul Kiel, Justin Elliott, James Bandler, Patricia Callahan, Robert Faturechi, Ellis Simani, Doris Burke, Agnes Chang and Lucas Waldron, ProPublica. In their reporting on a massive collection of IRS data, "The Secret IRS Files," ProPublica reporters revealed the systemic unfairness in the U.S. tax system.

"I am so proud we are able to honor all these outstanding journalists for the careful and thoughtful approach they take in informing the public," said Kathleen Bartzen Culver, director of the Center for Journalism Ethics. "It has been 10 years since we lost Anthony, and it's meaningful to everyone associated with the Center to pay tribute to him by celebrating the best of journalism done with integrity."

Contrera, a reporter for the Post's local enterprise team, covers people and the issues and events that affect them. A native of Akron, Ohio, she joined the Post as a features writer in 2014 after graduating from Indiana University.

Read her prize-winning stories here: <https://www.washingtonpost.->

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Holt is the anchor of “NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt” and “Dateline NBC” and leads NBC News’ special reports, breaking news and primetime political coverage. Conversation moderator David Maraniss is a New York Times bestselling author and associate editor at the Post. He is a three-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and won a Pulitzer for National Reporting in 1992.

The Center for Journalism Ethics, housed in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at UW-Madison, provides an international hub to examine the role of professional and personal ethics in the pursuit of fair, accurate and principled journalism. Founded in 2008, the Center offers resources for journalists, educators, students and the public, including internationally recognized annual conferences exploring key issues in journalism.