David Fanning, ‘Frontline’ Executive Producer, Wins 2004 Columbia Journalism Award

BY CAROLINE LADHANI

D avid Fanning, executive producer of both “Frontline” and “WGBH Frontline,” is the 2004 recipient of the Columbia Journalism Award, the highest honor awarded by the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism faculty. The award recognizes singular journalistic performance in the public interest.

Fanning has been executive producer of “Frontline,” which originated at WGBH, the public television station in Boston. The investigative documentary series has aired for 21 seasons and won major awards for broadcast journalism, including 29 Emmy Awards, 29 Dupont-Columbia University Awards and 11 Peabody Awards.

More than a decade after his tenure began at “Frontline,” Fanning, a South Africa native, produced films on religious and racial issues in that country, including programs for BBC-TV. In 1993, he came to the United States and began producing local and national documentaries for PBS, initially with KOCE-TV in Huntington, Calif. WGBH first hired Fanning in 1980 to develop a weekly program called “World.” He then produced and cowrote the docudrama “Death of a Princess” with director Anthony Thomas, and in 1982, also with Thomas, the Emmy Award-winning investigative documentary “Frank Terpel: Confessions of a Dangerous Man.”

That same year, Fanning began developing “Frontline” for WGBH, and soon after, two shorter 1985 series, “Adventures in Ring of Fire,” a four-part travel series exploring Indonesia. In 2001, his desire to increase coverage of foreign news in America led to the birth of a magazine-style TV series called “Frontline/World.”

Fanning is also the Journalism School’s commencement speaker this year, and Walter Pincus, a well-known staff writer for the Washington Post, is the Henry F. Pringle Memorial Lecturer on national affairs for the school’s Journalism Day event on campus.

Pincus is a co-recipient of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting for his stories on Osama bin Laden. He also won a George Polk Award in 1979 for his Post stories on nuclear weapons.

Pincus has written on a multitude of national news subjects, including arms control, the American hostages in Iran, the Iran-Contra affair and investigations of Congress and the government’s executive branch.

Graduate School of Journalism Honors Distinguished Alumni

Four distinguished alumni received the Graduate School of Journalism’s highest alumni honor during the Alumni Association’s recent spring meeting. The awards, which are presented annually, recognize journalistic excellence, a single outstanding journalistic accomplishment or a contribution to journalism education. The following are this year’s winners.

Kenneth Best, Journalism ’67, is editor in chief of West Africa’s first independent newspaper, the Daily Observer, in Monrovia, Liberia. During that country’s Doe regime, he was arrested and the offices of his newspaper burned down. After periods of exile in both Gambia and the United States, Best is planning to return to Liberia and resume publishing the Daily Observer.

Michele Montas-Dominique, Journalism ’69, spent 20 years as director and co-anchor of Radio Haiti. Her husband was gunned down in front of their radio station in 2000, and she has received threats against her own life. In 2002, Montas-Dominique won a Marie bore’s Cabaret Prize. She later came to the United States and currently is spokeswoman for the president of the United Nations General Assembly.

Rita Henley Jensen, Journalism ’77, is founder and editor in chief of Women’s eNews, an online news service, established in 2000, dispatches stories of interest to women around the world. The Web site now offers a feature on Arabic language service that reaches out to audiences in North Africa and the Middle East.

Lewis (Lew) Simons, Journalism ’64, a contributor to National Geographic magazine, has won several top prizes in journalism, including a Pulitzer Prize in 1986 and a George Polk Award in 1985. A former Washington Post and Associated Press reporter, he also wrote an Arabic language service that reaches out to audiences in North Africa and the Middle East.

Best

Michele Montas-Dominique

Rita Henley Jensen

Lew Simons

Rosalind Rosenberg, in History Lecture, Describes Era of Diversification at Columbia

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argued that the University served as a haven for the white Protestant elite up until the 20th century even as New York City increased its vibrant cultural mix of European immigrants, Jews, Catholics and African Americans. Rosenberg’s talk focused on the breaking down of the University’s homogeneity, and its growing diversity, in the 1920s. The dike began to leak in 1883, when a group of suffragists, including Susan B. Anthony, produced a petition with the names of some 1,300 prominent New Yorkers asking that women be admitted to Columbia. While the then-President F.A.P Barnard supported the move, the faculty and students were by and large opposed.

The arguments were predictable: women would distract the male scholars from their work. This sentiment, Rosenberg noted, was expressed in a way extreme and homophobic by mathematician professor John Howard Van Amringe, who said, “You can’t teach a man to think, and if you can, he isn’t worth teaching.”

Columbia and its affiliates eventually did diversify, seeking and welcoming students from a broad range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the previously excluded groups went on to make enormous contributions not just to the University but to New York City and beyond.

Barnard College opened in 1889 and became affiliated with Columbia. Three years later, another affiliated school was born: Teachers College. Both colleges had their own boards of trustees, which included several women and Jewish and Catholic leaders. Teachers College actively recruited minorities, and their female and African-American students began to change the demographic profile of Columbia’s graduate schools. The information presented by Rosenberg pointed out, so that by the 1920s Columbia was producing the largest number of black doctors in the country and the greatest number of female Ph.D.s.

Still another important step in Columbia’s diversification was achieved through the leadership of anthropology chair Frank Boas. Boas, a Jewish socialist, hired two women, Gladys Richard and Ruth Benedict, to join the faculty, unusual at the time. Between the world wars with the Ku Klux Klan on the rise in the United States and Nazi Germany metastasizing in Germany, Boas and his students, more than half of them women from Barnard, began a fierce intellectual battle against sexism and racism. Many of Boas’s students—formerly, Benedict, Margaret Mead, Zora Neale Hurston—won broad audiences with their writings and were widely influential. “They made popular the idea that not just race but also gender are social constructions,” Rosenberg said.

There were two respondents on the evening’s panel—Gillian Lindt, Columbia professor of religion emerita, and Monica Miller, Barnard assistant professor of English. Miller spoke eloquently about two of the first African American writers to attend Columbia—Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.

She noted that Columbia administrators at the time perhaps didn’t realize that people like Hughes and Hurston were as inspired by the ongoing Harlem Renaissance taking place on the doorsteps of the campus as they were by attending Columbia. “They wanted access to Columbia and Barnard networks as well as the opportunity to create their own networks—equally important as minority networks,” she said.

Lindt remarked that much remained to be done in the way of equality and diversity at Columbia. “There are still women that disproportionately are found, at least in the faculty ranks, at the lower levels, and often marginalized in all kinds of ways,” she said.

Rosenberg agreed that there is still work to be done. “The story of inclusion at Columbia is a story about process, one that is not fully complete even today.”

As that process of diversification goes forward, its context has changed. The University is a quite different place today. Women were admitted to Columbia College 20 years ago and now make up 50 percent of the University’s total student population, while ethnic and racial minorities also comprise a significant part of the student body. Nearly 20 percent of Columbia students are currently from foreign countries.

For more information on Columbia’s history, visit the C250 Web site at www.c250.columbia.edu/history.