

Scripps Howard Fund announces spring 2024 class of Roy W. Howard Fellows

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CINCINNATI – Five investigative journalists will receive hands-on training working with major nonprofit media outlets as part of the Scripps Howard Fund's Roy W. Howard Fellowship program.

The newsrooms participating in the yearlong program are: [Asheville Watchdog](#), [Inside Climate News](#), [National Public Radio \(NPR\)](#), [Open Secrets](#) and [Texas Observer](#).

The fellowships honor Roy W. Howard, former chairman of the Scripps Howard newspaper chain and a pioneering news reporter with The E.W. Scripps Company (NASDAQ: SSP).

The fellowships, which are awarded bi-annually, are given to graduates of the Howard Centers for Investigative Journalism at the University of Maryland and Arizona State University. The Scripps Howard Fund established the Howard Centers in 2018.

The spring 2024 class of Roy W. Howard Fellows:

Francesca D'Annunzio – Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, Arizona State University

D'Annunzio earned a master's degree in investigative journalism at ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. She received her undergraduate degree in the humanities program at the University of Texas. D'Annunzio has reported on deportations in the Dominican Republic, Christian nationalism, the U.S.-Mexico border, right-wing sheriffs, Arizona's water crisis and zoning and housing policy in Texas. Her work has been published or syndicated in The Guardian US, The Dallas Morning News, Religion News Service, the Global Investigative Journalism Network, the Texas Standard and The Arizona Republic. D'Annunzio begins her fellowship at Texas Observer in January.

Victoria Ifatusin – Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, University of Maryland

Ifatusin earned her undergraduate degree in communications from the City University of New York's College of Staten Island, where she interned for the Staten Island Advance, The Brooklyn Reader and Sirius XM. She was offered a Howard Fellowship to attend graduate school at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism. She started the master's program three months early so she could work on the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism's "[Printing Hate](#)" project, investigating the historic role of white-owned newspapers in inciting lynchings and other forms of racial violence. Ifatusin also worked on the center's "[Mega Billions](#)" project, examining how state lotteries transfer wealth out of needy communities. She contributed data work to two projects, one investigating sports betting on college campuses and the other a collaboration with the Associated Press examining police conduct. After graduating from Merrill College in May 2023, Ifatusin went to work for Education Week as a digital news specialist. She will begin working for the Asheville Watchdog in March.

Albert Serna Jr. – Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, Arizona State University

Serna received his master's degree in investigative journalism from ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication in August 2023. A strong supporter of community-focused reporting, Serna looks for stories that impact underserved groups to expose injustice, government failure and abuses of power at all levels. His previous work as an investigative intern with the Tampa Bay Times found a system in Florida that encouraged racially motivated policing. Over nine months, Serna's investigation of the Arizona State Board of Dental Examiners found that the state agency failed to protect the public and hold dentists accountable. Serna begins his fellowship at Open Secrets in January.

Noel Lyn Smith – Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, Arizona State University

Smith earned a master's degree in investigative journalism from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at ASU. She received her bachelor's degree in journalism from Northern Arizona University. While at ASU, Smith participated in the Carnegie-Knight News21 program, where she reported on Indigenous women navigating the complex maze of abortion care a year after the reversal of Roe v. Wade. Before returning to ASU to earn her master's degree, Smith was a reporter for 15 years. She worked for the Farmington Daily Times and the Navajo Times. At both publications, she reported about the Navajo Nation. Her reporting has won awards from the New Mexico Press Association. Smith begins her fellowship at Inside Climate News in January.

Caitlin Thompson – Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, Arizona State University

Thompson received her master's degree in investigative journalism from ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. She's also a graduate of Tufts University, where she studied international relations and modern Russian politics. As an investigative reporter and audio journalist, Thompson has reported internationally and across the U.S. She spent a summer working with the data journalism team at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, where she wrote stories about housing and labor. As a Global Reporting Centre Investigative Fellow, she reported on the child welfare agency in New Mexico. Previously, she was a reporter for Coda Story based in Tbilisi, Georgia, where she covered surveillance and disinformation. She was on the team at KAZU, an NPR member station in California that won a National Edward R. Murrow Award for wildfire coverage. Thompson begins her fellowship at NPR in January.

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About the Scripps Howard Fund

The [Scripps Howard Fund](#), a public charity established by [The E.W. Scripps Company](#) (NASDAQ: SSP), is dedicated to creating informed and engaged communities through journalism education, childhood literacy and local causes. At the crossroads of the classroom and the newsroom, the Fund is a leader in supporting journalism through scholarships, internships, minority recruitment and development and First Amendment causes. The Scripps Howard Awards stand as one of the industry's top honors for outstanding journalism. The Fund's annual "If You Give a Child a Book ..." childhood literacy campaign has distributed thousands of new books to children in need across the nation. The Fund partners with Scripps brands to create awareness of local issues and support organizations that build thriving communities. The Scripps Howard Fund administers funding for the Scripps Howard Foundation, a private foundation established in 1962 to advance charitable causes important to The E.W. Scripps Company and the Scripps and Howard families.