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Brodsky Prize hopes to encourage innovation in student journalism

Staff Report Feb 20, 2018



Manchester High School Central graduate Jeffrey Brodsky, right, pictured here interviewing the late journalist Ben Bradlee, is hoping the \$5,000 Brodsky Prize will encourage a new generation of student journalists.

COURTESY

A Manchester man whose editorship of the Central High newspaper brought him headlines beyond the campus — and a brief suspension of the publication — has established an annual scholarship award.

Jeffrey Brodsky says he hopes the \$5,000 Brodsky Prize will encourage out-of-the-box efforts and innovation by a new generation of student journalists.

"Working on the school newspaper was the most formative and meaningful high school experience for me — more than any classroom," Brodsky said. "When you're up against an institution, it often feels like it's not a level playing field. But the real world is never a level playing field either," Brodsky added. "It's more important than ever for young journalists to push boundaries and to challenge authority, and they can start by using the power of their school paper just like the press in the real world."

When Brodsky, now 44, and Manchester Central classmate Misbah Tahir assumed co-editorship of the "Little Green" newspaper, they turned it into a broadsheet publication, added color photography, and introduced new design and typography. They also revitalized a stagnant student newspaper circulation read by 20% of the school's population, boosting readership to over 75% of Central's students.

They also encouraged fellow students on the paper to ask tough questions and explore different topics. It was an editorial questioning the transparency of freshman class elections that got the two editors in trouble with the school administration, which felt identifying a faculty member in its criticism was out of line.

The two editors found themselves sidelined, briefly. The Union Leader ran stories on the issue, and those stories were picked up by other media.

The school appointed a new faculty adviser, and the paper was back in business, continuing to win local and national journalism honors.

Brodsky was featured in the non-fiction book, "Death By Cheeseburger", which chronicled censored high school journalism around the nation. Brodsky later testified before the New Hampshire House Judiciary committee in Concord about student press rights.

Brodsky, who graduated from Central in 1992, went on to study oral history and communications at New York's Columbia University, becoming a historian and documentary producer, before illness forced his retirement and return to his hometown.

During his time at Columbia, his signature project was interviewing prominent politicians about their first political campaigns. Brodsky conducted extensive interviews with more than 84 U.S. governors, senators, and heads of state from South America, Europe, Africa and New Zealand. They included Gov. Mike Dukakis, U.S. Sen. George McGovern, Speaker of the House Jim Wright, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Prime Minister of Spain Jose Aznar, and President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo.

Brodsky later wrote about these experiences in a feature article in The Washington Post Magazine.

During Brodsky's career, he also interviewed well-known television news personalities of the late 20th century including Sam Donaldson, Bob Schieffer, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, and Tom Brokaw.

The Brodsky Prize will be open to all high school students who either live in Manchester or attend school in the Queen City. Criteria for the honor will include a student's journalistic initiative and enterprise, as well as what its founder calls "a contrarian nature and out-of-the-box thinking."

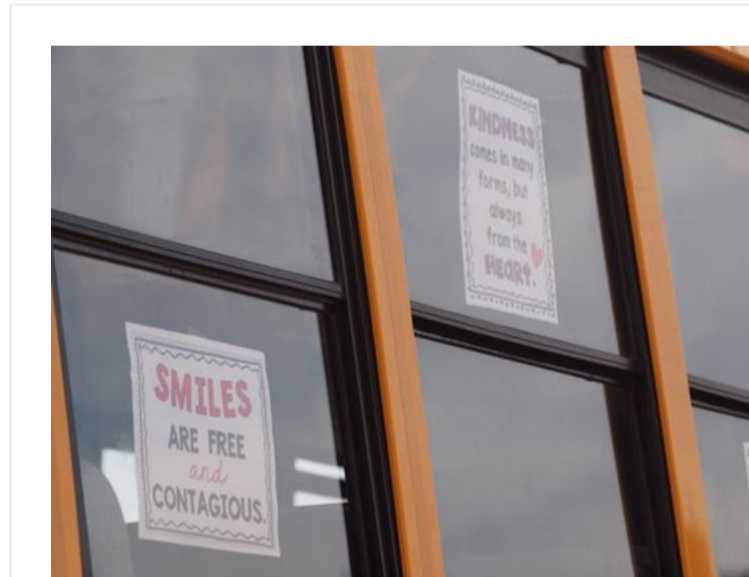
The Nackey S. Loeb School of Communications, Inc., will help oversee the award program and provide one of the judges, initially School Director David Tirrell-Wysocki. Other judges will include Tahir, the former Little Green co-editor; a member of the Brodsky family; and former Little Green adviser Rita Davis.

Interested students should submit examples of their work that are illustrative of the prize criteria, along with an 800-word essay on how they would use the award to further their journalistic studies or efforts. Entries should be emailed to: www.LoebSchool@loebSchool.org.

The deadline for applications is April 15.

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