

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Feb. 4, 2016
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Council on Contemporary Families Honors Dan Carsen (WBHM & Southern Education Desk) and Ashley Cleek (Al Jazeera America) for Outstanding Coverage of Family Issues (2016)

Austin, TX--The Council on Contemporary Families (CCF) is pleased to present its Twelfth Annual Media Awards at 4:15pm on Friday, March 4th at the Liberal Arts Building (118 Inner Campus Dr.), University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, at the CCF annual conference, "[Families as They Really Are: Demographics, Disparities, and Debates.](#)"

The CCF media awards honor outstanding journalism that contributes to the public understanding of contemporary family issues. Honorees are invited to speak for five minutes on emerging issues affecting American families and how CCF members and supporters can help the media cover these stories effectively.

The **2016 Award for Print Coverage of Family Issues** goes to Ashley Cleek for her piece, "[Filthy Water and Shoddy Sewers Plague Poor Black Belt Counties,](#)" which appeared on Al Jazeera America. Her reporting explores the intersections of race, socioeconomic status, and geographic location in terms of a local public health crisis that continues to threaten southern communities and families. Cleek highlights the serious structural challenges these communities face and how ongoing water contamination issues endanger children and families in the "Black Belt," a poverty-ridden region in Alabama that now faces the emergence of parasitic diseases in children in record numbers.

Ashley Cleek is a radio reporter and producer living in Birmingham, Alabama. Ashley has reported stories in Turkey, Ukraine, India, and Russia for American, German and British radio. Her stories have appeared on radio programs, *The World* and *Marketplace* and on websites such as PBS's *The Tehran Bureau*, Al Jazeera America, and the Atlantic.

The **2016 Award for Radio Coverage of Family Issues** goes to [Dan Carsen](#) for his four-part radio series, "[Bilingual Education in the South,](#)" originally produced for Renaissance Journalism's [Equity Reporting Fellowship Project](#). Among other things, this series highlights Georgia's unusual-for-the-Deep-South efforts to increase academic success and language proficiency by using multi-lingual educational programs in K-12 curricula. Teachers, administrators, parents, and children are all given voice in this series, which blends scholastic research with the pragmatic realities faced by English-as-a-second-language children and families, especially in other Deep South states where politics and policy have not caught up with research. But Dan's reporting emphasizes the positive impacts these programs can have on a range of outcomes, from knowledge mastery to future economic prospects, and draws attention to overlooked facets of contemporary debates about immigration.

Dan Carsen is [the Southern Education Desk](#) reporter at WBHM in Birmingham; his work has been recognized and honored by multiple groups, including previously by CCF in 2013. He's been a teacher, a teacher trainer, a newspaper reporter, a radio commentator, and an editor at an educational publishing house. His writing and reporting have won numerous regional and national awards. His outside interests include basketball, kayaking, sailing, mountain biking, percussion, and hoping his children let him sleep.

About the CCF Media Awards: The CCF media awards were established in 2002 as part of the Council's commitment to enhancing the public understanding of trends in American family life. "All too often, changes in U.S. family patterns are painted in stark, better-or-worse terms that ignore the nuanced

and complex realities of family life today. The Awards Committee looked for articles that put individual family issues in larger social context. This kind of coverage offers the public a balanced picture of the trade-offs, strengths and weaknesses in many different family arrangements and structures," explained Stephanie Coontz, CCF's Director of Research and Public Education. The CCF media awards committee will call for nominations for the 2017 awards in the fall of 2016. Please visit www.contemporaryfamilies.org for information.

The Council on Contemporary Families' 18th Annual Conference: "[Families As They Really Are: Demographics, Disparities, and Debates](#)," convenes experts on youth well-being and international adoption, parenting and intimate relationships, fertility, sexuality, and partner selection, transnational families, and interventions for immigrant families that work. The conference will be held at the Liberal Arts Building on March 4-5, 2016, and is hosted by the University of Texas at Austin.

CCF and how CCF assists journalists: The [Council on Contemporary Families](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of family researchers, mental health and social practitioners, and clinicians dedicated to providing the press and public with the latest research and best practice findings about American families. It was founded in 1996 and is based at the University of Texas at Austin.

For more information, or to receive future fact sheets and briefing papers from the Council, contact [Stephanie Coontz](#), Director of Research and Public Education of CCF and Professor of History and Family Studies at the Evergreen State College, at coontzs@msn.com; 360-352-8117.

LINKS:

[Families as They Really Are: Demographics, Disparities, and Debates:](https://contemporaryfamilies.org/2016-conference-date/)
<https://contemporaryfamilies.org/2016-conference-date/>

Ashley Cleek's "[Filthy Water and Shoddy Sewers Plague Poor Black Belt Counties](#)":
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/3/filthy-water-and-poor-sewers-plague-poor-black-belt-counties.html>

[Dan Carsen](#)'s four-part radio series, "[Bilingual Education in the South](#)":
<https://news.wbhm.org/author/dan/> and <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-12-01/bilingual-education-south-it-happening-even-here>

The Southern Education Desk: <http://www.southerneddesk.org/>

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