



## Ending Mass Incarceration: Michelle Alexander's Work Toward Criminal Justice Policy Reform Honored with 21<sup>st</sup> Heinz Award

*Civil rights attorney, legal scholar, policy advocate and author Michelle Alexander has sparked national dialogue on issues of criminal justice, racial disparities*

**PITTSBURGH, September 14, 2016**—The Heinz Family Foundation today named Michelle Alexander, legal scholar, advocate, civil rights attorney and author of the seminal book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, the recipient of the prestigious 21st Heinz Award in the Public Policy category. Ms. Alexander is honored for her work in drawing national attention to the issues of mass incarceration of African American youth and men in the United States, and for igniting a movement that's inspiring organizations and individuals to take constructive action on criminal justice reform.

As part of the accolade, Ms. Alexander will receive an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000.

The United States has the world's highest per-capita rate of incarceration and, according to Ms. Alexander, if current trends continue, one in three young African American men will ultimately serve time in prison. Ms. Alexander's work and her book *The New Jim Crow* have sparked a national dialogue on racial bias in America's criminal justice system, mobilizing activists, educators, religious leaders and individuals to take action to reform not only the system, but also the laws that limit opportunities for the formerly incarcerated. These include laws that deny the formerly incarcerated their civil rights by preventing them from being considered for employment, applying for housing and even voting. Such laws make it extraordinarily difficult for people to build new lives, instead churning them back into the system that sent them to prison in the first place.

"We are at an incredible moment of opportunity but also a confusing and dangerous moment, where there's a lot of rhetoric that could move us back into a law and order militarization mindset," Ms. Alexander said. "What's necessary right now is for us to shift from imagining that this is simply a policy problem to understanding that mass incarceration is really a moral crisis, a human rights crisis. It calls into question who we are as a people—as a nation—and we need to hear from people who are committed to elevating their voices from a place of morality. I'm incredibly gratified by how many people are engaging in advocacy and acting with courage for the restoration of basic civil and human rights."

Ms. Alexander's current focus is largely centered on collaborating with faith communities and others who recognize the moral imperative of this work, and includes two forthcoming books and a podcast to bring awareness to an ever-broader audience. Ms. Alexander has taught at a number of universities, including Stanford Law School and the Kirwin Institute of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University.

"Michelle Alexander has inspired new and far-reaching conversations across our nation about the disparities that exist in our criminal justice system," said Teresa Heinz, chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. "These conversations are taking place throughout the United States with an urgency that reflects the social unrest and inequity that is present in our communities. If, as many believe, our country is experiencing a 'tipping point,' Ms. Alexander is at the vanguard of those seeking to harness the hope

and opportunity that will help to transform our current judicial system while moving us to become a more just society.”

Established to honor the memory of U.S. Senator John Heinz, the 21<sup>st</sup> Heinz Awards this year recognize those who have made significant contributions in five distinct areas of great importance to Senator Heinz: Arts and Humanities; Environment; Human Condition; Public Policy; and Technology, the Economy and Employment. Now in its 21<sup>st</sup> year, the Heinz Awards has recognized 128 individuals and awarded more than \$25 million to the honorees. For more information about the awardees visit <http://heinzawards.net/2016>.

In addition to Ms. Alexander, the 21<sup>st</sup> Heinz Awards honored the following individuals:

- **Arts and Humanities: Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews, New Orleans, La.**  
Mr. Andrews, a celebrated multi-instrumentalist and performer, is being recognized for his achievements as a musician and for his community work to preserve and pass on to younger generations the rich musical heritage of his native New Orleans.
- **Environment: Hal Harvey, San Francisco, Calif.**  
Mr. Harvey, one of the leading strategists in the nonprofit sector’s efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change, is being recognized for his results-driven solutions in energy policy and innovation to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and energy waste worldwide.
- **Human Condition: Nadine Burke Harris, M.D., San Francisco, Calif.**  
Dr. Burke Harris, a pediatrician, is being recognized for her work in establishing pioneering protocols to identify and treat children suffering from toxic stress caused by extreme poverty, neglect and unsafe or chaotic surroundings.
- **Technology, the Economy and Employment: Matt Mullenweg, Houston, Texas**  
Mr. Mullenweg, visionary co-founder of WordPress, is being recognized for creating a free, simple-to-use, open-source website and blogging platform that is helping to democratize online publishing.

Winners will receive their awards in Pittsburgh on October 4, 2016.

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of Ms. Alexander or any of the other recipients, please contact Abby Manishor at [amanishor@burness.com](mailto:amanishor@burness.com) or 917-539-3308.

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**About the Heinz Awards**

Established by Teresa Heinz in 1993 to honor the memory of her late husband, U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrates the accomplishments and spirit of the Senator by recognizing the extraordinary achievements of individuals in the areas of greatest importance to him. The awards, administered by the Heinz Family Foundation, recognize individuals for their contributions in the areas of Arts and Humanities; Environment; Human Condition; Public Policy; and Technology, the Economy and Employment. Nominations are submitted by invited experts, who serve anonymously, and are reviewed by jurors appointed by the Heinz Family Foundation. The jurors make recommendations to the Board of Directors, which subsequently selects the Award recipients. For more information on the Heinz Awards, visit [www.heinzawards.net](http://www.heinzawards.net).

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