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10 Receive Distinguished Alumni, Outstanding Service, and McConaughy Writing Awards

by Cynthia Rockwell • May 24, 2016



The Wesleyan Assembly and Alumni Association Meeting was held in the Memorial Chapel on May 21. This year's gathering of Distinguished Alumni, Outstanding Service and James L. McConaughy Jr. Memorial awardees were: (bottom row, left to right) Meredith F. "Franklin" Sirmans, Jr. '91; David Anthony Hill '86; Alumni Association Chair Daphne Kwok '84; Ayelet Waldman '86, P'17; Robert E. "Rick" Crootof '66, P'96; Jed D. Hoyer '96; (top row, left to right) Luke F. Wood '91; Michael E. Greenberg '76, P'14; Ethan S. Bronner '76, P'10; Essel W. Bailey Jr. '66; and Oyeshola "Shola" Olatoye '96, with President Michael Roth. (Photo by John Van Vlack)

At the Wesleyan Assembly and Annual Meeting of the Alumni Association held during Reunion, alumni celebrate members of the community with a number of awards. This year, six were named Distinguished Alumni in recognition of their achievement in their professions; two alumni received the McConaughy Award for writing that conveyed "unusual insights and understanding of current and past events," and two alumni were celebrated for Outstanding Service. Chair of the Alumni Association Daphne Kwok '84 presented the

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 Wesleyan University
2 days ago

awards at a ceremony in Memorial Chapel, which featured newly proclaimed Distinguished Alumnus Luke Wood '91, president of Beats By Dr. Dre, offering thoughts on his Wesleyan education in "Come As You Are: A Liberal Arts Education Revisited."

Those receiving awards at this ceremony were Distinguished Alumni Award Recipients Essel W. Bailey Jr. '66; Michael E. Greenberg '76, P'14; Luke Wood '91; Meredith F. "Franklin" Sirmans, Jr. '91; Jed D. Hoyer '96; and Oyeshola "Shola" Olatoye '96; James L. McConaughy Jr. Memorial Award Recipients Ethan S. Bronner '76, P'10 and Ayelet Waldman '86, P'17; and Outstanding Service Award Recipients; Robert "Rick" Crootof '66, P'96 and David A. Hill '86. Please see further information on each awardee below:



Essel W. Bailey Jr. '66

Essel W. Bailey Jr. '66
Distinguished Alumnus Award

Essel Bailey is a lawyer, corporate executive, and private investor. Along with his wife, Menakka, Mr. Bailey has been a steadfast supporter of Wesleyan's College of the Environment (COE), endowing the Menakka and Essel Bailey '66 Distinguished Visiting Scholar Fund to bring outstanding outside scholars into the COE community.

A history major at Wesleyan who earned his JD from the University of Michigan Law School, Mr. Bailey spent several years in Michigan state government before serving 15 years with the Detroit law firm Dykema, Gossett, where he was a partner specializing in corporate and real estate finance. Over the course of his career, Mr. Bailey founded and ran two public companies and served as a director or

chair of the board of three NYSE-listed companies. For the past 30 years he has been engaged in the capital markets, dealing with rating agencies, investment banks, and other global financial organizations. He has invested in, organized, and managed businesses in real estate and real estate finance, healthcare, and manufacturing in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. In recent years he has served as a director of several NGOs.

Mr. Bailey currently serves as a director or officer of several private companies related to healthcare and healthcare finance, where he is also a principal; of nonprofit organizations related to mental health, hospice, and elderly care services; and of the Michigan chapter of the Nature Conservancy. Born on a farm in Tennessee, he has in recent years acquired a farm in California that produces grapes used to make premium wines under the Knights Bridge label.

At Wesleyan, Mr. Bailey was a member of the Eclectic Society and the Student Judiciary Committee. He also ran hurdles for the track team. The Baileys reside in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Ethan S. Bronner '76, P'10
McConaughy Award

Ethan Bronner is a senior editor at Bloomberg News, where he focuses on political features and analyses, mostly from overseas, and mentors young reporters. He joined Bloomberg after 17 years at the *New York Times*, where he was Jerusalem bureau chief, national legal affairs correspondent, national education correspondent, deputy foreign editor, deputy national editor, and education editor. Mr. Bronner also served as assistant editorial page editor. Right after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, he worked in the paper's investigative unit focusing on Al Qaeda. He has been a frequent book reviewer for the paper and contributed to its Sunday Review.

A graduate of the College of Letters at Wesleyan and of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Mr. Bronner began his career at Reuters in 1980, reporting from London, Madrid, Brussels, and Jerusalem. He worked at the *Boston Globe* for a dozen years, including as its Washington-based legal and Supreme Court



Ethan S. Bronner '76, P'10

Wesleyan
University Press authors
Hafizah Geter, Rac
Armantrout, and Honorée
Fanonne Jeffers were
recently longlisted for
awards from PEN America.
fal.cn/3cFKT



Wesleyan University

6 days ago

"Once again,
we in higher education must
recommit to
encouraging the kind of
democratic practice that is
fully in sync with the goals
of liberal education..."
President Michael Roth '78
shares his reaction to
yesterday's events in
Washington: fal.cn/3cBB9



Wesleyan University

2 weeks ago

Happy new
year, Cardinals! Here's to a

correspondent and as Middle East bureau chief.

He is the author of *Battle for Justice: How the Bork Nomination Shook America*, which was named one of the best 25 books of 1989 by the New York Public Library and awarded a Silver Gavel by the American Bar Association. Mr. Bronner is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former trustee of Wesleyan.

Mr. Bronner lives in New York with his wife, Naomi Kehati-Bronner, a psychologist. They have two sons.



Dr. Robert E. "Rick" Crootof '66, P'96

Dr. Robert E. "Rick" Crootof '66, P'96

Outstanding Service Award

Dr. Rick Crootof has chaired every reunion of the Class of 1966 since 1981, when he says he "fell into" the role. In this capacity, Dr. Crootof has maintained lifelong friendships with countless members of his class, keeping them connected to Wesleyan over the decades. For his 50th Reunion this year, in deference to the vagaries of age, Dr. Crootof has enlisted as a co-chair of the half-century celebration.

Dr. Crootof graduated from Wesleyan with a degree in chemistry. He continued his education with an MD from New York Medical College, followed by an internship in internal medicine at George Washington University and a residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Yale–New Haven Hospital.

After two years in the Navy spent at its teaching hospital in Oakland, California, in 1977 Dr. Crootof joined two friends in private practice in Norwich, Connecticut. Over the next 30 years that practice, which grew to include eight physicians, withstood picketing and bomb and death threats to provide a complete range of obstetrical and gynecological services to women of all income levels from across eastern Connecticut.

Until his retirement, Dr. Crootof and his wife, Linda, lived in a historic home in Norwich, where they both served on the board and as officers of the Norwich Heritage Trust and the Downtown Revitalization Committee. More recently, Dr. Crootof has been on the board and served five years as president of the Wolfeboro (New Hampshire) Tennis Club. Each winter, Dr. Crootof plays tennis and takes advantage of the cultural offerings in Sarasota, Florida. He also is an active amateur photographer.

The Crootofs enjoy visiting their children, Matthew '96 (in Bozeman, Montana), Sarah (in Manhattan), and Martha (in Los Angeles). They eagerly await the imminent arrival of their first grandchild, a boy, in late August, in Los Angeles.



Michael E. Greenberg '76, P'14

Michael E. Greenberg '76, P'14

Distinguished Alumnus Award

Michael Greenberg has spent the past 30 years investigating the molecular mechanisms that underlie the effects of sensory experience on the brain, helping us better understand how nature and nurture are intertwined during brain maturation. Most recently his research has explored the ways that neural activity controls the wiring of the brain, and how disruption of this process can lead to neurological disorders such as autism.

As a chemistry major at Wesleyan, Greenberg conducted honors research with Dr. Peter Jacobi. He received his PhD in biochemistry from Rockefeller University in 1982 and did postdoctoral research at New York University Medical Center. In 1986 he joined the faculty at Harvard Medical School, where he is currently chair of the

Department of Neurobiology and the Nathan Marsh Pusey Professor of Neurobiology.

In recognition of his contributions to neuroscience, Dr. Greenberg has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences and has received numerous awards, including the Gruber Prize in Neuroscience in 2015 (with Dr. Carla Shatz). He is also widely regarded as a leading mentor and advisor for a generation of neuroscientists, and for this he has been honored with the A. Clifford Barger Award for Excellence in Mentoring and the Harold Amos Faculty Diversity Award.

Dr. Greenberg and his wife, Dr. Rosalind Segal, live in Brookline, Massachusetts, and have two children, Rachel and Daniel '14.

David Anthony Hill '86
Outstanding Service Award

A College of Social Studies major and member of the Cardinal football team, David Hill has given back to Wesleyan in many ways over the last 30 years, including as a member of the President's Council and as the inaugural chair of the Alumni of Color Council. He also has been an alumni-elected trustee, a class agent for the Class of 1986, and a member of the organizing committees for his 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th, and 30th class reunions.

Mr. Hill is a partner in the national law firm of Wong Fleming, P.C., the largest woman-owned law firm and one of the largest minority-owned law firms in the United States. An accomplished lawyer and executive, Mr. Hill counsels clients, manages teams, and advances strategic objectives for businesses ranging from a Fortune 20 company to smaller for-profit companies and nonprofit entities.

Prior to joining Wong Fleming, Mr. Hill spent 17 years in the legal department of Bell Atlantic/Verizon, where he served as the general counsel of the Delaware, District of Columbia, and Maryland operating companies and as a liaison between Verizon and the Obama administration. Earlier he was associated with the law firm of Hogan & Hartson (now Hogan Lovells). While there, he was the lead counsel in *Wilkins v. Maryland State Police*, a landmark case that led to the end of the use of race-based drug courier profiles in Maryland.

Mr. Hill resides in Silver Spring, Maryland, with his wife, Lynn, and their two children, David and Gabrielle. His civic involvement includes service as the chair of the Commission on Social Action at the Reid Temple AME Church in Silver Spring and on the Executive Committee of the board of Leadership Montgomery (Montgomery County, Maryland).

Jed D. Hoyer '96
Distinguished Alumni Award

Jed Hoyer is executive vice president and general manager of the Chicago Cubs. Throughout his career in professional baseball he has been lauded for outstanding analytic skills as well as scouting and recruiting acumen and thorough preparation. The Cubs in 2015 advanced to the National League Championship Series for the first time since 2003. Currently, they lead the Central Division of the National League with the best record in baseball.



David Anthony Hill '86

Mr. Hoyer spent 2009–11 with the San Diego Padres. In 2010 the Padres posted only the fourth 90-win campaign in the franchise's 42-year history and finished just two games behind in the National League West race, despite having the lowest payroll in baseball. Earlier in his career, Mr. Hoyer helped guide the Boston Red Sox to their first world championship since 1918 during the 2004 season and then to a second championship in 2007.

A history major at Wesleyan, Mr. Hoyer played on the baseball team as a shortstop, outfielder, and starting and relieving pitcher, with a .400 hitting average. He still holds the school record for saves. At Wesleyan he once started both ends of a doubleheader and got the win in each one. In 1994 he played on the Cardinal team that advanced to the Division III College World Series. Following graduation, Mr.

Hoyer worked at Wesleyan in Admission and University Relations while also serving as an assistant baseball coach before taking his first job in professional baseball as an intern for the Red Sox.

Mr. Hoyer has remained an active Wesleyan alumnus, including as a member of the Athletics Advisory Council since its founding in 2007. In 2012 he gave the John W. Baird '38 Lecture at Wrigley Field. He also spends time with the Cardinal baseball team each year during spring training in Arizona. He and his wife, Merrill, live in Chicago with their two sons, Beckett and Gray.

Oyeshola "Shola" Olatoye '96 **Distinguished Alumna Award**

Oyeshola "Shola" Olatoye is chair and chief executive officer of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), which is the largest public housing authority in the nation, providing affordable housing to more than 620,000 low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.

Before her appointment to NYCHA in 2014, Ms. Olatoye was vice president and New York market leader for Enterprise Community Partners, a national nonprofit real estate investment company dedicated to furthering affordable housing and community development. In addition to other professional positions, Ms. Olatoye has served on the board of the Council for Large Public Housing Authorities and is founding board chair of the Fund for Public Housing.

Ms. Olatoye has won recognition from the Institute for Public Architecture, Urban Upbound, and Green City Force, as well as from Crain's, which named Ms. Olatoye to its "40 under 40" list of New York's "most talented, driven, and dynamic" young professionals in 2014.

A history and African American studies major at Wesleyan, Ms. Olatoye earned a master's degree in public administration from the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at NYU. She lives in Harlem, New York, with her husband, Matthew Strozier '96, and their three children.



Oyeshola "Shola" Olatoye '96

Meredith F. "Franklin" Sirmans Jr. '91 **Distinguished Alumnus Award**

Franklin Sirmans is the director of the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM). Prior to his recent appointment, he was the department head and curator of contemporary art at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) from 2010 until fall 2015. At LACMA Mr. Sirmans organized *Noah Purifoy: Junk Dada; Variations: Conversations in and around Abstract Painting; Fútbol: The Beautiful Game*; and *Ends and Exits: Contemporary Art from the Collections of LACMA and the Broad Art Foundation*, and co-organized the exhibition *Human Nature: Contemporary Art from the Collection*. He is the curator of the forthcoming LACMA exhibition *Toba Khedoori*.



Meredith F. "Franklin" Sirmans Jr. '91

From 2006 to 2010, Mr. Sirmans was curator of modern and contemporary art at the Menil Collection in Houston, where he

organized exhibitions including *NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith*; *Steve Wolfe on Paper*; *Vija Celmins: Television and Disaster, 1964–1966*; and *Maurizio Cattelan: Is There Life Before Death?* In 2007 Mr. Sirmans won the David C. Driskell Prize, awarded for original and important contributions to the study of art of the African diaspora. He served as the artistic director for the arts festival Prospect.3 New Orleans from 2012 to 2014.

An English and art history major at Wesleyan, Mr. Sirmans was profoundly influenced by the dual interests in African and African American art of his faculty mentor, Peter Mark. He was also greatly influenced by professors John Paoletti and Robert O'Meally. With Professor Mark as his advisor, Mr. Sirmans wrote an honors thesis on Jean-Michel Basquiat. Shortly after graduating, Mr. Sirmans used that senior thesis to create the chronology for the 1992 Whitney Museum show and catalogue on the artist.

Mr. Sirmans lives in Miami, Florida, with his wife, Jessica, and daughter.

Ayelet Waldman '86, P'17

McConaughy Award

Bestselling author Ayelet Waldman tackles her subjects—which range from motherhood and women’s issues to mental illness and the Holocaust—with honesty and verve. Her latest novel, *Love and Treasure* (2014), weaves a powerful story of love and loss around the history of the Hungarian Gold Train in World War II. Ms. Waldman’s next project, an edited collection of essays by prominent international authors about the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, will be published by HarperCollins in 2017. The book will be co-edited by her husband, the Pulitzer Prize–winning novelist Michael Chabon.

Born in Israel, Ms. Waldman spent her first years in Canada before her family settled in the United States. After receiving a degree in psychology from Wesleyan, Ms. Waldman lived abroad in a kibbutz in Israel before returning to the United States and receiving her JD from Harvard Law School.

Ms. Waldman practiced law for several years before reimagining her career and becoming a writer. In addition to *Love and Treasure*, she is the author of *Red Hook Road*; the *New York Times* bestseller *Bad Mother: A Chronicle of Maternal Crimes, Minor Calamities, and Occasional Moments of Grace*; *Daughter’s Keeper*; the Mommy-Track Mystery series; and *Love and Other Impossible Pursuits*, which was adapted into the film *The Other Woman*, starring Natalie Portman. She has also contributed to several nonfiction anthologies.

Ms. Waldman’s personal essays and profiles of such public figures as Hillary Clinton have been published in a wide variety of newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Her radio commentaries have been featured on *All Things Considered* and *This American Life*. She lives in Berkeley, California, with her husband and their children.



Ayelet Waldman '86, P'17



Luke F. Wood '91

Luke F. Wood '91

Distinguished Alumnus Award

Luke Wood is president of Beats by Dr. Dre, a premium brand of headphones and speakers that was acquired by Apple in 2014. A producer, guitarist, and music industry veteran with more than 20 years of experience, he has been involved with Beats since its early days, officially joining the company in 2011.

Prior to working at Beats, Mr. Wood served as chief strategy officer of Interscope Geffen A&M Records (IGA) and president of the imprint DGC Records, where he worked with many artists including Weezer, All American Rejects, Rise Against, and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Mr. Wood began his career with Geffen Records in 1991 as a director of publicity, representing such bands as Nirvana and Sonic Youth.

A lifelong songwriter and musician, Mr. Wood signed a publishing deal with Universal Music Group in 1996, and during that year his band, Sammy, released its third album, *Tales of Great Neck Glory*, on Geffen/DGC Records. In August 2014, he joined the board of directors of Fender Musical Instruments, alongside U2’s Bono and The Edge.

Mr. Wood graduated from Wesleyan with a major in American studies. He lives in Los Angeles, California, with his wife, Sophia W. Nardin '91, and two daughters.

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