

The David Astor Journalism Awards Trust

NEWS RELEASE

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First David Astor Journalism Award Winners Named

Three print journalists in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have been recognised for their outstanding potential and named as the first winners of the new David Astor Journalism Awards.

The award winners are: Murithi Mutiga, 25, at the *Daily Metro* in Kenya; Valentine Marc Nkwame, 34, at *The Arusha Times* in Tanzania; and Tabu Butagira, 28, at *The Daily Monitor* in Uganda.

They were selected from a field of 51 locally nominated candidates in a rigorous assessment process spanning nine months. Two independent judges chose the winners after interviewing three finalists each in Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam last week.

The key purpose of the awards is to help develop the capacity of exceptionally able early-career journalists to assume future leading roles in the profession.

“Congratulations to these very talented and dedicated young journalists,” said Richard Astor, chairman of The David Astor Journalism Awards Trust (DAJAT), a London-based human rights charity, which sponsors this innovative programme to promote, strengthen and support independent journalism in Africa.

“We recognise in these journalists the essential qualities and determination to excel in the profession and we look forward to offering them our continued support as their careers develop,” the DAJAT chairman said.

Each winner will initially take part in a three-month professional development programme tailored to their needs and interests, working with experienced outside journalists, and then become career-long members of the David Astor Journalism Awards peer-support network. They also each received a token cash award of \$500.

Appropriate programmes will be designed with each award winner and their employers in the coming months. These could include temporary work placements at newspapers in the

UK or South Africa, or intensive professional mentoring from veteran outside journalists in the award winners' own newsrooms.

The judges were: William Carmichael, former head of Africa Programs at the Ford Foundation in New York and currently an adviser to Human Rights Watch; and Michael Holman, Africa Editor at *The Financial Times* in London from 1984 to 2002, now a novelist and frequent contributor to various publications on African affairs.

“This has been much more than a talent spotting exercise,” Michael Holman said. “Above all, it has been a privileged opportunity to play a part in the creation of a network of some of East Africa's most capable young journalists, who will surely develop as an influential and inspirational force in the region and beyond.”

The candidate-selection process for these awards began in May 2007 with local nominations. All news media houses were invited to put forward one candidate each for consideration. Other nominators included journalists' associations, other media groups, journalism lecturers and trainers, civil society organisations and former editors.

There were no age, educational or minimum work experience requirements but candidates were expected to be at an early stage in their career and had to meet certain key criteria, including solid commitment to the profession, continuing to work in Africa as their long-term career goal, and maintaining the highest ethical standards.

In addition, candidates had to show some special talent and flair for journalism, and the requisite qualities to succeed in the profession, such as independent thinking, courage, determination and drive.

The 15 nominees each from Kenya and Tanzania, and the 21 from Uganda were required to submit a written application and examples of their published work. DAJAT's Executive Director, Jim Meyer, personally interviewed all of the candidates last September and October. He also took opinions from the nominators, employers and others.

A shortlist of preferred candidates was drawn up, from which the Trustees chose three finalists in each country at the end of November.

The runners up were Kenneth Kwama and Elizabeth Mwai, both at *The Standard* in Kenya; Samuel Kamndaya at *The Citizen* and Ezekiel Kamwaga at *The African* in Tanzania; and Emmanuel Gyezaho at *The Daily Monitor* and Benon Oluka at *The EastAfrican* in Uganda.

Each runner up received a token cash award of \$250 and will be automatically reconsidered in the next round of awards. Nominations for other new candidates will be accepted starting

in April.

The David Astor Journalism Awards Trust was formed in 2005. It is named in honour of the renowned editor of *The Observer* newspaper in London for 27 years, from 1948 to 1975, who was a lifelong champion of human rights and African development. He died in 2001. Lord Joffe and Lord Stevenson of Coddham are the Trust's founding Patrons.

The aim of the Trust is to help build strong, independent journalistic capacity in Africa for the purpose of defending human rights and promoting good governance and socio-political development.

“We are very pleased with the outcome of this first round of awards and wish to thank everyone who took part in it,” Richard Astor, the DAJAT chairman, said. “We are especially grateful to all the nominators and the many other local experts who gave us invaluable advice and help.”

“We intend now to make further annual awards to the most promising print journalists working in English in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and hope to expand the programme to other countries in Africa in the future,” he said.

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