

# David Cay Johnston

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## Work History

### **Syracuse University College of Law**

Distinguished Visiting Lecturer

2009-16 and 2019-

Tax and property law (spring) and business law (fall) of the ancient world (a way to learn the theory and principle of modern law)

2009-16; Law in Action for prelaw students, 2019-

### **DCReport.org**

Founder & Editor

2017-

Nonprofit news service, with mostly volunteer staff including founder, covering what the administration and Congress do, not what they say.

### **The Daily Beast and Investopedia**

Columnist

2016-17

### ***Tax Notes Magazine***

Columnist

2008-11 and 2013-15

### ***Newsweek***

Contributing Writer (3 cover stories)

2013-15

***Al Jazeera America***

Columnist

2013-16

***The National Memo***

Columnist

2012-16

***House of Cards (Netflix)***

Consultant

2014

Advised on electricity pricing and regulation, and rare earths availability, to ensure technical accuracy in political drama

***Columbia Journalism Review***

Columnist

2013

***Reuters***

Columnist, Global Tax and Economics

2011-12

***The New York Times***

Tax Reporter

1995-2008

***The Chronicle of Philanthropy***

Columnist

I also trained the inaugural staff and wrote training manual still in use

1988-95

***The Philadelphia Inquirer***

Atlantic City Bureau Chief, Business Reporter, Sunday Business Editor

1988-95

***Los Angeles Times***

National Investigative Correspondent in San Francisco Bureau, Metro Reporter, Feature Writer  
1976-88

***Detroit Free Press***

Investigative Reporter, Lansing Bureau  
1973-76

***San Jose Mercury***

Reporter (Santa Cruz, Monterey, Gilroy, Palo Alto and Redwood City bureaus)  
1968-73

**American Family Resort Hotels LLC**

Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus  
Hotel management company in Ocean City, NJ  
2007-12

**University of Southern California**

Journalism 101 and 102  
Students rated my Fall 1987 course No. 1 in value for the tuition in the entire undergraduate College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.  
1981-88

**UCLA Extension**

Magazine writing  
1982-83

At age 18, the *San Jose Mercury* recruited me to become a staff writer because of my reporting starting in late 1966 for two unrelated weekly newspapers in Santa Cruz County, Calif., *The County News* and the *Valley Press*.

*The Mercury* hired me in 1968 at age 19 for the next reporter opening. I remained the youngest staff reporter until I left in early 1973. I was on

the front page within weeks, figured out who committed the Ohta family mass murders in 1970 and, exclusively, covered the killer's arrest.

Except for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, I have never applied for a job. That newspaper had twice previously recruited me.

## **Awards and Honors**

2001 Pulitzer Prize (finalist in 2000 and double finalist in 2003)

2004 IRE Medal; Investigative Book of the Year award (2017 Finalist)

1982 George Polk Award

2015 Lloyd Leva Plaine Lecture, 49<sup>th</sup> Heckerling Institute

2015 2<sup>nd</sup> place, National Society of Newspaper Columnists

1981 Giraffe Award for LAPD coverage in *LA Times*

Numerous other awards received from accounting schools (University of Texas, Loyola Marymount, etc.) and associations, journalism organizations and ethics organizations.

## **Books**

***It's Even Worse Than You Think:*** What the Trump Administration Is Doing to America

Simon & Schuster January 2018

***The Making of Donald Trump***

*New York Times*, *LA Times*, *USA Today* and *Guardian* bestseller; *Independent* (London) Political Biography of the Year; translated into ten languages

Melville House Books 2016

***The Prosperity Tax: A Simple, Fair & Effective Tax for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy*** (in process)

***DIVIDED: The Perils of Our Growing Inequality (editor)***  
The New Press 2014

Trilogy on the American economy for Penguin's Portfolio imprint:

***The Fine Print (2012)***

Restraint of trade

***Free Lunch (2007) (NYTimes and WSJ bestseller)***

Subsidies

***Perfectly Legal (2003) (NYTimes and WSJ bestseller)***

Taxes

**Temples of Chance**

Casino industry exposé

Doubleday 1992

***A Guide to Michigan Public Records (1974)***

Textbook for Michigan State University journalism school

I also reported, partly wrote and co-produced the bestselling *I Want to Tell You*, (Little Brown 1995) by O. J. Simpson and Lawrence Schiller

## **Book Chapters**

*Investigative Journalism: Dead or Alive?* (British)

*Social Security Works!*

*Ten Excellent Reasons Not-to-Hate Taxes*

*Class Matters*

*The Best Business Writing 2012*

*The New York Times Reader: Business and Economics*

*The New Rules of Personal Investing*

## Accomplishments

Over five decades my reporting:

- revealed news blackouts and manipulations that caused Gross Telecasting's six broadcast stations to be forced off the air (a unique accomplishment in American journalism);
- caused the disbarment and rejection by voters of a corrupt Michigan State Senator, prompting 12 Republican primary voters to write me in for governor in 1974;
- won freedom for an innocent man, Tony Cooks, sentenced to life in prison *after* I identified and confronted the real killer; acquitted at fifth trial in 1985 when real killer called as witness.
- revealed in 1990 that self-proclaimed multi-billionaire Donald Trump was not so rich, a story he denied until his own documents later showed he had a \$232 million negative net worth.
- revealed and explained, in March 2017, Trump's 2005 income tax return;
- exposed injustices and inequities in the tax code, prompting passage of new federal laws and regulations and exposed how some of these reforms were shams;
- exposed how workers' compensation insurers improperly shift costs to Medicare through story of Bob Manning, fighting in 1997 to get benefits 35 years after being paralyzed on the job;
- changed the way all news organizations report executive compensation by showing vast sums hidden in plain sight (I read every executive compensation article in every major business publication from 1973 through 1999 to ascertain that reporting changed after my 1996 articles);
- revealed in 1996 how supposedly safe retirement savings plans left workers with pennies on the dollar while executives of failed

companies collected in full and in some cases doubled their retirement money;

- revealed weaknesses in federal regulations that helped dishonest business owners steal their workers' 401(k) savings, resulting in new rules;
- exposed and explained in late 1970s discriminatory gender pay policies that discriminated against women while showing solutions;
- stopped two tax dodges valued by Congressional tax staff at \$258 billion in the first ten years, resulting in reforms;
- prompted President George W. Bush to make his only major tax policy change, dropping a proposed gift tax repeal that would have allowed the rich to escape most income taxes;
- revealed how total incomes fell over the 12 years the Bush tax cuts were in full effect by \$6.6 trillion, an amount equal to the total income of Americans earned in 2012 through Labor Day;
- revealed how offshore corporate subsidiaries enable multinational (but not domestic) companies to convert the burden of taxes into extra profits;
- prompted President and Mrs. Clinton to change how they filed their tax returns, resulting in much more money for charity;
- shut down so many tax dodges and prompted 15 tax crime prosecutions (14 ending in conviction and prison) that a prominent law professor called me the "*de facto* chief tax enforcement officer of the United States;"
- exposed the purported loss of family farms due to estate tax as a myth;
- wrote, in the *Los Angeles Times*, the first deconstruction of a fatal drive-by gang shooting;

- debunked a supposed crime wave enveloping Los Angeles, which made news worldwide, by showing it was just a spike in thefts of Blaupunkt radios from German cars;
- exposed LAPD political spying, brutality and incompetence that included officers being assigned to sleep with women to gather political information and naming spies, including the undercover officer who instigated the May Day 1981 riot;
- revealed the constitution and other secrets of a centuries-old criminal gang involved in corrupting San Francisco police;
- obtained exclusive interview with Gary Gilmore that ran on morning of his execution.
- wrote what competitors said was definitive piece on Jim Jones of People's Temple
- exposed an American newspaper publisher as an unregistered foreign agent of the apartheid regime in South Africa, acts for which he was later indicted;
- exposed the California National Guard's training of local police to take over government through martial rule (not law), without teaching restoration of civilian authority;
- prompted Oregon legislators to adopt utility tax reform, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes before its repeal eight years later at the behest of Warren Buffett's lobbyists;
- exposed numerous utility company price-gouging and anti-consumer regulatory schemes;
- showed how by design rules of electricity markets raise, rather than lower, prices while also discouraging new investment so power plant owners can maintain inflated prices;

- prompted Jack Welch to relinquish retirement perks valued at about \$70 million, after explaining the economics;
- prompted the dismissal of the head of Ernst & Young after revealing partnership secrets he had thoughtlessly put into the public record in Indiana;
- exposed how school children and others are unknowingly at risk from pipeline explosions due to weak regulations including meaningless annual disclosures to local fire department and school officials;
- revealed the expected future cost of the Sun Desert nuclear power plant, which company officials later said killed the multibillion dollar California project (which environmentalists unsuccessfully had fought) by explaining the time-value of money issues to customers in plain English;
- detailed how the State of New Jersey created the appearance of tough regulation of Atlantic City casinos by publicly pursuing small fry while looking the other way at major violations by owners;
- exposed the looting of charitable estates by Barron Hilton and the Keck Brothers, and the misuse of charitable funds by numerous charities including three of the nation's largest United Ways (Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C.);
- exposed how three medical entrepreneurs become billionaires despite 400 years of legal doctrine to protect charitable assets and, later, how one of them was exempted from laws against self-dealing through a California statute that shielded only him;
- exposed MSIA, a wealthy Hollywood cult run by a former school teacher who claimed to be god incarnate and tricked prominent leaders including Mother Teresa, Lech Walesa and Ralph Nader into endorsements;

- created the first news beat in America covering nonprofits as hard news, prompting nine other newspapers (including *The Washington Post*, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*) to do the same after I co-wrote the 1983 *Columbia Journalism Review* guide to covering nonprofits;
- wrote the 1983 *Columbia Journalism Review* guide on how to cover police and policing;

## **Public Service**

Board President, Investigative Reporters & Editors, 2012-2014  
Board Treasurer 2008-12

Board President, InvestigativePost.org, Buffalo, 2014-18

Trustee, Geva Theatre Center, Rochester, N.Y., 2005-2012

Trustee, Visual Studies Workshop/SUNY (graduate fine arts school)  
2008-11

Chairman, Newspaper Guild Local #10

Led negotiations that expanded jurisdiction, improved health care, protected pension and produced real salary increases while showing management ways to improve profitability at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia Daily News*.

1993-95

Contributor and volunteer fundraiser for *feed/back*, *The California Journalism Review*

1977-1985

## **Education**

### **Michigan State University**

Public administration (graduate level), economics and journalism  
1973-75

### **University of Chicago**

Economics (doctoral level), law and public administration for two quarters on an Urban Journalism Fellowship (youngest by five years of 10 international fellows)  
1973

### **San Francisco State University**

Urban economics and journalism  
1972

### **Cabrillo, De Anza, Foothill and Cañada Community Colleges**

Economics, black studies, journalism and history  
1967-72

## **Lectures and Broadcast**

Frequent guest on MSNBC and CNN; BBC and Al Jazeera English in Britain; CBC and CTV in Canada; ABC in Australia; and various overseas, national and local television and radio shows in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran and Norway.

I have lectured on six continents about accounting, ethics, tax policy, and such journalism matters as interviewing techniques and using numbers effectively.

More than 50 colleges and universities, from Harvard and Columbia to Reed College and Sydney (Australia) University have retained me as a paid speaker (often through their law or business schools) and I have delivered *pro bono* lectures at many other colleges as well as at inner-city high schools from Los Angeles to Rochester.

Plenary speaker at global assembly of the gambling industry, and national assemblies of religious, trade and professional organizations including the American Association of Law Schools, American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and Unitarian Universalists (twice) as well as state organizations such as the New York State Society of CPAs.

### **Personal and Miscellaneous**

Married to Jennifer Leonard, CEO of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, 1982-.

Eight grown children ages 52, 50, 48, 46, 46, 44, 33 and 28; five grandsons and three step-grandchildren.