

# James McBride, Caroline Kennedy, and Other Alumni in the News

Winter 2013-14



James McBride (Chia Messina)

## Stars of the NBA

Several Columbians were recognized at this year's National Book Awards. **James McBride '80JRN** won the fiction award for his novel *The Good Lord Bird*. McBride, a journalist, has written several other books, including the best-selling memoir *The Color of Water*.

**Rachel Kushner '01SOA** was a finalist in the fiction category for her novel *The Flamethrowers*. Kushner's first novel, *Telex from Cuba*, was also a finalist for the award in 2008.

Additionally, **Molly Antopol '07SOA** was selected as one of this year's "5 Under 35" by the National Book Foundation. She is the author of the forthcoming story collection *The UnAmericans*.

### **Swearing In**

**Gale Brewer '97GS** was elected Manhattan borough president in November. Known for her advocacy work with affordable housing, she has represented the Upper West Side on the New York City Council since 2002.

**Caroline Kennedy '88LAW** was recently sworn in as the US ambassador to Japan. Kennedy is an attorney and the editor of nine books. From 2002 to 2011, Kennedy served as vice chair of the Fund for Public Schools, an advocacy group for school reform in New York City. She will be the third generation of Kennedys to serve in the US diplomatic corps.

The Senate confirmed **Jeh Johnson '82LAW** as the new director of Homeland Security, replacing Janet Napolitano. Johnson was most recently in private practice, but has also served as general counsel of the Department of the Air Force and of the Defense Department.

### **Director's Guild**

**Jennifer Lee '05SOA** was included on *Variety* magazine's 2013 list of ten screenwriters to watch. She has just become the first woman to direct a Disney animated feature film — she cowrote and codirected *Frozen*, a fairy tale inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen." Lee also cowrote *Wreck-It Ralph*, which was nominated in 2013 for the best animated feature Academy Award.

**Jeffrey Milarsky**, a professor of music at Columbia and the music director and conductor of the Columbia University Orchestra, won the 2013 Ditson Conductor's Award. The \$5,000 prize, established in 1945, recognizes conductors' commitment to American music.

## MacArthur Park

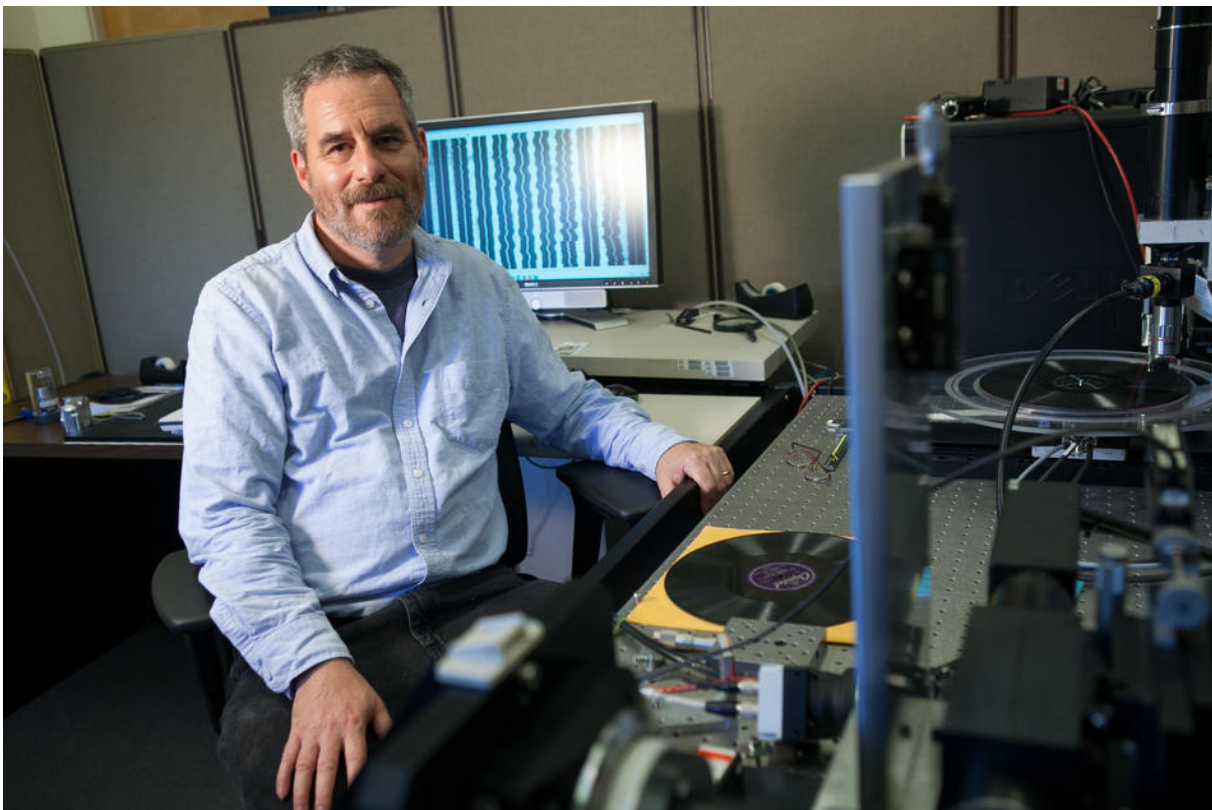
Three out of this year's twenty-four MacArthur Fellows are members of the Columbia community.

Fiction writer **Karen Russell '06SOA** was recognized for her innovative, surreal prose. She is the author of the novel *Swamplandia!* and two collections of short stories.

Associate writing professor **Donald Antrim** was similarly recognized for blending fantasy and reality in his writing. He is the author of three novels and an essay collection.

Experimental physicist **Carl Haber '80CC, '85GSAS** will use his award to continue developing new technology to reconstruct inaccessible and deteriorating sound recordings.

Winners receive \$500,000 "genius grants" to support their work.



Carl Haber. Photo courtesy of the MacArthur Foundation

## Banking on Her

**Karnit Flug '86GSAS** was named governor of the Bank of Israel by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, becoming the first woman to head the country's central bank. Flug, who immigrated to Jerusalem from Poland when she was three, previously served as an economist for the International Monetary Fund. She has worked at the Bank of Israel since 1997 and assumed her new role in November.



[Guide to school abbreviations](#)

[All categories >](#)