Alumni

Karen Russell, Gerry Lenfest, and Other Alumni in the News

Columbians making headlines.

Fall 2010



Karen Russell (Joanne Chan)

Five who have arrived

Five alumni and faculty of the School of the Arts writing division were recently included in *The New Yorker*'s "20 under 40" list of accomplished young authors. The Columbia honorees are Karen Russell '06SOA, Rivka Galchen '06SOA, Dinaw

Mengestu ’05SOA, assistant professor Gary Shteyngart, and Wells Tower ’02SOA. Galchen, Russell, and Tower also serve as adjunct faculty in the writing division.

I spy a scoop

Thomas Gommes ’06JRN has launched an online news venture called *The Periscope Post*, which summarizes the news of the day while allowing readers to post their opinions. Renée Feltz ’08JRN and Stokely Baksh ’08JRN have created Deportation Nation, an independent investigative journalism project that critically examines immigration enforcement practices in the U.S. The project has produced an online library of primary-source documents about enforcement efforts, an interactive map showing where U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents are most active, and a multimedia platform for immigrants to share their stories. The project is supported by the Open Society Institute.

Perfectly crooked

Former boxing manager Eric Drath ’94GS won the 2010 Sports Emmy Award for Outstanding Documentary for *Assault in the Ring*, an HBO movie that he wrote, directed, and produced about a controversial 1983 boxing match in which Luis Resto unexpectedly beat Billy Collins, Jr., but subsequently was imprisoned for having removed the padding from his gloves.

In the shadow of no towers

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf ’69SEAS has ignited a national debate over religious tolerance through his effort, as founder and leader of the nonprofit Cordoba Initiative, to build an Islamic community center and mosque near Ground Zero in Manhattan. Rauf, who earned his bachelor’s degree in applied physics at Columbia, is known as a moderate cleric whose organization promotes cross-cultural understanding between Islam and the West. He is author of the book *What’s Right With Islam Is What’s Right With America*, which asserts the common ethical foundations of Islam and American democracy.

Learning from the master

Li Lu ’96CC, ’96LAW, ’96BUS, a hedge-fund manager at Berkshire Hathaway, was profiled in the July 30 issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, which predicted that Li will eventually assume many of Warren Buffett’s investment responsibilities at Berkshire. A native of China who helped lead the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, Li was inspired to take up investing, he says, when he heard Buffett ’51BUS give a lecture at Columbia.

Good fixer-upper

University Trustee Gerry Lenfest ’58LAW, ’09HON will donate up to $5.8 million to help save the SS *United States*, a historic ocean liner that has been docked in Philadelphia since 1996. Lenfest’s donation will be used by a nonprofit organization to buy the ship from Norwegian Cruise Line and maintain it while planning its restoration and conversion into a museum. The SS *United States* still holds the transatlantic speed record that it set on its maiden voyage in 1952.



Guide to school abbreviations

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