

REPORT OF THE JURY
HERMAN WEKKER PRIZE
NATIONAAL CONGRES ENGELS

The title of our conference today is English in a Changed World. A title that reflects how the challenges we faced in the world these past few years have changed the professional lives of those working in education forever. But it's not just our job that has forever changed, for journalists around the world their job to report the news and gather background information has become all the more challenging too. According to the Washington Post, journalism has become a steadily more dangerous profession around the world, also in the United States. The last two years, with its global pandemic and widespread social unrest, the trend has continued. In a world of fake news and an increase in the harassment of those working in journalism, good reporting is more important than ever. The recipient of this year's Herman Wekker Prize did just that. Luckily, she is able to travel again to what she calls her second home, the United States. In fact, she is there right now and will reach us through Zoom in a few minutes.

This year's winner of the 2022 Herman Wekker Prize has kept us informed through various, innovative and new forms. For example, in the years and months leading up to the United States supreme court ruling to overturn Roe vs Wade and afterwards we saw her at talk show tables, could hear her on the radio, read her articles in De Groene Amsterdammer, follow her Blog and listen to her podcast to make sense of what was happening. Her media appearances and articles are always informative, accessible and diverse.

The Professor Herman Wekker Prize is awarded during each biennial *Nationaal Congres Engels* to a journalist from the Netherlands who has given outstanding service to the spread of information about English-speaking countries and cultures among the Dutch public. The prize

is named in honour of the late Herman Wekker, former Professor of English Language at the University of Groningen and one of the founders of this national conference. He had an international vision and recognised the central importance of responsible and exciting journalism in sharing insight and understanding between cultures. Before his early death in 1997 he was very active among English language scholars, teachers and writers in the Netherlands, and conceived the idea of this award. It was he who conceived the idea of this award, an award which, over the years, has become widely appreciated among journalists in this country. The winners to date are:

1995: Hans Bouman
1997: Tine van Houts
1999: Charles Groenhuijsen
2001: Peter Sierksma
2003: Max Westerman
2005: Hans Steketee
2007: Lia van Bekhoven
2009: Tom-Jan Meeus
2011: Hieke Jippes
2013: Eelco Bosch van Rosenthal
2015: Bram Vermeulen
2017: Arjen van de Horst en Wouter Zwart
2019: Melle Garschagen

It is this year's winner's unique combination of new journalistic forms combined with her versatility as a journalist and her passion for the subject matter that convinced the jury that she is the right winner. She's lived in Philadelphia, in Los Angeles and in 2021 she traveled 20.000 km across the United States for her podcast Welkom in Washington. Through this podcast we meet, not the politicians of Washington DC, but the Americans in 8 of the other Washingtons throughout the US. We learn about homelessness in Washington State, about

the history of the KKK in Washington Paris Louisiana, about Polygamy in Washington Utah and Black voters in Washington, Georgia. With her humour, intelligence and charming nature and the colourful characters that she interviews, her podcasts bring to life not only the big issues in American society but also the lives of the average, and maybe not so average Americans. She shows us that not everything is black and white and it is often in those grey areas that we get to know and understand the history and culture of a nation.

The winner of the 2022 Herman Wekker Prize is: Laila Frank