

Jonathan Scott Michels

ADDRESS 1731 Athens Avenue
Durham, NC 27707
336-596-4104 / jonscottmichels@gmail.com
www.jonathanmichels.com

EDUCATION

B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011
Major: Journalism and Mass Communication

A.A.S., Forsyth Technical Community College, 2009
Major: Radiography

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Independent journalist, 2011 - present

PUBLICATIONS

“Winning Medicare for All Would Have Massive Implications Beyond Health Care,” Jacobin Magazine, (April 2021).

In a review of “Medicare for All: A Citizen’s Guide” by Drs. Abdul El-Sayed and Micah Johnson, I explore how the only way to overcome the opposition of health care profiteers is to build a mass movement that’s large enough and powerful enough to defeat them.

“The Films of Ramin Bahrani Urge Audiences to Look in a Direction Where Nobody Else is Looking,” INDY Week, (March 2021).

On the heels of Ramin Bahrani’s third movie, critic Roger Ebert hailed him as a “new great American director,” comparing him to a young Martin Scorsese. On February 23, the Criterion Collection released his first two films, *Man Push Cart* and *Chop Shop*, on Blu-ray and DVD. With the induction of these two films into the collection, the Iranian-American Winston-Salem native takes his rightful place among the world’s master filmmakers.

“The Fight for Medicare for All Made Some Important Progress in 2021,” Jacobin Magazine, (December 2020).

The fight for Medicare for All is one of the most important in the United States today. And despite the many horrors of 2020, the movement demanding an end to our privatized health system actually made some headway this year.

“Biden Ran on a Return to Normalcy, but There’s Nothing Normal about the American Health Care System,” Common Dreams, (November 2020).

Post-election editorial arguing that the compromises and half-measures that are sure to be implemented under a Biden administration are not up to the challenge to combat the deadly coronavirus pandemic. What Americans want and need is a universal, single-payer healthcare system dedicated to meeting human needs and not the needs of stockholders.

“Kings Bay Plowshares Activists Pay Heavy Price for Resisting Nuclear War,” Shadowproof, (November 2020).

For 40 years, Catholic peace activists with the Plowshares movement have attempted to topple the formidable idol of nuclearism, and they have paid a heavy price for daring to confront the American war machine. I reported on how several Plowshares activists who infiltrated a nuclear submarine base in 2018 are being sent to federal prison.

“War on Torture,” INDY Week, (October 2020).

Building upon previous reporting, I examined how anti-torture advocates and North Carolina Democratic Congressman David Price worked together to demand that the CIA disclose information regarding the state’s outsized role in the rendition, detention, and interrogation (RDI) program implemented in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

“To Keep Not Only Patients but Ourselves Safe, We Have to Unionize,” Jacobin Magazine, (August 2020).

I spoke to five nurses at Mission Health hospital in Asheville, North Carolina, on the eve of an historic labor victory about why they’re organizing, how health care–worker unions can improve patient care and safety, and what a victory would mean for establishing a beachhead for unions in the South.

“North Carolina nurses stand on the brink of a historic labor victory,” Facing South, (June 2020).

Article puts the nurses’ union drive at Mission Hospital in the context of North Carolina’s long history of anti-unionism. Despite the odds, the nurses are continuing to march forward and say they are on the brink of a historic labor victory not only for the South but for the nation as well.

“North Carolina Nurses Seek Their First Union,” Labor Notes, (May 2020).

Blog article about the significance of a nurses’ union drive at Mission Hospital in North Carolina, the country’s second least unionized state. The piece highlighted the voices of nurses on the frontlines of the labor struggle as they try to maintain unity in the face of the coronavirus pandemic and a relentless union busting campaign from the country’s most powerful hospital corporation, HCA Healthcare.

“Giant Hospital Corporation Takes Advantage of Coronavirus to Fight Nurses’ Union Drive,” The Intercept, (May 2020).

Exposé about how the largest hospital corporation in America, HCA Healthcare, used the coronavirus pandemic to delay and undermine a union election for 1,600 nurses in North Carolina. While the corporation stood to rake in \$4.7 billion in coronavirus relief benefits, nurses say they had to fight for basic personal protective equipment, or PPE.

“Masks, Gowns, and Medicare for All,” Piedmont Left Review, (March 2020).

Article written in the midst of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic drawing on my own experience as a caregiver working on the frontline stave off the virus. The piece explores how the novel coronavirus laid bare the inadequacies of the American health system and the need for a national health program more commonly known as Medicare for All.

“The Spin Doctors,” Jacobin Magazine, (January 2020).

For decades, the American Medical Association has fought single-payer tooth and nail. But the US’s corporatized health system hurts doctors too — and cracks are forming in the AMA’s opposition to Medicare for All. My article looks at the American Medical Association's withdrawal from the corporate front group, Partnership for America's Health Care Future, and includes an interview with private health industry whistleblower, Wendell Potter.

“Single Payer Goes South,” In These Times, (November 2019).

A brief dispatch focusing on the efforts of an organization called the Southern Workers Assembly which has launched a worker-led campaign to pass Improved and Expanded Medicare for All. Faced with physical and financial ruin from our broken healthcare system, workers from around the South are making it clear they do not see this as a fight for a handout; it’s a worker-led fight for a universal health program to sever the chain between healthcare and employers.

“I Was Doing It for My Patients’: Dr. Charlie van der Horst on His Life Fighting for Justice,” INDY Week, (June 2019).

Edited oral history interview with Dr. Charlie van der Horst, a physician and world-renowned AIDS who disappeared during a 120-mile marathon swim. The previously unpublished interview—conducted in July 2014 as part of an oral history on the Moral Monday movement—explores how van der Horst’s commitment to social justice stemmed from his early political activism, the difficulty of caring for victims of the AIDS epidemic, and his indignation with the North Carolina General Assembly’s refusal to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

“Why we’re fighting the American Medical Association,” The Guardian, (June 2019).

Editorial about how the American Medical Association and other corporate interests are attempting to stymie the movement for Improved and Expanded Medicare for All. The article preceded a protest and die-in at the AMA’s annual meeting in Chicago led by a national coalition that included members of National Nurses United, Students for a National Health Program, The Center for Popular Democracy and Physicians for a National Health Program among others.

“The Biggest Moments of 2018 in the Fight for Universal Health Care,” Shadowproof, (December 2018).

A recap of the some of the most significant moments in the battle for universal healthcare from the teachers’ strike in West Virginia to the surge of support for single payer among medical students to the creation of a Medicare-for-All caucus in Congress.

“Citizen-Led Truth Commission Seeks Justice For Survivors Of North Carolina Torture Flights,” Shadowproof, (October 2018).

Investigation of a report released by a citizen-led truth commission working to shine a light on North Carolina’s outsized role in the rendition and torture of 49 terror suspects in the wake of the September 11 attacks. In examining the work of this landmark commission, the article is also an exploration of the grassroots organizing that gave it life. For the past 13 years, members of North Carolina Stop Torture Now have employed a wide range of tactics—from civil disobedience and peace vigils to legislative lobbying—to keep the issue of torture in the minds of Americans even as it has faded from the national headlines.

“WE KNEW WHERE THE POWER WAS’: Conversations with organizers of the North Carolina Prisoners’ Labor Union,” Scalawag Magazine, (June 2018).

A three-part series featuring interviews with organizers and members of the North Carolina Prisoners’ Labor union. At its height in the early 1970s, the North Carolina Prisoners’ Labor Union collected union cards from more than 5,000 prisoners, roughly half of the state’s total inmate population. In the least unionized state in the country, the union forced legal battles about whether prisoners have the right to free speech and assembly that led to the landmark Supreme Court Case, *Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners’ Labor Union*, which continues to overshadow prison organizing on the cell block today.

“Is this the year the AMA finally joins the single-payer movement?,” [STAT News](#), (June 2018).

Editorial written in support of medical students with the American Medical Association who passed a resolution demanding that the organization—the most powerful doctor's lobbying group in America—finally rescind its decades-long opposition against single-payer healthcare.

“A case for national health insurance,” [KevinMD.com](#), (March 2018).

Op-ed article calling for Americans to have the courage to move beyond poverty programs and half-measures and to imagine a healthcare program that provides affordable, quality care to every person regardless of age, income or employment.

“It's time for Medicare for all,” [The Winston-Salem Journal](#), (February 2018).

Drawing upon examples from the 100-year-old movement for universal healthcare, this editorial concluded that embracing single payer will demand not only a radical revision of how healthcare is financed but will require the courage to move beyond half-measures and partisan politics.

“The Biggest Moments of 2017 in the Fight for Universal Health Care,” [CommonDreams.org](#), (December 2017).

A list of the most significant moments in the battle for universal, single-payer healthcare from the Women's March on Washington to the surge of support for single-payer legislation in Congress.

“Steve's Story” and “Louise's Story,” [Scalawag Magazine](#), (May 2017).

First-person oral history interviews with two harm reduction advocates who spent years fighting for the humane treatment of drug users in North Carolina and elsewhere, sometimes at personal risk of arrest or relapse.

“First Do No Harm,” [Triad City Beat](#), (March 2017).

In the midst of the devastating opioid epidemic, this story presented the uneasy formation of a syringe exchange in the American South. The harm reduction program, which aimed to mitigate the effects of North Carolina's skyrocketing heroin abuse, was met with stiff resistance from some city residents.

“A single-payer healthcare system is needed,” [The Winston-Salem Journal](#), (March 2017).

Editorial looking back on lessons learned from 10 years of working in a market-driven healthcare system. The article argues that the only way to get back to the real business of health care — caring for our patients — is to enact universal, single-payer healthcare system that covers all Americans.

“The Top Ten Moments of 2016 in the Fight for Universal Health Care,” [In-Training.org](#), (January 2017).

A list of the most significant moments in the battle for universal, single-payer healthcare from Bernie Sanders' 2016 primary campaign to the Zika outbreak.

“Who gets to be remembered in Chapel Hill?” [Scalawag Magazine](#), (October 2016).

Examines the history and impact of memorializing white supremacy on both the student body, faculty and the integrity of the nation's oldest public university, UNC-Chapel Hill. The article was released one year before chaos erupted around a Confederate statue in another university town, Charlottesville, VA, that led to the tragic death of one protester and widespread calls for the removal of white supremacist monuments around the country.

“Earline Parmon and the legacy of Local 22,” [Triad City Beat](#), (March 2016).

Edited interview with NC Senator Earline Parmon about the legacy of a landmark interracial labor union in Winston-Salem called Local 22. What I assumed would be a standard interview between a

journalist and a lawmaker about history actually revealed a lot about Parmon herself and her own journey of becoming a strong, caring woman who never stopped pushing for change. Parmon's sudden death last week at age 72 reminded me of our brief interviews together and the importance of documenting the history of our community.

“Trial likely to pivot on whether NC election law is discriminatory,” [Triad City Beat](#), (August 2015). Coverage of the closing arguments in a historic voting rights trial in which the future of the Voting Rights Act—and the ability of minorities to access the ballot box—hangs in the balance.

“Q&A with Ajamu Dillahunt,” [Scalawag Magazine](#), (July 2015). Q&A article with Ajamu Dillahunt, a longtime civil rights and labor activist featured in the inaugural issue of Scalawag Magazine. The interview was adapted from a larger oral history project focused on documenting the recent political upsurge in North Carolina and across the South.

“Occupy Winston-Salem: Three Years Later,” [Triad City Beat](#), (October 2014). Retrospective article about the three-year anniversary of Occupy Winston-Salem, a local chapter of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The article traces the group's successes and failures as its members leaped into some of the most historic political struggles in North Carolina since the civil rights movement.

“Should the deadline be extended for NC eugenics victims?” [Facing South](#), (June 2014). Article corresponding with the in-depth report about the campaign to compensate survivors of North Carolina's eugenics program. The article led to a conversation about whether the deadline for survivors to apply for compensation should be extended. Reverend William Barber, president of the NC NAACP, wrote an open letter to the NC legislature demanding that the extension of the deadline.

“Breaking the 'wicked silence',” [Triad City Beat](#), (June 2014). In-depth report about the story behind the Winston-Salem *Journal's* dramatic series about North Carolina's eugenics program and the campaign to compensate survivors. In addition to giving a detailed account of the events leading up to the bipartisan compensation effort, the article explores whether history is repeating itself with new policies that hurt the poor.

“Marker to honor 1940s labor union,” [The Winston-Salem Journal](#), (April 2013). Investigated the impact that an interracial tobacco union during the 1940s had upon contemporary political activism in Winston-Salem, NC. The front-page article led to a formal apology from the newspaper for its smear campaign against the union.

PROJECTS

[Sounds Like Hate Podcast](#), (February 2021)

Recorded an interview with Megan Squire, a professor who tracks right-wing extremist groups online, for producers of The Southern Poverty Law Center's podcast.

[Southern Discomfort Podcast](#), (2020 – Present).

A bi-weekly podcast exploring the most crucial issues impacting the American South and the nation. The first episode focused on the hyperexploitation of poultry plant workers in Mississippi in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Another explored movement journalism and how it might help the media overcome its long struggle with uplifting diverse voices.

“Episode 6: Lights, Camera, Hillbilly! with Meredith McCarroll,” Southern Discomfort Podcast, (April 2021).

With Oscar season approaching and actress Glenn Close poised to win an award for her role in *Hillbilly Elegy*, professor and writer Meredith McCarroll walks us through the long history of Appalachian stereotypes in film and print.

“Episode 5: The Southern Struggle Over Medicare for All with Rita Valenti,” Southern Discomfort Podcast, (November 2020).

As the United States approaches 250,000 deaths from COVID-19, I spoke with nurse and health equity advocate Rita Valenti about the ways that the South was particularly unprepared to withstand the coronavirus pandemic and how Southerners can and must be at the forefront of the Medicare-for-All movement.

“Episode 4: Snowden, Surveillance and the South with Joseph Atkins,” Southern Discomfort Podcast, (October 2020).

Amidst speculation that President Trump might pardon NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, I spoke with journalism professor Joseph Atkins about the effort to years long effort to pardon Snowden and how the history of surveillance in the American South set the model for NSA spying today.

“Episode 3: Voting Rights and Voting Wrongs with Robert Korstad and James Leloudis,” Southern Discomfort Podcast, (September 2020).

In the leadup to the 2020 presidential election, I spoke with historians Robert Korstad and James Leloudis to examine the deployment of voter suppression tactics through the lens of the long struggle for voting rights in North Carolina.

“Episode 2: We Charge Omnicide with Patrick O’Neill of the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven,” Southern Discomfort Podcast, (September 2020).

On the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, this episode explores a 2018 action by seven Plowshares activists to infiltrate the Kings Bay Naval Base in St. Mary’s, Georgia, the largest nuclear submarine base in the world, containing six Trident submarines, each capable of holding 200 nuclear warheads, to call attention to the second nuclear arms race currently underway in the United States.

“Episode 1: Organizing to Defend ‘Paper and People’ with Tonia Moxley,” Southern Discomfort Podcast, (August 2020).

Episode features Tonia Moxley, a 20-year veteran reporter at The Roanoke Times, who helped to unionize the paper in April 2020. Moxley talks about the union drive, its implications for other struggling journalists in the South and the union's efforts to save 10 positions from the copy and design desks.

Untitled oral history project, (2012 – Present).

Oral history project examining the changing South through interviews with social justice activists involved in various actions, including the Occupy Wall Street and Moral Monday movements. This project required in-person interviews with more than 50 participants across North Carolina, from the beaches of Manteo to the Appalachian hollers, in order to capture their stories before they are lost forever. The interviews will be permanently housed at the Southern Oral History Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill for future scholarship.

FILMOGRAPHY

It's Monday and the South is Rising, (2013).

Documented the grassroots organizing of a North Carolina protest movement that garnered national attention. Shot 20 hours of footage and incorporated additional scenes from an independent videographer to use in the film. “It’s Monday and the South is Rising” was chosen as an official selection at the 2014 RiverRun International Film Festival, where the film received a standing ovation.

Local 22: Bringing the Giant down to Earth, (2013).

Short documentary about the historic efforts of Local 22, an interracial labor union led mostly by African-American women that pushed for gender, social and economic equality during the height of Jim Crow. The tobacco workers’ refusal to work in poor conditions for little pay in a segregated environment sparked seven years of hard struggle for workplace democracy. The film has been shown at panel discussions at the New Winston Museum.

Untitled Occupy Winston-Salem documentary, (2011 – 2012).

Attended dozens of activist rallies, protests and numerous city council meetings throughout North Carolina, Washington D.C. and New York City to document stories about political activism following the creation of Occupy Wall Street. Interviewed numerous Occupy W-S members, city council members, university professors and reporters with a Canon HDSLR and an audio recorder.

Ripe for Change, (2012).

Travelled throughout central North Carolina to examine the damaging effects of food deserts and how small, rural communities are fighting childhood obesity. The short film was produced with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

HONORS AND AWARDS

The Association of Alternative Newsmedia, 2018, Awarded third place in the best long-form news story category for “First Do No Harm.”

Southern Oral History Project at UNC-Chapel Hill's Center for the Study of the American South, 2014, Awarded grant funding to transcribe several oral history interviews relating to various social justice movements, such as the Moral Monday and Occupy Wall Street movements.

RiverRun International Film Festival, 2014, Official selection in the North Carolina short documentary category for It's Monday and the South is rising.

Carrboro Film Festival, 2014, Official selection for It's Monday and the South is rising.

Mental Health America Media Award, 2012, Awarded for best student journalism in mental healthcare reporting for “Dix patients fear losing safety net”.

MEDIA APPEARANCES

WUNC's The State of Things, (May 2020).

Interviewed alongside venerated labor journalist Mike Elk and emergency room nurse Trish Stevenson about the significant labor struggle at Mission Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina. Responded to questions related to my reporting with The Intercept about the deteriorating conditions at Mission since the takeover by HCA Healthcare that led to the union drive.

Medicare for All Explained podcast, (August 2019).

Interviewed for my Medicare-for-All advocacy work as a national executive board member for Students for a National Health Program (SNaHP) and a co-organizer of a successful campaign to pressure the American Medical Association to withdraw from a dark money lobbying group dedicated to defeating single payer.