

## Michael Lavers '04 is 2018 Murray Visiting Journalist

Tuesday, April 3, 2018



“Journalists are in the unique position of having front row seats to history as it unfolds. Journalists also have the immense responsibility of holding those in positions of power accountable and, in my case, bringing visibility to LGBT rights activists and movements throughout the world.”

So Michael Lavers, UNH '04, describes the work he does for the Washington Blade, the oldest LGBT newspaper in the United States covering gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender news around the world.

Lavers, international editor for the Blade and the 2018 Donald M. Murray Visiting Journalist, will give a talk entitled “Covering LGBT rights abroad and the broader global context” on Tuesday, April 3 at 5 p.m.in MUB Theater I. The talk is free and open to the public.

In his talk, Lavers plans to highlight his reporting on Cuba's LGBT rights movement within the context of the evolving status of relations between the U.S. and Cuba; his recent trip to Puerto Rico that highlighted the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and its continued impact on the island's LGBT community; and what it's like to cover the global LGBT rights movement during the Trump administration.

Lavers will be on campus throughout that week, speaking in

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journalism classes and meeting with staff of The New Hampshire.

“The best part of my job,” says Lavers, “is the fact that I get to speak with activists in countries around the world who trust me to share their stories. The most challenging part of my job is the fact that I get to speak with activists in countries around the world who trust me to share their stories.

For example, when Lavers planned an interview with two transgender women from a city where four trans women were killed in February 2017, he hoped to meet them somewhere in that city. But gang violence made it too dangerous to report from there. Instead, Lavers invited the women to the Salvadoran capital and interviewed them at a local mall over lunch.

Lavers interviewed a Cuban LGBT activist – someone who publicly criticizes his country's government -- at his home near Cienfuegos, Cuba, in May 2017. Cuban authorities had placed the activist under surveillance, and it soon became apparent that Lavers too had been placed under surveillance. A Cuban police officer stopped him on the road about an hour after he left the activist's home and checked his passport, press visa and other documents. The Cuban government earlier in the day had called the owner of the house in which Lavers was staying.

“Many of the stories that I cover are difficult,” says Lavers. “Many of the people with whom I have the honor of speaking are in very difficult situations. One of the challenges of the type of reporting that I do is to do everything possible to cover them in a way that is respectful, responsible, humane and ethical.

“Another challenge that I face while reporting abroad is to take some time to enjoy a particular country from which I am reporting. In other words, it's okay to have fun because reporting from abroad can be really fun.”

Lavers has been a staff writer for the Washington Blade since

2012 and the newspaper's international news editor since June 2015.

He has reported from the Deep South, the United Nations, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Israel, the West Bank and more than a dozen other countries and territories in Latin America and around the world. He has also appeared on Al Jazeera, BBC, Sirius XM, Telemundo and other English and Spanish-language media outlets to discuss LGBT-specific issues.

Lavers graduated from the University of New Hampshire with degrees in journalism and Spanish. He grew up in Manchester, N.H., and currently lives in Dupont Circle with his partner.

The Visiting Journalist program is sponsored by the UNH Journalism Program, the UNH English Department, the Telegraph of Nashua, and the McLean Contributionship.

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