

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[View this email in your browser](#)**WFSJ**World Federation of  
Science JournalistsTHE  
ABEL  
PRIZE

## Hear from this year's Abel Prize winner

Norway's prestigious Abel Prize, which honours the finest contributions to mathematics, is being presented to **Dennis Parnell Sullivan** of the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, USA. The award citation refers to his ground-breaking contributions to the several diverse aspects of topology, the branch of mathematics that considers the fundamental nature of shapes.

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and geometric ideas like a true virtuoso,” says Hans Munthe-Kaas, chair of the Abel Committee.

Although Sullivan’s accomplishments are credited with changing topology forever, he is more humble about the result, insisting that his ultimate goal has always been to express these complex concepts in the easiest and simplest way possible. He will explain more about this perspective in a webinar hosted by the WFSJ, where science journalist **Pakinam Amer** will conduct an in-depth interview with Sullivan.

WHAT: WFSJ Webinar: meet the 2022 Abel Prize Laureate

WHEN: **10amEDT/3pmCET Thursday 24 March 2022**

WHERE: Zoom address to be provided

REGISTRATION: send an e-mail request to [office@wfsj.org](mailto:office@wfsj.org)



A charismatic and lively member of the mathematics community, **Sullivan** has found deep connections between a dazzling variety of areas of mathematics. Over the years he has been connected to a number of universities, and during his time in France he made one of his most important breakthroughs: a new way of understanding rational homotopy theory, a subfield of algebraic topology.

**Sullivan** began to work on problems in dynamical systems in the late 1970s, the study of a point moving in a geometrical space, a field usually considered far removed from algebraic topology. The ability of computers to iterate functions beyond what was humanly possible had created an explosion of interest in this field, known popularly as “chaos theory”, since many of the dynamical systems exhibited chaotic behaviour.

He has won numerous awards, among them the Steele Prize, the 2010 Wolf Prize in

The Abel Prize's roots go back to 1899, when Norwegian mathematician **Sophus Lie** voiced his disappointment that the newly created Nobel Prizes did not include one for mathematics. The King of what was then a united Sweden and Norway was prepared to fund such an award, but those plans were thwarted when the two countries separated in 1905. Finally, in 2002 the Norwegian government established the prize, which is named after the country's pioneering 19<sup>th</sup>-century mathematician Niels Henrik Abel and includes a monetary award now worth around US\$1 million (NOK7,5). The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters administered the annual selection, which is conducted by a committee of the world's leading mathematicians.



**Niels Henrik Abel (1802–1829)** was a Norwegian mathematician who made pioneering contributions in a variety of fields. His most famous single result is the first complete proof demonstrating the impossibility of solving the general quintic equation in radicals. This question was one of the outstanding open problems of his day, and had been unresolved for over 250 years.

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**Pakinam Amer** is an Emmy-winning journalist, science writer, podcaster, experimental storyteller, and formerly, a Knight Science Journalism fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

She was the senior writer of *In Event of Moon Disaster*, an Emmy-winning interactive documentary and narrative project centered around deep fake technology and disinformation, and produced by the MIT Center for Advanced Virtuality where she is currently a research affiliate.

Her stories and podcasts have appeared in *Nature*, *Scientific American*, the *Boston Globe*, and elsewhere.

She was the former editor-in-chief of *Nature Middle East*, the regional edition of *Nature*. She also hosted and produced the region's first science podcast for English-speaking audiences.



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