

Spring 2025

Impact Report

the
center for investigative
reporting



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JILL CONNELLY/ZUMA

Courage in the Moment

While a dispiriting number of institutions—from Big Law to Ivy League universities and major news organizations—buckle under the demands of the Trump administration and the MAGAverse, our newsroom remains committed to unflinching journalism that shows up, digs deep, and asks the difficult questions that the public deserves answers to.

"The Throughline"

We follow the longer arc of a story across time, stitching together the throughlines other newsrooms fail to see.

Reveal's July 2024 episode, "How Police Guns Ended Up in the Hands of Criminals," produced in partnership with CBS News and The Trace, reported on the practice of law enforcement agencies selling their used guns, which ended up being used in 52,000 crimes over a 16-year period—reporting that led to some police departments curtailing the practice. In follow-up reporting, CBS News and The Trace noted that four additional police departments, in Cincinnati; Columbus, Ohio; Sacramento, California; and Monmouth, New Jersey, have stopped selling firearms.

In 2022, Samantha Michaels reported on the ways that failure-to-protect laws incarcerate women for violence committed by their intimate partners. In January 2025, an Oklahoma Republican state lawmaker filed a bill to amend the state's failure-to-protect law. An attorney involved in drafting the legislation texted Michaels to say that they are using her reporting as a fact basis to lobby for the bill. If it passes, it would create an affirmative defense for survivors of domestic violence who were unable to protect their kids from the abuse, and it would also retroactively allow people to file for postconviction relief.

Julia Lurie's October 2023 investigation into Universal Health Services, the country's largest chain of psychiatric hospitals, demonstrated a pattern of mistreatment of its teenage patients. In January 2025, Alaska state Rep. Andrew Gray reintroduced legislation that would limit foster kids' stay in the company's North Star facility in Alaska. His legislation came in response to reading Julia's article, and he introduced similar legislation in 2024.



ILLUSTRATION BY MOTHER JONES; ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY

VOTING RIGHTS

The National Referendum of Local and State Elections

It was not long after the November 2024 election that attention turned to the special elections spanning the first months of the new year—and none garnered more attention than the Wisconsin contest with control of the state’s Supreme Court hanging in the balance. As Elon Musk flooded the state with \$25 million in support of the Trump-aligned candidate and the president signed an executive order aimed at dramatically expanding voter suppression efforts, the election became a larger referendum on Musk’s role in tipping the scales of democracy. In the runup to the election and since—including reporting on a key North Carolina judicial election that Republicans have been attempting to overturn—voting rights correspondent Ari Berman has been a leading voice discussing the election’s larger implications for national politics and the role of money in future state and local elections. As he noted following Susan Crawford’s Wisconsin victory, “oligarchy lost and democracy won.” Berman appeared on MSNBC’s *The Weekend*, *Democracy Now*, and numerous podcasts including *Meidas Touch*, *The Left Hook*, and *Cleanup on Aisle 45*, with citations ranging from *The Independent* to the *Wall Street Journal*.

PODCAST

More To The Story

More To The Story, the new podcast from the investigative team behind *Reveal*, premiered on March 5. *More To The Story*’s complementary approach to *Reveal*’s long-form investigative work finds host Al Letson sitting down with the people behind the headlines for candid conversations that provide the nuance and depth the daily news cycle cannot. Upon its debut, daily podcast downloads in the *Reveal* feed more than doubled, showing that podcast audiences are hungry for more in-depth reporting.

DISINFORMATION

Keeping Up With Cronyism, Corruption, and Graft

One of the more consistent themes emerging in our coverage is following who stands to benefit—and who is made to pay—from a president leveraging the office to reward allies and punish enemies. Power is the ultimate prize, and as Tim Murphy described it, “everything with Trump is a negotiation—a hostage negotiation.”

Anna Merlan’s reporting on the “new state media” tracked the transformation of the White House briefing room, with friendly outlets and far-right influencers—including those with thin journalistic credentials and questionable pasts—gaining access and status. Her reporting, cited by CNN, landed her on WNYC’s *On the Media* as well as *Background Briefing with Ian Masters*.

While outlets in the new state media intentionally overlooked the conflicts of interest and lack of credentials of Trump’s Cabinet nominees, our reporting zeroed in on their statements and actions. Merlan’s reporting about a Pentagon deputy press secretary’s history of bigoted and xenophobic social media posts was picked up by the *New York Times*, CNN’s *Reliable Sources*, *Salon*, *Politico*, *The Independent*, and MSNBC’s *Maddow Blog* and *All In With Chris Hayes*, among others. Alex Nguyen reported on Elon Musk’s promotion of the far-right AfD in the lead-up to the German election, with *Current Affairs* and *The Root* citing his reporting in their coverage.

Perhaps no other Cabinet appointee came into the role as uniquely unqualified as Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in taking the helm of the Department of Health and Human Services. David Corn’s July 2024 reporting about RFK’s role in a deadly measles outbreak in Samoa resurfaced during Kennedy’s confirmation hearings, with the *New Republic* citing it and the *San Jose Mercury News* citing Merlan and Kiera Butler’s follow-up reporting about Kennedy’s distortions of the facts of the trip during the hearings. Corn was the first to break the story of Kennedy’s settlement with his second wife over accusations of misconduct, reporting that was widely amplified by the likes of the *Daily Beast*, the *New York Post*, *Newsweek*, *Page Six*, *Mediaite*, *Kaiser Health News*, and MSNBC’s *Maddow Blog*.



ILLUSTRATION BY MOTHER JONES; MARK BOSTER/LOS ANGELES TIMES/GETTY; PHOTOS COURTESY GÉNESIS LOZADA, JOSEPH GIARDINA, ARTURO SUÁREZ, AND MARÍA ALVARADO

IMMIGRATION

The Shocking Truth About Trump's Deportations

Following the Trump administration's deportation of more than 200 Venezuelan men under the 1798 Alien Enemies Act, reporters Noah Lanard and Isabela Dias dug into the stories of some of these men to understand why, despite having no apparent ties to the Tren de Aragua criminal gang, they were disappeared to a gulag in El Salvador. They learned that one common criterion for deportation was having tattoos, including, in one case, an autism awareness tattoo. Lanard and Dias's work went viral on social media and was widely cited, including in *The Ink*, *Al Jazeera*, the *New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone*, and the conservative podcast *The Bulwark* (which also interviewed Dias and Lanard). Dias appeared on KERA (Dallas) and Lanard appeared on MSNBC's *All In With Chris Hayes*, with Hayes proclaiming it "a fantastic piece of rigorous, in-depth reporting. It will make you want to pass out with rage." The ACLU included Lanard and Dias's reporting as one of the exhibits it included in its petition to the Supreme Court to keep the injunction against the deportation flights in place.

For many migrant communities, living in fear of deportation is one of many daily hardships. Ted Genoways of the Food and Environment Reporting Network, in partnership with *Mother Jones* and *Reveal*, told the story of a group of Haitian residents who migrated to Colorado on the promise of good jobs with the local meatpacking plant, only to face physical abuse and harassment. Genoways appeared on WBUR's *Here and Now*, *Food With Mark Bittman*, and *Marketplace's Make Me Smart* discussing how this story is playing out in rural communities across the country against the backdrop of renewed threats of deportation.

Awards Round-Up

"40 Acres and a Lie" was named a Pulitzer Prize finalist for explanatory reporting. The project, along with *Reveal's* "We Regret to Inform You," also won the duPont-Columbia Silver Baton award.

CIR's 2024 multiplatform package "40 Acres and a Lie" also earned second place from Investigative Reporters & Editors for its Philip Meyer Journalism Award.

"My Platoon's Fight to Survive—and Heal From—the Bloodiest Battle of the Iraq War," produced in partnership with *The War Horse*, earned a citation from the Overseas Press Club.

Zaydee Sanchez won the American Mosaic Journalism Prize, recognizing her poignant coverage of migrant farmers, including "Pajaro's Quest to Rebuild," on the tragic flooding in Pajaro, California, published by *Mother Jones*.

***Reveal's* "Black in the Sunshine State"** earned an award for excellence in audio (best scriptwriting, nonfiction) from The Ambies.



The Center for Public Integrity and its partners spent two and a half years unearthing the history and consequences of the United States' most famous attempt at reparations for American slavery. The project, which includes a narrative podcast, used cutting-edge methods to answer a question few journalists would think to ask.

Comments from Philip Meyer
Journalism Award judges

JANUARY 1–MARCH 31

By the Numbers:

7.8M

video views across platforms

90%

increase from Spring 2024

3.9M

engagements

101%

increase from Spring 2024

61.5M

impressions

42%

increase from Spring 2024

TOP SOCIAL STORIES

RFK Jr. Wants to Send People Addicted to Antidepressants to Government "Wellness Farms," by Kiera Butler (July 2024) | 1.17M views

In Your Face: The Brutal Aesthetics of MAGA, by Inae Oh (March 2025) | 143K views

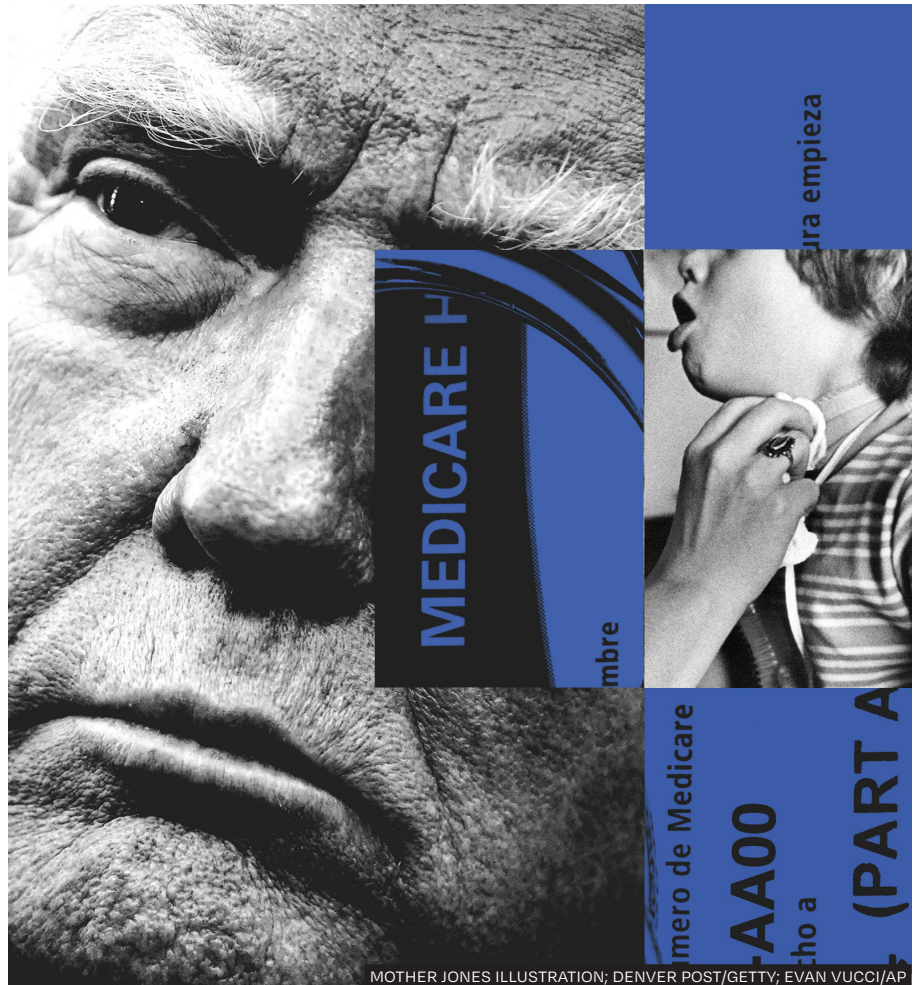
"You're Here Because of Your Tattoos," by Isabela Dias and Noah Lanard (March 2025) | 135K views

RFK Jr. Secretly Recorded Second Wife During Divorce and Acknowledged Being Polygamous, by David Corn (January 2025) | 103K views

What the Hell Is Going on at NIH?, by Jackie Flynn Mogensen (January 2025) | 91K views



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POLITICS

Life Under Trump 2.0

Following his election, Donald Trump set out on a wholesale remake of the federal government. In a few short months, what were once campaign promises of renewed efficiency and cheaper eggs have turned to a dismantling of the social safety net, attacks on marginalized communities, and an economic forecast driven by fear.

Our reporting has focused on showing the real-world impacts of the administration's policies. Julia Métraux's reporting on Trump's war on Medicaid was cited by *The 19th*, and her reporting on how drastic cuts to the Department of Education will disproportionately affect disabled students was amplified by the Disability Debrief newsletter. Her coverage of how NIH-funded cures have been instrumental to Project 2025 architect Russell Vought's daughter was cited by *Democracy Now*. Jackie Flynn Mogensen appeared on *The Majority Report* to discuss her investigation into the black-out of research at the National Institutes of Health, and her reporting of a first-person account of the fear among NIH staff was republished by LGBTQ Nation.

Madison Pauly's reporting, noted in *The Advocate* and republished by *THEM*, of a renewed "Lavender Scare" that would purge decades of LGBTQ gains, explains how the government is pursuing its anti-LGBTQ goals under the auspices of anti-DEI policies. Pauly's coverage of Trump's declaration defining gender was noted by the *Boston Globe* and republished by *LGBTQ Nation*, and her expertise on the anti-trans movement was featured in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *The Fifth Estate*.