



**THE
MARSHALL
PROJECT
2021-2022**

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PROJECT, NBC NEWS AND PROPUBLICA

Graphic illustrations throughout from
a visual explainer of our findings about
who votes for judges in Cuyahoga County.
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN G.



Awards

2022 PULITZER FINALIST

"Foster Theft": National reporting, finalist

2021 MURROW AWARDS

"The Zo": Excellence in Innovation, winner

2022 THE SIGMA AWARDS FOR DATA JOURNALISM

"Felony Vote": Single project, winner

2022 THE SIGMA AWARDS FOR DATA JOURNALISM

Weihua Li: Portfolio, winner

2022 PENN STATE COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATIONS

BART RICHARDS AWARD FOR MEDIA CRITICISM

"The Language Project," winner

2021 COLLIER PRIZE FOR STATE GOVERNMENT

Coverage of Mississippi prisons, winner

2021 ONA ONLINE JOURNALISM AWARDS

"Dog Bites": Collaboration, winner

2021 NONPROFIT NEWS AWARDS INN

"Foster Care": Insight Award
for Explanatory Journalism, winner

2021 EPPY AWARDS, EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Serving Incarcerated Audiences:
Best Community Service, winner

2021 NABJ SALUTE TO EXCELLENCE AWARDS

"Dog Bites": Online Project News, winner

AWARDS MADE BETWEEN JULY 1, 2021 AND JUNE 30, 2022.

**Letter from the
President and Chair**

Dear Friends,

The media landscape in America is changing fast, and a lot of the news about the news business is alarming. More than one-quarter of American newspapers have closed since 2004 and at least 1,800 communities have been left without a local media outlet, allowing ill-informed and potentially nefarious actors to fill the void. As a result, evidence-free narratives have proliferated, threatening our ability as a society to make sound judgments about the institutions of our democracy, including our system of justice that incarcerates more people than any other in the world.

The Marshall Project is a light in the darkness. Our reporters consistently unearth stories that would otherwise have remained buried, stories exploring the lives of people touched by our justice system, including the testimonies of those who have suffered enormously under it. Only then do we have a chance to address the issues that are at the root of this suffering and cost to society, and sometimes — never often enough, but sometimes — we see change and justice.

People want to hear meaningful stories that are close to home, and it's become clear that we need to be ensconced in local communities, particularly in news deserts where stories of people affected by the justice system all too often go untold. We came to this conclusion after consulting with media partners, criminal justice advocates, incarcerated readers, donors, board members and our own staff to chart a course for the next five years.

We'll be starting local newsrooms in places where criminal justice is especially neuralgic and the local media can no longer produce the kind of investigative journalism that leads to change. We'll be doubling down on our investment in audiences who've been directly affected by the criminal justice system, most notably, those who live and work in America's biggest news desert, the one behind bars. And we'll be making sure that our national newsroom can produce more of the top-quality journalism that has an actual impact on our justice system. Launching the first of these local newsrooms in Cleveland in 2022 was a signature achievement of the past year.

As a non-profit newsroom focusing on a single subject, we're creating a different kind of business model in a media sector that's struggling. The administration of criminal justice is a major part of American governance and eats up tens of billions of taxpayer dollars every year. To make it better is to contribute to a stronger democracy. But to make the news business healthy and sustainable contributes to democracy, too.

We can't solve the media crisis in this country. We can't fix the whole criminal justice system on our own, either. But we can build a healthy, non-profit media organization that employs excellent journalists, produces excellent journalism, and does everything it can to make our system of justice more fair, effective, transparent and humane.

We're grateful for the support of everyone reading this in that effort, and we invite you to read on.



Carroll Bogert
PRESIDENT



Liz Simons
CHAIR



Bedroom of a 16 year-old who wrote home from Acadiana: "I'm not getting any kind of mental stimulation ... I'm going crazy."
BRYAN TARNOWSKI FOR NBC NEWS, THE MARSHALL PROJECT AND PROPUBLICA

No Light, No Nothing: Beth Schwartzapfel on Breaking the St. Martinville Story

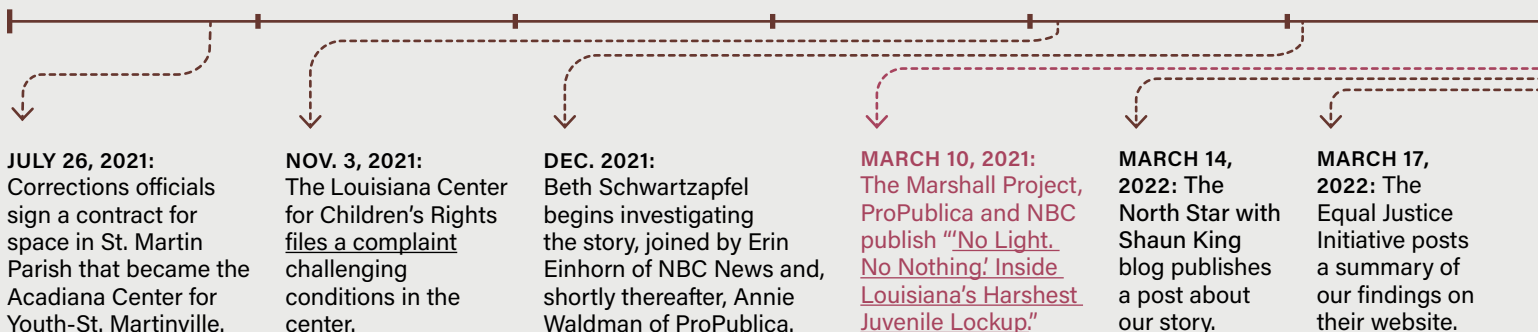
IN MARCH 2022, Marshall Project reporter Beth Schwartzapfel co-published “No Light. No Nothing.’ Inside Louisiana’s Harshest Juvenile Lockup,” an exposé of conditions at a new high-security facility for juveniles in St. Martinville, La. The story detailed shocking conditions including routine solitary confinement, shackling, and lack of education or entertainment at the Acadiana Center for Youth. She shares her recollections on breaking this story, which helped lead to an end to widespread solitary confinement for youth in Louisiana.

How did the situation at the Acadiana Center for Youth first come to your attention?

Beth Schwartzapfel: It was all very hush-hush when they opened it — even judges were surprised. The kids there had very little contact with parents or lawyers. It was like a black site where they were shipped in the middle of the night.

The Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights was onto the site earlier than most — they filed a lawsuit over the lack of educational opportunities in fall 2021, just a few months after it opened.

From Breaking News to Legal Reform: Ending Solitary Confinement for Louisiana’s Children



Was it difficult to get information or access to the facility?

Yes. It was months of work. Reporting on the juvenile criminal justice system is very different than when adults are involved — because they are juveniles, there are a lot of regulations meant to protect their privacy, but these also allow bad actors to hide.

I'm really proud of the fact that we were able to dig into this story. There is very little reporting on juvenile facilities that exposes conditions like this. It is tremendously difficult to do.

How did you do it?

The first thing we did was make a list of all of the attorneys in Louisiana who were licensed to take juvenile cases, and we cold-called all of them to see if they had any clients there. The other thing we discovered after a while is that there is an exception to not publishing kids' names if they escape. Under Louisiana law, notifying the public of an escape is considered more important than privacy. So the local papers will publish names and pictures. We found ten or so lawyers with clients who had been in Acadiana. And we were able to make contact with a young man who was in adult prison — he called me and told me stories that friends of his told him about being in the facility.

What was your first reaction when you began to get a fuller picture of the conditions inside Acadiana?

It is pretty horrifying what was going on there. Kids had no schooling, and were often kept in solitary. I heard about a kid who was shackled to the table, even when meeting with a therapist. They are shackled in the shower. What kind of message does that send to kids about what they are capable of?

It is pretty horrifying what was going on there. Kids had no schooling, and were often kept in solitary.



Ronnie and Bridget Peterson at the grave of their 13-year-old son, Solan Peterson, who died by suicide while in solitary confinement in Louisiana's Ware Youth Center, a juvenile detention facility, in 2019. BRYAN TARNOWSKI FOR PROPUBLICA/NBC NEWS/THE MARSHALL PROJECT

What happened when this story came to light?

Louisiana recently passed a bill strictly limiting the use of solitary confinement for juveniles. This is a victory for the many activists who have pushed the issue — the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights have been pushing for this for years. And credit is due to some incredibly brave people who testified about having been held in solitary as children.

What our reporting and work did was put the conditions at Acadiana Center for Youth under a brighter public spotlight. After it came out, the director of the Office of Juvenile Justice was put on the spot, confronted with the situation in Acadiana, and he couldn't pretend that it wasn't horrendous. He just couldn't. In just three months after we broke the story, it was picked up by activists and politicians, and the Legislature passed reforms banning solitary confinement for juveniles — not the only change that is needed, but a very important one.

MARCH 20, 2022: The Advocate, in Baton Rouge, publishes a front-page editorial denouncing the abusive conditions and calling for "a more productive, and humane, way" of treating juveniles in detention.

MARCH 25, 2022: The Advocate follows up on our reporting with a record request and publishes additional information about the chaos at St. Martinville.

APRIL 11, 2022: A video from "Us or Else Now," a group founded by Atlanta rapper Tip T.I. Harris, engages a wide audience on Instagram demanding that Acadiana be closed.

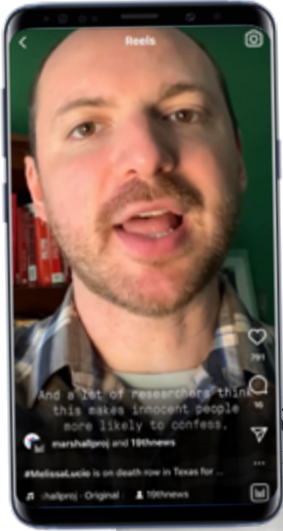
APRIL 27, 2022: State lawmakers debate a bill to end the use of solitary confinement for juveniles.

MAY 5, 2022: The Louisiana House of Representatives votes 86-7 to pass the bill

JUNE 16, 2022: Gov. John Bel Edwards signs a law restricting solitary confinement in juvenile facilities in Louisiana.

Our Audiences

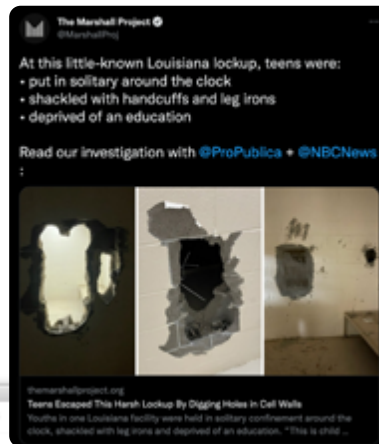
THE MARSHALL PROJECT continues to reach audiences through multiple channels: our reporting appears in print newspapers and magazines across the country, on our website and those of our partners, and is amplified through many social media sources. Here are a few highlights of our readership in the past year:



Maurice Chammah talked about his heart-breaking story about Texas Death Row inmate Melissa Lucio on Facebook Reels, drawing **28,000 viewers and more than 200 shares.**



"Nonprofit Group Takes Turn to the Right in Texas." by Keri Blakinger with David Farenthold of The New York Times, was featured on the front page in April 2022. The story had **258,000 page views** on the website, and reached **1.8 million subscribers.**



A single tweet featuring images from our St. Martinville story was **seen by 130,000** Twitter users, who shared the tweet over 260 times. The story itself had **715,542 readers** on the NBC, ProPublica and Marshall Project websites.



When **Axios published our piece** on law enforcement crime data, the exposé drew more than **500,000 readers.**



Beth Schwartapfel's "Prison Money Diaries" was read over 95,000 times on The Marshall Project website, and when we posted it to Instagram, **more than 800 people** shared it.

On **Instagram**, **573,000 people** viewed an **article** The Marshall Project did with NPR on brutal conditions in Thomson Federal Prison. **One thousand people** saved the post in Instagram, and **over 1,300** shared it.



Dear Friends,

This fall, our expanding, far-flung staff gathered in person for the first time in three years. It was thrilling to see tangible proof of how much we've grown, to share the toll of living and reporting during these years and to dream of how much more we want to do.

We're expanding in important ways. Our Cleveland-based reporting team gives residents vital information about what is done in their name. Our Testify project, based on a painstakingly assembled database of every court case and outcome over the past six years, is shedding light on a deliberately opaque system. We will build on this model, investing time, cultivating sources and cooperating with communities to investigate stories that otherwise would stay in the shadows. We envision cross-fertilization with our national and local work, each informing and supporting the other. And we're assiduously scouting and fund-raising to support new local reporting teams.

We're expanding our capacity to tell stories in a wide range of ways that engage new audiences. We've hired a senior editor for storytelling, who is working closely with editors and staff to use data visualizations, video, audio, podcasts, motion graphics, illustrations and graphic novel-like treatments. These tools help us reach varied audiences with different needs and interests.

Our investigations continue to expose abuses in foster care, prisons and policing, including solitary confinement of teenagers, criminalization of pregnancy and more, winning praise and awards. We are developing a collaboration with Vice to expand Inside Story, a video version of our work that will help us reach the startling number of people behind bars who face literacy challenges. Our Life Inside essays dazzle with raw honesty and humanity, and our groundbreaking News Inside publication continues to add new features and engage directly with our incarcerated readers.

What unites all these efforts is our commitment to accountability and relentless focus on fact-based journalism. Our determination to uncover what many would like to keep hidden drives all our work. We report what we find, not what we might want to see. Our work to unearth and document abuse exposes some of the deepest, most intractable injustices in the United States, involving race, gender, inequality, poverty, educational gaps, violence. We believe reality is often messy, with flawed characters and gray zones. But if we don't expose the complexities of the system, you can't understand how they might be changed. We don't advocate for any particular change or worry about angering anyone; we focus on exposing what is wrong.

All our forms of journalism are interrelated, and investigative work is deep in our DNA and will remain so. An important tool for us is engagement journalism, asking people what they need and want to learn, listening to what issues they raise, through surveys, in-person meetings, radio call-in shows, old-fashioned print flyers and a host of other ways to make communication two-way. Testify is an example of the power of this approach.

These have been tumultuous years on all fronts — for the criminal legal system, public health and the health of our democracy. As we grow, we must sustain open communication and a shared culture to live up to our workplace ideals of humanity, diversity, equity and inclusion.

Even after 40 years, I feel lucky to have journalism to turn to for purpose and solace. And I feel even luckier to work with my colleagues here who share this commitment. Thanks to all of you for the vital support that enables and sustains our work.



Susan Chira
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Finalist for a Pulitzer

WINNING A PULITZER is a terrific honor. The Marshall Project has done that twice: first in 2016 for an article entitled [“An Unbelievable Story of Rape”](#) and again just last year for [our reporting on police dog violence](#).

Being a finalist for a Pulitzer is pretty great, too. This year, The Marshall Project and National Public Radio (NPR) were [Pulitzer finalists](#) for a story on [local governments taking Social Security benefits](#) intended for children in foster care.

But best of all is when a story leads to change. And The Marshall Project’s investigation, in addition to being a Pulitzer finalist, had an impact all around the country.

We teamed up with NPR to reveal that in at least 49 states and Washington, D.C., government agencies had been pocketing federal benefits meant for children in foster care — payments such as social security survivor’s benefits intended to meet the needs of children whose parents are gone. Agencies were instead applying to be the “financial representative” of these children and using the funds to cover government costs associated with foster care.

“How are you going to make a child pay child support?” asks Alex Carter, lead plaintiff in a lawsuit filed against the state of Alaska for payments they kept. ASH ADAMS FOR NPR AND THE MARSHALL PROJECT

Many kids leave foster care with virtually empty pockets. Without resources or support, many end up homeless or in jail. “I just had to learn how to cope with being poor, with only myself to survive,” former foster youth Mateo Jaime told us.

In addition to the investigation, we published an easy-to-use guide, helping foster children understand how to contact Social Security to inquire about their benefits. We made sure the story got into our print publication for incarcerated audiences, since so many people in prison have experienced foster care.

In response to our original story, a cascade of reforms has unfolded across the nation. A Los Angeles County Commissioner heard the story on NPR in her car and soon introduced a bill. Connecticut followed not long after, and the Philadelphia city council passed an ordinance as well. New York City banned the practice soon after.

Five states — California, Illinois, Minnesota and Nebraska, in addition to Connecticut — have now outlawed the practice of collecting funds belonging to foster kids. Legislators in Hawaii are now considering similar legislation, and the U.S. Congress may introduce a bill that would end this practice across the country.

Mateo Jamie is owed \$20,000 in survivor’s benefits after the murder of his mother; the money was paid to the state of Alaska. ASH ADAMS FOR NPR AND THE MARSHALL PROJECT





Bringing News Inside

NEWS INSIDE IS The Marshall Project’s effort to reach one of our most important audiences — incarcerated people. With no internet access inside prisons and jails, a digital news outlet like The Marshall Project has to get creative.

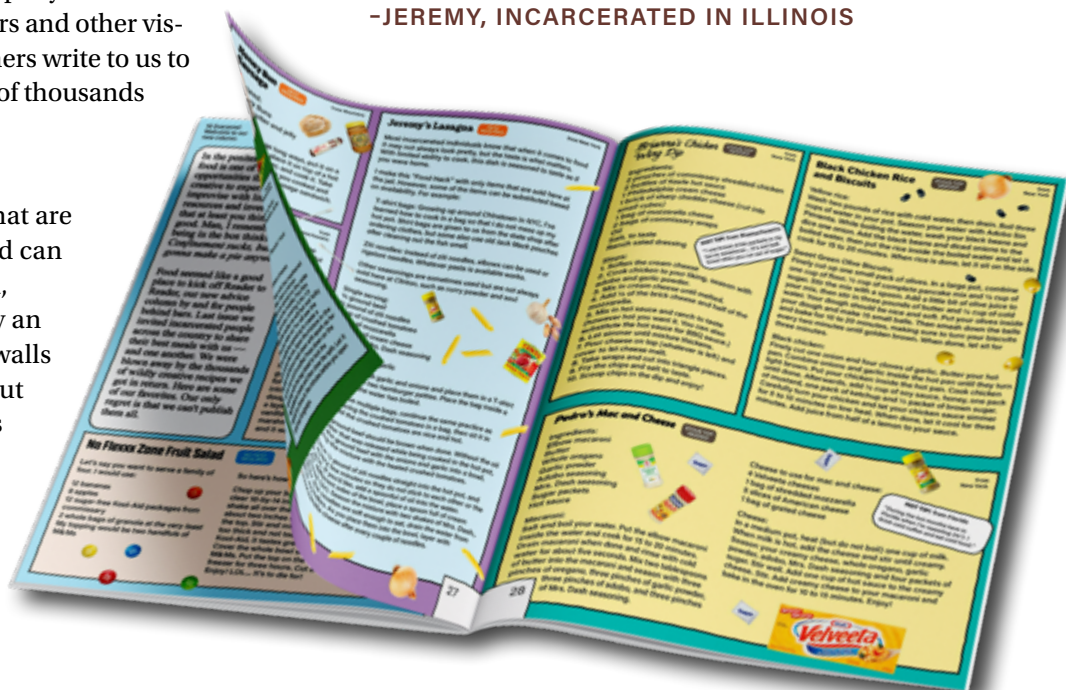
We find our readers in a variety of ways: Some prison libraries subscribe to our magazine of Marshall Project stories, which is published three times per year. Others are exposed to News Inside when educators and other visitors hand-carry copies in; and still others write to us to request that we send it. We reach tens of thousands of people on educational tablets.

It is not always easy.

“Finding information on topics that are relevant and useful while incarcerated can be really difficult,” says Martin Garcia, manager of News Inside and formerly an incarcerated reader himself. “Those walls aren’t meant just to keep people in, but to keep information out. Our vision is that News Inside figuratively breaks down these walls.”

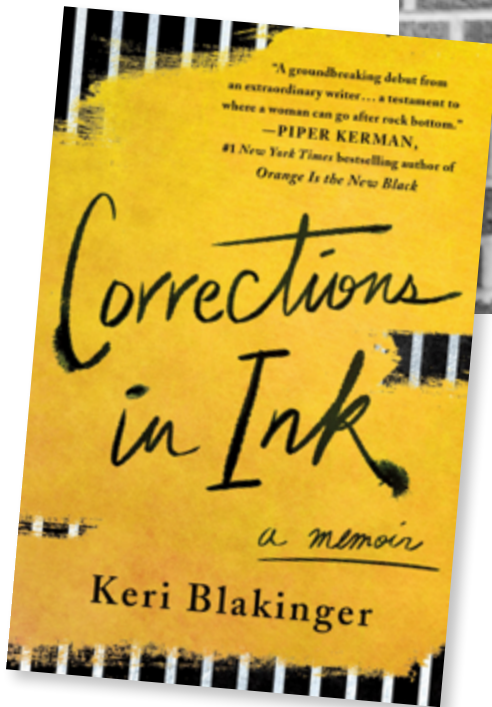
Above: Cover of Issue 9.
 Right: Pages from the same issue showing recipes contributed by News Inside readers, which they developed using ingredients available from the commissary.

“I read your August 2021 issue — my first ever! I found it very encouraging, enlightening, well written and put together... I appreciated your magazine wasn’t filled with ads of companies trying to make money off of prisoners. I look forward to the next issue.”
 -JEREMY, INCARCERATED IN ILLINOIS





ILANA PANICH-LINSMAN FOR THE MARSHALL PROJECT



A Life in Ink, Inside and Outside

KERI BLAKINGER KNOWS the prison system inside and out, and her reporting draws on deep expertise to expose many abuses in the system. She wrote that Southern jails and prisons are commonly named after Confederate generals and slave plantations — and the Texas Legislature subsequently changed the names of many facilities. She got the scoop on how many Texas prisons lack working fire alarms — and the family of one man who died in a Texas prison fire used her work as evidence in their lawsuit against the state. Her series of stories, written with

Marshall Project colleagues, about the abject unresponsiveness of the federal Bureau of Prisons to the threat of COVID has been widely cited — and the BOP has a new, reformist director.

To say that Blakinger knows the system inside and out is not just a metaphor. As a college senior, Blakinger herself was arrested on charges of heroin possession and sentenced to 24 months behind bars in New York State. At the encouragement of an older woman she met inside, she kept journals, and they became the basis for her extraordinary memoir, “Corrections in Ink,” published in June 2022.

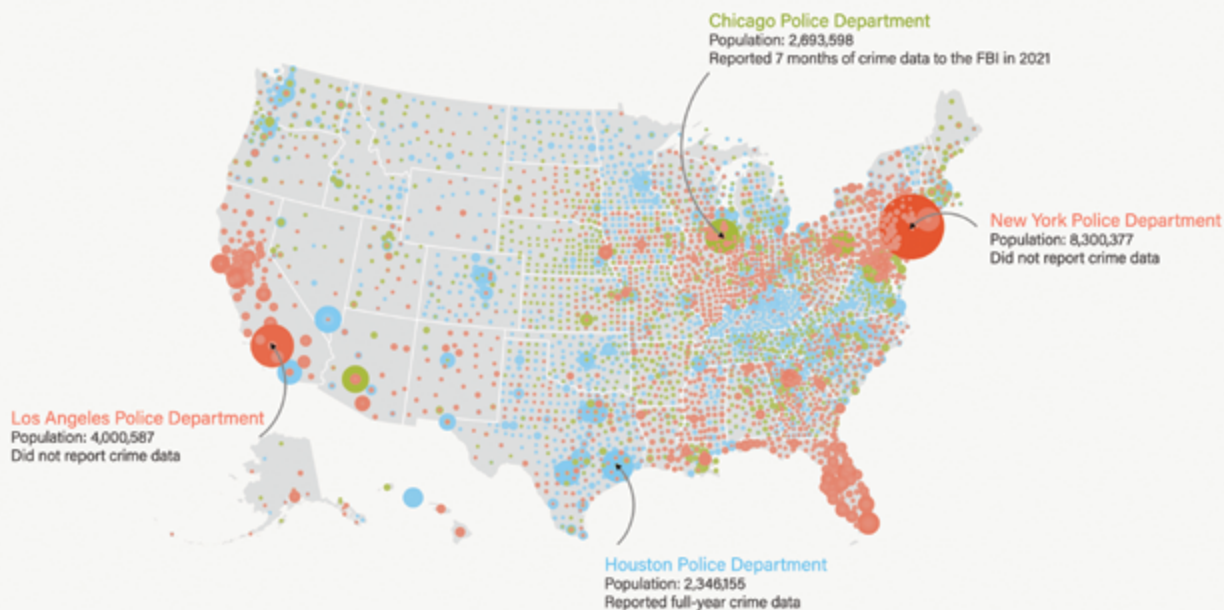
“I didn’t know it then, but the truth is this: Jail is its own kingdom. The basic rules of engagement do not apply here.”

“Corrections” won a glowing review in The New York Times and was featured in its “What to Read Now” column: “In her brave, brutal memoir, Blakinger looks back on her journey from Cornell student and competitive

figure skater to drug addict and prison inmate. A tale of survival and recovery, it’s also the story of what came next — and what galvanized Blakinger to become a journalist covering the criminal justice system.”

Blakinger’s firsthand experience is invaluable to us: understanding the lived experience of incarcerated people enables her to uncover the truth and to give readers a deeper understanding of what it means. “Even when they’re quiet, jails have a distinct sound,” she writes. “Every whisper ricochets off the cinderblock walls and heavy steel doors into a muffled cacophony — the echoing soundtrack of your mistakes in stereo.”

In an interview with Ailsa Chang on NPR’s “All Things Considered,” Blakinger said that the experience shaped her career as a reporter. “To me, it’s just been so deeply meaningful to be able to tell stories about people who are in the places that I have been, and to help amplify those voices and make their experience of incarceration maybe some bit less awful or more productive than mine was.”



Data Journalism Reveals Critical Gaps in Crime Stats

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM does not like to give up its secrets. In a season of heated political rhetoric around crime, our data analysis of crime statistics brought a shocking new fact to light: as much as 40% of local law enforcement agencies did not report their crime data to the FBI last year. That makes it virtually impossible to understand crime rates in the country today.

The FBI announced several years ago that it was switching from a century-old system for collecting crime data. It gave grants and held trainings to help law enforcement agencies make the switch. But when that switch happened in 2021, more than 8,000 agencies failed to send any data to the FBI.

“If agencies complied,” said author Weihua Li, “this system would provide a much richer picture of crime in the United States, one that could be tremendously useful to policymakers at all levels. As it is, when politicians step to the podium to talk about crime today, I would take it with a grain of salt.”

Li and her colleagues made sure that The Marshall Project’s database inspired additional stories at the local level that could push the issue forward. And it did. Axios Local, for example, published seventeen stories on local crime data reporting in June 2022, focusing on the failure of local police and sheriffs to report their data, and has published another half dozen after the reporting period ended.

In April 2022, Li received the prestigious Sigma Award for data-based journalism. Another Sigma Award was given to The Marshall Project reporters Nicole Lewis and Andrew Calderón, for a project gathering information through text and other means to understand voter registration patterns among the formerly incarcerated.

“We were blown away by the consistent excellence in data analysis and reporting, across a wide variety of stories,” the awards committee said. “The Marshall Project’s efforts to create a community of the incarcerated in order to center stories and experiences is an example for us all.”

Infographic Source: Agency participation data compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on Feb. 7, 2022, which was the deadline for local agencies to submit crime data for the Q4 2021 quarterly report.

2021-2022 Publishing Partners

- The Advocate (Baton Rouge)
- AL.com
- The Arizona Republic
- Associated Press
- Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Axios
- The Clarion-Ledger
- The Cleveland Observer
- Cleveland Scene
- The Colorado Sun
- The Dallas Morning News
- Documenters (Cleveland)
- The Gadsden Times
- The Guardian
- Houston Chronicle
- Houston Public Media
- Ideastream
- Indian Country Today
- Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting
- The Land
- Lexington Herald-Leader
- Los Angeles Times
- Louisiana Illuminator
- Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting
- Mississippi Today
- The Montgomery Advertiser
- Mother Jones
- NBC
- The New Bedford Light
- New York Magazine
- The New York Times
- NJ.com
- National Public Radio (NPR)
- OpenNews SOURCE
- La Opinión
- El País
- Patch
- Politico
- Prison Journalism Project
- ProPublica
- The Real Deal Press
- Slate
- Tampa Bay Times
- The Tuscaloosa News
- The Upshot
- Time Magazine
- USA Today
- The 19th

What Do We Know About Judges?

HAVE YOU EVER entered a voting booth and been faced with a list of judges you've never heard of and wondered how to choose? Less than a third of us cast a vote in judicial elections, partly for that reason. Yet judges have enormous power over who goes to prison and for how long.

That's why we dove into the records of the 34 criminal court judges in Cuyahoga County, where all of Cleveland's felonies are adjudicated. We gathered six years of rulings by all 34 judges for *Testify*, a first-of-its-kind project to make judicial decision-making transparent to those who are affected by it.

Comparative data on a judge's track record simply didn't exist — even for judges themselves. “We talked to one judge at the start of this project,” said editor-in-chief Susan Chira. “He said he did not know how his rulings compared to others on the bench. If he doesn't know, who does?”



It was a daunting task. As Data Editor David Eads notes, “The county court system actually made this data harder to obtain: They built a widget that made it impossible to download cases in bulk. Gathering hundreds of rulings one-by-one would have been almost impossible.”

We built our own widget to overcome this hurdle and download all the data we needed. The database we built made it possible to dive deeply into the records of every judge in Cuyahoga. Our reporting also showed that only 25% of the votes cast in Cuyahoga County judicial elections in 2020 were from voters in the city of Cleveland, where most criminal defendants are coming from. That made votes from the predominantly White suburbs more valuable, even determinative, in the elections.

Ensuring that voters had this information was critical. We partnered with no fewer than *seven* media outlets in Cleveland: the city's main alt-weekly, a Black community radio station, the local National Public Radio affiliate, a Black digital newspaper and a new local nonprofit news organization. Finally, we also collaborated extensively with the Cleveland Documenters, a community-based research group that helped us understand what people in Cleveland actually wanted to know about their judges. In addition to news stories, we printed up a one-page graphic illustration of our findings and shared it through community centers and libraries across the city.

We will continue to analyze this data, and no doubt others will, too, giving voters the tools they need to make sure that judges reflect the values of their community.



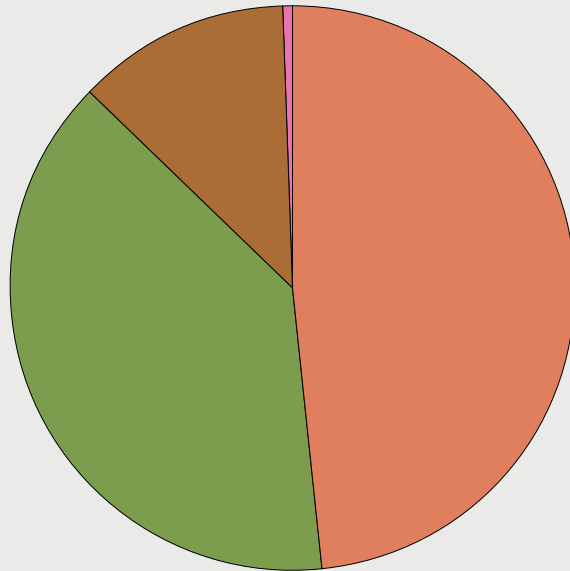
Financing our Growth

THE MARSHALL PROJECT is committed to shining light on the criminal justice system, locally as well as nationally. Our plans require substantial growth and we are working to manage that transformation carefully. We've established a Growth Fund to help us make investments in local coverage, and challenge local philanthropists to match our commitment.

We also maintain a Reserve Fund at 10% of the total annual operating budget as a contingency for emergencies. As The Marshall Project pursues its expansion plan and establishes more local newsrooms, we will make additional contributions to the Reserve Fund to keep it at 10% of the total annual budget.

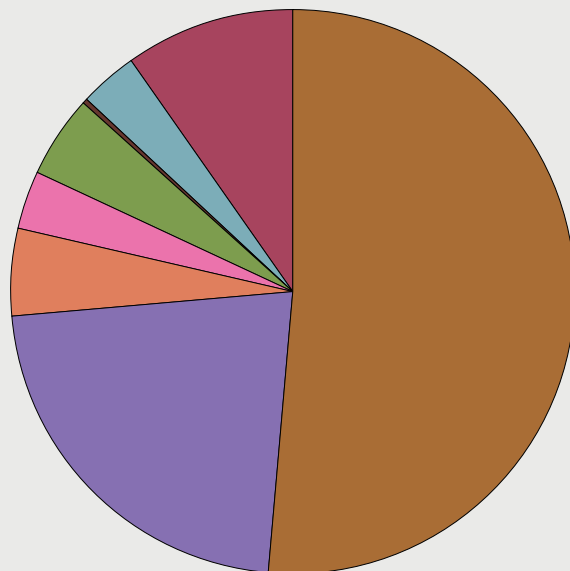
Revenue

Individuals + Family Foundations	6,029,000
Foundation Grants	4,832,000
Membership	1,529,000
Earned Revenue	55,000
Total	12,445,000



Expenses and contributions to designated funds

Newsroom salaries, benefits and payments	6,395,000
Other salaries	2,755,000
Occupancy and office expense	630,000
Professional fees	410,000
Newsroom expenses	580,000
Marketing/outreach	40,000
Contribution to Reserve Fund	400,000
Contribution to Growth Fund	1,200,000
Total	12,410,000



(RESULTS FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1, 2021, THROUGH JUNE 30, 2022. ALL FIGURES ARE PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED, ROUNDED TO THE NEAREST \$1,000.)

Our Supporters

OUR AWARD-WINNING investigative journalism plays a vital role in reforming the criminal justice system. We depend on many partners to support this work. The following generous donors gave \$10,000 or more between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

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Meadow Fund
Michael and Elizabeth Bierer
Michele Roberts
Mighty Arrow Family Foundation
Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris,
Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.
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Thurgood Marshall on his first day in court wearing judicial robes, 1967. AP PHOTO/BOB SCHUTZ

The Marshall Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system. We have an impact on the system through journalism, rendering it more fair, effective, transparent and humane.

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