



## News, January 2021

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### Proposals Due Monday, Feb. 8

The next deadline for proposals for grants on any topic is Monday, Feb. 8, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern. [Click here to apply and learn more.](#)

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### Seven New Grantee Stories

New stories published by our grantees over the last several weeks break new ground on how a corporation damaged millions of acres of U.S. farmland, how government agencies failed a homeless girl in Washington, D.C., and how members of Congress are personally benefiting from COVID-19 bailout funds. We're honored and proud to provide funding and other critical assistance to these investigative journalists.

#### Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting: [‘Buy it or Else’: Inside Monsanto and BASF’s Moves to Force Dicamba on Farmers](#)

Monsanto's new system for selling cotton and soybean seeds was supposed to be the future of farming, providing farmers with a suite of seeds and chemicals that could combat weeds that were becoming harder to kill. Instead, the rollout led to millions of acres of crop damage across the Midwest and South, widespread tree death in many rural communities and nature preserves, and an unprecedented level of strife in the farming world.

Johnathan Hettinger at the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting has been digging into the story for five years and, with a grant from the Fund, was able to show that the two corporations behind the new farming system knew the damage it would cause. The Fund's executive director, Eric Ferrero, asked Hettinger to share how he uncovered the story, how other reporters can approach long-term stories, and how journalists can understand rural and farming issues better. [Read their Q&A here.](#)

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#### WAMU American University Radio: [Through the Cracks](#)

When 8-year-old Relisha Rudd disappeared from a homeless shelter in Washington, D.C., in 2014, nobody noticed. By the time authorities formally declared her missing, 18 days had passed since she'd

been spotted at school or the shelter where her family lived. Relisha has never been found.

A new podcast, “Through the Cracks,” investigates gaps in our society and the people who fall through them. Host and FIJ grantee Jonquilyn Hill asks if Relisha’s disappearance was, as the city later claimed, unpreventable. The first episode is available now, and new episodes will be added every Thursday.

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### **InvestigateWest:** [Getting to Zero: Decarbonizing Cascadia](#)

A remarkable yearlong series kicked off this month, led by grantee InvestigateWest with several journalism partners, looking at why Washington, Oregon and British Columbia (the region known as Cascadia) are failing to decarbonize and reduce carbon dioxide emissions, despite being a “green” region.

The series explores ways low-carbon energy for the region and uncovers why governments haven’t acted on them fully. The first stories in the series have been published by numerous media outlets, including Grist, Crosscut, local NPR affiliates, the Associated Press, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Houston Chronicle.

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### **Sludge:** [Members of Congress Profited from COVID Bailout While Small Businesses Were Shut Out](#)

As part of a new report on COVID-19 bailout funds, reporters Justin Glawe and Jeremy Borden created the first comprehensive data set of federal COVID bailout money that went to private companies and other groups affiliated with members of Congress. They found that companies at which 28 members of Congress or their spouses hold positions received at least \$27 million in bailout funds.

With a grant from the Fund, Sludge is making this one-of-a-kind database available to the public to promote transparency about the loans established by the CARES Act, which have been criticized as mostly benefiting wealthy Americans.

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### **Slavic Sacramento:** [COVID-19 Runs Rampant in Slavic Religious Communities Across the U.S.](#)

An investigation by grantee Ruslan Gurzhiy at the Russian-language media outlet “Slavic Sacramento,” identifies some of the reasons Slavic communities across the U.S. have been especially vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The investigation highlights the spread of the pandemic in Russian-speaking religious communities from California to New York and uncovers a culture of mistrust toward the government, resulting in the spread of conspiracy theories and misperceptions about the virus.

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## Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting: [Louisville Police Routinely Busted Down Doors in Hunt for Drugs](#)

The Louisville Metro Police Department conducted 72 forced entries from September 2019 through March 2020, according to a review of police records by grantees at the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting. Police kicked in doors, broke windows and picked locks. They used battering rams, sledgehammers and, in one case, a concrete planter.

Policing experts say officers rely on the element of surprise, which the strategy offers. But using force to search for drugs carries risks that often outweigh the rewards, according to criminal justice experts, police professionals and civil liberties advocates.

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## *palabra:* [Interviews with Latino Journalists Yield Stories of Discrimination in U.S. Newsrooms](#)

As part of a unique reporting project, grantees Dagmar Thiel and Frank LaRue interviewed dozens of Latino journalists across the U.S. about their experiences as journalists. They uncovered widespread instances of disrespect and discrimination.

Underpinning their work is an ongoing survey of Latino journalists in the U.S., started last year by [Fundamedios](#), a Pan-American nonprofit that advocates for media freedom and the protection of journalists. The survey found that 45% of participants said they had experienced direct racial discrimination.

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## Register for a free webinar on Thursday, Feb. 4, on localizing the 'Land Grab Universities' investigation

A groundbreaking investigative report “Land Grab Universities” showed how colleges and universities continue to benefit from nearly 11 million acres of land taken from Native Americans in the 1800s. In addition to a story in [High Country News](#) and an op-ed in the [New York Times](#), the team that reported this story produced a database of the properties and agreements associated with them.

Join us on Thursday, Feb. 4, at 11:30 a.m. Eastern to hear more about the story and the research, and to learn how to access and navigate the data. This forum, co-sponsored with the Native American Journalists Association, is particularly tailored to local/state media and student press who can use the data to localize the story. [Click here to RSVP.](#)

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