



News, May 2021

Several of our grantees published new stories this month, and several other previously published stories saw new impact. Highlights are below.

Investigation identifies Michigan politicians at Jan. 6 riot in Washington

Ryan Kelley climbed on scaffolding, helped a man who was moving a police barricade and repeatedly waved fellow protesters toward the Capitol riots in Washington on Jan. 6. Now he's running for governor in Michigan. Several other people who participated in the riots are running for Congress or state office in Michigan. Jonathan Oosting and our grantees at [Bridge Michigan](#) reviewed photos, videos and social media posts to identify politicians who participated in the riots and are now running for office.

Secrets behind police personnel moves begin coming to light

Residents of a former mill town in Maine rallied for a longtime local police officer after she filed a harassment complaint against the new police chief in 2020. Within a year, the police department was disbanded; the chief was fired, then unfired; two town managers were terminated; and the town agreed to \$250,000 in settlements with two former officers. But little of what happened to cause all that personnel turmoil has been made public. In a [report for Bangor Daily News](#), Josh Keefe details Millinocket's turbulent year, highlighting the tensions between the privacy rights of municipal employees and residents' right to know about the actions of public officials.

Ongoing environmental series explores new regeneration program

InvestigateWest's Decarbonizing Cascadia series, with a grant from the Fund, has been exploring how the governments of Washington, Oregon and British Columbia have failed to live up to their promises to moderate climate pollution by 2020. Amanda Follett Hosgood's [recent installment of the series](#) explores the Seed the North project, which aims to regenerate large swaths of land in British Columbia in an effort to sequester carbon and fight the climate crisis. As Hosgood reports, the project will collect seeds, combine them in biodiverse seedpods, and drop them using drone technology over thousands of acres.

Grantees' continued investigation into teacher sexual misconduct sparks impact

Our grantees at the Voice of San Diego are continuing to investigate misconduct in local schools through ongoing reporting, as well as litigation. In a new deposition, the official responsible for responding to requests for public records [acknowledged](#) that he does not comply with the law. While the investigative team continues [pursuing the case](#) in court, it's reporting has already led to new policies, settlements and disciplinary action. In response to the reporting, the local district attorney created a task force to receive complaints and investigate them, and this spring, the task force issued its first indictment, charging a teacher with unlawful misconduct.

New law would give reparations to women involuntarily sterilized in California prisons

Erika Cohn's documentary, "[Belly of the Beast](#)," documented the harrowing stories of women who were involuntarily sterilized at the Central California Women's Facility and their fight to expose those abuses. The documentary follows Cynthia Chandler and Kelli Dillon as they wage a near impossible battle against the Department of Corrections, and spearhead investigations that uncover a series of statewide crimes, primarily targeting women of color, that range from inadequate access to health care to sexual assault to illegal sterilization. Last week, [a bill seeking reparations](#) for California survivors of forced or involuntary sterilizations moved closer to becoming law when it was passed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. The bill would provide reparations for two groups of survivors — those who were sterilized from 1909 to 1979 when California's eugenics laws were repealed, and those who were sterilized after 1979.

Grantees recognized for outstanding reporting

Several of our grantees were recognized recently for their outstanding reporting.

- Diversity Fellow Romina Ruiz-Goiriena's story, "Gaming the System," detailed how wealthy people navigate around U.S. immigration barriers. Finalist, [Esserman Knight Journalism Foundation Outstanding Public Service Journalism](#).
 - Grantees Kathleen McGrory and Neil Bedi's series, "Targeted," exposed a policing program that monitors and harasses people who have not been accused of violating laws. Winner, [National Headliner Awards "Best in Show."](#)
 - Grantees Mark Betancourt and Christine MacDonald's investigation, "Detroit homeowners overtaxed \$600 million," showed how homeowners were wrongly facing foreclosure, and helped spark a new state law. Winner, [National Headliner Awards "Public service in newspapers in top 20 media market."](#)
 - Grantee Erika Cohn's documentary, "Belly of the Beast," uncovered abuses at the Central California Women's Facility. Finalist, [Peabody Awards](#).
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