



News, July 2021

Today, we're announcing a new way for people applying for grants over the next six weeks to get help in the application process. We're also sharing five new stories that were produced with our grants and other support, including a deep investigation into sexual misconduct in Chicago's youth poetry community, continued fallout from attempts to subvert democracy after the 2020 election, a report on environmental hazards threatening U.S. coastlines, and more.

Past Grantees to Serve as Mentors in Application Process; Pilot Program Prioritizes Journalists of Color and First-timers

Applicants for our Sept. 13 grant deadline can now request mentorship from past grantees who will provide feedback and suggestions to help strengthen their proposals. [Click here](#) to learn more. During the next six weeks, applicants can email grants@fij.org to request peer mentors. Priority will be given to journalists of color and first-time applicants.

This is a pilot program that we may expand in 2022. It was sparked by one-on-one conversations and group meetings with journalists of color over the last several months. We're grateful to everyone who shared and shaped the idea – and to the former grantees who will share their expertise.

Because we're trying to reach people who might not have applied for grants in the past, we need your help spreading the word about this. You can:

- [Post on social media.](#)
- Forward this email to people in your network.
- If you're part of an organization for whom we can submit a short newsletter item or speak at a meeting, let us know. Just reply to this email message and we'll get back to you within a day.

New Stories Published With Our Support This Month

Grantee Uncovers Sexual Assault Allegations in Chicago's Youth Poetry Community

Roger Bonair-Agard was one of the most well-known slam poets of his generation, known for his work addressing race, colonialism, and sexuality. But, as grantee Taylor Moore uncovered in her investigation for the Chicago Reader, Bonair-Agard was accused of rape in 2013 and continued to work in the Chicago arts scene with the help of powerful friends. Drawing upon interviews with more than 40 people, [Moore's investigation](#) addresses a culture of silence in the city's spoken-word community, particularly around Young Chicago Authors and poet Kevin Coval, and examines what accountability means in instances of sexual harm.

Emails: Michigan sheriff sought to seize voting machines amid Trump claims

As part of their ongoing reporting into the aftermath of the 2020 election, grantees at Bridge Michigan recently obtained hundreds of pages of emails from Barry County Sheriff Dar Leaf through the Freedom of Information Act. According to grantee Jonathan Oosting's recent investigation, the [emails detail Leaf's unsuccessful efforts](#) to obtain voting machines and inspect them. The records also indicate that Leaf's attorney provided updates on the effort to Trump allies, including attorney Sidney Powell and a contact for former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn.

Without body cameras, Iowa State Patrol is an outlier among Iowa law enforcement

About 90 percent of more than 200 Iowa law enforcement agencies that responded to a survey last fall about body camera use said their agencies had cameras. But Iowa State Patrol troopers, who stop more than 150,000 motorists a year, provide security at the state Capitol and staff high-profile events, don't wear body cameras, according to grantee Erin Jordan's [new report](#) in the Bellevue Herald-Leader. The survey was part of the "In Focus" series by the Iowa Newspaper Association and more than 30 Iowa newspapers that examines the use of police body cameras and access to police video in Iowa. [This is the third article in that series.](#)

The Perfect Police State: China's Surveillance Dystopia

Blocked from facts and truth, under constant surveillance, surrounded by a hostile police force: Xinjiang's Uyghur population has become cursed, oppressed, and outcast. Most citizens cannot discern between enemy and friend. Social trust has been destroyed systematically. Friends betray each other, bosses snitch on employees, teachers expose their students, and children turn on their parents. Using the haunting story of one young woman's attempt to escape this vicious technological dystopia, his own reporting from Xinjiang, and extensive firsthand testimony from exiles, grantee Geoffrey Cain reveals [in his new book](#) the

extraordinary intrusiveness and power of the tech surveillance giants and the chilling implications for people across the globe.

Coastal Landfills Are No Match for Rising Seas

As sea levels rise, landfills along U.S. coasts have become a ticking environmental time bomb. In Massachusetts, an ever-growing pile of ash created by the Wheelabrator landfill's incinerator threatens habitat for migratory and breeding birds and other terrestrial wildlife. And, according to studies, there are thousands more just like it along the U.S. coastline, threatening not only wildlife, but the people who live nearby. So why does the federal government have no plan to avoid this looming catastrophe? In his [new investigation for The Nation](#), grantee David Lindorff seeks to answer that question.



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