

First
Look
Institute

Annual Report
2021



The
Intercept_

FIELD_
OF_
VISION

PRESS
FREEDOM
DEFENSE
FUND



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INSTITUTE

For more information please email
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Contents

Giving democracy a fighting chance.

First Look Institute is a nonprofit organization committed to fearless reporting, bold filmmaking, and defending those who speak truth to power. By empowering journalists to unearth injustices, un beholden to outside influence; by investing in a generation of trailblazing filmmakers; and by protecting risk-taking reporters and whistleblowers from retribution, First Look Institute vigilantly defends our First Amendment rights so democracy can flourish.

First Look Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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Letter From the CEO

Dear Friends,

In the midst of a shifting political and media landscape and in the second year of a global pandemic in 2021, First Look Institute has been even more committed to our mission of producing fearless investigative journalism, innovative documentary filmmaking, and defending those who stand up for freedom of the press.

Our work across The Intercept, Field of Vision, and the Press Freedom Defense Fund continued to deliver on this mission with exceptional courage and increasing impact.

What makes this work possible? The ongoing support of our committed supporters, including over 50,000 individual members as well as institutional philanthropic leaders such as the Ford Foundation, Bay and Paul Foundations, and Wyncote Foundation. Every day, our contributors and advocates join us to hold the powerful accountable, expose injustices, and defend those who cannot defend themselves, and we could not be more honored to do this work.

The Intercept continued its investigations and reporting into a range of critical global issues, such as the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic, the rise of right-wing extremist groups, the tumultuous withdrawal of the U.S. military from Afghanistan, and battles within the Democratic Party over President Joe Biden's legislative agenda. A breakthrough scoop on Amazon delivery drivers forced to urinate in bottles sparked a national conversation on the e-commerce giant's treatment of workers.

Field of Vision launched a new filmmaker Digital Security Platform and Security Clinic, a Legal Clinic providing pro bono legal support, and an Apprenticeship Program to address the barriers to entry in the field. Field of Vision supported projects that both reflected and revealed critical issues and advanced individual creative vision and aesthetics. 2021 marked the sixth year in a row that Field of Vision-supported films were shortlisted and/or nominated for an Academy Award, including Best Documentary Short Subject nomination *Do Not Split* by Anders Hammer, which provides an expansive and firsthand portrait of the protests in Hong Kong. After the nomination, the Chinese government censored coverage of the Academy Awards and a major Hong Kong broadcaster dropped the broadcast of the awards ceremony entirely for the first time in 50 years. The commitment to capture the determination and sacrifices of the city's youth and ensure their voices were heard, despite the efforts of the government, is the essence of Field of Vision's mission.

In 2021, the Press Freedom Defense Fund provided over \$500,000 in financial aid to individuals and organizations that risk everything to expose corruption in the name of democracy, including continued support of Maria Ressa, the founder of the Philippines' Rappler and 2021 Nobel Peace Prize winner. The Press Freedom Defense Fund was the first, and the largest, financial backer of the marathon legal defense of Maria Ressa and Rappler against the Duterte regime. PFDF also expanded its international aid to include Belarusian and Afghan journalists. The pro bono legal aid project Lawyers for Reporters saw remarkable growth in 2021, more than doubling the number of clients supported with legal resources and guidance. Since its launch more than two years ago, Lawyers for Reporters has provided crucial technical and legal assistance to 83 clients across 23 states, many of which are led by people identifying as women, BIPOC, and/or LGBTQ+.

On behalf of all of us at First Look Institute, thank you for your advocacy and belief in our work. During 2021 we achieved so much together, and we look forward to continuing to be a relentless force in the pursuit of a free and open society and democracy in which everyone can flourish.



Michael Bloom
Chief Executive Officer



BY THE NUMBERS

First Look Institute's impact is measured in several ways, with the most important barometer being real-world change. In addition to impact, First Look Institute is committed to demonstrating our dedication to equity and empowerment through the news we report; the films, filmmakers, journalists, and whistleblowers we support; and the communities we serve.

\$940,000 in direct funding to filmmakers, journalists, artists, whistleblowers, and other nonprofit organizations

100+ Freedom of Information Act requests in pursuit of bringing to light hidden truths

Eighty-three journalists and newsrooms across **23 states** supported with pro-bono legal aid and technical assistance

\$1 million+ of pro bono legal services from 25 law firms leveraged in support of journalists and newsrooms across the nation

1,359 unique pieces of content published

Three films premiered at Sundance Film Festival

ACCOLADES & AWARDS

First Look Institute's work was recognized with a number of prestigious awards and nominations at the highest levels of journalism and documentary film.

THE INTERCEPT

AMERICAN ISIS

- Adweek Podcast of the Year Awards: Best Storytelling Podcast, 2021 win
- Uproxx's Best Nonfiction Podcasts of 2021 list inclusion
- New York Festivals Radio Awards: 2022 finalist



American Isis

"BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE ROCK"

- Deadline Club Awards: Best Newspaper or Digital Feature Reporting, 2022 win

"EMPIRE POLITICIAN"

- Society of Publication Designers: Web - Custom Feature Design, Editorial Package category, 2022 Silver Medal

"GENERAL IMPUNITY"

- Deadline Club Awards: Opinion Writing, 2022 finalist

"MEET THE RIOT SQUAD: RIGHT-WING REPORTERS WHO USE VIRAL VIDEOS TO SMEAR BLM"

- Mirror Awards: Best In-Depth/Enterprise Reporting, 2022 win

"MIRRORS OF CALAMITY: HOW HOSPITALS BECAME VAULTS THAT HID EVIDENCE OF COVID-19'S TOLL"

- Mirror Awards: Best Single Article/Story, 2022 finalist

"PRECARITY"

- Society of Publication Designers: Digital Merit Award, 2022 nomination

"THE AFRICOM FILES"

- Military Reports & Editors Association: Overseas Coverage, 2022 win

"MEET THE CONSULTING FIRM THAT'S STAFFING THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION"

- Dateline Awards: Magazine - Business Reporting, 2022 win

Sharon Lerner for her reporting in "EPA EXPOSED" and "MERCK SELLS FEDERALLY FINANCED COVID PILL TO U.S. FOR 40 TIMES WHAT IT COSTS TO MAKE"

- Newswomen's Club of New York Front Page Awards: Journalist of the Year, 2021 win

FIELD OF VISION

ASCENSION by Jessica Kingdon

- Tribeca Film Festival Awards: Best Documentary Feature, 2021 win

CHURCH AND THE FOURTH ESTATE by Brian Knappenberger

- Emmy Awards: News and Documentary Award for Outstanding Short Documentary, 2021 nomination
- Webby Awards: Video - Documentary - Longform, 2021 nomination



Still: "Disclosure"/Field of Vision

DISCLOSURE by Sam Feder

- Peabody Awards: Peabody Award, 2021 nomination

DO NOT SPLIT by Anders Hammer

- Academy Awards: Best Documentary Short Subject, 2021 nomination

USERS by Natalia Almada

- Sundance Film Festival Awards: U.S. Documentary Directing Award, 2021 win

The Intercept_



Chief Keith Humphrey of the Little Rock Police Department walking through the door of his office in Little Rock, Ark. Photo: Andrea Morales for The Intercept

The Intercept

The Intercept was launched in 2014 to provide the kind of independent journalism missing from many mainstream media outlets. Since then, it has been singularly focused on bringing to light hidden truths that the public has a right to know. Dedicated to holding the powerful accountable through fearless, adversarial journalism, The Intercept's in-depth investigations and unflinching analysis focus on politics, war, surveillance, civil liberties, corruption, the environment, technology, and criminal justice. Our staff roster includes a number of award-winning journalists, including Ryan Grim, James Risen, Sharon Lerner, and co-founder Jeremy Scahill.

HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to reaching about 3 million unique readers each month in 2021, The Intercept had a profound impact by holding powerful institutions to account, whether that means governments — our own or others — private industry, or any institution that benefits from keeping publicly relevant information out of public view. Our investigative reporting both informs readers and inspires citizens, other journalists, and news outlets, policymakers, and advocacy organizations to take informed action in response to the most pressing risks of our time.

The forces threatening the world are the targets The Intercept has chosen as the focus of its reporting: past and potential biological catastrophes; governments promoting invasive surveillance and secret wars; corporations corrupting public policy with money and influence-peddling; and Big Tech amassing unthinkable tracking capabilities and power. Key to addressing these threats is creating an informed citizenry and electing officials who are accountable to the public.

In 2022, The Intercept will continue to be armed with robust First Amendment counsel and a team of award-winning investigative journalists. The Intercept will cover neglected topics with its credible, sharp, legally vetted reporting on abuses of power in political and corporate spheres.

The Intercept's team aims to expand its distribution and partnership strategies. Our investigative reporting will continue to help our readers better understand and prevent abuses of power, and provide vital information to the public about the most urgent crises facing the world today.

Origins of the Pandemic

As the coronavirus pandemic swept the world in early 2020, Intercept reporters Sharon Lerner and Mara Hvistendahl learned from sources that the genesis of Covid-19 could be more complicated than the natural origins story portrayed by much of the press at that time.

On September 3, 2020, Lerner filed a Freedom of Information Act request seeking the release of National Institutes of Health records related to funding it provided to EcoHealth Alliance, the dominant player in the viral forecasting industry. The NIH denied the request in December 2020 and then failed to respond to an administrative appeal filed by The Intercept. Only by suing the NIH was The Intercept able to obtain more than 900 pages of documents detailing the work of EcoHealth Alliance. The Intercept's reporting on these documents, first published in September 2021, has had a monumental impact, irrevocably altering the debate around Covid-19 origins and bringing new questions to light.

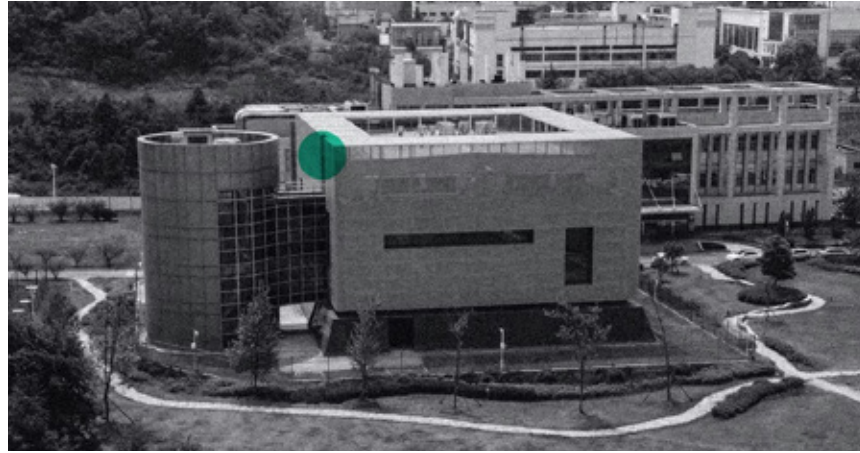


Illustration: The Intercept

The Intercept's coverage left open the possibility of a research accident from the start and focused on examining the existing scientific evidence as well as the many unanswered questions around this new coronavirus. Our work also looked into the dangers related to U.S.-funded "gain-of-function" research across the globe and uncovered serious oversight issues at the NIH.

In a series of stories, Lerner, Hvistendahl, and Maia Hibbett exposed a number of risky experiments funded by the NIH, including evidence that the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the Wuhan University Center for Animal Experiment, and EcoHealth Alliance had engaged in what the U.S. government defines as "gain-of-function research of concern." The Intercept also reported on a grant proposal written by EcoHealth Alliance and submitted in 2018 to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which provided evidence that the group was planning to work on several risky areas of research. While the research described in the grant materials could not have led to the Covid-19 pandemic, the findings contradicted claims by then-NIH Director Francis Collins and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci that the NIH had not funded gain-of-function research in Wuhan.

In light of The Intercept's reporting, the House Energy & Commerce Committee released a statement saying, "The American people deserve answers. Understanding how this pandemic started is one of the most critical public health questions of our time." Reps. Mike Gallagher, Buddy Carter, and Henry Cuellar introduced a bipartisan bill to put a five-year freeze on taxpayer funding of gain-of-function research, and the House voted to include an amendment to the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act that would prohibit federal funding to EcoHealth Alliance.

Additionally, the panel of scientists investigating Covid-19 origins was disbanded due to the task force's ties to EcoHealth Alliance and concerns around bias raised by The Intercept's reporting. Finally, the NIH released a statement correcting the untruthful assertions by Collins and Fauci, stating that EcoHealth Alliance had violated the NIH grant's terms and conditions.

EPA Exposed

Sharon Lerner's "EPA Exposed" series began in spring 2021, when Lerner was approached by a group of scientists who work on the assessment of new chemicals at the Environmental Protection Agency.

In June 2021, these whistleblowers began providing Lerner with substantial proof – including screenshots of emails, internal reports, draft chemical assessments, and audio and video recordings of meetings – of serious problems at the EPA's chemical safety office. The result was a series of groundbreaking investigations exposing corruption within the EPA that has left the agency unable to effectively regulate the powerful chemical industry. Following the publication of the first two stories in the "EPA Exposed" series, Reps. Frank Pallone, Diana DeGette, and Paul Tonko penned a letter to EPA Administrator Michael Regan to request more information on reported irregularities in the EPA.



Illustration: The Intercept

In October, in response to Lerner's reporting, the EPA announced plans to improve scientific integrity within the agency's New Chemicals Division. Specifically, the EPA created two internal science policy advisory councils, one of which is to focus on the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics and the Office of Pesticide Programs. The other, a "New Chemicals Advisory Committee," is now reviewing scientific and science policy issues related to new chemical submissions. The agency also said it would be creating a new senior-level role within the agency, a science policy adviser, to chair one of the councils.

America's Frontline Doctors

An anonymous hacker provided The Intercept hundreds of thousands of records from two health care companies, Cadence Health and Ravkoo, which showed that the companies had worked with the pro-Trump group America's Frontline Doctors to make millions of dollars selling discredited Covid-19 treatments to patients.

In a series of explosive stories, Micah Lee, First Look Media’s director of information security, detailed the lucrative operation. AFLDS, which has been spreading highly politicized misinformation about Covid-19 since 2020, referred its many followers to its telemedicine partner SpeakWithAnMD.com, which used a platform called Cadence Health.



Illustration: The Intercept

People who signed up paid \$90 for a phone consultation with “AFLDS-trained physicians,” who then prescribed treatments such as hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin. The drugs were delivered by Ravkoo, a service that works with local pharmacies to ship drugs to patients’ doors.

The records indicate that patients paid \$6.7 million for telemedicine visits over a two-month period and over \$8.5 million for unproven Covid-19 drugs since November 2020.

Following our story, the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis announced an investigation into AFLDS and SpeakWithAnMD citing our work. The committee also wrote a letter to the chair of the Federal Trade Commission requesting that the agency “investigate the deceptive conduct of companies promoting and profiting from misinformation” about the pandemic.

Revealing Joe Manchin

Throughout 2021, as the Democratic-controlled Senate and House of Representatives decided on the future of President Joe Biden’s agenda, Democratic West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin quickly became one of the most talked about politicians in the nation. Would Manchin approve the House-approved Build Back Better climate and social spending legislation, which many saw as a cornerstone of Biden’s response to the crisis unleashed by the pandemic? What were some of the political interests informing Manchin’s thinking on this landmark bill?

To answer these questions, The Intercept published a series of exposés on Manchin’s relationships with special interests, lobbyists, and industries that were in opposition to Biden’s climate agenda.

The Intercept published an investigation into Manchin’s ownership stake in coal companies, exploring how these ties may have influenced the senator’s policy stances. Earlier in 2021, we reported on a leaked Zoom recording of Manchin and billionaire donors discussing legislative strategy. Then, we exposed an audio recording of the same dark-money group dangling campaign contributions in front of other conservative Democrats who do their bidding. The Intercept also highlighted Manchin’s key role in opposing Biden’s Clean Electricity Performance Program, which would have sped up the transition to renewable energy from coal and natural gas by offering power utilities money to make the switch and charging them fines if they failed to do so. Another original Intercept scoop exposed how Manchin’s daughter, Heather Bresch — then president and CEO of the drugmaker Mylan — worked directly with the CEO of Pfizer to keep prices of the company’s EpiPen product artificially high.

Our coverage of Manchin’s fossil fuel ties has been cited by dozens of other sites, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, MSNBC, Democracy Now!, The Guardian, Slate, Mic, and The New Republic. Many of these stories reached over 100,000 views in the first week.

FIELD_
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Field of Vision

Founded in 2015, Field of Vision commissions, produces, and supports nonfiction work that uses innovative and artistic ways to explore contemporary global issues through a cinematic lens. Field of Vision is a filmmaker-driven program that supports experimental visual storytellers and journalists and facilitates multidisciplinary presentation and distribution of their work. Its goal is to both push the boundaries of creative nonfiction work — through film, art, and writing — and to be an advocate in the field for those who have been marginalized in the mainstream and whose work transcends traditional categorization.

Field of Vision has supported more than 178 films to date, including 94 shorts, five series, and 84 feature-length documentaries, with 68 films currently in various stages of production. More than 56% of the filmmakers supported are female, 46% are people of color, and 35% are filmmakers from outside of the United States.

HIGHLIGHTS

Field of Vision listens to filmmakers' needs, observations, and experiences in the field. In response, Field of Vision launched a new Digital Security Platform and Clinic for filmmakers and journalists working on projects or in locations considered high-risk, a pro bono Legal Clinic, and an Apprenticeship Program to address barriers to entry in the field. The IF/Then Shorts program continued to provide mentorship and project support to underrepresented short documentary filmmakers in the U.S. and internationally.

Looking ahead, Field of Vision's strategy around film investment and diversifying income is a success with three feature films going to market in 2022. As part of our commitment to supporting creative explorations of nonfiction filmmaking, our online journal Field Notes will expand to a quarterly publishing schedule. The team also plans to offer additional filmmaker support through expanded office hours — a vital service launched during the pandemic — and one-on-one and group training sessions through our Digital Security and Legal Clinics.

Digital Security Clinic & Digital Security for Filmmakers Platform

In partnership with the Freedom of the Press Foundation, Field of Vision released its comprehensive guide to Digital Security for Filmmaking, providing documentary filmmakers a navigable platform to assess their risks, evaluate best practices, and increase their security. The heart of the platform is a collection of more than 30 resources with detailed instructions on a variety of security strategies. In tandem with the release of the platform, Field of Vision and Freedom of the Press Foundation launched a free Digital Security Clinic for documentary filmmakers. The clinic features group training sessions and private consultations for filmmakers and production teams, led by experts at Freedom of the Press Foundation. At a preview event hosted by Sundance Institute, Field of Vision and Freedom of the Press Foundation demonstrated the platform components with approximately 200 filmmakers and photojournalists who have experienced digital security threats.

Legal Clinic

In partnership with Lawyers for Reporters, a joint project of the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice and First Look Institute's Press Freedom Defense fund, Field of Vision launched a pro bono Legal Clinic for filmmakers and journalists in need of legal guidance. This ongoing resource is available to documentary freelancers working in the U.S. and provides legal information on specific topics and referrals to pro bono legal counsel.

Apprenticeship Program

Field of Vision launched its new Apprenticeship Program in 2021 to address multiple barriers to entry to working in the documentary field. Mentorship, access, and on-the-job training are out of reach for many and essential to advancing the next generation's craft and careers. Field of Vision designed the program to create new models of working and professional development while supporting the craft. We initiated outreach with global, independent production houses to support fully compensated apprenticeships, with a focus on underrepresented and emerging talent. We selected five independent production houses to mentor apprentices in 2022. The goal is to provide opportunities for apprentices to further their careers, land more permanent positions, and foster greater career sustainability.

IF/Then Shorts

IF/Then Shorts is an acclaimed short documentary fund and mentorship program launched in 2017 and acquired by Field of Vision in 2020. With a focus on breaking systemic and structural barriers to access, IF/Then amplifies regional, community-centered stories and supports nonfiction filmmakers through project grants, substantial mentorship, industry consultations, editorial feedback, filmmaker advocacy, and multiplatform distribution support.

In 2021, IF/Then supported 14 short documentary film teams across North America and awarded \$155,000 in project funding through a combination of open calls for yearlong cohort-based labs, thematic pitches, and regional editing residencies. 2021 funding and program partnerships included renewed operational support from the MacArthur Foundation, a new lab and fund with Hulu, an environmental pitch with the Redford Center, the sixth continuous partnership with New Orleans Film Society, and an evolution of our distribution initiative to advance projects toward completion and distribution. IF/Then also participated in virtual panels and one-on-one training sessions in collaboration with regional and national film partners such as Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, New York Foundation for the Arts, Black Public Media, and Northwest Film Forum.

FILM AND FILMMAKER SUPPORT

Projects supported by Field of Vision illuminate and impact the world around them. Many premiered at top-tier film festivals around the globe and were nominated for or won prestigious awards in 2021. 2021 also marks the sixth consecutive year when Field of Vision-supported films were shortlisted and/or nominated for an Academy Award. Impressively, seven Field of Vision films had their broadcast premiere on television's longest-running showcase for independent nonfiction film, POV on PBS.



Still: "Ascension"/Field of Vision

Nomination and award highlights include Jessica Kingdon's ASCENSION, an artistic exploration of the paradox of progress in modern China. The film examines what living the so-called Chinese Dream looks like today. ASCENSION was nominated for the 2022 Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature and won Best Documentary Feature at the Tribeca Film Festival, six Critics Choice nominations, and many others. The film was later sold to MTV Documentaries. Brian Knappenberger's CHURCH AND THE FOURTH ESTATE, about child-abuse allegations in Idaho's Boy Scouts that implicate the Mormon church, was nominated for a News and Documentary Emmy Award for outstanding Short Documentary and a Webby for Documentary Longform. DISCLOSURE by trans filmmaker Sam Feder and executive produced by Laverne Cox was nominated for a Peabody Award for its examination of Hollywood's depiction of transgender people and the impact of those stories on transgender lives and American culture. USERS by Macarthur Genius Award recipient Natalia Almada is a cinematic, dystopian essay about children and the future of the technological world, which won the Directing Award for U.S. Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival (the second time Almada has won this award).

DO NOT SPLIT by Anders Hammer was nominated for a 2021 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject. DO NOT SPLIT takes viewers into the heart of the Hong Kong protests, capturing the determination and sacrifices of the city's youth as their movement becomes symbolic for a generation's rebellion against the political systems of two governments. The film gives an expansive and firsthand portrait of the unrest that prompted a

government backlash, the passage of the new Beijing-backed national security law, and the protests that captured the attention of the world. After the Academy Award nomination, censors in Hong Kong were given the power to vet films that authorities said may endanger national security. The Chinese government censored coverage of the Academy Awards, and a major Hong Kong broadcaster dropped the broadcast of the awards ceremony entirely.



Still: "Do Not Split"/Field of Vision

AMERICA by Garrett Bradley is a cinematic omnibus rooted in New Orleans that challenges the idea of Black cinema as a "wave" or "movement in time," proposing, instead, a continuous thread of achievement. Inspired by the earliest surviving feature-length film with an all-black cast, Bradley conjures a series of stunning black-and-white vignettes of joy, domesticity, and triumph.



Still: "America"/Field of Vision

AMERICA is the third film Field of Vision has worked on with Bradley, a Field of Vision fellow. We released the film in conjunction with a monthlong outreach series aimed to engage a wide audience. In addition to AMERICA, Bradley's other two films — LIKE and THE EARTH IS HUMMING — were made available to watch on the Criterion Collection platform, alongside Field of Vision's platform. This distribution was showcased and coupled with a 30-day screening of films by New Orleans students working with Bradley as a mentor and made in collaboration with the New Orleans Museum of Art and NOVAC.

Field of Vision also presented an online panel "The Politics and Considerations of Archive," featuring Ashley Clark (curatorial director at Criterion), Mike Mashon (head, Moving Image Section at the Library of Congress), and Devika Girish (co-deputy editor at Film Comment magazine and a Talks programmer at the New York Film Festival).

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Protesters with face cutouts of detained Belarusian journalist Raman Pratasevich is seen during the protest for freedom for Belarus in Cologne, Germany on June 6, 2021. (Photo by Ying Tang/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

Press Freedom Defense Fund

Since its launch in 2017, First Look Institute's Press Freedom Defense Fund has become a globally recognized defender of First Amendment rights by providing legal resources to those who risk everything to expose corruption. This guiding principle is especially vital today when the systematic silencing of the press has never felt so widespread and dire. While other organizations provide support to ensure information transparency or engage in strategic litigation, PFDF is unique. It extends its mission-saving resources to remedy the devastating personal injury caused to the underresourced reporter or struggling news outlet.

Since its founding, PFDF has taken on dozens of individual cases, successfully defended press freedom, protected and strengthened media law, and — crucially — enhanced modern understanding of free speech as a foundational right, nationally and internationally.

HIGHLIGHTS

In 2021, PFDF provided over \$500,000 in financial support to individuals and organizations to support three critical areas of need: defending defamation and retaliation against the press; defending against subpoenas for sources and newsgathering; and defending whistleblowers. PFDF expanded its international aid to include Belarusian and Afghan journalists, as well as the number of clients supported by its nationally focused program, Lawyers for Reporters.

Looking ahead to 2022, priorities include building on its international work with continued support of journalists from Belarus and Afghanistan. PFDF is also collaborating with New America and The Intercept to support fellowships for Afghan journalists in exile and publish their work in August 2022, during the one-year anniversary of the fall of Kabul. Most recently, PFDF became the first non-European supporter and founding partner of the JX Fund, a coalition of support organized by Reporters Without Borders. The fund endorses and backs European journalism and journalists in exile, including support of Russian journalists working in exile due to the severe repression of the media in Russia.

Defending the Press

This past year, Maria Ressa, founder of the Philippines' Rappler and grant recipient of PFDF, was honored with the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. PFDF was the first and is the largest financial backer of the marathon legal defense of Ressa and Rappler against the Duterte regime. Since 2018, the Philippines government has worked overtime to silence Ressa and arrested her in 2019 on trumped-up charges of cyberlibel, resulting from Rappler's skillful reports on President Rodrigo Duterte's extrajudicial killing campaigns. PFDF has stood by Maria Ressa from the beginning and will continue to provide her with the financial assistance she needs to pay her legal bills in the face of the series of trumped-up legal cases which continue to plague her today.

International Support of Independent Journalists

Since Belarus's mass pro-democracy protests in August 2020, Alexander Lukashenko's regime has enforced a particularly brutal crackdown on independent journalists and media outlets that have been critical of the government. In 2021, PFDF began a collaboration with the Human Rights Foundation's Belarus Solidarity Fund to support independent Belarusian journalists and media organizations in exile, and advance Belarus journalists reporting on critical issues.

Complementary to its support of Belarus, PFDF has committed to support for journalists in Afghanistan. PFDF is concentrating on ensuring that Afghan media organizations that have been built up over the past 20 years remain in business, and that local concerns are reported by local journalists. This past year, PFDF began supporting Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghanistan's largest independent news agency with stories published in Pashto, Dari, and English.

Lawyers for Reporters

PFDF continues to expand and deepen our Lawyers for Reporters initiative, a joint project with the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, which provides legal resources and guidance for newly established nonprofit U.S. media organizations that represent local and diverse communities.

Since its launch more than two years ago, Lawyers for Reporters has supported 83 clients across 23 states, many of which are led by people identifying as women, BIPOC, and/or LGBTQ+. Twenty-five law firms have deployed 111 attorneys to serve these clients, donating the value of more than \$1 million for their pro bono services.

Lawyers for Reporters saw remarkable growth in 2021, more than doubling the number of clients supported, as well as the number of law firm partnerships. New clients include the Prison Journalism Project, a national organization that trains incarcerated individuals to be journalists; a merger between an investigative news site and a public television station in Virginia; and a Spanish-language news site based in Miami fighting a defamation lawsuit against the Venezuelan government. Lawyers for Reporters also began receiving referrals from the American Journalism Project, with potential clients asking for corporate and restructuring advice.

SUPPORTERS

First Look Institute’s relentless work is only made possible by your continued support. Our community of donors provides the means to uphold free expression and a free press, alongside fiercely independent perspectives that ensure functioning democracies and inclusive cultures. We are ever grateful for your belief in our work.

First Look Institute is honored to be included in the philanthropic priorities of more than 50,000 individual and institutional supporters. This list includes those who contributed \$2,500 or more during the 2021 calendar year.

Institutions

- Bay and Paul Foundations
- Broad Reach Fund
- Defense Against Thought Control Foundation
- Democracy Fund
- Ford Foundation
- Hulu
- Kalliopeia Foundation
- The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Maine Community Foundation
- The Miami Foundation
- Overbrook Family Advised Fund
- The Redford Center
- Stanford Law Fellowship
- State Law Research Initiative
- Trehan Foundation
- Way to Rise
- Wild Thyme Fund
- Zegar Family Foundation

Individuals

- Anonymous
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- James Wise

First Look Institute strives to provide accurate donor information. We apologize for any inaccuracies or unintended exclusions in our reporting. First Look Institute’s Form 990 returns are available at our website: www.firstlookinstitute.org. Our audited financial statements are available on request.

Leadership:

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**We are deeply grateful for the support and
guidance provided by our Board of Directors:**

Jeff Alvord

Michael Bloom

Pat Christen

Questions about supporting us? Please contact:

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