



Gateway Journalism REVIEW

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Fighting the **BIG LIE**(s)

We need media literacy now more than ever.

GJR examines efforts to make us smarter about information.

Inside this issue:

Federal shield laws and the R. Kelly case

By Robert Chiarito

Do paywalls really work?

By Jackie Spinner

**News outlets struggle to cover
environmental racism**

By Clarissa Cowley

Media literacy and the Holocaust.

Our founder reflects

By Charles Klotzer

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE **Media literacy, big lies, the Holocaust, the election and democracy**

- The last week in October featured the annual U.S. Media Literacy Week.
- Nov. 2 is the reopening of St. Louis's Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum with its expanded space for media literacy.
- Nov. 8 is Election Day, when tens of millions of voters are on a glide path to electing hundreds of public officials embracing Donald Trump's Big Election Lie.
- Nov. 9 marks 84 years since Kristallnacht ended the bar mitzvah plans of a young boy in Berlin - Charles Klotzer, who founded this publication.

What ties all this together? It is the importance of media literacy as a process by which a nation or a community finds the facts, finds the truth and discards lies, propaganda and disinformation. In this country, it is the process of democracy, by which freedom of the press informs 'We the People' and helps us govern wisely.

Unfortunately, this process doesn't always work and seems increasingly fraught. It doesn't ensure that elections are settled on true information. Jonathan Rauch, a Republican and a senior fellow at Brookings Institution, put it this way recently: "Stop the Steal is the most audacious and successful political disinformation campaign that 's ever been run against America foreign or domestic."

We're not on the threshold of a new Holocaust when Kristallnacht sent Klotzer's family fleeing by rail and ship through

Shanghai and eventually to St. Louis. Maybe today's threat level to democracy is more on the order of McCarthyism in the 1950s or the 1968 election victories of segregationist George Wallace who carried five states winning a majority of young white males in the South. We overcame those threats.

Today a growing number of Americans fear democracy is in peril, according to polls for the New York Times and CBS - though few people cite it as a major problem.

It's a promising development that media literacy is the flavor of the decade in academia. Illinois has even adopted the nation's first media literacy requirement for public education, the topic of our cover story. The story finds the requirement is vague and underfunded. Meanwhile, Missouri is considering its own media literacy law. But a separate law that went into effect in August has resulted in suburban communities, including progressive ones such as Kirkwood and Webster, removing books from school libraries. Even a graphic novel adaptation of '1984' was removed from the shelves.

Meanwhile, Missouri's Sen. Josh Hawley, a Republican, leads a conservative crusade against "woke public schools" which he says are hostile to the Bible and America's moral fiber.

The pages that follow pull together these strands of media literacy, truth, big lies and democracy at a time of uncertainty that has left many fearing for the future of our democracy.



Photo by Christoph Scholz via Flickr

Illinois' pioneering media literacy program lacks resources, oversight

By Emily Cooper

The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting's Campus Consortium provided support for this project.

In the year since Illinois' pioneering media literacy requirement went into effect, experts, teachers and the state have scrambled to define what media literacy means and how to implement the new law without additional funding, professional development or clear standards.

Illinois became the first state in the nation to require instruction of media literacy at the public high school level when Illinois' Public Act 102-0055 was passed in July 2021.

There is no state money for professional development and no state plan to check on compliance. Some teachers who already were teaching media literacy say they had not heard it was now a requirement.

Hannah Maze, a social studies teacher at Anna-Jonesboro Community High School in southern Illinois, said she has been already teaching it as a unit, so it wasn't anything new for her students.

The school already knew Maze was teaching it in her classes, she said.

"We have been teaching it maybe since 2018/2019, maybe even before that," she said. "So, it wasn't a brand new idea to us. It was just one of those 'hey, are you covering it?' I showed them my unit plans, and we were fine."

A few hundred miles north in Chicago, Dan Katz-Zeiger, a social studies teacher at Roberto Clemente Community Academy, said he was not aware of this requirement.

"I pay fairly close attention to the news," he said. "It's not like I'm watching every bill that comes out of the state government, but I pay fairly close attention. So, I do think it's an interesting example of the way that things are passed by legislative bodies don't actually end up. They tend to often disconnect to what actually happens on the ground" because, he said, the mechanism by which he should have heard—as a high school social studies educator—clearly failed.

What is a unit?

The new law requires a "unit" of media literacy but does not specify if that's an hour, a day, a week, a semester or a school year.

Illinois' Act states "beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, every public high school shall include in its curriculum a unit of instruction on media literacy."

"Is that a 30-minute instruction, or is it six months of continuous curriculum," Yonty Friesem, associate professor of civic media at Columbia College Chicago and a co-founder of Illinois Media Literacy Coalition (IMLC), said. "It doesn't define unit on purpose to give this flexibility, but it can create a gap."

The use of "unit" in this bill is intended to give teachers more autonomy, Friesem said.

A unit of media literacy "can come in lots of different forms, it doesn't say how it should be and all that," Michael Spikes, PhD candidate at Northwestern University,

Media Literacy Now's current Illinois chapter leader and a co-founder of IMLC, said.

It gives a lot of opportunity, he said.

Pushback on bill

The bill passed the Illinois General Assembly almost exclusively along party lines.

The House passed the bill by a vote of 68 to 44 without a single Republican voting in favor. In the Senate, the vote was 42 to 15, with three Republicans voting in favor and 15 against.

Sen. Terri Bryant (R) voted 'no' on the bill.

"There was some question of when you're talking about media literacy, who decides which media you're going to be looking at? Who decides what's good and what's bad," Bryant said.

The bill itself had some flaws because it didn't identify what the curriculum would look like, it was pretty wide open, she said.

"What does that mean where they are going to be studying the media itself? Was it just social media? Would it be CNN and Fox News? Who is going to determine what is the right way to approach something? Who is going to say what is true and what is not true if you have situations where it's purely subjective?" she said.

When asked about any pushback over the media literacy curriculum, Friesem said there are the usual suspicions that this is a Trojan Horse for "student indoctrination."

However, Friesem said most people understand the need for proficiency in navigating the contemporary media-saturated environment.

Bryant said a lot of legislation that is written is kind of arbitrary in its nature.

"So, you look at it and say 'is the concept good'" she said. "Maybe the concept is good, but the way the bill is written is not. That was my read on what happened."

What does this bill mean?

Sen. Karina Villa (D), chief Senate sponsor of the legislation, said asking teachers to include a unit of study makes things simpler.

"That can be incorporated into an already existing class," she said.

This bill, Villa said, aligns with critical literacy skills that are present in many core content areas like English/Language Arts, social studies and sciences, in all of these standards.

"This isn't a new idea," she said. "This has been a hot topic. Media literacy has been a hot topic in literacy instruction for many, many years."

Maze teaches media literacy in a required stand-alone civics course to sophomores, she said.

"Every semester, we have an introduction to history. So, I teach about primary and secondary sources, the importance of corroboration," Maze said. "So, this year, I kind of tied that into that unit because then as we're talking about corroboration, all right let's look into who these sources are."

In years past, Maze said she taught it in a separate unit near the end of the semester, but this year she incorporated it into primary and secondary sources.

"Who are our sources? Who's behind that information? What evidence are they using? How do we know that websites are reliable? Because a lot of times [students] will say if it's '.org,' it's reliable," she said. "So, we've been actually investigating who can potentially own those sites and causing them to dig a little deeper."

Though Katz-Zeiger said this new requirement has never been communicated to him, he still teaches media literacy in his class.

"I think that's basically one of the most key skills in any social studies classroom," he said.

When he thinks about the intent of social studies education Katz-Zeiger said the biggest thing is to make informed citizens. He said a key skill for having informed and empowered citizens is to be able to navigate media literacy.

"I think it's very tied into what we're doing most days in my class although there is no specific unit that we do that's like 'this is our media literacy unit,' but I think it's built into basically everything we do," he said.

What we know about the law

Maaria Mozaffar, attorney and legislative drafter who wrote the bill, said she was approached by MLN's Alicia Haywood, former Illinois chapter leader and current Florida chapter leader, to help bring this legislation to Illinois.

The key thing for this legislation, Mozaffar said, is that it's in the curriculum as a shall versus may, "which is awesome because now it's in the curriculum. It has to be taught." Shall means it is mandatory, not optional.

"I think the critical piece about this is that the transition from 'may' to 'shall' is a challenge because schools don't like to be told what to teach, but I think people realize how important media literacy was," Mozaffar said.

Friesem said Haywood was the orchestrator of the bill, working on it for five years with different people.

At the last moment, when it was given to experts to evaluate, Haywood involved Friesem in the language of the bill, Friesem said.

The law has three parts:

- A. A definition
- B. Five practices of media literacy
- C. Illinois State Board of Education resources

Definition of media literacy

Media literacy, according to the Act, "means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and communicate using a variety of objective forms, including, but not limited to, print, visual, audio, interactive and digital texts."

Friesem said it's broad and vague, but a lot of people can agree on it.

Friesem said in a way the act's definition is a modified version of the 1992 Aspen Institute's definition.

The '92 definition uses the term "produce" whereas the Act's definition uses the term "create and communicate."

"It's very different from the way that it was in the 90s," Friesem said. "It was produced, you were producing something, but now you're creating something by resharing, remixing, it's so different in that sense. The practice shifted. So, that's why the term is instead of produce it's more create because in production you usually need to have a lot of stuff to produce, but today you can create easily with a click. In several minutes, you can create, which can be good and can be bad. So, it's a little bit different in that sense."

Friesem said the Act's definition means that media literacy is the ability to access, evaluate and communicate with and through media.

"It's any media in that sense," Friesem said. "It doesn't matter if it's social media, if it's a song, if it's a book or if it's a mural. It doesn't specifically say social media, but when you create, it's on any of those platforms."

In the language of the law, it names the specific media, Friesem said. Usually, nobody does that but it's for the clarity that it's included.

It's basically for teachers and not academics. In the classroom to just think about how to analyze, evaluate, create, communicate, it doesn't help, Friesem said.

"How does that look in a science class," Friesem said. "That's really not helpful for people."

Five competencies of media literacy

Friesem pushed to have the five competencies the way Renee Hobbs, founder of the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island, defined media literacy in 2010, Hobbs's report was based on the conclusions of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy and the

Continued on next page

Aspen Institute.

The second part of the bill is where Friesem contributed to the majority of – the five competencies, Friesem said.

"I was getting more into the midst of like, 'okay, so what does media literacy look like,' which it's not a typical way that a bill would have, but it does explain the five practices, which for me, stand for media literacy," Friesem said.

Here are the five competencies and Friesem's explanation:

1. Make responsible choices and access information by locating and sharing materials and comprehending information and ideas

What does it mean to act as reliable information, Friesem said. It's not access in terms of having technology.

"It's about how to access the information and to know that it's reliable," Friesem said.

2. Analyze messages in a variety of forms by identifying the author, purpose and point of view, and evaluating the quality and credibility of the content

This means analyzing media messages by deconstructing them, Friesem said.

3. Create content in a variety of forms, making use of language, images, sound, and new digital tools and technologies

"It's not just about sitting and doing academic analysis, but it's also about creativity and also being practitioners," Friesem said. "Everybody is communicating online in different ways. So, how do you communicate coherently?"

4. Reflect on one's own conduct and communication behavior by applying social responsibility and ethical principles

"Are you aware of your media usage consumption, and what does that mean," Friesem explains. "Do you reflect on other people's way of consumption?"

5. Take social action by working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, workplace and community, and by participating as a member of a community

This is civics. "You cannot be media literate if you don't have social responsibility," Friesem said. "So, how does it look to be socially responsible with the media, for you and others? How do you look at it?"

Providing state resources

Then, the final part of the law, which Friesem insisted on the language, is that ISBE will provide resources and professional development options, Friesem said.



The Abraham Lincoln 'A Greater Task' statue at Union Square Park in downtown Springfield, Illinois.

Photo by Emily Cooper

"My point was you cannot ask teachers to do something and not provide them tools and support," Friesem said. "That doesn't make sense to add more to the teacher's plate without supporting that."

In response to the Act, the IMLC was created, Jackie Matthews, ISBE Executive Director of Communications, said.

Spikes and Friesem co-founded the coalition.

"The coalition has a Media Literacy Framework and is currently working to develop curriculum resources aligned to the framework and the legislation," Matthews said. "The next step for the coalition will be to identify professional development opportunities."

Amanda Elliott, Executive Director of Legislative Affairs at ISBE, said ISBE has been working with the coalition in the implementation of the bill.

"We have a fact sheet, we co-hosted a webinar, we have the framework, all on our website," Elliott said. "We are still working with the coalition on additional guidance that can go out to the field to inform really anyone, but educators in particular, on how to best implement this mandate."

Elliott said there may be more resources to come, but at this point, the resources on their website are what has been done.

Resources currently offered to educators are limited due to lack of funding and oversight mandated by the bill.

"We as ISBE do not dictate or endorse specific curriculum," Johnson said. "So, in the past we have had some legislative measures that have provided us opportunity and specifically funding to dig deeper into creating resources, but they're free and we ensure that they are aligned with standards, but in terms of a lot of unfunded mandates, this being one of them, we don't have the opportunity or ability to say this is what you have to use or should use, that's really up to local districts to determine what meets their needs and with a bill like this, that has the flexibility of allowing students or schools to determine where to place this unit of study. It really has to be incredibly flexible because it could appear in an English course, a history course or a stand-alone course. So, it really depends on what the school district identifies as its needs."

According to HB2683, Illinois is a local control state, meaning every district has control over its curriculum, Spikes said.

ISBE develops state standards to serve as a general guide for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, Matthews said.

Illinois Arts Learning Standards Media Arts Standards provides ISBE approved standards for media arts learning.

It is broken into four sections: creating, producing, responding and connecting.

The term "media literacy" is identified in connecting and ranges from 5th grade to intermediate high school levels.

Out of respect for local control, Johnson said the only thing that ISBE pushes out are standards.

"Standards weren't attached to this particular legislation," Johnson said. "So, I didn't have a role in that. A lot of it comes down to funding and resources as well. In the past with other curriculum measures, it would be a funded mandate. This one unfortunately didn't have any funding for professional development or those types of things."

School districts locally develop curriculum that aligns to the state standards and meets any curriculum mandates required by law, Matthews said.

"Because of that, it can make it kind of messy because while the state can say 'okay, you need to include this thing,' say media literacy in our case, it can't say how it should be taught," Spikes said. "It can't say what materials they should be using."

ISBE put a task force together to do that at the end of last year. It was made up of teachers, librarians, similar to IMLC, Spikes said.

At the beginning of this year, that task force was dissolved because ISBE was getting some pushback because the state cannot recommend or tell teachers what curriculum they should be using, Spikes said.

The person who initially ran that task force was Kimberly Johnson, English Language Arts Principal Consultant at ISBE, Spikes said.

"Task forces are legislative requirements, so they're oftentimes written into the bill. So, it wasn't a task force," Johnson said. "We put together an advisory group. Oftentimes, when we have bills or things that require curriculum, we try to reach out to as many other stakeholders as possible to include them into that conversation."

There was no pushback on this advisory group, Johnson said.

"There was nothing negative with that," Johnson said. "Our concerns when identifying, from my perspective in my role, when identifying curriculum resources, ISBE, we don't endorse curriculum and that becomes particularly problematic when we have paid resources or those types of things. After diving into this work, it was becoming more and more apparent that there are not a lot of free resources that exist in this space or even identifying professional development resources. So, I wanted to do justice to the topic of media literacy as a whole and the external group was able to dig into that a little more than what we had. But no pushback, it's just we have limitations as a local control state."

Johnson said she helped identify and put together this advisory group made up of teachers, educators.

Spikes and Friesem were part of the advisory group, Spikes said. Johnson approached Friesem and Spikes and asked if the coalition could put together recommended resources, he said.

"We ended up shifting that group to the external group of the Illinois Media Literacy Coalition because they too were working on the same efforts," Johnson said. "And many of them had been involved in the creation of the bill as well as the two leaders, Yonty and Michael. So, it just made sense instead of having duplicative efforts, we would just combine forces."

Spikes said Johnson knew of his and Friesem's background in media literacy while part of the advisory group.

"When she had received information, at least this is what she had indicated to us, that ISBE really couldn't be involved in trying to put together or like say 'we are recommending certain resources or places to go' or things like that to get information on media literacy, that's when she reached out to us and said 'I would like to talk to you guys about being that provider,'" Spikes said.

What we don't know

The state does not say how they will check this media literacy requirement, Spikes said.

"There is no media literacy police out there that will go to every school and say 'how are you doing this?' There is no means for that," he said. "Those are limitations, but I think those are also limitations imposed based on the structure of how schools are run in the state and so on, but again, I do think that there is a great opportunity here in the fact that it has been formalized in this kind of way."

Johnson said ISBE's Regional Offices of Education throughout the state do more of their compliance checks. So, it's communicating with them about the changes in mandates and what's required of school districts.



Illustration by Nicolas Raymond via Flickr

Media literacy advocates could face political minefield in Missouri

By Don Corrigan

Educators at this summer's annual International Media Literacy Research Symposium (IMLRS) in Wisconsin had reason to celebrate. They had an educational win in neighboring Illinois. They savored details on how Illinois became the first state in America to require students to take media literacy classes.

Starting in the 2022-2023 school year, high schools in the Prairie State are offering curriculum for students to learn how to analyze and communicate information originating from a variety of media, including digital, interactive, audio, visual, and print.

The Illinois law asks teachers to instruct students to consider how media affects their information consumption and its impact on their and others' behavior. A civics and social responsibility section encourages students to engage in thoughtful and respectful discussion on media content.

The new Illinois law did get some pushback from Republican state legislators before it passed.

The bill passed the Illinois General Assembly almost exclusively along party lines.

Will Missouri and other red states be next?

Most states in America have Republican governors and Republican-dominated legislatures that can be hostile to educational initiatives – and this does not bode well for media literacy proposals elsewhere. Many educators at this summer's conference at the University of Wisconsin hail from states where getting their legislators to approve media literacy curriculum is a long shot at best.

A case in point is Illinois' next-door neighbor, Missouri, with a Republican super-majority in both House and Senate and a Republican in the governor's mansion. Missouri has a long track record of strident opposition to educational initiatives that could be seen as progressive.

Nevertheless, Julie Smith, author of "Master the Media," and an educator at Webster University in St. Louis, has taken on the mission of getting a literacy media proposal together for the Missouri legislature. Smith teaches digital literacy and is especially concerned about the impact of social media.

She approached state Rep. Jim Murphy,

R-Oakville, in 2019 about drafting legislation for media literacy curriculum in Missouri schools. Murphy agreed that Missouri should be more pro-active when it comes to on-line media literacy and filed legislation for the 2020 session.

"I'm excited about the idea of Missouri showing it cares about its students having 21st Century media literacy survival skills," said Smith. "Young people are spending up to 11 hours daily with electronic mass media, yet we don't talk about this nearly enough."

"Media literacy is not about hating the media," added Smith. "It's about asking questions about the messages we consume – and if you check out the qualifications that employees are looking for in 2022, 'critical thinking' is near the top of the list."

Bill in Missouri legislature

Oakville's Rep. Murphy said he hopes the 2023 session of the legislature will take a close look at the media literacy bill he is sponsoring and pass it.

"We will file it again," said Murphy. "We've done various iterations of the bill in response to some pushback we've gotten. There was

concern about the scope of the bill, so our plan is to do it as a pilot program at the beginning.

"Under the revised bill, media literacy instruction will be implemented in five different school districts and then evaluated," said Murphy. "We are looking at putting together a panel to help devise such curriculum, and it won't be just be educators, but health professionals and people who work in the media."

Murphy said the idea is not necessarily to put together the perfect media literacy course. He said there is more interest in seeing how media literacy can become a component of courses in different subject areas.

Another Missouri Republican who has taken an interest in trying to educate the public about "fake news" and phony media reports is Secretary of State John Ashcroft. Ashcroft shares Murphy's concern that too many young people rely on unreliable social media platforms.

Ashcroft has said on NPR that the need for on-line media literacy is not an issue just for Republicans or just Democrats, nor is it just for young people. He held a town hall meeting with AARP in 2019 in which he expressed concern about senior citizens.

Ashcroft, who oversees elections in Missouri, said some studies show that senior citizens are more likely to share political misinformation on social media than other age groups.

"Too many people are getting their news from what shows up on Facebook and other internet sites," said Murphy. "They see it. They believe it. They don't question it or analyze it, and they spread it. That has to change. We are living in the Wild West now."

"Information is not sourced well now, and we can teach people to be more discerning about what is fact and what is gossip," added Murphy. "Media literacy is not about making you a Democrat or a Republican. It's about making you smart."

Literacy is non-partisan

At this summer's IMLRS conference in Wisconsin, Art Silverblatt, a founder of Digital International Media Literacy Education (DIMLE), advised educators to emphasize the non-partisan nature of media literacy studies. He said this was especially important when approaching school boards, state legislatures or concerned parents.

In a presentation to MLRS, Silverblatt said that academics have already witnessed how public misperceptions about Critical Race Theory have been exploited and embroiled in partisan politics. He said educators must be on guard to see that the term "media literacy" is not similarly exploited.

"In that spirit, we urge media literacy instructors and organizations to incorporate the following statement into their definitions

of media literacy: 'The discipline of media literacy is non-partisan.' It's hoped that this step will prepare the media literacy community to make an effective case."

Silverblatt said educators have to be prepared to withstand and overcome any ideological attacks in he making. He is professor emeritus of media communications at Webster University and author of "Media Literacy: Keys To Interpreting Media Messages."

Webster University's Smith said she agrees with Silverblatt. She said media literacy is a critical intellectual process, not a partisan vehicle for some political agenda.

"I absolutely agree with Art Silverblatt," said Smith. "All proposals for media literacy instruction should make the point that the discipline is non-partisan. I would hope all organizations in this field would adopt the 'non-partisan' language."

Smith said she has testified before the legislature in the past in favor of the media literacy bill and will do so again in 2023. And she is ready for any questions about pushing some kind of liberal agenda in the classroom.

"Look, I am the furthest thing from a left-winger you can find," said Smith. "I voted for Trump in 2016. I am a registered Republican, although I admit that I am more of a libertarian and I do not vote straight ticket."

"My bias is that I believe media literacy is the only way we can save this republic," said Smith. "We cannot outlaw all bad information, we cannot outrun it, and the only thing we can do is get smart about it."

"People need to realize that misinformation and biased news is very often a business decision to make money, and it's not about supporting Democrats or Republicans. Polarized news keeps viewers and makes money. If objective news drew audiences and made money, that is what the media companies would be doing."

Missouri legislature has anti-academic history

The Illinois' legislature has a history of being favorable to academic initiatives. In contrast, Missouri has a long track record of strident opposition to most educational initiatives that might be seen as progressive.

Among the initiatives that have come under attack in Missouri are student free expression bills, gender studies, sustainability and environmental studies, and Critical Race History (CRT). Political rhetoric over some of these initiatives can become especially hyperbolic at election time.

Academic issues that have generated a lot more heat than light in Missouri over the years include:

- Student free expression legislation in the 1990s was meant to counteract the 1988 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the Hazelwood case that allowed principals to block student speech in school-

sponsored activities like newspapers. Laws protective of student speech passed in neighboring Illinois, Arkansas and Kansas, but Missouri legislators denounced such proposals as a formula for anarchy in classrooms and on high school campuses.

- In the case of gender studies, ideological attacks have focused on whether these studies constitute an assault on traditional values. Missouri's influential religious conservatives have argued that teaching about gender identity in high school and college lacks scientific validity and is disruptive of the lives of young people. Teachers have been accused of "grooming" students for homosexual lifestyles.
- In the case of sustainability studies, Missouri conservatives have branded sustainability studies as part of Agenda 21 proposals of the United Nations that focus on the sustainability of the planet, global prosperity and international partnerships. Some state lawmakers have sought to outlaw use of words like "sustainability" in schools and to forbid any "Agenda 21 thinking." Such thinking is labeled as anti-development and a threat to sovereignty.
- In the case of critical race studies, the ideological attacks have maintained that these studies are, in fact, racist against Caucasian people. Conservative critics charge they are designed to promote reparations as a solution to past racial injustices. They also contend that the studies make white children feel guilty for enslavement of blacks, and a long-ago historical past for which these children bear no responsibility.

The Missouri legislature is not alone in attacking Critical Race Theory, which its defenders point out is not even taught at the elementary or secondary level. Numerous state legislatures have debated bills seeking a ban on critical race studies, even so. Missouri lawmakers also are not alone in attacking gender or sustainability studies, but the stridency of their attacks often attracts national attention.

Politicians have charged that school officials are usurping parental control of children with a flawed curriculum. These kinds of attacks on educators yielded political gains in Virginia 2021. Gov. Glenn Youngkin used such charges in his successful campaign last year and took Virginia's top spot in January 2022.

In the case of media literacy legislation, what hope is there for a fair hearing in Missouri's statehouse given the legislature's past antipathy for many academic initiatives? Media literacy advocates in the state are taking steps to find conservative allies and to fashion proposals that will not draw heavy fire.

Hawley, activists attack books, teachers, libraries

News analysis

By Don Corrigan

Missouri's Sen. Josh Hawley has made the fight against the "woke left" a signature issue and moral crusade. He criticizes "woke public schools" that he says are hostile to the Bible and that are destroying America's moral fabric.

Hawley maintains public schools are filled with secular humanists who hate the Bible, and teachers who revamp history to portray America as racist and groom students to be confused about their sexual identity. Librarians stack shelves with books encouraging sexual perversion and racial division, he says.

"Without the Bible, there is no modernity. Without the Bible, there is no America," Hawley told the annual NatCon convention earlier this year. "And now our biblical inheritance is again at the center of our politics. It is the question of the age. The woke left's campaign to remake the country," he continued, – from the 1619 Project to trans rights – is all about destroying "the inheritance of the Bible."

Hawley told the National Conservatism convention in September to be aware of the toll of taking on leftist elites in schools, the media, and the Democratic Party. Yes, it's a costly exercise, he said, but it's also a moral imperative to save a nation.

"The 'woke left,' they seem powerful, and maybe they are," Hawley inveighed. "Opposing them might cost us much, but the truth is worth any cost ... though the God of the universe could have accomplished his purposes entirely on his own, he chose instead to call us to do his work with him.....We are the heirs of the revolution of the Bible."

Hawley's attacks notwithstanding, Americans may be growing skeptical of attacks on schools, libraries and teachers. Right-wing canards against public education have been around for decades. They last peaked with the the John Birch Society and the 1950s' reports by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, which maintained that education institutions are riddled with subversives.

Many Americans may be sympathizing with educators who have struggled with COVID, low-pay and long hours, lockdowns from assault weapon threats, and verbal attacks at board meetings and in school parking lots. Polls show Americans are now more focused on economic issues, women's rights and immigration.

Nevertheless, some Republican politicians see political hay to be made in upcoming elections by attacking "liberal

education establishment."

Among the many groups, consultants and "think tanks" taking up the cause are: the creationist Discovery Institute, Heritage Foundation, Federalist Society, Civics Alliance, Claremont Institute, Family Research Council and state organizations such as Missouri Prosper, Arizona's Goldwater Institute, and Massachusetts' Pioneer Institute.

School book bans

A major piece of "education reform" by energized right-wing groups involves not just curriculum, but books used in classes and which are available in school libraries. Groups like Missouri Prosper, the Missouri chapter of No Left Turn in Education and Kansas City's Northland Parent Association have gotten a sympathetic hearing from the predominantly Republican state legislature in Jefferson City.

Missouri legislators have proposed 21 separate bills in 2022 that would restrict gender identity and race-related materials, books and curriculum in state schools.

In August of this year, a new Missouri law went into effect outlawing an array of objectionable books from school libraries. The law, sponsored by state Sen. Rick Brattin, R-Cass County, makes it a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail or a \$2,000 fine for librarians and other educators to give students access to such material.

Even before the law passed, some activist parents were targeting school teachers and local school boards with vocal denunciations of what they have found on school library shelves. The protesters have joined parents in Tennessee, Florida and Texas to demand removal of 50 books including "Fun Home," "Maus," and more.

Books about racial injustice like "The Hate U Give," and novels by people of color, like Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" and Sherman Alexie's "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," also have met with disapproval.

Parents at school board meetings in Wentzville and Kansas City have petitioned boards to remove books they find inappropriate. The parents claim to be "grassroots" – saying that national groups and conservative politicians are not behind their efforts.

In Wentzville, parents said students do not need to learn "that kind of stuff" at school. In the North Kansas City School District, members of the Northland Parent

Association said "Fun Home" and "All Boys Aren't Blue," depict sexual situations and sexual abuse. The parent group was successful in getting the board to pull the books. Wentzville also pulled books, despite letters from the Missouri Library Association and the ACLU protesting board actions.

Now that laws banning the materials deemed objectionable have passed the state legislature, the parents groups say they are policing schools and libraries to see that the law is enforced. And they've have successes.

Andy Wells of the Missouri chapter of No Left Turn in Education, said he doesn't think anyone under the age of 18 should have access to explicit content in school, and that explicit scenes negate any artistic or educational value a book may have.

In radio interviews, Wells said his group's goal is to elect school board candidates sympathetic to No Left Turn's cause and to prosecute schools and teachers who do not remove materials deemed obscene.

Jay Richmond, president of Northland Parent Association, told KCMO Talk Radio in Kansas City that the group's ongoing mission is to promote more conservative political involvement with school boards. This will insure that sexually-oriented and racially-divisive books and curriculum will be eradicated from schools. The group was also behind a lawsuit against mask mandates in Kansas City public schools. A federal judge dismissed that lawsuit, saying the Northland Parent Association didn't demonstrate that masks actually harmed children.

Sen. Brattin of Cass County has received high marks from conservative groups such as No Left Turn in Education; as has U.S. Sen. Josh Hawley; as has Sen. Cindy O'Laughlin, R-Shelbina. O'Laughlin, a member of the Missouri Club for Growth and the National Rifle Association, has been an outspoken critic of books and curriculum that she considers to be harmful for students.

Sen. O'Laughlin, chair of Missouri's Joint-Committee on Education in Jefferson City, appears on the Missouri Prosper website alongside other supporters who blast Critical Race Theory. CRT is described as an ideology of hate using a Marxist dichotomy of privileged v. disadvantaged; oppressor v. oppressed; racist v. victim of racism – a paradigm meant to tear down America.

"Missouri Prosper is the citizens' response to overreach by our educational institutions," O'Laughlin declares on Missouri Prosper's website. "(It's) a group of energized parents who have become citizen advocates and who are willing to do what they must to take back the future for their children. I greatly respect people such as this, it is never easy to fight entrenched interests and I support their efforts."

Missouri Prosper came to the Kirkwood, Missouri, before the 2021-22 academic year to fight "entrenched interests" and to raise questions about the local school district's educational policies. The meeting organized at the Kirkwood Community Center included a panel of state Sen.

Andrew Koenig, R-Ballwin; Mary Byrne, co-founder of the Missouri Coalition Against Common Core; and Jessica Laurent Clark, a Rockwood School District parent who has since been elected to that district's board.

The Kirkwood meeting was just one in an ongoing series of meetings by Missouri Prosper. The group has conducted meetings in rural areas of the state, as well as Kansas City and Springfield. Koenig told the meeting that race studies the race studies are the number one issue in his state senate district.

Clark said too many teachers are obsessed with diversity, equity and inclusion curriculum, and are not interested in the basics of reading, writing and math. She expressed concerns about low state MAP test scores for minority students compared to their white counterparts. She said events like a Black Lives Matter peace walk organized by Kirkwood Teachers of Color do nothing to raise test scores.

"I don't understand how being a social justice warrior improves academic scores," Clark told the Kirkwood audience. "If my Black daughter is struggling in reading, I want you to focus on her reading."

She also shared her opinion that attempts by the Kirkwood School District to eliminate "microaggressions" in the classroom – subtle or unintentional discrimination against a racial or ethnic minority – are a foolish diversion away from more useful academics. Useful academics means hitting the math and science books, not poring over books on racial or sexual identity, according to Clark.

Citizens, educators fight back

Missouri residents and educators are fighting back against right-wing groups like Missouri Prosper and No Left Turn. Educators are refuting the charges that CRT is being taught in K-12. It's a college-level program that needs no defense. Librarians are decrying efforts to remove books that have won Pulitzer Prizes and National Book Awards. Residents are telling activists that what their kids read and learn in school



Kirkwood School District parents met to protest Missouri Prosper when the right-wing group came to to the city's community center to conduct a forum on the need to stop Critical Race Theory from being taught in schools.

Photo courtesy of Don Corrigan

should not be determined by right-wing loudmouths.

Kirkwood School District officials refused an invitation to participate in the Missouri Prosper event at the town's community center. The traveling road show panel sessions of Missouri Prosper were dismissed as electioneering – an attempt to drag educators into national political fights that are not germane to local school issues

"The Kirkwood School District is not interested in being pulled into a national political debate on how issues of race and equity are taught in the classroom," according to Kirkwood District spokesperson Steph Deidrick. "Kirkwood values equity, diversity and inclusion; that work is a priority of our recently approved strategic plan, which was created with feedback and support from our community."

Librarians also have circled the wagons to protest attempts by right-wing activists to remove celebrated books from shelves, whether in school district libraries or city and county libraries. They have raised their voices in an attempt to counter the most vociferous.

"This demand for removal of books is just way too broad," said Wicky Sleight, a past president of the Missouri Library Association and former director of the Marshall Public Library and the Kirkwood Public Library. "It's just another indication of where everything else has been going with our Missouri politics."

"I am all for parents having a say in what their kids should read," added Sleight. "I am against a few loud parents directing what your kids can or cannot read. The positive out of all this is people are now buying these books to see what the fuss is all about."

The Wentzville School District received formal notice from the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Missouri Library Association asking the district to stand up to bullying activist groups and noisome state and national politicians. The library

association demanded that books like Toni Morrison's, "The Bluest Eye" and Alison Bechdel's "Fun Home," be returned to the shelves.

"We would like to again formally express our concern as Missouri librarians and intellectual freedom advocates regarding your recent decision to remove Allison Bechdel's Fun Home. As with the previous attempt to remove Toni Morrison's work, this is an ill-founded and disingenuous attempt by a vocal minority to control access to diverse perspectives and experiences obfuscated by concerns about 'protecting children'" the MLA letter stated.

"Removing this work does not, certainly, protect LGBTQ+ youth, who need access to authentic representations of Queer experience to provide context for growing up in a predominantly "straight" society, just as cis/heterosexual children benefit from perspectives like Bechdel's that help them empathize with and understand the broader scope of human experience," the MLA added.

Concerned citizens have joined the fight against lobbying groups like Missouri Prosper, No Left Turn in Education and Civics Alliance. Jack Lane, a Kirkwood School District resident said he had a special reason for wanting to see Allison Bechdel's "Fun Home" stay on the bookshelves. The theatre director for Kirkwood's Stages St. Louis was a Broadway co-producer of the musical version of the Bechdel novel in New York City.

"I'm very proud to say that a lot of Missouri money went into producing the Bechdel book on Broadway," said Lane. "The book and the musical are for anyone who chooses to live a full life and embrace humanity. It's that simple."

Washington University has announced that it will honor Bechdel with its 2022 International Humanities Prize in November, which includes a \$25,000 award as part of the recognition.

The culture of hate and intolerance

Continued on next page

stoked by the last (presidential) administration has brought out a lot of ugliness in American society," said Lane. "To be honest I think Wash U is giving a well-deserved finger to the small minds who are messing around with this beautiful and important story. I see the novel and the musical as a way to fight the intolerance that is killing our country."

Elissa Sullivan, a Webster Groves resident and spokeswoman for Webster Equity Bridge (WEB), said it is imperative that school districts and parents stand up to protect inclusive curriculum and library books in schools. Sullivan's Webster Equity Bridge is an independent, multi-racial coalition of over 400 families in the Webster Groves School District.

Bridge said special interest political groups and partisan legislators should not be in the business of censoring teachers and mandating what they teach in public schools. She stressed that these actions run contrary to educational principles and First Amendment freedoms.

"Through bad-faith arguments, misrepresentation of school district work, and the misleading and inaccurate use of terms such as 'Critical Race Theory' (CRT) and 'Marxist,' these groups seek to silence those who promote equitable learning," Sullivan stressed.

Missouri prosper setback

Missouri Prosper suffered a major setback in 2022 when revelations about its spokesperson, Jessica Laurent Clark, surfaced after her surprise election to the Rockwood School Board in suburban St. Louis.

St. Louis newspapers and television newscasts had a field day with the discovery of Clark's online instructions for becoming a member of the "sugaring" lifestyle, which mysteriously disappeared for a time. Clark promoted a lifestyle in which younger women seek relationships with older, wealthier individuals with expectations of financial support.

Missouri Prosper's Clark once offered a four-week "Sugar Boot Camp" for prospective "sugar babies." One of her TikTok posts had the hashtag "hoe is life." St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter Aisha Sultan noted in her April 17 column that in one of Clark's educational episodes, she began her pitch in a seductive voice:

"What the (expletive) is up, ladies? So, it's me, Jessica Laurent, St. Louis' one and only sugar lifestyle coach..."

Clark informed her followers about an upcoming not-to-be-missed Sugar Ball and added: "But, as you also know, sugaring can be a little scary and a little intimidating. ... But you're talking to the woman who walked into the first Sugar Ball in February single and walked out with a CEO. And six

months later, happily ever after, livin' the dream ... So, I know that sugaring can be life changing."

Sultan remarked in her column that for all the recent conservative rhetoric about leftist educators and politicians "grooming" children for sexual behavior and indoctrination, Laurent Clark's supporters seemed fine with her jaded past, judging from their comments on her Facebook campaign page.

Clark's past "educational seminar" did merit some condemnation from school district parents who were not impressed by her on-line "sugaring" classes. Clark was in hot water again for her commentaries in September 2022, when she made hateful comments on a radio broadcast and video.

Missouri Prosper's Clark blasted the Rockwood School District for trying to control students, for promoting critical race theory in classrooms and for coddling people who use wheelchairs or are in the LGBTQ+ community. She dismissed her critics as "libtards."

KMOV-TV News 4 contacted Rockwood's school superintendent for comment. The district sent back the following statement:

"The Rockwood School District is committed to providing a safe and healthy learning environment where students of all backgrounds feel included and respected. That is our responsibility as educators, and we owe that to the families who entrust us with the education and safety of their children every day. Intolerance and disrespect have no place in our schools or on our campuses, as it goes against our core values and mission to provide outstanding opportunities for all students."

Some Rockwood parents called on the Missouri Prosper spokesperson to resign her board seat. A district parent told KMOV: "I'm offended for my child, and I am concerned because she is voting on issues and decisions that impact not only my child's daily life, but funding that keeps them in school."

'American Birthright' curriculum

Civics Alliance and its National Association of Scholars are distributing a set of social studies standards for K-12 schools. The goal is to promote the educational standards of their "American Birthright" model for state schools. These correctives for "woke left public schools" are meant to replace any history studies that differ with past perspectives on the American Republic.

The introduction to "American Birthright" holds that "a warping of American social studies instruction has created a corps of activists dedicated to the overthrow of America and its freedoms ... larger numbers of Americans are indifferent



Jessica Laurent Clark of Missouri Prosper says that basic studies are taking a backseat in public schools in favor of teacher obsessions with curriculum about race and books about gender equity.

Photo courtesy of Don Corrigan

to the steady whittling away of American liberty, and many more are so ignorant of the past they cannot use our heritage of freedom to judge contemporary debates."

States such as Texas, Florida and Mississippi are embracing the "American Birthright" model for a curriculum that diminishes any reference to diversity, equity and social justice issues. The curriculum promotes a history that plays down or ignores the role of slavery in America's early years. Part of the mission is to curb any progressive influence on students by teachers.

The Miami Herald has reported on the Florida Department of Education's three-day training sessions for public school teachers to prepare them to conform with the state's new Civics Literacy Excellence Initiative. The sessions are part of Gov. Ron DeSantis's efforts to create a more "patriotic" civics curriculum, according to The Herald.

Similar efforts to "reform" education and to train teachers in a more patriotic pedagogy are happening in Texas. New curriculum holds that America's Founding Fathers opposed separation of church and state and it downplays the history of American slavery. The Texas Tribune reports that advisers to its state education board are effecting new social studies standards. These are in line with the legislature's ban on teaching about racism or slavery in ways that might make students "feel discomfort."



Some of books banned nationwide.

Photo by Joy Wandrey via Flickr

Missouri right-wing succeeds with book removals

By Don Corrigan

The multi-pronged attack on schools, curriculum and books recently achieved major success on the library front as school officials across the state began removing books. The districts removing books included Kirkwood and Webster Groves, where pressure to ban books had been resisted last spring.

Blythe Bernard wrote in the Post-Dispatch, "And as life imitates art, Kirkwood School District banned a comic book adaptation of George Orwell's "1984," the cautionary tale about government mind control.

The removals are in response to Missouri Senate Bill 775, which went into effect Aug. 28. School districts in the St. Louis area began removing books on the advice of district attorneys.

Under the new law passed by the state legislature, anyone affiliated with a private or public school who provides what is deemed as explicit sexual material to a student could be subject to a misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$2,000.

Among the books removed in the Webster Groves School District:

- "The Handmaid's Tale" (graphic novel)
- "Milk and Honey"
- "The Sun and Her Flowers"
- "Flamer"
- "Gender Queer"

- "Breakfast of Champions"
- "Watchmen"
- "Home After Dark"
- "Zahra's Paradise"
- "Be Gay, Do Comics"
- "Lighter Than My Shadow"

Among the books removed in the Kirkwood School District:

- "The Handmaid's Tale" (graphic novel)
- "Milk and Honey"
- "The Sun and Her Flowers"
- "1984: The Graphic Novel"
- "American Gods 1: Shadows"
- "American Gods 2: My Ainsel"
- "Annie Leibovitz at Work"
- "Crime and Punishment" (graphic novel)
- "Gender Danger: Survivors of Rape, Human Trafficking, and Honor Killings"
- "Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation"
- "Himawari House"
- "The Daughters of Ys"

Parents showed up to a September Kirkwood School Board meeting to speak against the removal of the books. Kirkwood School Board Member Judy Moticka agreed with unhappy parents, saying some of the books pulled provide much needed representation for students.

"The thought that we would take away a kid's ability to find themselves, to understand themselves, to feel safe, is wrong," she said. "As a district, we have to do better. You can cherry pick a passage

from the Bible and some would say its pornographic and inappropriate.

"I understand we're dealing with lawyers and I don't want you guys (school employees) to get in trouble, but some of these books that have been pulled, they're works of art," Moticka said. "Just because it's a subject that makes you uncomfortable as an adult doesn't mean it's wrong."

The online newspaper, Missouri Independent, presented an op-ed on Oct. 3 by author Janice Ellis expressing outrage over book removals in the state and the legislature's action:

"As parents, teachers, librarians and concerned citizens, is educating our children about all aspects of American history and contemporary society the better alternative to censorship?

"For a country that values and boasts about freedom of speech and the press as outlined in the First Amendment, are we now willing to turn a blind eye to the unprecedented increase in book banning?

"Don't we care as much about the threats to the First Amendment as we seem to care about the Second? Do we care more about the right to own guns than the right to express ideas, write about and discuss real issues among us honestly in the most appropriate way to create awareness and find solutions?"



Klotzer's father was imprisoned in Buchenwald Concentration camp. Here is a photo of eating utensils from the camp.

Photo by Dr. Hans-Günter Wagner via Flickr

Publisher's note: Eighty-four years ago this month, Lothar Gustav Gabriel Klotzer was turning 13 and looking forward to his Bar Mitzvah that was scheduled, as it turned out, on the weekend we now know as Kristallnacht. This week the Holocaust Museum in St. Louis reopens with its much expanded exhibition on the importance of media literacy to combat propaganda. Klotzer, who fled Nazi propaganda, went on to found the St. Louis Journalism Review to counter disinformation he found in American media.

In recounting his career, Klotzer once wrote, "Memories are a fragile commodity. Episodes come to mind: anecdotal flashbacks, some we cherish, others we have not managed to forget. None of them however, offers an even flow of events, a flow that would enable us to record the past dispassionately, rationally and with authority. That thread we are obliged to find and insert with hindsight."

The account below is the thread of Klotzer's memory compiled from his writings and interviews over the past half century. It includes a recent account Klotzer wrote as he approached his 97th birthday.

Coming of age on Kristallnacht

By Charles Klotzer

My Bar Mitzvah in Berlin, Germany, was scheduled for Saturday, November 12, 1938. However, the night of November 9 lasting through November 10, Nazis launched a night and day of terror attacks against Jews in Germany and Austria.

The Nazi's attacks were revenge for the killing of Ernst vom Rath on November 7, 1938, who was at work at the German embassy in Paris when Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jew, walked up to him and fired five times at close range.

The events are now called Kristallnacht, the night of the broken glass, because the riots against Jews

were well organized and participants smashed windows and glass doors wherever located.

Obviously I wasn't bar mitzvahed. The synagogue was destroyed.

Life in Berlin

As a child, when I saw a Nazi coming down on one side of the street, I walked to the other side of the street. My parents never told me, I just did it. I didn't wear a Hitler youth badge. I didn't have a uniform. So I avoided this kind of stuff, fear was always there, pervasive. Like you couldn't go to public parks; you couldn't go swimming.

My parents, to the best of their abilities, tried to protect me from the surrounding nightmare. These efforts had their limitations. Initially, I was enrolled in a public school. One day all the kids around me moved away. The elderly, gray-haired teacher asked what is going on? The kids replied "Klotzer stinks." The teacher immediately knew what was going on and announced that this kind of behavior will not be tolerated in his class. Shortly thereafter, my parents transferred me to a Jewish school.

One day coming home, I saw the word "Jude lebt hier" (Jew lives here) painted on the outside of the residential building

where we had an apartment on the first floor. On another occasion, walking home with my mother but lagging way behind, some kids my age, I guess I was 11 or 12, tried to accost me. Their leader became aggressive and I hit back, knocking him down.

On the ground floor of our residence was a tobacco shop where my father, Salo Klotzer, bought cigarettes. One day the owner embarrassedly told my father how much he liked him but if he would not mind buying his cigarettes somewhere else where they do not know he is Jewish. He apologized.

I also remember that my father had a radio which we listened to secretly when Joe Louis, an American, fought Max Schmeling, a German, for the world boxing championship. When Louis knocked out Schmeling in the first round, the radio stopped broadcasting. (After World War II, Schmeling and Louis became friends.)

My father was arrested in our home in June 1938 as German authorities may have suspected him of political activities or simply because he is Jewish. The Nazis arrested thousands of Jews in the attempt to frighten them into leaving Germany. He was 58.

Two plain clothed police officers knocked on our door early one day and asked him to come along with them. My father said something like, "Don't worry, I'll be back soon." I remember the officers telling him, "Well, you better say goodbye to your wife." He was sent to the Buchenwald Concentration camp..

That early arrest was fortunate. It motivated my mother to try to emigrate, secure all the necessary documents and obtain shipping tickets. At the time, camp inmates were released if they provided evidence that they would leave the country. Many relatives, who procrastinated, never made it out.

My father spent about 10 weeks in Buchenwald, six of which he was actually in an infirmary (yes, there was such a facility at that time) after another inmate accidentally poked a hole in his skull with a pickaxe. Inmates had to break up large stones and carry them to another location, only to carry them back to the original location the next day. By then, he had also acquired broken ribs thanks to a German guard. He entered the camp at about 160 pounds and was released weighing 90 pounds.

The day before the release a German attendant at the infirmary replaced all the bandages on his head with a band-aid and told him to walk straight and strong past the inspection team or he would never be released. He did. He was taken to a Berlin police station. Weak and barely

able to walk, he tried to call a cab. None would stop. Finally, one did. The driver brought him home, did not accept any fare and said, "Do not tell anyone I drove you."

He came up to the second floor, and my grandmother was home. He crawled up on all fours on the first floor, you know, and then stayed in the hospital.

We were ordered to leave within two weeks, but our departure was postponed repeatedly because of my father's stay in the Jewish Hospital. He improved rapidly partly because of the medical care and partly because of his unbending optimism. His favorite phrase: "Everything will turn out for the best."

The weekend of Kristallnacht

By the time of my scheduled Bar Mitzvah (a Jewish ritual for young males and a Bat Mitzvah for young girls) on Saturday, November 12, 1938, my father had recovered enough to attend. But on Wednesday, November 9, 1938, the Nazis organized an attack on synagogues, Jewish stores and individuals all over Germany in an orgy of destruction in revenge for the killing of a German embassy official by a Polish Jew who had heard of Nazi misdeeds. Those events are now internationally known as "Kristallnacht," meaning the night when crystals were broken. My Bar Mitzvah was postponed and held weeks later along with four other boys in a school.

My mother registered me to go to England under the Kindertransport program, because my sister, Elfriede (we called her Friedel), nine years older, was scheduled to receive a labor permit also from England. When the permit failed to arrive in time, my parents decided that I would go with them to Shanghai. Just after they had turned down the Kindertransport opening, my sister's permit arrived. My parents checked about my spot to go to England but it had been reassigned.

Still, my sister made it to England, where she rediscovered relatives and stayed with them throughout the German bombing raids on England, known as the "Blitz." She later moved to Wales with other relatives. She joined us in the United States in 1948.

Although we were permitted to take out 10 Marks, my parents were intent on getting rid of any money. So we kept buying hot dogs whenever the train stopped on the way to Genoa, Italy.

When the train reached the border, uniformed German guards questioned all travelers and inspected their travel documents. When they asked how much money we had, my parents said "Nothing," They questioned what we would do

when we get to our destination." My parents said that they hoped that some organization would help. The guards shrugged and moved on. We crossed the border and we were greeted by Italian Carabinieri in their green caps with the words, "Relax, you are out of Germany, smile," (Mussolini ruled in Italy at the time.) The world had changed for us.

Passing through the Red Sea on Passover

Although we traveled third class on the Conte Biancamano, an Italian ship, the trip was a vacation for us. All meals were served with red wine. We seemed to be the favorite of the waiter. The day of the arrival in Shanghai, he addressed my mother in German—he had never spoken German before—telling her, "You have never complained, you were always appreciative. Thank you."

We traveled through the Red Sea during Passover 1939. What seemed odd to me, a 13-year-old, that Asia was on one side and Africa on the other, yet the sand looked the same on both sides.

Upon our arrival in Shanghai we were loaded on trucks, standing up, and brought to "godowns," the Malay term the British used for warehouses in the Hongkuo district then under Japanese occupation. The warehouses were subdivided by blankets into small room-size spaces, one per family. Teenagers were housed in a separate area with double-decker bunks.

The chilling view of a nearly destroyed city—the Japanese had invaded in 1937—caused many refugees to worry about their future and survival. In spite of these fears, what happened to that area is a testament to the refugees' ingenuity and creativity.

Streets were rebuilt, giving them a European touch with sidewalk cafes. Several weekly and three daily newspapers were published by refugees. A hospital with 200 beds was established. A puppet theater, a Yiddish theater and a radio station among other cultural institutions came to life. In about 60 theaters plays were produced, in some of which my father acted. He called himself a poet and actor. I have a file drawer full of his German poems. Sport teams in soccer, table tennis and boxing became well known. I have many pamphlets and newspaper clippings of these events.

The fate of the 20,000 or so refugees was mixed, some of them did very well, even establishing thriving companies. Others suffered from hunger and disease. When my children at one time saw the film "Shanghai Ghetto," some wondered that

the impression they had from me was not as depressing as the film. These ups and downs were also reflected in our family.

Just after our arrival in 1939, 350 refugees came down with scarlet fever, including me. By the time I was released from the hospital my parents had moved out of the camp and into a one-room apartment. Thanks to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) they had received US\$125, a sum that was sufficient for a family of three to live modestly for about two years.

Back to the camps

Initially, my parents opened up a small store offering household utensils and similar items. They enlisted a partner because, they thought, he was more knowledgeable. That venture did not last long because they discovered that he was making underhanded deals on the side. They sold the store. That kept them from entering into any new venture. Gradually, the funds were depleted and they moved back into the camps after two years.

There were a number of refugee camps to house the thousands of refugees. Recently, I discovered a list of eight moves we made from camp to camp my mother recorded during our nearly nine years in Shanghai. In one camp, the Pingliang Home, I was sleeping under a net on an upper bunk to keep large flying insects off me. As a result, I have acquired an aversion to flying insects. The last three years we lived in the Seward Camp, on a second floor of a four-room house. The upstairs had a very large room separated by blankets. Since we had the backroom, we had to walk through the other family's room to the only door leading to the stairs.

Winters were cold and we all suffered from frostbitten toes. Water had to be boiled for drinking (it still has to be boiled in 2022). Cooking was done on charcoal stoves either on the windowsill or outside. A separate building housed toilet and shower facilities.

As mentioned, my father at heart was a poet and actor and an extrovert par excellence. He had been taught by his father the repair of leather goods that came in handy. He also wrote and acted in a number of plays and became a solo performer at various cafes and nightclubs.

With an abundance of professionals and teachers, it was only natural to open a school, the Kinchow Road School, later replaced by the Kadoori School funded by Horace Kadoori, whose family of Iraqi Jews had been prominent traders in Asia for many decades. Another Jewish merchant, who had holdings in Shanghai for many years and supported

the thousands of European refugees was Victor Sassoon.

I entered the school at age 13. My class was the oldest. After about three years my class was discontinued, equivalent to graduation, but no ceremonies. My mother had arranged for me to enroll in Xavier's College a high school accredited by the University of London. Surrounded by teachers in clerical garb speaking French, I felt lost. After my first day, I never returned. Some friends of mine did attend, received an excellent education and went on to prominent academic and professional careers.

Mother sold wedding ring

I enrolled in the Shanghai Business College that taught accounting, shorthand and typing. All of which came in handy both in Shanghai as well as later after my immigration to the U.S. By then my family had used up the HIAS funds they had received. Reluctantly, I agreed to my mother selling her wedding ring to pay for my tuition.

In 1943, I joined the 16th Independent Boy Scout Group under the direction of the Shanghai British Boy Scouts. After some time I became their Scoutmaster and later headed the senior group called Rovers. We made excursions, camping trips and had monthly meetings. One of the scout leaders, a Colonel Stempera, visited our senior scout group and asked us to help Allied Forces once they invade Shanghai. Meanwhile, Japanese forces had started building concrete-reinforced bunkers at major street intersections. While we were never called upon to be of help—not that anyone of us knew what to do—we were awarded some medals after the war.

After Pearl Harbor, the English and French settlements, actual colonial enclaves, had been taken over by the Japanese. Hongkuo, where most refugees lived, had been under Japanese occupation since the invasion in 1937. Initially, nothing much changed for the refugees. A year later, most likely because of German pressure, the Japanese established the Hongkuo Ghetto into which all "Stateless Refugees" (they never referred to any religious identities) had to move. Refugees who lived outside had to sell their homes or try to exchange homes with non-Jews living in the Ghetto.

One memory that never left me. I was sitting with my mother in the camp's canteen, a sort of social gathering spot, which also housed a snack and coffee bar. I watched my mother's eyes following a cup of coffee bought by someone. She didn't have the money to buy one. Not a really tragic moment, nevertheless an image that cut deep.

Boxing and ballroom dancing

Life in Shanghai was a mosaic of poverty, of sidewalk traders, of shop owners, of a few entrepreneurs, who managed to establish business ventures—especially those who had close connections with prominent Chinese or Japanese.

Looking for employment, I took a job with another refugee who founded a small paint factory, earning the equivalent of \$3 per month. He also paid for meals for us at the camp's community kitchen. To leave the Ghetto, refugees were issued daily, weekly or monthly passes. The Ghetto was guarded by refugees. Because of my employer's connections, I got a monthly pass, a lapel button.

My job was about two miles from where we lived. Some White Russian youngsters noted my daily walks and decided to have some fun. The Czarist Russians, who had fled the Bolshevik revolution from Russia were known for their Anti-Semitism. A little boy would pester and hit me.

After several such incidents, I hit back. It was then that a big brother would appear and accuse me of hitting the little boy. After being beaten up, I joined a boxing club. I never intended to compete, but peer pressure undercut my resolution and I fought twelve three-minute bouts, eleven of which I won. The final one was for the featherweight championship in China (read: Shanghai) ended in a draw. While I consider boxing a sport that should be banned, I must confess that the exercise and training instilled in me a lasting measure of self-confidence.

Incidentally, the boxing instructor also conducted classes for ballroom dancing that I also joined. In later years I managed to win with my wife Rose some awards in that activity.

American bombing of Japanese facilities in the surroundings was of no concern to us. We ran into the streets to watch the silver birders streak high in the sky. That all changed when American planes dropped bombs on our part of the city that killed 30 refugees and scores of Chinese. After that, we dug deep ditches outside of our homes and covered them with corrugated sheet metal.

Many feared the end of the war and the withdrawal of Japanese authority would generate an outpouring of masses of Chinese, celebrating finally being free. When the war did end, Japanese soldiers were ordered to turn in their weapons. They did but stayed on guard with clubs. After they were assembled for repatriation, the Chinese army moved in. The turnover was peaceful.

The arrival of American forces opened up job opportunities. After working for



After the Anschluss (German annexation of Austria), Austrian Jewish refugees disembark from the Italian steamship Conte Verde. Shanghai, China, December 14, 1938.

Photo courtesy of United States Holocaust Museum

years for US\$3 per month, I was hired as a warehouse manager at \$80 per month. Due to "warehouse politics," I was reassigned to a \$40 per month job—still a fortune.

With the departure of American troops, I was hired as secretary to Charles H. Jordan, the top American social worker assigned to the refugee community in Shanghai by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), who administered refugee affairs and emigration to other countries.

A group of us—all males ranging in ages 18 to 21--formed a Tikvah Club that published a regular monthly journal. (I still have these and the local Jewish archives wants these and many other boxes of Shanghai memorabilia.) Many of the members immigrated to the U.S. and settled in different states. They formed local Tikvah clubs in about six cities and had national conventions twice. With more integration in American

activities, these efforts faded. In St. Louis, we campaigned in the early 1950s that the local YMHA should integrate its swimming pool.

Meeting Paul Simon

After arriving in San Francisco, we had to decide where to settle permanently. We didn't want to move to states in the South. Philadelphia had a reputation of a coal industry. By elimination, we settled on St. Louis, it was the center of the country. You could easily leave. I had some notions of the Mississippi, having cafés, restaurants along the river. While some improvements along the river along its nationally known arch have taken place, the river and its potential has largely been ignored.

The Jewish Family Service Agency helped us get settled in a not well maintained hotel. After one week, I moved to another, cleaner hotel. I told the social worker, who later became a friend, "We

can save money. We get all this money for eating out, we can cook." The social worker was very upset. "You did this on your own?" I said, "Yes. It makes more sense."

I became active politically supporting Henry Wallace, not Truman. I went to Jefferson City and heard Paul Robeson, a Wallace supporter, sing.

I got a job as a bookkeeper, entering Social Security figures. We had no calculators at the time. It got very boring. I switched to take over public relations, advertising and personnel for a local construction company. While income and work were acceptable, it did not offer long-time prospects that would meet my expectations.

So I put an ad in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch looking for work in journalism. Lots of responses wanted to hire me as an insurance salesman. One very poorly typed letter was from a young

Continued on next page



Photo courtesy of Klotzer family

guy interested me. He was 19 years old, living in Troy, Illinois, publishing a weekly newspaper. We met downtown in St. Louis. I told him my views on race and politics.

"I love it," he said. And I said, "Well, I'm a Jew?" He said, "You'll be the first Jew to work in Troy, Illinois, and everybody will look at you." They did.

His name was Paul Simon. He asked me to join him as assistant editor. We became close friends. I organized his campaign for President in Missouri. We had many conversations about his plans for the future, what he would do as senator and when he would run for President. He later became a U.S. Senator and ran for president in 1988. I was talking to him on the cell phone when he was going into heart surgery. He died after that surgery in 2003.

I got to know my wife Rose while I attended Washington University under the GI Bill (I had been drafted and served in the military). I proposed to her after a few months. She said, "No," I want to finish school. Five years later, in 1953, and after being released from the army, I married her. I continued at Washington University, graduated with a degree in political science and continued graduate studies.

While part time still in school, I decided the Jewish community really needs an independent newspaper, because the Jewish Light then was just a house organ for the Jewish Federation. My school advisor, Prof. Merle Kling, advised me not to do so as it will take up all my time and I will never complete my

studies. I published the Jewish Star for nearly half a year. My wife was getting her master's in social work and we were struggling to make ends meet. Prof. Kling turned out to be correct.

Representatives of the Jewish Federation contacted me and asked, "Why struggle? Why don't you become editor of the Jewish Light and director of public relations for the Jewish Federation?" I accepted. They offered a reasonable salary. It dawned on me later that they were really co-opting me and killed off a competing voice. For one year, I worked for the Federation. Restrictions at the Light made me look for another job. I accepted a public relation, advertising, and personnel position for a construction company in St. Louis.

While we were active in groups such as ACLU and NAACP, my wife and I wanted to do more. So in 1961, I suggested to her, "How about starting a Midwest magazine featuring political, social, cultural and racial issues, covering Chicago, Kansas City and St. Louis, and gradually grow and take on other midwestern states." She agreed.

My wife, rather than pursue her social work career, worked with me for the next five decades or more to keep the ventures alive. The contents of F/M encompassed the Chicago-St. Louis-Kansas City triangle. The hope, that once F/M was self-supporting we could expand into adjacent midwestern states remained a hope, but F/M never did expand.

The expense to buy typesetting copy for the journal made us buy an

IBM typesetting system that became profitable, known as FOCUS/Graphics, producing books for major publishers throughout the country.

Birth of journalism reviews

The birth of the modern journalism reviews in the United States by working journalists flourished during the late 1960s through the early 1980s. The birth of the first of the reviews is encapsulated in one paragraph by Ron Dorfman, co-organizer of the first, the Chicago Journalism Review (CJR), now long defunct.

"The Chicago Journalism Review was a product of the local newspaper coverage of the Democratic national convention (1968) and the violence that attended it in the streets of Chicago. When the convention was over and the national press had left town, Chicago editors proceeded, deliberately and shamelessly, to rewrite history in an effort to patch up Chicago's reputation as 'the city that works'."

Mayor Daley had marshaled an army of police to confront thousands of protesting students. Newspapers reported that the confrontation resulted in a student riot. Reporters, some of whom were also beaten up by police, knew it was a police riot.

Dorfman recalls that newspapers told their readers that their own reporters had lied. Outraged, scores of reporters met, raised funds and published the first issue of the Chicago Journalism Review, the prototype for nearly 30 others which cropped up in cities and institutions around the United States. (Chicago Journalism Review and other JRs collected by SJR over the years, have been donated to the SIU-Carbondale library and are available for research.)

The father of journalism reviews actually is George Seldes, who founded "In Fact" in 1940. He revealed, among many other exposes, that tobacco causes cancer. And he showed that the New York Times had an understanding with the tobacco industry that it would continue advertising as long as the paper would not be critical of tobacco. His publication folded after ten years, the victim of red-baiting and blacklisting.

When I read the first issue of the Chicago Journalism Review, it struck me that here was a paper not unlike Seldes' and it had a means to influence and reform the media that controls what we knew about the world. The media are powerful. They define, influence, and often join forces with particular interests, which may or may not serve the general public. At the time, we thought that while politicians must always keep

the electorate in mind, business leaders cannot forget their stockholders and labor leaders, their members. Who calls the media to account for their treatment of news?

I invited a number of reporters from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the St. Louis Globe-Democrat to meet. Some local reporters, including Ted Gest, then a reporter of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch had also discussed the idea of a local journalism. They joined us in months of discussions and meetings, creating a core group of 20 members of the working press.

First issue of SJR

Because we expected a strong reaction by the Globe and Post, it was decided not to use any bylines. Nevertheless, 13 journalists (Robert E. Adams, Margaret M. Carlan, Al Delugach, Peter A. Donhowe, Ted Gest, Charles L. Klotzer, Richard Krantz, Gerald Lindhorst, Gus Lumpe, Roy Malone, John Shelton, Ellen Sweets, Fred Sweets) decided to be included on the editorial board.

Two Globe reporters did experience severe management criticism, with one seeking other employment and a second resigning from SJR's editorial board. The Post was more open-minded. At one of the sessions of key Post employees at the home of Pulitzer III (Joseph Pulitzer Jr.), the publisher asked whether any members of SJR were present and three hands went up. From what we know, they experienced no "official" reaction.

St. Louis journalists endorsed the concept that only the press can insure an informed public, which is needed to make democracy work. An informed public, declared the inaugural issue of SJR, requires that every segment of society knows about the needs, fears and hopes of all others Irrespective of the powers which represent the status quo.

The issues below highlight why reporters felt that it is their ethical duty to report on shortcomings of their employer. Some were accused of biting the hand that fed them. But these were stories that the mainstream media were not publishing:

- The first issue revealed that the Post and Globe had established a Joint Operating Agency (JOA) and had combined all operations except for news and editorial coverage. A Post editor called accusing SJR of libel and threatening legal action.
- SJR's coverage of the Globe demise by Roland Klose was the only investigation that showed that the Globe circulation exceeded that of the Post. When Pulitzer offered S.I. Newhouse, owner of the Globe, 50% of profits under the continuing JOA,

Newhouse could not afford to turn it down and agreed to close the Globe.

- Suburban Journals, before they were bought by the Post, banned African-Americans from being pictured on the front page above the fold.
- SJR disclosed that Globe editor G. Duncan Bowman was receiving lucrative guardian ad litem fees from Juvenile Court Judge Gary Gaertner after the Globe had heralded Gaertner for jailing more juveniles. The Post refused to print the story.
- A student reporter at the University of Missouri School of Journalism carried a wire for the Columbia, Missouri police with the permission of faculty in order to entrap a solicitor for providing nude dancers.
- Local media ignored for years how the police dealt with young African-Americans who assembled in downtown streets late Sunday nights to socialize during the summer. Police would corral the car cruisers towards the highway and block all exits until they were in the suburbs.
- The Alton Telegraph, an Illinois daily across the river from St. Louis, fired its cartoonist and editor after a local bank complained that a cartoon was critical of the bank.
- In the summer of 1971, one of the Post's investigative reporters became a paid informer for the St. Louis police and testified before the then US House Internal Security Committee. The reporter claimed he was not "paid" because what he was paid just covered his expenses. The Post just pressured him to quit being an informer.
- The Post had information that of the publisher of the then best-known local Black papers that he was an informer for the FBI. He published derogatory items about leftist groups. When the Post failed to publish this information, a Post reporter turned over the material to SJR. The Post did publish similar material about the Globe, its competitor.
- SJR made a more lasting contribution when we questioned the Post sports editor why he had only white male reporters. That question never occurred to him and he agreed that women and African-Americans should be on his staff. So he hired one African-American woman covering both fields.
- When SJR disclosed in 1998 that Post editor Cole Campbell had appointed an editorial editor at a time he was having a social relationship with her, Campbell threatened SJR editor Ed Bishop with a libel suit. SJR published the story anyway.

Concerned about survival

Having been involved in publishing for thirty years and having witnessed the closing of journalism reviews throughout the country, we searched for a new home for SJR in the 1990s.

Don Corrigan, professor of journalism at Webster University, and a long-time supporter and writer for SJR, after many discussions and negotiations he talked his university into sponsoring SJR.

At the time, Bishop was co-editing SJR and had been for a number of years. He agreed to stay with SJR at Webster and also teach there. During the years at Webster from 1995 to 2005, he became an institution in his own right. When he died in 2016, his obituary stated, he was "a journalist cut from old-school cloth, a cantankerous grader, and a man of considerable wit and outspoken opinions."

For financial reasons, Webster wanted to take the review entirely online. We wanted to continue to print magazines. SJR left Webster and printed independently for five years until it moved to Southern Illinois University Carbondale. As part of downsizing at the Post, William Freivogel had moved to SIU as chair of the Journalism School and SJR was adopted by the school in 2010 with the explicit promise of editorial independence.

GJR established a free weekly online newsletter, while reducing SJR's publishing schedule to quarterly and added the name of Gateway Journalism Review that reflected its wider geographic coverage. William Freivogel is now publisher and Jackie Spinner, Assistant Professor of Journalism at Columbia College Chicago and one-time Baghdad Bureau Chief for the Washington Post, is editor. GJR has continued SJR's interest in civil rights and civil liberties with its projects on the Ferguson protests, police accountability and the history of race in Missouri and Illinois.

For my wife, Rose, and I taking up the cause of media criticism in 1970, was not as impetuous as it may sound. At the end of the century, the SJR remained the sole survivor of the privately published journalism reviews. Why had it survived? We had decided many years before that there must be more to supporting good causes than simply belonging to the American Civil Liberties Union.

For the time being, the Midwest media will continue to have a watchdog that keeps tap on its power and influence, and expose its corruption.



Photo courtesy of Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum

Reopening of St. Louis Holocaust museum institutionalizes media literacy education

By Jessica Z. Brown-Billhymer

This spring, historian Amy Lutz invited this curious media literacy educator to visit the unfinished work space being meticulously prepared for a highly-anticipated re-opening of St. Louis's Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum Nov. 2.

Wearing a hard hat, glasses and closed-toed shoes for safety did nothing to diminish first impressions of the permanent exhibit space.

Those affective responses I talk about in my classes – highly individual and personal reactions one may encounter when accessing media—immediately took hold. My eyes opened wide, struck by the background murals, the use of scale – how big or small something is in relation to us. And the up-close-and-personal-meetings with the almost life-sized renderings of human beings actually sent chills up my spine.

"We're going for a transformative experience, and how we do that is by making you feel connected to the content," Helen Turner, director of education, told me recently.

Turner's respect and high regard for the power of media literacy education is unmistakable.

"Whenever you're looking at the Holocaust, the first thing that comes to mind, usually, aside from genocidal acts, is all the questions of why and how. I think a tremendous part of the why and the how is part of the propaganda machine Nazis used to persuade and to move the public towards seeing other human beings in society as less than," Turner said.

A great regard for historical and cultural contexts, important media literacy education considerations for analyzing media, is certainly evident in the museum's undertakings, especially with regard to propaganda yesterday and today.

"When we think about that kind of very intense use of propaganda and misinformation we can really make ties to today, and how people are misinformed; or how stereotypes are perpetuated about different groups. We made a very cognizant effort to want all of our visitors, young and old, no matter what background they're

coming from, to really look at this history and to look at the propaganda presented with a very critical lens of what people are being manipulated to see; what are they being taught to think and feel? how can we apply those lessons to ourselves today?"

An interactive media section focused on propaganda prompts visitors to take a real propaganda piece from the Nazi era - about all different kinds of victims.

"So obviously we're telling a Jewish centric story, but not a Jewish solo story," Turner adds.

Turner speaks to the importance of the historical example and how we can bridge it directly to today with things like clickbait, Tik Tok, Facebook, memes.

"All these things that they give us... that snapshot of something, and yet they're usually a very misrepresented or misleading story."

Seasoned media literacy educators will appreciate the KFHM education team's focus on habits of inquiry... the asking of questions, followed by a series of traveling deeper with more questions, said Lutz, the

museum's communications and marketing manager.

"You know, we talk so much here about how important it is to ask, 'Why is this history relevant?'"

Why is it important to learn the Holocaust today?" How did the Nazis take power? That's a historical question. But it's a historical question that has relevance today. And so that's one of the big reasons the education team does have plans to really expand our media literacy curriculum and opportunities because it's so timely, so much we can do on that front."

The media literacy definition cited by the National Association for Media Literacy Education is the generally accepted one used in numerous formal and informal classrooms across the U.S: "The ability to ACCESS, ANALYZE, EVALUATE, CREATE, and ACT using all forms of communication."

The well-thought-out museum expansion, from a 7,000-36,000 square feet space, allows the museum to enliven the media literacy definition and facilitates engagement with history by showcasing a variety of primary resources—texts, photos, audio, personal artifacts, and video recordings -- a dynamic way to introduce complicated material.

The person-to-person experiences of the visitors to the museum's permanent exhibit is heightened via production elements like sound, color, graphics, scale, point of view, and voice facilitating storytelling rooted in the human experience.

Using color

Turner further describes the exhibit space. "Our museum is actually surprisingly colorful. It uses the changing of color to take you into the history. So we haven't colorized images, but we're using colors and color tones to change the tone of the narrative as we move through history.

At the beginning of the exhibition, we have a gray line that follows you all the way down into kind of the heart of the Holocaust, where we're really getting to the mass murder and genocide. And then the line also takes you out as we come towards liberation and the renewal of life.

We never want to create an immersive experience because that would be, I think, traumatizing, and an abuse of power and history. But we are trying to create an atmosphere where we can ask good questions of our visitors. What do you see? What would the people in this image see? What might they smell or hear? You know, what's happening in these images?

I think we also very creatively used survivor testimony, which is in every single gallery. We have very large quotes from Saint Louis survivors all throughout. We have their images, we have their artifacts, we have their physical voices that you can

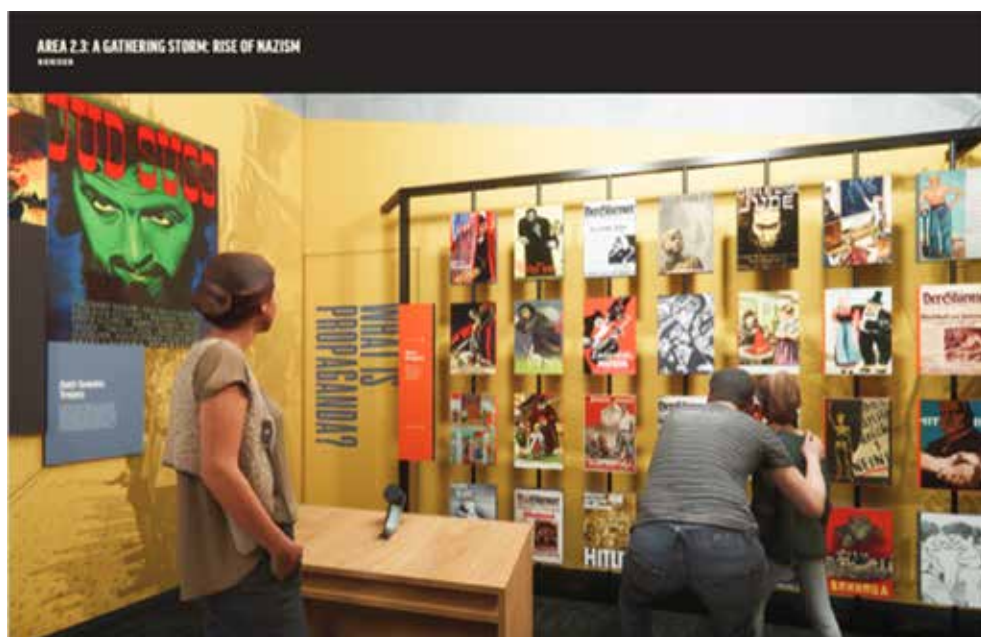


Photo courtesy of Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum

listen to", Turner said.

It's a perfect time to ask Turner to address the challenge of verifying memory.

"I think memory is a curious thing. So I think I would probably answer it in two parts. The first is that the museum believes in the emotional truth of memory, and that means that someone might say, you know, 'April 4th, 1933, this happened,' and maybe it was April 5th. But the emotional truth of that memory, right, that my father was arrested, that my mother was beaten, that I was frightened, those things remain true. So as educators, our job is to solidify the facts and the dates and all that kind of stuff. But with listening to someone's memory, we are seeking and respecting an emotional truth in that space."

Further, the story of the Holocaust and other genocides prompts a reminder to all media communicators that language matters. "There are people who, for some time, have used Holocaust as a synonym for genocide, which it's not. The Holocaust, capital H, was one very specific thing. Genocide is also a very specific thing. We want to be very careful with when we use that language, how we use that language. So I think it just emphasizes the importance of that specificity," Lutz said.

According to Turner, Holocaust studies and continued scholarship deal with such a complicated and large history, and thus keep Holocaust language evolving, to refrain from using just the term "death camps," when we know so much more, now, i.e. to differentiate between "killing centers" and killing sites.

"For me, I'm not so worried about Holocaust denial anymore in the world. I'm more worried about Holocaust distortion, and that usually comes from broad strokes

in language."

Lutz adds, "And I think this also goes if anyone makes any comparison to the Holocaust, which I'm quite opposed to, unless there is a very specific reason to do so...to be very specific in that comparison."

And on the subject of journalists covering the Holocaust, Turner says she would urge them to question the mythologies about the Holocaust. Additionally, "I would hope they not only come away with a questioning and a more nuanced appreciation for this history, but a questioning and maybe a more nuanced conversation with themselves, especially as journalists, about their role in what they put out into the world, and also how they interact and how they perceive others in themselves."

IMPACT LAB

The museum will feature a special IMPACT LAB, a separate experience that" uses the Holocaust as a core case study to reject hatred, promote understanding and inspire change. "

Also case studies about how journalism impacted the Holocaust will be shared; and terms like bias, stereotyping, hate crimes, genocide, bystander, resister, victim, survivor, and collaborator will be discussed.

Now a stand-alone non-profit organization, recently separated from its parent, the museum has the ability to expand its education capacity as a model education resource that serves the bi-state area. The recently formed Missouri Holocaust Education Commission, and a recently legislated media literacy mandate for all Illinois high schools to teach media literacy prompts Kaplan Feldman to perform even more rigorously during this next stage of its institutional life.

Holocaust educators emphasize primary sources in lessons to 'Never Forget'

By Jessica Z. Brown-Billhymer



Photo courtesy of Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum

Two well-known media literacy education educators with strong St. Louis ties remind us that teaching the Holocaust can be enriched in formal and informal classrooms when media literacy analysis tools are introduced and incorporated into the curricula.

Frank Baker, noted media literacy educator, author and lecturer, is a lifetime partner of and ongoing contributor to Gateway Media Literacy Partners in St. Louis. He is a longtime champion of using media to teach the Holocaust, and is continually asking audiences, "Where did you learn about the Holocaust: was it from a textbook, a film, a documentary, a survivor's testimony?" and "Who bears responsibility for teaching young people the Holocaust?"

Baker reminds us of the Virginia high school student who recently wrote in a widely disseminated commentary that her Holocaust education consisted of one slide about concentration camps and one handout. No wonder, she says, "my generation lacks the knowledge."

Readers may recall in 2018, the Claims Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany released a survey revealing a significant lack of Holocaust knowledge in the U.S.

With that information still front and center for many historians and educators, it's understandable many ask, "How do we fight Holocaust ignorance?" Baker responds, "We fight it with evidence."

Baker urges teachers to embrace media young people use specifically to perpetuate the myriad stories told in testimony and memoirs, and to honor the rallying cry of survivors and their families to "never forget."

"Primary sources such as these are critical because they are the evidence and they demonstrate that the Holocaust DID happen," Baker says.

Baker, author of the recently published graphic novel "We Survived the Holocaust: The Bluma and Felix Goldberg Story," explains, "Graphic novels have re-invigorated young people's literacy habits. They appeal and engage young people. It's another opportunity to tell the stories."

He cites just a few of the stories, previously told in word-filled pages of traditional books that are now graphic novels and quickly making their way off library shelves: The Diary of Anne Frank, Shakespeare, 9/11, John Lewis's MARCH. "Through words and compelling images, young readers discover

another way to comprehend a variety of narratives," Baker said.

The Bluma and Felix Goldberg story tells the story of Bluma Tishgarten and Felix Goldberg, two young Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust and subsequently married.

"Seeing our illustration of Bluma and her family running from the home the Nazis had just burned, took me immediately back to Ukraine, where people were fleeing their homes, destroyed by another dictator. Educators must help young people make the connections: this IS happening again," Baker said.

When asked, "How do we know the graphic novel will be used?" Baker replies: "Add a teacher guide and activities. Young people probably don't appreciate what goes on behind the scenes to create a graphic novel, so I thought it was critical to create a companion guide to the book in order to help the teacher better teach with and about a graphic novel and the subjects it covers."

Felix Goldberg had been testifying about his Holocaust experience at an annual Holocaust remembrance, Yom Hashoah, just before he died in 2000, and as he stepped off the stage handed Baker his speech and said, "Frankie, do something, do something with this."

To honor the Goldbergs, Baker first listened to the personal recordings of their Holocaust experience, then he created an educational web site, Stories Of Survival, but later asked himself, "What have I done for young people—many of whom continue to be oblivious about the Holocaust and its impact?" "One of my goals was to engage young people with the words and memories of this couple, and honor the promise I made to Felix to keep the stories alive.

"The power of hearing testimony from the real people who experienced the Holocaust—seeing a Buchenwald identification card, or discovering a picture of a ship that brings refugees to safety—making the connections with what's happening today—the horrors taking place in the Ukraine; book banning in the U.S., limiting who comes to our shores, troubling rhetoric.....so many lessons from the past," Baker said.

Renee Hobbs, Professor of Communications Studies and director of the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island's Harrington School of Communication and Media is also a longtime friend of St. Louis's media literacy community.

In 2014, Hobbs, a longtime distinguished

leader in the global media literacy movement, suggested to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, with whom she was consulting, that St. Louis might be a community worth the museum's attention because of its rich media literacy education efforts in the St. Louis bi-state region.

As a result, the museum chose St. Louis as one of its first group of cities to debut its new propaganda exhibit, State of Deception, in 2015. The St. Louis Holocaust Museum (now St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum), Gateway Media Literacy Partners and the Missouri History Museum collaborated as exhibitors, educators and outreach partners, to do something relatively new: use primary source materials as education tools.

Hobbs credits JoAnn Wasserman, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's education director, for recognizing, even before Hobbs and she collaborated, that media literacy pedagogy was going to be relevant to the special exhibit; the use of primary source materials was going to give the exhibit an educational edge, and that it was a pedagogy that had a lot of power for history teachers.

Hobbs' popular text, *Mind Over Media: Propaganda Education for a Digital Age* speaks to the ongoing challenge of propaganda education, today, and how media literacy and the study of propaganda, especially, cultivate a kind of intellectual curiosity. "We're in a time period where, you know, every other day somebody's making reference to Nazis in the Holocaust, right? So, the connection between past and present remains like an ongoing place of struggle for Holocaust educators and for all of us in the media literacy community,"

Addressing the challenge and subsequent ultimate joy of teaching students how to compare and contrast media, and to take into account historical and cultural contexts, Hobbs speaks to the power of teaching media literacy analysis tools to make a difference in a student's education.

"So I do feel it takes an active imagination to leap into another context. And I feel like adolescents struggle with that because they're so self centered and stuck in their own time period. But it's a beautiful thing to see a teenager try to leap imaginatively into another time period, another context, another world view, another lived experience, and I think we know they can do it because it's so beautiful to see, when it happens in the classroom, it's so magical."

Media literacy must move beyond fact-checking

By Shashidhar Nanjundaiah

Fact checking is not enough, and communities are central to achieving greater media literacy. That was the premise of a panel at a three-day United Facts of America virtual festival.

The panel was part of an annual event on fact-checking and related subjects organized by Poynter Institute and its fact-checking website PolitiFact.

Media literacy captured a sudden spotlight after the 2016 presidential election, when we discovered how easily information could be manipulated. The Covid-19 pandemic compounded the issue as available facts were distorted and replaced by misinformation. "The Big Lie" about the election of President Joe Biden over Donald J. Trump continued the era of misinformation.

This year, as a Reuters Institute report found, three out of four Americans distrust news. More people than ever are de-selecting and selectively avoiding news. A deep dive into factors that govern this new phenomenon—and into the direction media literacy should take—has followed.

Belinha De Abreu, president of the International Council for Media Literacy, Jodie Jackson, founder of a news literacy network in England, Jeff Share, who teaches at UCLA, and I spoke, while PolitiFact's Josie Hollingsworth laid the framework and asked the questions. Our discussion touched on community learning, institutional trust, and solution-journalism.

Share, a known proponent of critical media literacy, has argued that media literacy education should include an understanding of the structure and ownership of media systems. He stated that "the medium informs the content," alluding to Marshall McLuhan's argument, the medium is the message. So the inadequacy of the current conceptualization of media literacy partly lies in not asking enough questions about the medium and how it structures social communication processes.

Share took a pedagogical approach to media literacy education by which such social communication processes can be better enabled in the classroom by making learning more "communal," helping students work collaboratively in classes: "The more people working together and supporting each other, creating media together in partnering pedagogy, is also a strategy we use."

De Abreu remarked: "The fact-checking that is offered is simplified, perhaps purposefully, but so is the solution, as though the problem isn't complex." The questions about facts—such as who is behind the information, where is the evidence, and what are other sources saying—also somewhat undermines the subjective nature of human experiences, as De Abreu argued. She identified the complexity in the assumption that requires people to raise themselves to taking information as seriously as media literacy educators and scholars do.

Jackson pointed out that there is an excessive focus in media literacy on the production of information and not enough on the way it is processed. She argued that news and the cognitive processing of information should result in a certain kind of action by the user. However, she said, "action from people is missing from the current news literacy advice. Either people know [the information] or they don't, and they are not motivated enough to [act on] it." A reason, Jackson said, is that information is mostly impersonal. For example, it could be about "protecting democracy." Creating a more personal narrative helps in linking information in a more actionable way—to "get them to meaningfully engage with something that is of value to them."

I spoke on something I had argued for previously—the need for community-level media literacy. I view media literacy as a state of knowledge to be achieved through interventions. As technology has evolved, media processes have organized themselves in new patterns. Use of media has traversed from community to individual forms—from town square reading of news to family level radio and television consumption to individual "prosumerism," users making their own media with a smartphone or other device.

Much of the scholarship is founded in assumptions of individualistic learning—that learning is essentially an individual process. However, as virtual communities collaborate in the construction of messages and meanings, community learning needs to be included in our scholarship. Calling for the recognition of these new patterns, I argued that as we continue building knowledge societies, media literacy must lay emphasis on helping prosumers better understand how they are building this

collaborative knowledge.

Although digital communities are organizing themselves differently from more traditional ones, trust remains a governing factor on which they operate. When Donald Trump used social media to aid his 2016 presidential election campaign, he used (especially) Twitter and the hashtag, the tool that gathers together messages under the same theme. When he speaks now on public platforms, snippets are shared using Tik Tok or other social media vehicles, sometimes providing his followers with false or misleading information.

Rather than being a fully democratizing platform as social media technocrats have claimed, the messages flowed from leader to followers. (Platforms encourage users to achieve big "followership.") Thus, if a leader indulges in disinformation, it is amplified by their followers in their virtual communities.

Of course, this is not different from the workings of the diffusion of information among real communities. When I think of a community, I still think of a street within a village in my native India. There, the stratification is deep, and so the trust in immediate circles is high, whereas across stratifications, it is lower. However, although virtual discourse has entered communities deeply, they continue to be controlled by traditional group leaders who de facto act as the institutions of information.

A community approach to media literacy comes with understanding the intersectionality of identity and experiences. This means a media literacy program in these communities is an intervention that challenges the traditional community norms and empowers their members.

In a media literacy initiative in India called FactShala, local trainers enter their own communities and address specific groups—stay-at-home women in a semi-urban neighborhood, autorickshaw (tuk-tuk) drivers, and so forth. These groups use social media to communicate, often through virtual "groups" that are moderated. But they also frequently meet with one another in the course of their daily life. Although it is not immediately clear how effective this media literacy training course has been (indeed, the measurement of media literacy over time is lacking overall), these non-Western experiences can be useful in understanding how

communities can become more media-literate.

Hybrid forms of learning can be useful in this endeavor, using a combination of physical and virtual interventions. A media literacy trainer in a community encourages individual participation in groups that enjoy high comfort levels before helping in cross-group participation; facilitates a more organic form of mutual learning through the sharing of experiences; and intervenes to dispel disinformation among groups or as received from the media.

Training programs in media literacy must first acknowledge the implications of the cultural environments and social dynamics in which these hyperlocal consumer communities operate. Hierarchies pre-exist among many communities (such as caste-based ones in India). As I have argued, new forms of hierarchy are evolving among virtual communities regardless of the pre-existence. Trust within local communities is an underlying factor for sharing and acceptance.

As trust in media institutions seems to have diminished among media users in the United States and elsewhere, they are cutting the news cord, selectively avoiding news and, rather, relying on community leaders to organize and transmit messages. This seeming shifting of institutional trust to community forms of trust raises several questions. How can media literacy organize itself around communities? Can community members think independently of internal hierarchies that may operate within these groups of people? Communities are also useful to media literacy programs on the ground in how media literacy trainers learn from the communities they interact with and contribute to an overall body of literacy that is decentralized and rooted in local forms of media illiteracy.

Eric Schmitt teams up with the Gateway Pundit

By Paul Wagman

After Attorney General Eric Schmitt won the Republican primary August 2 for the open U.S. Senate seat in Missouri, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch expressed the hope that he would pivot to the center for the general election.

But Schmitt continued his embrace of "toxic radicalism," as the Post has commented. And an indication that that might be the case – an indication that no one in St. Louis noticed at the time -- came on the very day Schmitt won the primary.

On August 2, Jim Hoft, a St. Louisan otherwise known as the Gateway Pundit, was added as another plaintiff in a suit the Missouri Attorney General had filed months earlier, along with four other new individual plaintiffs. The joint pleading came in the form of an amended version of a complaint Schmitt had originally filed in May with just one other plaintiff, Attorney General Jeffrey Landry of Louisiana, in the U. S. District Court of the Western District of Louisiana.

In both its original and amended versions, the suit alleged that President Biden, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and other prominent members of the executive branch had sought to suppress free speech by pressuring social media companies like Facebook and Twitter to restrict or censor what users could say. The argument that Big Government and Big Tech are allied in such an effort is a widespread contention on the political right. The suit specifically focused on free expression about the issues of Covid, election integrity, and Hunter Biden's laptop.

"I will not stand idly by," Schmitt announced in a press release the day the suit was initially filed, "while the Biden Administration attempts to trample on the First Amendment rights of Missourians and Americans." He deplored what he called the Biden Administration's "Orwellian campaign against 'misinformation.'"

Critics immediately ridiculed the initial filing as little more than a disguised press release – another example of Republican Attorneys General tossing red meat to their bases. Liz Dye, a writer for the legal publication "Above the Law," noted that Trump had filed his own censorship case against Twitter, but that another federal judge, James Donato in the Northern District of California, had dismissed it, in part on the ground that government officials had a right to express their opinions.

"It takes a lot to file something

dumber than Trump's tech lawsuits," Dye commented. "But by God these AGs have left no corner of 4chan unscored in their effort to do it."

But the suit may fare better than many liberals would like, in part because the venue was clearly carefully targeted. U.S. District Judge Terry A. Doughty is an appointee of President Trump who has already overturned the Biden Administration on mandatory Covid vaccines for federal healthcare workers and restrictions on drilling for oil and gas on federal lands. In July, he ruled against the Biden Administration and for the plaintiffs Schmitt and Landry in ordering commencement of the discovery process.

Regardless, rhetorical haymakers like the kind thrown by Dye are nothing new for Schmitt, whose critics have long lambasted his legal attacks against school districts over mask-wearing to thwart Covid, against China in connection with Covid, and more -- all, of course, with no evident impact on the man who seems destined to be Missouri's next U.S. Senator.

So it's not the suit, per se, or the criticism, that makes this particular case stand out. It is, rather, the entry of the individuals into the case – and in particular, Hoft -- that makes it noteworthy.

Adding any individuals to a suit brought by the state is unusual, said James Layton, who served as Missouri's Solicitor General for about 20 years under Attorneys General Jay Nixon and Chris Koster, both Democrats. Layton noted that the docket in the case says that it was the current Missouri Solicitor General, D. John Sauer, who added Hoft and the other four individuals to it. Layton is now with the Clayton law firm of Tueth Keeney.

"I just think it's unusual for an Attorney General to affirmatively have private parties (enter a case)," he said. "And the only time I can recall that ever having happened with any public entity, frankly, is where there's a question of standing and they need the private party in order to ensure that the case can go forward. And I've seen that most commonly in Hancock cases."

"Hancock cases" are ones referring to challenges to tax increases under Missouri's Hancock Amendment, which limits tax increases.

Agreeing to add individual plaintiffs also strikes the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri (ACLU) as contrary to Schmitt's and Sauer's posture in a recent case, a

spokesman said. The situation is not entirely analogous, but in September, 2021 the ACLU represented some students with disabilities who asked to intervene against the state in a case in which the Attorney General was seeking to stop a school district from requiring universal masking. Sauer argued against the intervention, saying, "... the party that's already in the case, doesn't have to raise every single argument that you want to raise on behalf of the representative as long as they're very vigorously defending the ultimate position and relief that you would like to see."

Schmitt's spokesman declined to comment for this story, so it's impossible to know, but it may be that he and Landry believed they did need to add the individuals to gain standing, said one local attorney who asked not to be identified. Both attorneys generals asserted in their original filing that they have grounds to file, in part because they have "a quasi-sovereign interest in protecting the free speech rights of the vast majority of their citizens" and because they rely on a free flow of information on social media to make good decisions. But they may nonetheless have felt vulnerable on this point, the lawyer said. So adding Hoft enabled Schmitt to claim he was protecting the rights of a Missourian, while adding Jill Hines a Louisiana resident did the same for Landry.

But what's especially noteworthy, of course, is who Hoft is.

The website he founded and publishes, The Gateway Pundit, is among the most notorious purveyors of disinformation in the country. As a GJR profile reported in 2021, he has been a champion of right-wing conspiracy theories for nearly 20 years, and, like some others in the field, appears to have made a very good living out of it.

For the state's top law enforcement officer to partner with him, therefore, doesn't sit well with some legal experts.

"By adding Hoft to the case and giving him the state's imprimatur, Schmitt has essentially normalized him," commented Michael Wolff, a former chief justice of the Missouri Supreme Court and Dean Emeritus of the Saint Louis University Law School.

"Eric Schmitt has chosen to partner with a man who has made a career out of purveying lies and misinformation," said Alan Hoffman, a retired Husch Blackwell attorney who leads a group that has filed an ethics challenge against Sen. Josh Hawley for his statements concerning the integrity of the 2020 election. "That is beyond inappropriate and enormously distressing."

Hoft did not respond to a request for comment.

A 2017 study out of Harvard University reported: "Gateway Pundit is in a class of its own, known for publishing falsehoods and spreading hoaxes." In 2021, The

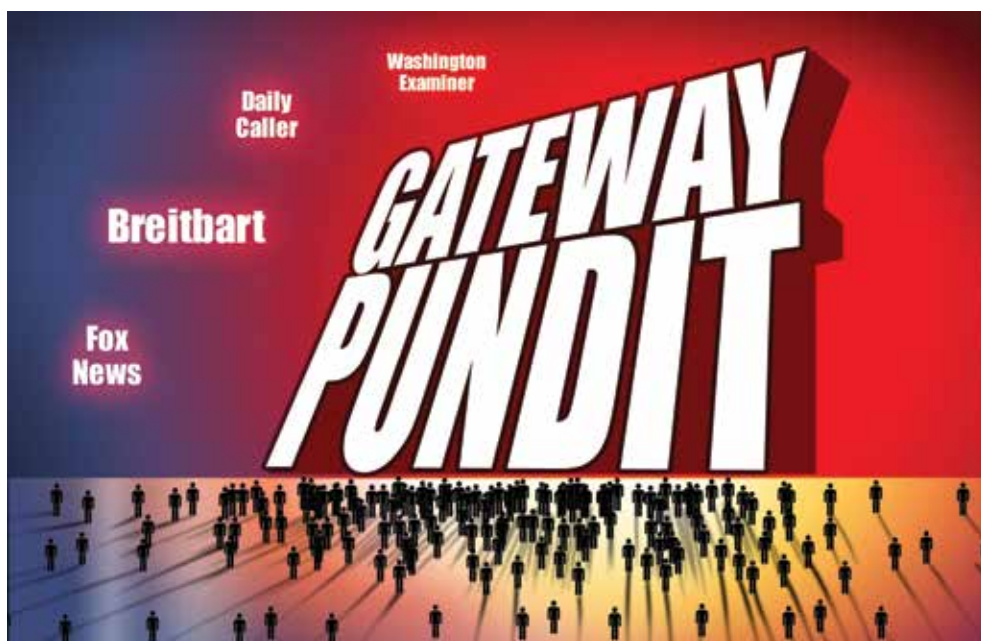


Illustration by Steve Edwards

German Marshall Fund of the United States, a nonpartisan think tank based in Washington, D.C., singled him out as a responsible for a disproportionate share of the chatter about the election from "False Content Producers" in the fourth quarter of 2020. He has been contradicted by one fact-checking organization after another.

And more recently, he has been sued for defamation.

One case is in the state District Court in Denver, where Hoft, along with Rudolf Giuliani, Sidney Powell, the Trump campaign, Newsmax and others have been sued by Eric Coomer, the former security chief for Dominion Voting Systems. Hoft wrote that Coomer had personally guaranteed Antifa members that Dominion election machines had been rigged to elect Biden. He called Coomer "an unhinged sociopath," a "lunatic," "mentally ill" and "an unhinged Trump hater and Antifa supporter." Coomer received death threats and was forced to go into hiding.

Hoft and the other defendants responded with motions to have the charges dismissed, but in a development that seems to have escaped notice outside Colorado, Judge Marie Moses ruled against them all. She made her ruling last May 13 – about three months before Hoft was added to Schmitt and Landry's case.

Here is what Judge Moses, a recent appointee of Colorado's Democratic governor, said about Hoft in turning down his request for dismissal. (She referred to him in the plural as "Hoft-TGP" (The Gateway Pundit):

"To date, Hoft-TGP have not put forward any evidence in support of their statements about Coomer. Hoft-TGP never attempted to contact Coomer, asked to see the notes Oltmann [Hoft's source for

his report] claims he took during the call, or asked about the identities of the other alleged participants. ... Hoft-TGP financially benefitted from this conduct as their post-election coverage resulted in increased subscriptions, increased advertising revenue, and notoriety as a pro-Trump grassroots leader. Hoft-TGP have not retracted any of their publications about Coomer, and they remain publicly available to this day."

Hoft, she continued, "did not consult with experts on election systems to confirm the allegations made. Instead, there is evidence that Hoft-TGP disregarded credible sources of information that refuted their allegations, including statements by ... former U.S. Attorney General Barr that there was no evidence of widespread fraud. There is evidence the allegations against Coomer were inherently improbable. Yet Hoft-TGP 93 republished and embellished these allegations. There is evidence that Hoft-TGP allegations against Coomer conformed to a preconceived storyline of fraud given their allegations of fraud leading up and after the election. ... This evidence is sufficient to support a finding of actual malice as well as overcome Hoft-TGP's professions of good faith."

Hoft is now appealing the judge's dismissal. Meanwhile, however, he also faces charges of defamation in St. Louis Circuit Court. Here the plaintiffs are two Georgia poll workers who said they, like Coomer, had also received death threats and been harassed online and in-person after Hoft falsely accused them – in their case of cheating for Biden in counting the votes in Atlanta. That case made national news when the two women, Ruby Freeman and Wandrea Moss, testified before the

Continued on next page

Special House Committee Investigating the Jan. 6 Attack on the Capitol. That case isn't expected to go to trial here – if it does -- until roughly the beginning of 2024.

Nothing of this nature is presented in the filings that Schmitt and Hoft have made with the court in Louisiana. Instead, the first amended complaint describes Hoft as follows:

"The Gateway Pundit is one of the most popular conservative news sites in the country, with over 2.5 million web searches per day. Mr. Hoft maintains and operates The Gateway Pundit's social-media accounts, including a Facebook account with over 650,000 followers, an Instagram account with over 205,000 followers, and (until its recent permanent suspension) a Twitter account with over 400,000 followers." He is part of a group, the complaint continues, of "social-media titan(s) ... one of the most influential online voices in the country, with over a million social-media followers."

A second amended complaint, which was filed just Oct. 6 and added 47 more defendants to the case – there are now 67 in all -- contains the same language.

The complaint goes on to say that Hoft and the other individual plaintiffs "have suffered and are suffering grave and ongoing injuries" from the alleged suppression. It cites the "demonetization of Plaintiff Hoft from Google" as one of those injuries. It does not, however, ask for monetary damages. It simply asks for a finding that the government has overstepped and must stop it.

Money, however, is at stake for Hoft in all of these issues, as the demonetization from Google reference makes clear. Hoft has been complaining for years about being suppressed on social media, and in February of 2021, started fundraising off of it. This post is still running on his website:

"Behind the scenes, there's a battle for survival of The Gateway Pundit. For 15 years, we've been fighting Big Tech and Leftists who want to shut us down. They've censored us on social media. They've defamed us in the media. They've restricted the advertising that pays our bills. And yet, we soldier on. We're putting up more articles than ever. We're digging deeper into corruption and fraud. We're continuing to fight.

"Many of you have asked how to help, and we finally have a way: You can now subscribe to The Gateway Pundit."

You can also buy Gateway Pundit merch.

Schmitt did not issue a press release in August when Hoft and the other individuals joined his suit.

But Hoft has not been shy about the state's embrace. Some sample headlines:

- June 22, 2022 -- Missouri Attorney

General Files Landmark Lawsuit Against Biden for Colluding with Big Tech – Evidence from The Gateway Pundit Plays Major Role in Case

- Aug. 3, 2022 -- HUGE BREAKING UPDATE: Gateway Pundit's Jim Hoft Officially Joins Missouri and Louisiana National Lawsuit – SUES Joe Biden and Administration for Violation of First Amendment, Internet Censorship

And by August 11, he was writing that he had no longer just joined the case, he was leading it:

- Announcement: The Gateway Pundit's Jim Hoft Elevated to Lead Plaintiff in State of Missouri and State of Louisiana Lawsuit vs. Joseph R. Biden, Jr. et al

Hoft is likely not the only winner, however. Schmitt has reason to be happy too.

During the primary season, when he was facing off against former Mo. Gov. Eric Greitens and other rivals, the Gateway Pundit did not have a kind word to spare for Schmitt. He was a "career politician," and what's worse, a "RINO" (Republican in Name Only). He drew headlines like this one, from Sept. 16, 2021:

Breaking: General Flynn Endorses MAGA Navy SEAL Eric Greitens, Blasts RINO Eric Schmitt for Ties to Chinese Communist Party

But here is what Hoft wrote on his website this past Sept. 1:

"If this were a Star Wars spinoff, we'd call it "Free-Speech Wars II: The Good Guys Strike Back."

(Note: Hoft's joining the case, it should be noted, does not mean he is represented by the state; he has his own lawyer, St. Louis attorney John C. Burns. So do the other individual plaintiffs, who are: Jill Hines, a Louisianan who has supported giving the state's residents the right to accept or reject vaccines or any form of health care; Dr. Aaron Kheriaty, a medical ethicist and former psychiatry professor at the University of California Irvine who was fired in late 2021 for refusing to be vaccinated after claiming natural immunity from a prior COVID-19 infection; Martin Kulldorff, a former Harvard University professor of medicine; and Jayanta Bhattacharya, a professor of health policy at Stanford University School of Medicine. Kulldorff and Bhattacharya were two of the three authors of the so-called Great Barrington Declaration, an open letter, published in October 2020, which advocated against lockdowns and for letting Covid sweep through most of the population, creating herd immunity, while only the most vulnerable were protected.)



Editor of Madison-St. Clair County Record set to retire

By Linda Lockhart

When Ann Maher accepted the invitation to become editor of the newly established Madison County Record, she was a bit unsure of what she was signing up for. But she took a chance.

Now, 18 years after leading what became the Madison-St. Clair Record, and 10 other Record newspapers around the country, Maher is stepping down.

"I am transitioning out and will be mostly retired at the end of the year," Maher said in an interview. "I will probably stay active on a contract basis, helping in a yet-to-be-determined, behind-the-scenes role."

Maher will be turning over the editor's job to Heather Isringhausen Gvillo, who has been a reporter at the Record since 2013 and has served as associate editor since 2017.

For the time that remains, Maher is proudly directing her staff of 10 and a dozen freelancers in reporting on things that received little attention before the Record showed up – initially based in Edwardsville, in a small office just down the street from the county courthouse.

Maag vs Karmeier

It all started in the fall of 2004. There was the election contest for Illinois Supreme Court between Gordon Maag, then a sitting appellate justice, and Lloyd Karmeier, a circuit judge.

"Maag was backed by the trial lawyers and Karmeier was backed by the conservatives, which ultimately included the U.S. Chamber of commerce, through its political action interests," Maher said.

The election, "involved the eruption of class action litigation in Madison County. The lines were drawn between the corporate interests and the trial lawyers," she said.

At that time, Brian Timpone, who lives in the Chicago area and owned several small newspapers in central Illinois, wanted to do something about it, Maher said.

"He found a partner with the Chamber and that was how the Madison County Record was born. That race became the most expensive Supreme Court in U.S. history, she said. "10 million dollars was spent."

Karmeier won.

Timpone came under criticism, including from the Post-Dispatch, for receiving support from the Chamber.

He said in a recent interview that the Chamber has no control over the news content of the paper.

In 2004, in response to a critical article in the Washington Post, Timone said, "The newspaper's business relationship with the Chamber does not de-legitimize its mission, which is to fill a void in courts coverage."

After the Record launched its first edition on Sept. 7, 2004, "I got a phone call out of the blue," from Timpone, Maher said. "I came on board a few weeks later."

She had spent several years working in Republican politics, including as a field coordinator, but she also had a solid background in news reporting.

"My degree was in speech communications at the University of Minnesota. My first job was in market research for A.C. Nielsen, driving all over the Chicago area, doing mundane reports."

Not quite to her liking, she applied for a stringer job with the Suburban Journals in southern Illinois. "I covered a Swansea village meeting. I got 25 bucks."

From there she was hired as a reporter for the O'Fallon Progress.

"I loved working there. I covered the city council, school boards, I took photos, developed film. It was the early days of computers."

She later was promoted to editor.

Through the years, her jobs changed and she raised five children.

A quick learner

Then came the cold call from Timpone.

"I had not had any experience in reporting on lawsuits," she said.

But she learned quickly.

"You just tell the story. It's just right there on the pages of a lawsuit," she said. "This was a novel approach. Nobody had covered civil litigation. There was no oversight or transparency."

"Meanwhile you had corporations from all over being dragged into Madison County. We later learned it was all about who was getting elected judge and who was contributing to the election of circuit judges that had an effect on how cases were decided."

The American Tort Reform Foundation included Madison County on its watchlist for "judicial hellholes."

"We had just started up when the Washington Post got wind of this newspaper covering courts in Madison County," she said. "We made national news. And the Post-Dispatch became aware of us."

Timpone had started by going to Madison County Courthouse, looking at the class action cases.

"In the clerk's office, he went in and asked for the day's new filings," Maher said. "A reporter from another news organization told him, 'that's not news.'"

"To them it wasn't. Up until that point, that other organization had covered only the criminal courts," she said.

"As it turns out 18 years later, Maher said, "that's (class action cases) what people wanted."

"We have earned the respect of not just the interested parties that we purportedly stood up for initially," she said. "We have also earned a degree of respect from the trial bar. We often get some of our best tips from the so-called other side. It is a testament to writing litigation stories fairly."

"We have earned the trust of everyday citizens of Madison County. We have earned respect across the board."

The Record publishes about 10,000 papers weekly, which are available free on stands throughout the area. Online, madisonrecord.com, publishes stories daily.

As she turns the Record over to Gvillo, Maher is confident that the paper will look a lot the same. "Heather has had her hands all over the management over the past year," Maher said. "There will not be a lot of changes. She is smart, savvy and young."

Gvillo also has a strong news background. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism and communications from the College of the Ozarks, and a master's degree in media studies from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. She graduated summa cum laude from both.

In college she was set on broadcast journalism. She interned with KSDK NewsChannel 5 and also worked as a production assistant. But she soon found TV wasn't the right fit for her.

"That's when I came across a reporter position with the Madison-St. Clair County Record," she said.

"I was drawn to political and legal journalism and grew up in Madison County."

Gvillo said she is most proud of the Record's approach to reporting.

"We do our best to tell all sides of a story," she said.

Today there are 11 Record newspapers, including in California, Louisiana, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas and St. Louis.

All came after the success in Madison County. All have seen reforms, amplified by the Record newspapers, Maher said.

Regarding Maher's retirement, Timpone said, "You don't replace Ann. Heather has been her understudy for a while. We have a system. We have a tone that (Ann) set."

Ann is a quiet, nice woman with a smile, but tough as nails. We are going to keep building and she is going to help us do it."

"We are entering a whole new era of transparency of getting court records online," Timpone said. "People forget that journalism is an adversarial process. If you sit around and wait you are never going to get (the court records)."

"We have to be the ones pushing for transparency. Not just courts, (but also for) voter information — police records. Public records are ours. We've got to extract it. We are going to be driving and spur competition."

In response to previous criticism of his other news organizations aside from the Record, Timpone said, "I think substantive criticism makes us better. I ask them to show me a story in the millions we have done — show me one story that was inaccurate. I grew up in a Democrat household. We have spirited debates."

"Tell me what you don't like. Don't just say it's all fake news and fabrication. If your point of view is on the left that's alright. But if it's on the right that's alright, too."

Likewise, Maher believes in the value of offering news from diverse perspectives.

"When there is one-party rule for so long, you don't get good government. You need checks and balances. You need one side looking over the shoulder of the other, from both sides — Democrat and Republican."



Illustration by Steve Edwards

Lawyers appeal decision to clear Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley on election ethics complaint

By Paul Wagman

A group of lawyers who claimed Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley had committed ethics violations in connection with his challenges to the 2020 presidential election is appealing the rejection of their complaint by the Missouri Supreme Court's chief disciplinary counsel.

The appeal, which has not been previously reported, was with the Missouri Supreme Court's advisory committee Sept. 9. It was signed by Alan B. Hoffman, a retired St. Louis attorney, and 17 others, most of them St. Louis lawyers but a few of them current or former Democratic Party politicians, including former St. Louis Mayor Vincent Schoemehl Jr.

Although it was not reported at the time, Alan Pratzel, the chief disciplinary counsel, informed the group in a letter on Aug. 16 that he had rejected their initial complaint, which had been filed Feb. 26, 2021 -- nearly 18 months earlier. It accused Hawley of making statements concerning the election that "were false and known by Senator Hawley to be false at the time made or were

made with reckless disregard for truth or falsity."

Chief among those statements was a tweet Hawley posted on Dec. 30, 2020, alleging that "some states, particularly Pennsylvania, failed to follow their own state election laws" and that there had been an "unprecedented effort of mega corporations, including Facebook and Twitter, to interfere in the election." Hawley used the same language in a press release he posted on his web site the same day.

Hawley made these allegations, the complaint said, despite "the fact that no evidence of irregularity or impropriety in the conduct of any State election was offered in any judicial or administrative proceeding, that every court which considered these matters found no evidence of any such irregularity or impropriety, and that no such evidence in fact exists."

The complaint also took of Hawley's fist-pump to the crowd outside the capitol just before the attack Jan. 6, a "salute" that had the effect of "encouraging the

lawlessness and violence which ensued."

In these and other acts, the four-page complaint said, Hawley violated the oaths he took as a Senator to uphold the U.S. and Missouri constitutions and to practice law in Missouri. Among other examples of such violations, the complaint quoted the preamble to Missouri Supreme Court Rule 4-3.1, which states, "A lawyer shall not bring or defend a proceeding, or assert or controvert an issue therein, unless there is a basis in law and fact for doing so that is not frivolous ..."

But in his Aug. 16 letter, Pratzel rejected the complaint in a single paragraph.

"We found insufficient probable cause," the letter said, "to believe that Senator Hawley was guilty of professional misconduct that would justify discipline regarding his conduct leading up to and following the Presidential election on November 3, 2020, including the events at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Specifically, the ODCD found that the public statements made by Mr. Hawley regarding the

Presidential election, whether made on the Senate floor or in other public and media venues, were constitutionally protected. The OCDC also concluded, based on the location and timing of Mr. Hawley's 'fist-pump' at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, that there is insufficient evidence to establish a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct."

In its appeal, the group challenging Hawley noted that Pratzel failed to offer any "analysis of the facts or applicable law ... to support these conclusions." But it appeared from the context of Pratzel's comments, the group wrote, that he based his position on the "Speech or Debate" clause of the U.S. Constitution.

That clause, which was written before the First Amendment, protects members of Congress from being "questioned in any other place" for speech they make in Congress in connection with their legislative activities.

In their appeal, Hoffman and the others wrote that they had anticipated that defense, and "made clear that the Complaint does not address any statements made by Senator Hawley in his legislative capacity ..."

"The question presented, therefore, is whether the conduct complained of was protected legislative activity," the appeal continued. "The answer is no."

In *U.S. v. Brewster*, the group wrote, the Supreme Court in 1972 ruled that "news releases and speeches delivered outside of Congress" by members of Congress "are political in nature rather than legislative," ... and therefore lack "the protection afforded by the Speech or Debate Clause."

The conduct by Hawley that sparked their complaint, the appeal noted, "was clearly 'political in nature rather than legislative.' In the digital age, a Senator's website is the contemporary medium for news releases. Such was certainly true of Senator Hawley's Dec. 30, 2020 statements on his web site. And his gesture of encouragement to the already inflamed mob on January 6, 2021 was the functional equivalent of 'a speech delivered outside of Congress.' Both were political acts, even if they could be considered related to legislative activities and were not protected by the Speech or Debate clause of the Constitution."

Finally, the appeal noted that Hawley continues to use the photograph of him raising his fist to the mob for fundraising. "No clearer evidence of the political, rather than legislative character of Senator Hawley's conduct could exist," it said.

In an email to the other signatories of the complaint, Hoffman also said that Sen. Lindsey Graham (S.C., Rep.) had used the Speech or Debate clause to resist a subpoena to testify in the Fulton County,



Illustration by Steve Edwards

Georgia investigation of the election. But U.S. District Court Judge Leigh Martin May rejected the argument, Hoffman wrote.

Mike Wolff, a former chief justice of the Missouri Supreme Court who was not involved in the complaint or the appeal, offered this perspective:

Pratzel, he said, is a straight shooter. But to maintain his effectiveness with the Court, Pratzel has to have a sense for what cases can be won, and Pratzel may believe the Court would be more interested in guarding free speech by members of Congress than punishing what Wolff called Hawley's "nonsense."

"It's not a crime to lie to the public, but it is a crime and ethical offense to lie in court," Wolff said. "Apparently it's not a crime to lie on the floor of the Congress either."

The Missouri Supreme Court Advisory Committee, to which the complainants have appealed, is appointed by the Missouri Supreme Court. If the committee finds a "substantial need for further investigation or analysis," it can assign the Complaint to a regional disciplinary committee that was not involved in the original investigation, according to a Supreme Court rule.

The committee currently has 12 members, according to the committee website. They are Dorothy White-Coleman,

chair, St. Louis; Edward C. Clausen, vice chair, Jefferson City; David W. Ansley, Springfield; Sheryl Butler, St. Louis; Keith A. Cutler, Kansas City; Jill A. Kanatzar, Kansas City; Levell D. Littleton, Clayton; Elizabeth D. McCarter, St. Louis; Dan R. Nelson, Springfield; Dale Siebeneck, Jefferson City; Kirby Upjohn, Kansas City; and Branson L. Wood III, Hannibal. The committee's legal ethics counsel, who serves as the committee's counsel and staff, is Melinda J. Bentley.

Sunshine Law could allow for backdoor censorship of publicly funded journalism

By Nick Karpinski

With a decline in the independent, local newspaper industry, publicly-funded institutions have attempted to fill in the many gaps left behind. Journalism schools, many of which are state- operated, have played a large role in this process as have public radio stations, such as St. Louis Public Radio.

"It's great for communities because they get local news that they otherwise wouldn't get," said Kathy Kiely, the Lee Hills chair in Free-Press Studies and professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. "This is an important model going forward into the future for providing communities with information they need."

However, the relationship between journalism and publicly funded institutions gets complicated in conversation with public record laws, along with journalists' ability to protect their sources. This became evident recently when Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt requested emails from the Columbia Missourian and two Missouri University journalism school professors by way of the Sunshine Law. The Sunshine Law is meant to foster transparency by requiring public institutions to disclose their activities to the public.

The request was in regard to the school's collaboration with PolitiFact, a nonpartisan newsroom that fact-checks statements by public officials. The school worked with PolitiFact to make sure that professors were trained in their fact-checking methodology while also training students in the PolitiFact fact-checking rubric.

Emails in the private journalism sector are not subject to the Sunshine law and are also typically protected by shield laws — laws that protect reporters' privilege and allow reporters to refuse to reveal notes or information about their sources. However, with the Missourian being affiliated with the University of Missouri, a state-funded institution, it is subject to the Sunshine Law. David Kurpius, the journalism school's dean, said the school supports the principles of open records laws and will "comply with the request to fulfill the lawful duty that we have."

Kiely said, "Journalists who work in [publicly operated institutions] are now going to be subjected to fishing expeditions from public officials who do not like what they're reporting. That is a form of censorship that has a chilling effect on news organizations."

"How many university presidents public university presidents are going to be willing to have a journalism school that operates news outlets, if they know they're going to be

subjected to this kind of legal expense, and process.... You know it is backdoor method of censorship.... that has a chilling effect on news organizations."

Tim O'Neil, a retired Saint Louis Post-Dispatch reporter and University of Missouri alum, said he was "dismayed" by the dean's response and wished the school pushed back a bit more on the principle of Schmitt's request.

"It was a stunt by Schmitt to get a few headlines," O'Neil said. "The larger implication is that if professors have to give up their emails over fact-checking exercises, then what's to keep a mayor, or a Senate candidate from demanding the emails of a reporter who's writing an investigative story. If the university rolls meekly on this, then what does the journalism school have in terms of internal workings?"

"I just wanted to see some fire out of the school. (It) is the publisher, effectively the publisher there, Missouri, and I wish he would have given a little more fight in his opening comments, because I'm, I'm thinking about the poor kids of the Missourian, they now have to be very careful what they write in any sort of email to the city."

Schmitt did not respond to repeated GJR request for comment. As attorney general, Schmitt has responsibility for enforcing the Sunshine law.

Schmitt's office has not specified what it is that they're after with their request, just that they want to better understand how the Missourian checking works.

"That raises the next question," Kiely said. "The Attorney General can tell us how to do our jobs? I mean, do we really want to live in a country where the people in power get to tell journalists what they should and shouldn't be covering?"

Mike Hiestan, a student legal counsel at the Student Press Law Center, said that with public funding entering the journalism sector, there's a whole ecosystem of news media that needs up-to-date legislation.

"The citizens are supposed to own the government, and the government works for us," Hiestan said. "It gives us the owners the ability to keep tabs on what it is our government officials are up to. People like Schmitt are really taking advantage of openness in these laws that is allowing them to go after information that they have no business seeing."

Brian Munoz, a Southern Illinois University alum and photojournalist at St. Louis Public Radio, said groups like the

Student Press Law Center are vital to help news organizations attached to public institutions keep their editorial independence. He said the Sunshine Law should be working in favor of journalists and not against them.

At SIU, Illinois' Freedom of Information Law - the equivalent of Missouri's Sunshine Law - did work in Munoz's favor. Munoz worked at the student publication, the Daily Egyptian, during his time there and filed many FOIA requests as a part of his investigative reporting.

"Public records are a valuable resource to hold people accountable," Munoz said. "State agencies and those that receive taxpayer dollars in order to keep them accountable and transparent. Right now, where it becomes a little bit of a sticky situation is when it's on the flip side with a news organization that is affiliated with a public institution."

Without Shield Law protections, journalists can't guarantee their sources the protection they need to speak with anonymity.

"Courts have found that the public good served by journalism is important enough that it should be provided some protection," Kiley said. "Journalism is in many ways a last resort for people who are whistleblowers, people who are in an institution that's corrupt. They're not going to talk and corruption festers. For years, this has been a precedent, and that's the reason for it. If you take away that protection, it makes it more difficult for journalists to do their jobs."

"Sometimes, if you can't get satisfaction within the institution, and you have to go outside and you blow the whistle to the press, and the press does a lot of good. And in that watchdog role, well, if people who are inside situation, know ...their anonymity cannot be protected, that suddenly their livelihoods and their children and their families might be subject to terrific financial penalties because a journalist can't protect them. They're not going to talk and corruption festers."

Hiestan said that Schmitt's email request, in conversation with the larger story of the vulnerability of publicly funded journalism institutions, sets a dangerous precedent for the future.

"To find out what stories student editors are covering, what the local NPR affiliate is covering, and who they've talked to — that's abusing Freedom of Information laws," Hiestan said. "They were never intended to be used that way."

To paywall or not? Young readers provide the answer

By Jackie Spinner



Photo by Febe Roels via Flickr

A few years ago, while preparing to teach a copy editing course for the first time, I stumbled across a hidden gem in The New York Times digital edition: Copy Edit This!, an interactive quiz that tests readers on grammar and word usage errors from recent Times articles.

The Times's standards editor catches the errors and then explains why they are wrong. Here is an example from installment No. 1: "The trial has suggested that corruption in Mexico is as bad, if not worse, than many thought." The problem, according to Editor Philip B. Corbett is that "as bad" needs another "as," which readers learn as they click on a word in the quiz to see what's wrong with it. To be correct, it should read "as bad as."

In my class, which I teach online, I split the students into copy desks to work together on a different quiz each week. It is a feature of the course they seem generally to like.

But a few weeks ago, a student reached out to let me know that they could not access the quiz through our college's library database, which they had been able to do in the past. It turns out that we no longer offer students access to the digital version of the New York Times. The library asked for it in its budget but was denied because Columbia College Chicago, like many other institutions in higher education, is facing a mounting deficit resulting from declining enrollment.

I reached out immediately to my journalism faculty colleagues, irate that we had lost access to the copy editing quiz and all of

the multimedia elements that are part of the digital edition of the Times. I also implored my students to purchase a subscription, which for them, at a student discount, would amount to one fancy coffee drink per month. Few of them agreed, after the fact, so without access, I eliminated the quiz from the course.

Although this anecdote says much about the state of journalism education, as part of higher education in general, it really for me is illustrative of the larger problem we face within our industry. It is incredibly difficult to get people to pay for news, for quality features, even as we continue to invest in them. I find it telling, and sobering, that we cannot even convince future journalists to pay as consumers, even as they expect to be fairly compensated to produce news after they graduate.

In the United States, only 21 percent of respondents to the 2021 Reuters Institute Digital News report paid for news.

In May, the Nieman Lab looked at why that was, drawing on a scholarly article by Danish researcher Tim Groot Kormelink. The analysis is interesting, noting factors such as cost and whether or not they actually follow up after subscribing, but it didn't offer clearly defined resolution. There were no lightbulbs.

But other studies have suggested that young readers may be willing to pay for a news subscription if the price is lower.

Many news outlets use deals to lure readers and then sock them with a price increase. This increase can often be negotiated down by

calling and complaining. But really, that is not a relationship built on trust.

Gateway Journalism Review is not behind a paywall, and we are no longer sharing content in our digital newsletter that requires a subscription to a particular news outlet. I fundamentally believe that news cannot be behind a paywall. Many people simply will move on. We can lament that we did this to ourselves in the early days of delivering content online. We can lament that we still have not figured out a profitable model to replace the classified ads that kept us afloat. We can continue to charge a premium to some readers willing or with the means to pay, further dividing our communities between the informed and the uninformed.

The attraction of nonprofit news organizations is that they don't have to figure this out except that they also have to figure this out. Whether through donations, grant funding or private investment, it still costs to produce quality news, and someone pays when it's not the reader or viewer.

Frankly, I believe that the membership model, or the "freemium model," is the one in which we should embrace. GJR will be launching such a model next year for our print subscribers, following the lead of digital news successes like Axios.

A hard paywall keeps people out. A soft paywall keeps people engaged until they run out of free articles. A membership model allows us to embrace branded and premium content for certain subscribers while continuing to preach the very real ideals about journalism and our vital role in protecting democracy, of being watchdogs of giving people accurate and responsible content that they need.

Public radio through its pledge drives connects journalists with donors, something more news organizations should do. When I get a solicitation from Leila Fadel, the host of Morning Edition for NPR, when I read her personal story and commitment to journalism, I'm instantly connected. Newspapers do that less, preferring to keep journalists away from the unsavory side of the business, even though that side is what actually keeps us in business. We can do more to make the business of news personal for our readers at the most local level.

In the end I can certainly force my students to pay for a New York Times digital subscription but that doesn't change the fundamental problem that they are part of a public that doesn't want to pay for quality news. After all, their college has already sent them a powerful message about the value.



Photo by Liren Chen via Flickr

Chicago Sun-Times drops its paywall. Will other local newspapers follow?

By Sharon Walsh

It was big news in January when nonprofit WBEZ radio in Chicago bought the Chicago Sun-Times, raising \$61 million from foundations and individuals to acquire the daily paper under the umbrella of Chicago Public Media.

Now, the Sun-Times is taking another step into a new media landscape by taking down its digital paywall and, like WBEZ, asking the community to support its journalism.

"This is a long-term commitment

we are making to the community," said Celeste LeCompte, chief audience officer for Chicago Public Media. "We have a responsibility to tell core stories to the community.... High quality journalism shouldn't be available only to those who can afford it."

Matt Moog, chief executive of Chicago Public Media, hinted this summer that the merged outlet planned to drop the paywall. Moog noted at an event at Northwestern University that there was

"some risk" associated with the initiative, "but we are really committed." He said the two outlets had 200,000 members and subscribers between them, and they hoped to add another 100,000 digital subscribers by dropping the paywall.

Borrowing from public radio's playbook, the Sun-Times has been using its high-profile staff members to speak directly to readers this week to try to accomplish that.

Sun-Times Washington Bureau Chief

Lynn Sweet was on WBEZ, offering to have coffee with anyone who signed up as a founding member. In an email, Editorial Page Editor Lorraine Forte asked digital subscribers to become a founding member. "As the editorial page editor of the Chicago Sun-Times, my goal is to foster a robust dialog with the diverse communities that make up Chicago," she said. "Everyone's voice should be heard when it comes to the important issues that matter in our city."

Scores of enthusiastic readers on Reddit praised the move, calling it "amazing news," and "great!" "We're enormously excited about people's enthusiasm," LeCompte said.

The Sun-Times, like many local papers, has been through uncertain times, with multiple owners in recent years. Its major competitor, the Chicago Tribune, owned by hedge fund Alden Golden Capital, has seen big cuts in staffing. One Reddit commenter wrote of the Sun-Times dropping its paywall: "Bye, Trib."

Chicago Public Media will now be one of the largest nonprofit news organizations in the country. And the Sun-Times example of memberships and foundation support, along with collaboration with a powerful radio station, could emerge as a model for other local newspapers that are floundering.

The shift to a membership model was one of the tenets mentioned in the original announcement of the Sun-Times' purchase.

"Community support, through both individual memberships and philanthropy, is essential for sustaining local journalism and has long been a cornerstone of public media," it said, noting that "WBEZ is more than 60 percent listener-supported."

As a nonprofit, the Sun-Times will adopt the membership model of its sister radio station and ask readers to donate \$5 a month, or \$60 a year, for unlimited access to its digital news. That will come with certain membership benefits, access to special events and thank-you gifts like mugs and umbrellas.

But the contribution is voluntary, and everyone will be able to read the digital product, while the printed paper will retain its subscription model.

In cutbacks around the country, some papers have reduced the number of days they deliver a tangible printed newspaper to subscribers' homes, citing the cost of presses, newsprint, delivery and ink.

They've asked readers to go online instead, a shift that not every reader wants to make.

While some publishers have gone so

far as to envision a future without any print newspapers, the Sun-Times is not one of them.

"We don't have any plans to stop printing," said LeCompte. "We have very engaged subscribers."

To that end, Chicago Public Media intends to hold listening sessions with readers and have reporters at the newspaper and the radio station collaborate while still reporting to their independent editors. CPM currently has about 18 positions open.

Questions for the future of news

The mash-up of a local newspaper and a public radio station is another attempt to get the business of journalism right after its interruption by the Internet and the advertisers' move to online platforms.

With those changes, hundreds of newspapers have died, leaving so-called 'news deserts' in some underserved areas. Without hometown papers covering local public affairs, democracy itself is endangered, scholars and publishers argue.

From late 2019 to the end of May 2022, more than 360 U.S. newspapers closed, according to a report by Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. Since 2005, the country has lost more than one-fourth of its newspapers and is on track to lose a third by 2025, the report by Medill's Local News Initiative found.

At the same time, many readers have turned to social media for "news" that is often found to be inaccurate and adds to a seeming torrent of misinformation.

Scholars and publishers have called the situation a 'crisis' and a 'threat to Democracy.' How can people make decisions about their government, they ask, if they don't have access to accurate information?

But good reporting is expensive. And many new models have been tried. Paywalls, like pop-up ads on news websites, aren't popular with many readers. And some who've studied newspaper profitability argue that they don't really help sustain news budgets.

Several large newspapers, like The New York Times, with 8.4 million online subscribers as of May 2022, are exceptions.

The ability to succeed behind a paywall is largely "a factor of reputation and quality," said Dr. Reo Song, associate professor of marketing at California State University at Long Beach.

Many papers offer digital news for minimal fees that they later increase, annoying and often losing readers. "For many small, local papers, a paywall is not successful," Song said.

Chicago is a big city, with scores of

monied foundations. But not every local newspaper in financial trouble is in a metropolis where so much money can be raised to sustain quality journalism.

Meanwhile, hundreds of nonprofit web sites have been founded in recent years to cover the local, state and national news in areas abandoned by newspapers. Most are not associated with television or radio nonprofits.

Among those digital nonprofits, there is still the issue of size and the ability to raise money from individuals and foundations. One 2019 study showed that of the \$469.5 million raised by foundations and donors between 2009 and 2015, three national nonprofits – ProPublica, the Center for Public Integrity and the Center for Investigative Reporting – took in 40 percent of that money.

In a larger context, hundreds of smaller nonprofits get by on a shoestring, according to Bill Birnbauer of Monash University in Australia, who authored the study.

Chicago itself is hardly a news desert. The Midwest office of ProPublica is there. Its current lead piece is an investigation into a troubled Chicago hospital. Chicago is also home to several innovative start-ups, such as City Bureau and Block Club Chicago, as well as niche newspapers serving its rich diversity of ethnic groups and neighborhoods.

He suggested at the time that "some news sites may have to merge with local public radio and television broadcasters or other nonprofits to improve their viability."

However, he wrote, "some may ultimately fold due to financial problems – no matter how well their work serves the public interest."

"We want Chicago area residents to feel the Sun-Times is theirs, and something they want to participate in and contribute to," new Sun-Times Executive Editor Jennifer Kho said in a statement. "Membership will give us another tool to deeply engage our community....Holding us accountable to our readers."



Beth Hundsdorfer, left, and Molly Parker, right, at radio interview about Choate.

Photo courtesy of Molly Parker

Reporters at different news outlets work collaboratively to expose disturbing conditions at Illinois mental health facility

By Beth Hundsdorfer and Molly Parker

As we scrolled through a 700-page police report into an abuse allegation at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center, a disturbing picture rolled onto the screen. It was of a young man with two blackened eyes and a bloodied lip, with a lost expression on his face. The photo was taken around Christmas in 2014, not long after he'd been held down by at least four employees and beaten, according to the police record. We had heard from sources that we had to see this picture. We were told that it illustrated the stark consequences of Choate's failures to protect patients from abuse at the hands of their caregivers.

Though we'd been warned it was a horrendous photo, we still found it

shocking. We'd both already spent months investigating Choate, a state-run residential center in southern Illinois for people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses. But seeing the photo of Blaine Reichard, then a 19-year-old patient, put a real face to the troubling conditions we'd been reading about in state government reports and court records. Blaine's story became the lead of the first article in our series about Choate that began in September.

In Blaine's case, four employees faced felony charges. Though, ultimately, three pleaded their charges to misdemeanors for failing to report the abuse, and the fourth received a reduced felony charge for obstruction of justice. None has been fired

and three of them continue to collect their state paychecks on paid administrative leave. (The Illinois Department of Human Services, which runs Choate, said it had to await the completion of the criminal cases against them to do its own internal review, which could result in disciplinary action up to termination; criminal proceedings concluded in December 2021.)

Though egregious, the abuse of patients did not end with Blaine's case. In reviewing Union County court records, we found that since his assault, more than two dozen state employees have been charged with felonies connected to their employment at the 270-bed facility that houses some of the most vulnerable people in the state. They've been accused of punching,



Photo courtesy of Whitney Curtis for ProPublica

choking, whipping, and raping residents with developmental disabilities, according to court records. A companion article detailed a long history of broken promises by IDHS to fix unsafe conditions cited by advocacy organizations and the U.S. Department of Justice.

In response to the stories, Gov. J.B. Pritzker called the abuses “awful” and said that a failure to put an end to patient mistreatment could result in the facility’s closure. Following his comments, in October, we published a story about a culture of coverups at Choate – including instances of employees who had lied or refused to cooperate in investigations – which may be a roadblock to reforming the institution. (In various statements responding to our questions, IDHS acknowledged the problematic conditions at Choate that have been ongoing. The agency said they are the result of “longstanding, entrenched issues dating back decades” and that the current administration has taken “aggressive measures over the past several years to unravel them.”)

One unique aspect of this reporting is that it involves three newsrooms. Beth is a reporter for Capitol News Illinois, a nonprofit focused on state government and politics; Molly is a reporter with the Lee Enterprises’ Midwest Public Service Team, a new initiative focused on community service and investigative journalism. Our partnership also includes ProPublica, a nonprofit newsroom based in New York, which brings expertise in editing, storytelling and data analysis, where Molly has a three-year fellowship in its Local Reporting Network program.

Prior to coming together, we (Beth and Molly) and our respective newsrooms had separately covered breaking news out of Choate in recent years. Since 2020, a dozen employees have been arrested, including three administrators who were accused of interfering with a state police investigation. (The charges against the three administrators have since been dropped.) Independent of one another, we each became acutely aware that Choate was a place in need of more attention.

As we began our individual reporting, we were speaking with some of the same sources, who would mention to us that they had also spoken to the other. That prompted a phone call and a conversation: Should we work together? Bringing our newsrooms’ collective resources to bear has allowed us to share our findings and ideas. Prior to our current roles, Beth worked at the the Belleville News-Democrat for 20 years, where she produced investigations on state government failures to protect vulnerable populations including children, sexual assault survivors and people with severe disabilities; Molly was a reporter for The Southern Illinoisian for seven years, where she investigated failures in public housing and in the child welfare system.

Choate is in our backyards, and we setsat out to talk with people about their experiences with the facility. But we faced complications in reporting this story. Choate is so integral to the region’s rural economy that some people are hesitant to talk about what’s going on inside. They fear negative news will result in its closure. Choate is located on the outskirts of the small town of Anna, which sits about 20

miles south of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and about 120 miles southeast of St. Louis.

For almost as long as Anna has existed, it’s been home to Choate. The town was founded in 1854. Fifteen years later, the state chartered the facility, which has been renamed several times. Its current namesake is the late Clyde L. Choate, a decorated World War II veteran of Anna who served for years in the Illinois House’s leadership.

It’s been Union County’s largest employer for decades, and generations of Southern Illinoisans have raised their families on the decent state wages and benefits Choate jobs pay. Community members have driven through the tree-lined streets on the sprawling campus to enjoy the Halloween and Christmas decorations over the years.

As we interviewed local sources, we heard time and again that it was important to the community that the facility stay open. They worried that people wouldn’t be able to find work without it. Parents whose adult children reside there also expressed fear that their loved ones would end up in a worse situation. But this was another area where working together served us well. We both tapped into our extensive network of sources in the region and were able to find people who prioritized the exposure of wrongdoing and other failures over closure concerns, in hopes that it would lead to better patient protection. It was not lost on us that those sources risked their livelihoods, reputations and standing to talk to us.

Continued on next page



Photo courtesy of Whitney Curtis for ProPublica



Photo courtesy of Whitney Curtis for ProPublica

Here's a little from both of us, in our own words, about how we went about this project, and what we learned along the way:

When did we know we had a story?

Beth: I think when I talked to Blaine Reichard's mother and heard about their struggles with his autism, from his education in his childhood to his run-ins with the law. She also told me how vulnerable Blaine was, how much she loved him and how powerless she was to protect him. He didn't want to be in Choate, but he had exhausted his options and fell prey to those who were paid to care for him. He became more than a picture, then. He was a real person with simple dreams of getting a girlfriend, petting his dog, and having a daughter.

How did we go about reporting the series?

Molly: Between us, we filed more than 50 public records requests over the course of a year. We filed requests to IDHS, the state police, the Illinois Department of Public Health and to Union County, where the facility is located. Additionally, we spent hours together, and separately, combing through court records and attending the court hearings of accused employees. We did this because we thought it was important to establish that Blaine's case, while egregious, was part of a larger pattern of abuse of patients by caregivers at the facility. We found numerous instances of patient abuses and a lack of significant consequences for employees facing serious accusations.

What have we found the most surprising?

Beth: The length of time it has taken for employees to be disciplined for abusing patients. In Blaine's case, it has taken years

for these four accused employees to be disciplined by IDHS. I was shocked that three of them collectively received more than \$1 million in pay, plus benefits, since the incident, while they've mostly been on paid administrative leave. Although all of them were convicted of crimes connected to Blaine's beating, to this day, none has been fired.

Molly: For me, it is how often IDHS' Office of the Inspector General is unable to make a determination in an abuse or neglect investigation. Only a small number of cases are substantiated, meaning there was enough credible evidence to find the allegation true, or unfounded, meaning that it was ruled out. But in many other cases, the OIG could not make a call and it ended up in a third category – unsubstantiated. In numerous such cases, the OIG called for the installation of cameras to help prove or disprove claims, or cited employees for lying, the late reporting of allegations or other investigatory missteps that impeded their review.

What are you hearing from residents and their guardians and advocates in response to the stories?

Molly: We've spent hours talking with residents and the folks who care about them throughout the course of this story. There's not one unified response. One former resident that I speak with frequently feels very strongly that the center should be shut down. The parent of another resident told me that she's troubled by some of the issues at Choate – her own son's ribs were broken by an employee later convicted of misdemeanor battery. But she stressed that there are more good employees at Choate than bad ones, and also worries that its closure would place people like her son

in a worse position. She doesn't feel like small group homes can give her son the structured care that he needs. Two of the chief advocacy organizations for people with disabilities in Illinois – Equip for Equality and The Arc of Illinois – have both expressed their desire to see Choate closed and the money used to run it reinvested into community-based programs.

Beth: It's very overwhelming, the struggles these families go through. Most have tried to care for their loved ones with disabilities or mental illness until they have exhausted their abilities and resources. Advocates note that quality programming is key to improvement for these patients. They, and their caregivers in the community, need tools to manage their maladaptive behaviors so that they might be able to live independently or return home. It's heartbreaking that these families would have to sacrifice any part of their loved one's safety in exchange for care.

What's next for the series?

Beth: We have several stories in the works and we will follow where the story takes us. We will continue to keep our ears to the ground and our eyes open.

Molly: We'd love the public's help in continuing to follow these issues at Choate and at any of the other state-run facilities in Illinois for people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses. Please let us know if you are a current or former resident, employee, guardian or advocate and have experiences you'd like to share. We can be reached at molly.parker@lee.net and bhundsorfer@capitolnewsillinois.com.

News outlets struggle to cover environmental policy that impact communities of color

By Clarissa Cowley

Residents of two predominantly Latino neighborhoods in Chicago faced years of poor air quality living near a coal-treating plant. But it wasn't until the plant was demolished, sending a plume of dust into the air and finally bringing attention to its environmental impact, that news outlets took notice.

The plume was easy to cover. It had visuals made-for-TV and residents distressed about the impact on their health.

But in this case and others like it, including a wood-treating plant in southern Illinois, news outlets struggle to cover the environmental racism behind policies that have allowed industries to operate—often with little oversight, in communities of color.

In April 2020, when construction crews for Hilco Redevelopment Partners began to tear down the Crawford Generating Station in Chicago, they created a massive cloud of dust over the neighborhoods and on residences less than 50 feet away.

"That made a lot of news," said William Bike, the editor of the Gazette-Chicago, a monthly community newspaper. "Pilsen and Little Village completely flipped and started being opposed to plants," Bike said.

Residents told WGN-TV that their health was harmed by toxic dust permeating their community.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot issued a stop-work order, halting the demolition.

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul filed a suit against Hilco and its demolition contractors Management Corporation and Controlled Demolition Inc. for violating state pollution laws.

The coal plant was built in 1924 and permanently closed in 2012 because Midwest Generation's owners disagreed with the financial burden of complying with air standards and would rather shut down.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, minority, low-income, and indigenous populations frequently bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm and adverse health outcomes while living near power plants that cause air pollution.

The health effects of air pollution include the development of heart or lung diseases, such as asthma and bronchitis, according to the USEPA. Also, increased susceptibility to respiratory cardiac symptoms and premature deaths can occur.

None of this was news to the people



Photo by Eric Allix Rogers via Flickr

who lived near the Chicago plant.

According to an analysis by the Chicago Reporter in 2008, public health data showed people living closer to the power plant had higher death rates because of lung and heart disease.

The western Chicago neighborhoods also had higher hospitalization rates for asthma or bronchitis than other parts of the city.

The Crawford power station and another, Fisk Generating plant, another coal-fired electric station, both primarily impacted communities of Color, said Bike, of the Gazette-Chicago, which covered both stories.

Out of the six operational coal-burning plants in the Chicago area in the early-2000s, Fisk and Crawford were five miles apart.

The Fisk station went into service in Pilsen in 1903, closing in 2012 after air pollution disasters.

Industrial plants and where people live
Leslie Duram, professor of geography in the School of Earth Systems and Sustainability and director of the Environmental Studies minor at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, said how you think about environmental geography is an excellent way to think about environmental racism.

Duram said this comparison works because geographers deal so much with the place and people.

A question such as why one neighborhood is impacted more than another neighborhood by an environmental hazard suggests a place issue, Duram said.

Environmental racism is closely linked because it deals with the interface between people and the environment, Duram said.

"Whether it's waste management or toxic spills... we're finding that Black and brown communities are impacted more heavily," Duram said.

According the landmark Toxic Wastes and Race report by the United Church of Christ, industrial companies that mishandled toxic waste and potential pathways for contaminants to pollute the environment or pose an exposure risk to the community is a significant issue facing communities of color compared to other demographics.

"If you look at the demographics and you look at the people and the environment... you're going to see that overlap where lower income and minority communities are closer to these environmental degradation sites," Duram said.

Duram said whether the industry

Continued on next page

entered the environment before or after the residents is such a difficult question.

"I think throughout time you can say that lower income, poorer people were always next to those environmentally degraded areas," Duram said.

"There are poor people who are going to be living in the dumps," Duram said.

Duram said she thinks that this reality has intensified through time due to specific demographic groups' lack of financial ability to leave these areas.

This seemingly is a structural aspect to this issue, Duram said.

"Rich people who have power want to stay and become more rich or stay and become more powerful," Duram said.

"That always is going to harm people who have less power and less money," Duram said.

Duram said there is a correlation between basic geography and the mobility aspect of who can move in and out of polluted communities.

"There's not a lot of options for lower income people," Duram said.

Mainstream v. grassroots journalism

Whether or not these issues involve minority communities mainly being impacted by industrial hazards due to geographical and economic reasons, Duram said she does not mean to be harsh.

Duram said it feels to her that most mainstream news in America does not address environmental injustice very much at all.

"Mainstream news may have a very short news cycle...oh, there's breaking news about toxic waste and then it's over and we don't talk about it, the aftermath, or any health issues after the fact," Duram said.

Duram said the rare long-term, consistent view of environmental news in the mainstream press is depressing because what mainstream does do is a fast pass over, do one story, and that is it.

Duram asked, why don't we report more on the environment?

Duram said our lives depend on it, and it matters that we have clean water, air, and food that we can eat daily.

"The news should cover those types of stories to keep us up to date on what's going on, even local environmental issues," Duram said.

Bike said environmental issues might get some coverage by the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Tribune, and television stations, but nobody covers it and neighborhood papers.

The stories featured in the Gazette are pretty significant, and that is something mainstream media may not have time to cover in-depth, Bike said.

"Our reporters have time to really delve into issues and really write about the complicated things and these pollution

stories are pretty complex," Bike said.

Bike said if you look at the Sun-Times or the Tribune, their stories are pretty short. The same thing with television.

"You're talking about a feature on the news that's a few seconds long," Bike said.

Bike said he thinks local press such as the Block Club Chicago can do a better job because it can delve into the issue and devote space.

Bike also said community groups have statistical information about the prevalence of diseases near the power plant beneficial for the local press because of close community-newspaper relationships that mainstream newspapers may not have.

"We've got relationships with the local community groups," Bike said. "It's not really that interesting for the mainstream media to cover, but it is for us."

Andrea Firestone, broadcast content manager for KSDK, an NBC-news affiliate located in St. Louis, Missouri, said it is hard to put a number on how often her station covers an environmental issue.

"If there's a tip or an idea about an environmental issue, we cover it...but, I'm not sure if it's daily, weekly, or even monthly," Firestone said.

Firestone said she thinks it depends on the day's news and what is happening.

It does not need to be a disaster, Firestone said.

Usually, the environmental stories the station covers on the local level are pollution or problems. The national news the station covers is more climate change and global warming.

"Weather is probably our number one priority to inform and keep our viewers safe when it comes to weather that is threatening their lives," Firestone said.

"We will absolutely cover an environmental issue in a community that impacts people," Firestone said.

Firestone said the station tries to keep their target audience in mind, usually the striving, working-class.

The striving, working-class is individuals making great efforts to achieve or obtain something in the labor force who do not have bachelor's degrees, including high school dropouts, high school graduates, people with some college, and associate's degree-holders.

Firestone said her station's veteran reporters have sources all over St. Louis, including the city, Metro-East, East St. Louis, north and south St. Louis county, and affluent, striving, working-class areas.

"We really strive to reach every group of the community," Firestone said. "What's happening in our local area is what we're giving the most air-time."

Sometimes environmental stories, you have to get a response from the government, investigate what the people

in the community are saying, talk to a scientist or professor who is an expert on the issue to get the whole story, Firestone said.

Firestone said these stories are not something you can turn in a day on deadline.

Firestone said that anytime the station is doing a story on an environmental issue, the reporters seek university science expertise such as Washington University in St. Louis, University of Missouri St. Louis, and sometimes SIU Edwardsville.

Firestone said the reporters at her station usually could not get officials over the phone who work at federal agencies such as the EPA for interviews.

"Most of them have a spokesperson in the office of communications where you call them and they call you back or send an email," Firestone said. "Most of the time, they'll give you a statement."

If the station is covering a developing story that made national headlines, sometimes a government official or their spokesperson will be in town, and the station can get an interview with them.

Firestone said she thinks her reporters have to be persistent when gaining information from public or government sources on an environmental story.

"If it's earlier in the day and they're usually these government workers who are out the door by five o'clock...you have to call first thing and be very persistent in order to get a response from them," Firestone said.

Firestone said she thinks that elected officials who represent their communities, such as aldermen, mayors, council members, state senators, and representatives, are willing to talk about environmental issues affecting their constituents.

"Usually, there's a state representative or U.S. senator that leads the effort to change on an environmental issue and they become the point person," Firestone said.

Government deters journalists

Amelia Blakely, a reporter for the Southern Illinoisian and former journalism student at SIUC, said there seems like a gap in public information.

Blakely said that the gap is where an environmental issue will occur, and the media will wait before it becomes news because work has to be done on the government level.

Blakely said she worked for Illinois senator Tammy Duckworth, so she understands what has happened in local or state government.

According to a press release, Duckworth helped introduce the Environmental Justice for Communities Act to support communities experiencing environmental injustices, which the deadly COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated.

Duckworth also recently introduced the Environmental Justice for All Act, sweeping legislation that would help achieve health equity and climate justice for all, particularly underserved communities and communities of color that have long been disproportionately harmed by environmental injustices and toxic pollutants, press release.

Around this time last year, Duckworth helped announce the introduction of legislation that would create and authorize funding for a system to comprehensively identify the demographic factors, environmental burdens, socioeconomic conditions, and public health concerns related to environmental justice and collect high-quality data.

(Duckworth's advocacy - along with that of Rep. Cori Bush of St. Louis and Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass. - led to passage this summer of the Environmental Justice Mapping and Data Collection Act. The law was included in the omnibus Inflation Reduction Act passed in Congress in August.) "Officials are aware of these issues fairly quickly, but they won't make it public knowledge until they know the steps they are going to take," Blakely said.

Blakely said she understands that from a local government perspective because you want to have a game-plan or approach before letting things become public knowledge.

However, it hinders the reporting process for journalists, Blakely said.

"I might get a tip from somebody, but then I won't really be able to go investigate yet because I'm just going to be stonewalled," Blakely said.

"I'm not going to get information until after everything is said and done," Blakely said.

Blakely also said that makes it difficult because reporters only have a certain amount of time to follow a lead on a story.

"It's very difficult when you have people on the inside trying to clean things up or trying to do good work, but there's no communication and bridges in my position," Blakely said.

There might be journalists who have had relationships with government entities such as the USEPA, local city hall, or regional EPA offices for years, but from Blakely's experience as a young reporter, that is not what she is used to.

"I think these experiences deter a lot of journalists because it makes you not even want to talk to them because you don't have faith that you're going to have a good conversation," Blakely said.

Blakely said she really can not trust the USEPA and does not think many people in public can.

"Out of all the government agencies, you want to trust them because they're in

charge of the environmental health," Blakely said. "You can't."

The aura, the energy, and the vibes that the USEPA officials give off, especially those in charge of communicating with the public, feel like you are not welcomed.

"I don't want to waste my time if you're going to lie to me and I don't want to perpetuate the lies," Blakely said.

Blakely said other well-intentioned journalists, whether white or not, who have a naive perception of the government and think they are supposed to help the American people are shattered.

"Whenever I'm speaking to someone at the USEPA, I see them as a human... as someone that might be a really good person, but where they're employed, they're having to work towards a certain goal and our goals are not the same," Blakely said.

Blakely said she thinks gaining comment from federal agencies for an environmental piece is difficult because good things such as teamwork and cooperation are hard to get out of.

"We're serving different people with different agendas and goals," Blakely said.

Blakely said that the American story is the people working at these agencies, trying to serve a purpose, yet their bosses may have different agendas.

"You have people at the bottom level who want to do the work, but it seems like good people don't always necessarily get promoted," Blakely said.

Blakely also said the people who get to call the shots may be less qualified or have not as good intentions.

"That's a very tough and unique circumstance, but that situation is inherently unequal," Blakely said.

This internal problem within journalism and federal agencies translate into pollution and toxicity impacting communities of color, making it hard to legitimize those stories.

"Unfortunately, communities of color aren't believed," Blakely said.

Blakely asked she could get why, but how?

Whenever you listen to people's stories and drop all the biases or reliance on how the government is always right, it is tough not to believe them.

"If you don't have the government's backing, people in more affluent places or don't have experience with contamination may be looking down on them, even though they don't realize they are," Blakely said.

If the government is not saying yes, this is true, or yes, we are helping you, then the people facing pollution are not believed.

"If we trace this problem to the people who have power and the people who don't have power for whatever reason...whether it's class or it's social...you start to have this imbalance between who's believed and

legitimized versus who isn't," Blakely said.

The U.S. has historically pushed people out who are minority or poor and forget about them on the outskirts and not centered in society.

Blakely said stories of environmental racism are newsworthy because journalists will perpetuate the same types of practices if they continue to put people of color on the outskirts of things and not center their concerns, experiences, and quality of living.

Journalists have to use principles to decide what is a story or not, Blakely said. What that means is that journalists have to be active for democracy.

"With environmental racism, we have to be guided by our principles to decide what's newsworthy and what's not newsworthy," Blakely said.

The Pilsen and Little Village communities impacted by the Crawford Station demolition are under Region V of the USEPA, overseeing corrective actions for Superfund sites.

This region also regulates the former Koppers wood-treating plant in Carbondale, Illinois, near a Black community facing decades of environmental pollution.

News outlets also failed to report in detail on that story.

Publisher's note: In 1981 two cows grazing on the Smith farm near the Koppers Inc. tie plant in Carbondale in southern Illinois died from exposure to creosote, a toxic chemical used to protect railroad ties from the weather. A predominantly Black community nearby had close contact with water and soil contaminated by creosote. Eight of 11 children in the Tisdale family, which lived right next to the plant, have died of cancer since then. But the government did little to investigate the health effects on residents and media coverage was spotty.

About the same time that the cows were dying in Carbondale, the CDC discovered horses dying in Missouri horse arenas where Russell Bliss had spread dioxin-contaminated oil on dirt to keep down the dust. One entire town, Times Beach, has its roads covered with the toxic oil. The response was national, thanks in large part to the media spotlight from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and national news organizations. The dioxin problem came to symbolize the Reagan administration's weak handling of environmental problems and toxic waste. CDC recommended buying out Times Beach, which it did. Anne Gorsuch had to quit as director of EPA because of her mishandling of this and other pollution problems. Her top official for toxic waste, Rita Lavelle, went to prison for lying to Congress about her misuse of Superfund money.

The Post-Dispatch published a special section - Dioxin Quandary of the 80s. The government dug up the contaminated soil and incinerated it.

But nothing like that government response came to Carbondale. It took until June, 2022 - this past summer - for CDC to open an investigation of the cancer cluster in the Tisdale family. Experts from nearby SIUC argue that the government should have been much more aggressive digging up the soil and studying health effects on citizens.

Relatives blame prolonged exposure at wood-treatment facility for Carbondale family's cancers

By Clarissa Cowley



All these members of the Tisdale family contracted cancer and all but one died of cancer.

Photo courtesy of Tisdale family

On the verge of the Great Depression, Fredrick Tisdale, one of the only black farmers in Carbondale, moved north of the former Koppers Inc. wood-treating plant to start a family and plant roots in the town.

Tisdale built a house very close to the plant, originally called Tie Addition and named after its former owners Ayer and Lord. Fifty years later, cows began dying on a nearby farm. Eight out of his 11 children eventually contracted some form of cancer.

Finally, this past winter, after decades of pleas for help, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention informed grandson Darryl Tisdale that it would investigate any links between the creosote pollution from the plant and the Tisdales' cancers.

In a June letter, CDC said Illinois health officials "will evaluate possible exposures

to environmental contaminants and the potential for harmful health effects for the community near the Former Koppers Wood Treatment facility. The findings of the public health evaluation will be documented in a written report called a Health Consultation, along with recommendations for further actions, if warranted, to protect public health."

Magdalene Tisdale-Davis, one of six daughters born to Tisdale and his wife Ethel Lee, said she grew up so close to the plant that her birth certificate recorded the Tie Addition plant, as her birthplace because her father's house had no physical address in 1930.

Davis, a retired school psychologist living in Atlanta, Georgia, said she remembers her family playing, raising and eating crops

such as sweet potatoes, corn, soybeans, and strawberries on their farm next to the plant.

"I remember my father being the largest sweet potato producer there in [Carbondale] Illinois," Davis said.

Davis said she and her siblings played in a pond or lagoon bordering the plant, between the home, farm, and the plant.

Davis said when she and her siblings were playing one day while bringing back their family's cattle from drinking at the pond, one of her youngest sisters, Eva Tidwell, fell into a big tub of creosote sitting alongside the plant fence separating the industrial site from her family's property.

Davis said after the horrific accident, Eva could not participate in any sports or the school band because of persistent lung issues caused by being exposed to the creosote.

According to the CDC, creosote can cause cancer and respiratory issues. It has an amber to black color typically used as a pesticide to treat and preserve wood products.

After Eva's exposure to the chemical, Davis said she could not play the clarinet because of a diagnosis with black lung disease attributed to creosote contamination.

According to John Hopkins Medicine, headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, creosote can cause pneumoconiosis when the lungs cannot get rid of the substance, causing inflammation leading to scar tissue in the lung.

Following the incident and lung affliction, Eva bore a son, James Shelton. Shelton was raised at the Tisdale home and farm permanently as his mother lived there since she was born.

Shelton displayed disabilities present at

birth that the family attributes to his mother's exposure to creosote which hindered Shelton's mobility, communication, and writing.

Over the years, Shelton had struggled with his condition and was hospitalized most of his life until he died in 2010, Davis said.

Eva continued fighting her lung disease but as time went on she developed aggressive breast cancer. This diagnosis drove her to receive cancer treatment and genetic testing at the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, Arizona, to investigate whether her cancer was caused by her childhood environment or family genes.

The tests revealed that Eva's cancer was not due to hereditary reasons but to environmental causes.

According to the investigation done by the clinic, Eva's genes did not show any evidence that she was predisposed to the disease, although predispositions can not entirely be ruled out and more genetic testing should be done.

Eva died in 2019 from her cancer.

Davis said because of Eva's death and the prevalence of cancer in her other siblings she thinks emissions originating from the Koppers plant over a long period of time throughout the years caused a cancer cluster in her family.

Davis said she and her siblings had sustainable, significant health problems resulting from environmental pollution of the pond the family played in, the soil her family planted and ate from, and the water the family drank from their residential well everyday unaware of creosote in it.

Davis said she remembers her sister Florence went to Barnes Hospital in St. Louis for cervical or ovarian cancer treatment but died in 1954. Florence bore a daughter named Ida Rabon who developed lung cancer and died in 2011.

Tisdale-Davis said her sister Martha was treated at Kaiser Sunset in Los Angeles, CA., for breast cancer, later dying in 1982.

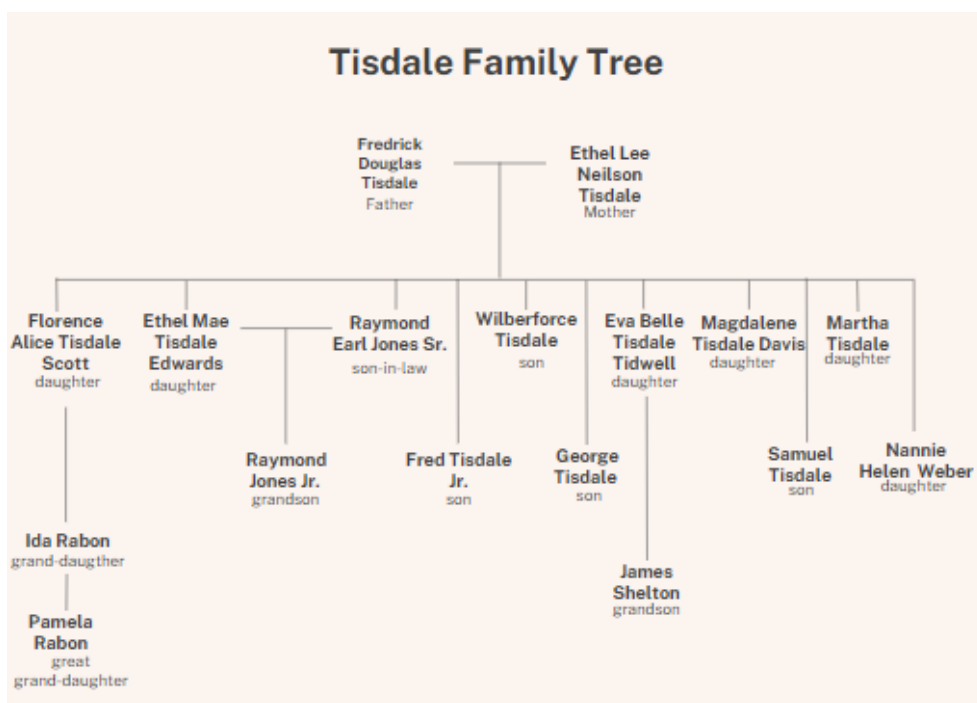
Nannie Weber, a sister of Davis, received treatment at Methodist Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, for breast cancer and had a mastectomy. However, cancer spread to her bones, causing her death in 2002.

Ms. Weber bore a son named Darryl Weber who said he believes his mother's cancer is attributed to exposure from living next to the plant over the years.

A brother of Davis, Wilberforce Tisdale, was diagnosed with prostate cancer and died 1997 after receiving treatment at Kaiser Hospital in LA.

Ethel Mae, named after the family's mother, sought treatment at Mercy Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, after fighting a 16-pound tumor in her stomach, later dying in 1999 eight years after the close of the Koppers plant.

Koppers was forced to close after



contamination was found off plant site property in Glade creek, allegedly killing fish and two cows. The autopsy of the cow concluded that creosote was in the stomach of the livestock resulting in their deaths.

Davis said Russell Smith Sr. and Russell Smith Jr. owned the cows at the Smith farm located north of the plant and received a paid settlement.

Davis also said the land on the Smith farm was originally owned by her father, Tisdale who sold the land to a third-party, and who sold the land to the Smith's.

The Smiths did not want to provide comment for this story nor did the city of Carbondale have any record of paid compensation toward the Smith farm.

The only survivor

Davis said she was tired with pain and soreness on her right breast one day.

Davis said she originally received treatment at the John Wayne Cancer clinic in Santa Monica, California.

"There was a little growth at the size of about a pea and I went to the doctor, and they did not think it was anything," Davis said.

Tisdale-Davis said she reported the size of the lump to her son, who was in Georgetown medical school, and he provided her with the information she believes saved her life.

She received further breast cancer treatment at the University of California Los Angeles with an oncologist, a doctor who studies cancer.

Davis said the oncologist aspirated the growth, which is the use of a fine needle aspiration to test for breast cancer and found the disease.

"I ended up having a lumpectomy,

radiation, chemotherapy, and followed some of the best cancer people," Davis said.

Davis said she is the only cancer survivor in her family and believes most of her siblings died from cancer after being exposed to the chemical contamination.

Davis said she thinks the contact her family had with soil on the family farm, emissions from the facility, and water in the residential well and the local pond exposed them to creosote and caused their cancer.

Davis said many people lived in Carbondale throughout the years as her family did, moved to different cities and died from cancer in other parts of the country.

"I can only tell you about our family...I can't tell you about all the other people who went to school with me that died of cancer," Davis said.

"I just know that they did," Davis said.

Davis and Mr. Weber said that their family should receive compensation for the deaths of their relatives and other families who experienced the disease while living near the plant should also.

Some residents currently living near the former plant think what is happening involving the handling of Koppers contamination is environmental racism.

Escaping one type of racism for another

Davis's parents relocated to Carbondale to get away from harm after losing everything during the Tulsa riots near Boley, Oklahoma.

The demolition of the Tisdale house happened long ago, but the family still owns the land to this day.

The family's children produced 34 grandchildren who were not diagnosed with cancer.

Reporter not required to testify in R. Kelly trial even without federal shield law in place

By Bob Chiarito

Although reporter Jim DeRogatis could have been forced to testify in the recent R. Kelly trial in Chicago, a federal judge declined to make him, deciding that defense attorneys for the chart-topping R&B singer had not made their case.

It was a surprise—and a relief—for DeRogatis, who broke the R. Kelly sexual-abuse story in 2000 and has reported on it for the Chicago Sun-Times, BuzzFeed and The New Yorker for more than two decades.

There are no shield laws for reporters in federal cases, which means U.S. District Judge Harry Leinenweber could have forced DeRogatis to testify and potentially reveal his anonymous sources.

Kelly faced 13 counts including production child pornography, enticing minors to engage in sexual acts, and conspiring to defraud the United States by rigging his 2008 trial that resulted in an acquittal. On Sept. 14, he was found guilty of six counts that had to do with producing child pornography and enticing minors to engage in sexual acts and found not guilty of the seven remaining charges which included the conspiracy charge. Co-defendants Milton Brown and Derrel McDavid were found not guilty of all charges against them.

DeRogatis' first story about the allegations against R. Kelly, co-authored with reporter Abdon Pallasch, ran in the Chicago Sun-Times on Dec. 21, 2000, and DeRogatis remained one of the few reporters who stayed on the story, even after Kelly's 2008 trial. Along the way, he earned the trust of more than four dozen women who say they were victimized by the former superstar.

The subpoena DeRogatis received from the attorneys for Kelly's former business manager Derrel McDavid, who was on trial with Kelly for allegedly conspiring to hide his crimes, was alarming to him because he feared he would have to betray the trust of several of the abuse survivors and name names or risk being imprisoned himself.

Reporters are protected by shield laws or reporter privilege statutes on a state level in 48 states, plus the District of Columbia. But there is no such protection on the federal level. On the state level, only Wyoming does not have a shield law or recognize reporter's privilege. Shield laws for reporters allow them to invoke their right to not reveal confidential information such as sources and where information was obtained, much the same way doctors and

therapists have privilege when it comes to testifying about patients and lawyers have attorney/client privilege.

Outside the courtroom, minutes after he was excused from testifying, DeRogatis characterized Leinenweber's decision as a victory for the press.

"I'm pleasantly surprised and I'm glad," DeRogatis said. "Reporters will be able to continue working on complicated stories without this layer of fear that they will be dragged into court," DeRogatis said.

On Sept. 6 before the jury entered the courtroom at the Everett M. Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in downtown Chicago, McDavid's attorney Beau Brindley addressed DeRogatis's motion to quash his subpoena, saying that they were not interested in asking him about his sources or the information they provided him. Rather, they said they planned to ask if the videotape that the Chicago Sun-Times editors turned over to the Chicago Police Detective Dan Everett in 2001 was the same physical tape that is currently in evidence in the ongoing trial. Brindley said he was planning on showing DeRogatis the physical tape to either confirm or refute that it was the same tape. Additionally, Kelly attorney Jennifer Bonjean said she intended to have DeRogatis confirm that he began reporting on the Kelly allegations before he received any videotapes.

DeRogatis, who appeared in court the next morning wearing a short sleeve, black Bermuda shirt and black trousers, stayed silent while his attorney Seth Stern made an argument in support of his motion that his client should not have to testify. Stern told Leinenweber that both issues could have been resolved by an affidavit instead of testimony and that it was well known through DeRogatis's reporting that he received an unmarked videotape in 2001 and that he had begun reporting on the allegations against Kelly the year before.

Abdon Pallasch, the former reporter who shared bylines with DeRogatis on many of Kelly stories while both worked at The Chicago Sun-Times, was in the courtroom gallery to support his former colleague. After the hearing, he said he was happy with Leinenweber's decision.

"The judge called it right. Either one of those issues could have been handled by stipulation," Pallasch said. "It's a victory for the First Amendment."

Had Leinenweber denied the motion from DeRogatis, it would not have been the

first time he's had to testify.

In 2008, when Kelly was on trial in Cook County, Illinois, for 14 counts of child pornography, (he was acquitted in that trial), DeRogatis had to testify but because it was a state trial, he was allowed to invoke shield laws and did — citing both the 1st and 5th amendments. Additionally, despite the common misconception that DeRogatis testified in open court, he actually testified in a closed hearing absent of the jury at the 2008 trial, according to Damon Dunn, an attorney who has served as outside counsel to the Chicago Sun-Times since the early 1980s and is currently advising DeRogatis.

DeRogatis said he invoked the First Amendment to cite free speech rights as a reporter and the Fifth Amendment to protect his right against self incrimination at the 2008 trial after viewing two videotapes that he received anonymously that contained footage of Kelly having sexual relations with what appeared to be underage girls. DeRogatis has long maintained that he viewed the videos because he did not know what they contained when he received them and proceeded to copy one of them before turning it over to police because his paper needed to report on it and verify its content. On Aug. 26, in his first piece for the Chicago Sun-Times since leaving the paper 12 years ago, DeRogatis wrote about the origins of the story and how he received two videotapes not long after first being tipped to Kelly's alleged behavior by a random fax on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving of 2000.

In an interview before the motion was decided on, Dunn said he could see no valid reason for McDavid's attorneys to have DeRogatis testify, noting that in the 2008 trial, the victim at the center of the trial did not testify and prosecutors were seeking all the help they could get. Kelly was ultimately acquitted in that trial but among his current charges are conspiracy to defraud the United States by which prosecutors say Kelly, McDavid and a third codefendant, Milton Brown, conspired to cover up evidence and intimidate the victim and her family at the center of the charges in 2008.

"The first time they didn't have Jane. Now, there's not much reason to call a reporter," Dunn said.

Kevin Goldberg, a First Amendment Specialist with the Freedom Forum, said subpoenas to reporters are "often fishing expeditions that waste everybody's time."



Photo courtesy of Robert Chiarito

He added that while he doesn't support the use of confidential sources as a rule, their use is important in stories of a touchy nature, especially stories about alleged sexual contact with minors.

"If a journalist cannot use a confidential source on a very important story, it's the public that loses out, not the journalist," Goldberg said.

McDavid's attorneys may not agree with Dunn and Goldberg, however. Two weeks before Kelly's trial began, attorneys for McDavid filed a six-page motion that alleged the former lead prosecutor on the current case engaged in "surreptitious" communications with DeRogatis. In the motion, McDavid attorneys Beau Brindley and Vadim Glozman alleged that Assistant U.S. Attorney Angel Krull used a private email account and fake name to engage in "surreptitious" communications with DeRogatis in April 2019. DeRogatis told GJR that he has never shared anything with prosecutors that hasn't been published.

In response to the motion, Federal prosecutors acknowledged that a private email account using a fake name was created by Krull to obtain an advance copy of DeRogatis's 2019 book about Kelly, but they said that "none of the emails exchanged using the account were in any way deceptive."

Krull has since left the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago to care for a family member with cancer and is currently based in the U.S. attorney's office in Connecticut, prosecutors told the court.

As for shield laws on the federal level, multiple efforts since the 1970s have failed, but a current proposal called the Protect Reporters from Exploitive State Spying Act passed the House Judiciary Committee unanimously on April 6. It now must pass the full House before moving to the Senate. However, if passed, it would not protect someone like DeRogatis because he was subpoenaed by defense attorneys in the current Kelly case. The proposed PRESS

Act only addresses subpoenas from the government, according to Trevor Timm, executive director of the Freedom of Press Foundation.

"If the subpoena is from the defense or if it's in a civil trial, the law wouldn't apply. There needs to be a separate law to address private parties subpoenaing journalists."

As for the chances of the PRESS Act passing in both houses of Congress, Goldberg said he's "realistically pessimistic and cautiously optimistic."

"The climate is favorable but it's reached the precipice many times and always dies in the senate," Goldberg said, noting that if the act isn't enacted by the end of the current congressional term it will have to be reintroduced again.



Shrubshell photographed McElroy's bullet-riddled Silverado with window glass shattered and blood staining the cab's bench seat.

Don Shrubshell for the Columbia Daily Tribune

Hall of Fame photojournalist loses job at Columbia Daily Tribune in latest round of Gannett layoffs

By Terry Ganey

Donald Edward Shrubshell never married. Perhaps the constant squawking of police scanners in his car and home had something to do with it.

For all of his working life until just recently, Shrubshell was a newspaper photographer. In August he reached the pinnacle of his career, learning he would be inducted into the Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame.

Just days later, in a bitter ironic twist, he was told during a video call that he was being laid off from his job as the lone, fulltime news photographer at the Columbia Daily Tribune.

Describing the conversation he had with a Des Moines-based Gannett human resources person, Shrubshell said he was

told, "This isn't anything that you've done wrong. This just all has to do with, you know, the financial situation."

It was not a total surprise. In early August, Gannett reported second quarter results showing a loss of \$54 million. Layoffs were coming at USA Today and at 200 of Gannett's regional daily newspapers that included the Tribune.

Beginning on Aug. 12, Gannett began telling roughly 400 employees including Shrubshell they no longer had jobs. Gannett also informed its staff that an additional 400 vacant positions will go unfilled.

Shrubshell, who will turn 67 in November, received a nine-page severance letter that said he'd receive his salary for

the next six months. He believes those who told him he was out of a job knew about his forthcoming photojournalism honor.

Scott Swafford, a former assistant city editor at the Tribune, nominated Shrubshell for the Hall of Fame in April. He said he had been trying to get Shrubshell to go along with the idea for the past three or four years. He deserved to be inducted, Swafford said, because of his longevity (41 years), diligence and "intense curiosity."

"You can't teach that; you have to have it," said Swafford, a former professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. The selection committee's approval of the nomination was unanimous.

Swafford said it was "preposterous" that a newspaper would lay off one of the



Brian Kratzer, an MU journalism professor, holds up t-shirt "Free Don Shrubshell" at the Hall of Fame presentation.

Photo courtesy of J.B. Forbes

best photographers in the state. Tribune Managing Editor Kevin Graeler directed questions about Shrubshell's departure to Gannett's corporate public relations office.

A Gannett spokesperson wrote by email, "As a matter of policy, we do not discuss personnel or former employees."

A memorable image

Perhaps the most famous photo Shrubshell has captured, or at least the one that has been seen by the most people, came very early in his career, when he was just 25 years old and working his first job at the Maryville, Missouri Daily Forum. It was July 10, 1981, and the angry townspeople in the village of Skidmore, 15 miles west, had taken the law into their own hands.

In front of dozens of onlookers, Ken Rex McElroy, a violent local troublemaker, was ambushed in broad daylight in the cab of his parked pickup. The public vigilante killing of Skidmore's town bully would later be recounted in books and movies because to this day no one has identified McElroy's killer or killers. The case remains unsolved.

That day Shrubshell had been dispatched to photograph a woman who



Shrubshell accepting the Hall of Fame award. Four other photographers were inducted into the Hall of Fame. They were Melissa Farlow and Randy Olson, a wife-husband photo team who worked for National Geographic and taught at the University of Missouri School of Journalism; Mary Schulte, a former photographer for the Kansas City Star and a teacher of photo journalism in junior colleges and high schools, and the late Ken Paik, who had been a photographer with the Kansas City Star and later the New York City edition of Korea Times.

Photo courtesy of J.B. Forbes



Columbia Police Sgt. Robert Bennett salutes fallen fellow officer Molly Bowden during public visitation at Mizzou Arena in Columbia, Mo. Feb. 15, 2005. Bowden was shot three times in the neck and shoulder by motorist Richard Evans during a traffic stop on Jan. 10, 2005.

Don Shrubshell for the Columbia Daily Tribune

had won a golf tournament when he heard police on his scanner calling for an ambulance in Skidmore. It took some time for him to convince his editors to pursue what had happened, and to this day Shrubshell believes he could have gotten better photos if he had arrived sooner.

What Shrubshell photographed was McElroy's bullet-riddled Silverado with window glass shattered and blood staining the cab's bench seat. Seen through the truck's broken window is the sign for the D and G tavern where McElroy had just bought a six-pack. As he snapped the shutter, Shrubshell heard the sheriff say, "Goddammit people, you didn't have to blow him away!"

In the years that followed, when the story was recounted, Shrubshell's image appeared in publications like the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and others. Do an Internet search today of "Ken Rex McElroy" and you can find Shrubshell's picture. But he gets no credit.

"I happened to be at the right place at the right time," Shrubshell recalled. "It never won any awards. I never sent it in for a contest for anything back in those days."

The Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame was established in 2005 at the suggestion of Bill Miller Sr., publisher of the Washington Missourian. Miller believed the workers who put images of the news into newspapers deserved some recognition.

Since its founding, the Hall of Fame has inducted 74 photographers, living and dead. The Missouri Press Association is in charge of it, and the photographers' work is on display at the State Historical Society of Missouri's Center for Missouri Studies in Columbia.

Dark Room work

Shrubshell grew up in Maryville in northwest Missouri and as a high school senior he got a job at the Daily Forum through a program called Cooperative Occupational Education. He started as a

janitor and worked in the mailroom, the print shop and the camera room where page negatives were created and burned onto aluminum press plates.

Soon he found himself in the dark room and enjoyed it. It wasn't long before he was shooting house fires and car wrecks and selling them to the newspaper for \$2.50 each.

"I didn't have any formal journalism experience," Shrubshell said. "I couldn't string two sentences together but I could take pictures. I basically learned photography by shooting hundreds and hundreds of rolls of black and white film and reading everything I could on photography."

Four months after he took the famous McElroy photo, Shrubshell became a full time news photographer at the Arkansas City, Kansas Traveler. While working full time, he obtained an associates degree in journalism at a junior college.

After working nearly ten years at

the Traveler, Shrubshell moved on to newspapers in Hutchinson, Kansas and Cape Girardeau, Missouri. But he wanted to get closer to his Maryville roots. Each November, when he would drive to northwest Missouri to hunt deer, Shrubshell would stop at the Columbia Daily Tribune to inquire about openings. In 1998, there was one.

"Nobody worked harder than he did," said Jim Robertson, who was managing editor at the time. "The magic about 'Shrubby' he was always there. He lived with a police scanner. I think he beat the cops there sometimes.

"He knew all the cops. And they knew him," Robertson said. "I think he probably got some consideration that other newer guys didn't get. He was a great community photographer."

Shrubshell would patrol Columbia's streets, parks and the university campuses scouting prospects for a feature photo. He sought out homeless people, befriended them and managed to photograph them in their camp.

One photo shows two men, Rick and Jimbo, in the hovel they had built out of plywood in a wooded area near the intersection of U.S. 63 and I-70. Shrubshell got the picture after drinking a beer with the two men.

"They started laughing just because I took a drink with them," Shrubshell said. "I was in with them right then."

Free Don Shrubshell

In January 2005, Columbia police officer Molly Bowden was fatally shot by a motorist during a traffic stop. Shrubshell arrived on the scene and was doing his job, when police expanded the size of the crime scene and erected yellow police tape behind him. A police officer tackled Shrubshell and arrested him for being inside the crime scene boundary.

Police confiscated Shrubshell's equipment, which was later delivered to the Tribune's offices. A newspaper columnist had a t-shirt made up with the words "Free Don Shrubshell." The charges were eventually dropped. Bowden's family later thanked Shrubshell for a photo he captured of an officer saluting Bowden during a public visitation in the Mizzou Arena.

Years of experience gave Shrubshell confidence to know what it takes to create a remarkable photo. When Willie Nelson came to Columbia in 2009 to perform at a downtown festival, Shrubshell talked Nelson's stage manager into allowing him to use a stepladder to capture an image from behind the performer with a packed crowd watching.

While on assignments for the Tribune in Columbia, Shrubshell would sometimes encounter students from the University of



At a Columbia concert in 2009, Shrubshell talked Willie Nelson's stage manager into allowing him to use a stepladder to capture an image from behind the performer with a packed crowd watching.

Don Shrubshell for the Columbia Daily Tribune



Fiberglass boats called Boathenge stand reflected in floodwater near the Katy Trail on Thursday June 5, 2019. The river was forecast to begin falling Wednesday night but rains across the region were enough to delay the river's retreat and it remained 10 to 12 feet above flood stage Thursday morning throughout central Missouri.

Don Shrubshell for the Columbia Daily Tribune

Missouri's School of Journalism. "It's not too late to change your major," Shrubshell would advise them.

Shrubshell has a son, Brody, 22, who is on his second tour as a wheeled vehicle mechanic in the U.S. Army. "I don't think I would tell my son to go into journalism," Shrubshell said. Now that he's unemployed, Shrubshell says he might seek part time work different from journalism or photography.

After a lifetime of hunting news pictures, Shrubshell searches for words that describe these two concurrent developments: a journalistic honor and a

forced departure from his craft. He realizes that the opportunity to choose a career path like he did might no longer exist.

"People were photographed because life happened to them," Shrubshell said. "Documenting people in a small town is important, but that's not happening. There's always going to be journalism but it's changed a lot. And it's sad."

Will there be news photographers in the future to be inducted into a Hall of Fame? With Shrubshell gone, the Tribune's remaining reporters take photos with their cell phones.

Chicago Tribune creates podcast to lure younger demographic to investigative series marking 40th anniversary of Tylenol murders

By Bob Chiarito

Earlier this week, a friend of Chicago Tribune investigative reporter Christy Gutowski was walking past her 22-year-old daughter's bedroom and heard Gutowski's voice. Gutowski hadn't stopped for a visit, however. Her voice was coming from a podcast the news outlet launched in an attempt to reach a younger demographic of its in-depth reporting.

The eight-episode Unsealed podcast, which debuted last week, is paired with a series of investigative stories about the Sept. 29, 1982, Tylenol murders that killed seven in the Chicago area. The killings caused a nationwide panic and forever changed the way over-the-counter drugs were packaged in the United States.

"We're all storytellers, and we want to create different ways to reach different audiences," Gutowski said. "It's an honor to get to do something in the 175-year history of the Chicago Tribune that no other journalist has done."

Gutowski first proposed the idea of investigating the unsolved Tylenol murders five years ago, in time for the 35th anniversary. But then she and Stacy St. Clair, another Tribune investigative journalist, both got assigned to the trial of Jason Van Dyke, the Chicago Police officer who was ultimately convicted of killing 17-year-old Laquan McDonald. About a year ago, after covering the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse in Kenosha together, they picked the idea up again for the upcoming 40th anniversary of the crime.

They knew that this time, the story was more urgent because of the age of the story.

"Witnesses were dying, memories fade, records get lost and one of the main suspects had already died, another is in his mid 70s, and we thought 'time is running out, let's take a look at this' and that got us started," Gutowski recalled.

At about the same time, former Chicago Tribune senior editor Amy Carr was talking to At Will Media, a New York based podcast production studio, about doing an audio series about the Tylenol case. Carr reached out to Chicago Tribune Executive Editor Mitch Pugh to find out if the Tribune would support the idea, Pugh told GJR in an email. Pugh, who became top editor in August 2021, agreed and enlisted two of his best reporters — Gutowski and St. Clair — to write the newspaper stories and script and narrate the accompanying podcast.

The Tribune is publishing the stories online on Thursdays and in the print edition of the newspaper on Sundays for six weeks. The first story in the print series is free and unmetered, meaning it doesn't count against the number of free articles a reader has access to before hitting the paywall. The second part two is metered and parts 3-6 are behind the paper's paywall, Pugh said.

The 8-episode podcast, which debuted with two episodes on September 22, will drop one episode a week going forward until October 27 and is free to listen to and download. Pugh and Will Malnati, founder of At Will Media, will serve as executive producers for the podcast. Additionally, the podcast is made in association with audiochuck, a company that has produced several highly rated podcasts.

Podcasting to go along with investigative stories is becoming more popular for traditional media outlets, according to Diana Fuentes, executive director of Investigative Reporters & Editors, an nonprofit group that is supported by the Missouri School of Journalism.

"People tend to be interested in serials and investigative reporting lends itself to that," Fuentes said.

She added that interest in podcasting among traditional media outlets has forced her organization to schedule training and workshop sessions on the topic at its annual meeting next summer.

Gutowski and St. Clair estimate that they have worked together on more than 100 stories in careers that saw them first team together at the Daily Herald. The duo teamed up again at the Chicago Tribune in 2010 when Gutowski was hired by the Tribune. (St. Clair joined the paper three years prior.)

Among the stories the two reporters have teamed together for include, for the Daily Herald, the 1993 Brown's Chicken massacre in Palatine, Illinois in which seven were killed and the 1999 story about Naperville mother Marilyn Lemac, who was convicted of killing her three children. While at the Chicago Tribune, they worked together on the Rittenhouse trial and the trial of Chicago Police officer Jason Van Dyke, among dozens of others.

During the Van Dyke trial, the Chicago Tribune teamed up with WBEZ to produce "16 Shots," a podcast about the murder of

Laquan McDonald and surrounding issues. However, for the podcast about the Tylenol murders, it would prove to be a very different experience for the two reporters.

"With 16 Shots, WBEZ had a vision and the expertise," Gutowski said. "They knew the story that they wanted to tell and how to tell it. When we got involved, we helped with the reporting end of it. We didn't really help put together the narrative. So, we had to learn a whole new form of storytelling."

St. Clair agreed and said it was both exciting and terrifying.

"Christy and I worked on 16 Shots with WBEZ and that was a great learning experience, but this was different. We had to figure out the audio, how to be audio storytellers," St. Clair said.

She added that from the beginning, the Tribune took the reporters off having to do daily stories and gave them nine months to totally focus on the Tylenol case and complete the stories and podcast.

"We had the backing. Mitch Pugh wasn't in the newsroom that long and basically said, 'we're going to take this chance with the two of you, go out and show us what you can do.' That's pretty thrilling at this point in your career when you are allowed to try something new. Thrilling and terrifying."

Greg Pratt, a Tribune City Hall reporter and leader of the outlet's union, said he is happy to see the Tribune dedicating resources to a project like this.

"This is a very collegial newsroom where people are happy to see each other do good work," Pratt said. "That's the reason we stick around. It's certainly not the good pay. So, people are happy to see the support."

Although Gutowski and St. Clair have been print reporters for years, a podcast required them to employ different skills than they were used to using.

"Podcasts are very conversational," Gutowski said, adding that when writing for print there is much more attribution and reliance on documents.

An example of conversational storytelling in the first episode of the podcast is when the listener is taken inside a small rental car with Gutowski and St. Clair on the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts during a 5-hour stakeout of the main suspect in the unsolved case. Then, suddenly the man appears on a sidewalk and the reporters approach — something hard to convey in a newspaper



Photo by Josh Lowensohn via Flickr

story and something unusual for both reporters.

"You're not going to find a lot of first-person clips with our bylines on them, that's just not how we roll as reporters," St. Clair said. "So, it is a little bit strange to involve ourselves in the story but we've learned that podcasting is such an intimate relationship between host and storyteller. You're literally in their ear so we had to let them get to know us, at least a little bit."

St. Clair also said a lot of things that are often praised in print do not translate to audio storytelling.

"One of the things that was hardest to learn but also most interesting to learn was that a sentence that looks beautiful on paper can be just awful when spoken. Finding the beauty in simplicity and telling a story in an audio way has been really challenging for us and also really fun."

Both reporters also credit At Will Media producers Claire Tighe and Jessica Glazer for helping to keep their writing conversational and "easy on the ear," along with voice coach Christina Shockley for teaching them how to enunciate and talk slower than they were previously used to.

The podcast required both reporters to do another thing they had never done in their careers before — have sources sign releases allowing the recordings of the interviews to be used in the broadcasts. They both said that they did not receive any pushback from sources and took special

care to ensure confidential sources would remain just as protected in the podcast as they are in the print stories.

Gutowski and St. Clair also said they are excited to reach a younger demographic than traditional newspaper readers through the podcast, like the daughter of Gutowski's friend.

Fuentes agreed, but added it's not only the younger generation who is attracted to podcasts.

"I think it does help attract a younger demographic but I also think it attracts an older demographic too," Fuentes said. "People who remember the old radio serials, the old classics, because those were always popular."

While the podcast required Gutowski and St. Clair to do a lot of different things than what they were used to, old fashioned shoe-leather reporting and getting details certainly was not something unusual for them.

"I think Stacy and I are both the type of reporters and writers that get the name of the dog, notice the color of somebody's hat," Gutowski said.

While the podcast is largely new ground for the Tribune, the serialized format of the print stories is something Gutowski and St. Clair also had never done before.

"People have to follow it to the very end to find out certain things that aren't addressed until later," Gutowski said. "It's a very different form of writing and it's very

long. Readers have to follow the course of the stories over the next several weeks, which is really exciting."

Ironically, although the plan was to stick to the serialized format, during the course of their reporting, Gutowski and St. Clair learned that investigators were pushing prosecutors to press charges against a long-time suspect in the case. The Tribune published a news story Sept. 22.

"We didn't put it all out because we are committed to this serial effort but we knew that this week being the 40th anniversary there would be a lot of competitors, so we wanted to break some of our news," Gutowski said.

So far, feedback from their sources, victim family members and readers have been very positive, St. Clair and Gutowski said. Although numbers on listeners and readers were not disclosed, Pugh said the Tribune is keeping an eye on things and are pleased thus far.

"We will certainly have access to podcast downloads versus UVs/PVs/single-copy sales/direct subscriptions from the series," Pugh said. "What we would like to see is a general increase in the amount of search traffic we might expect from a project like this and significant referral traffic from social accounts and other platforms related to the audiochuck empire. So far, we're pretty happy with what we are seeing in terms of audience trends on our site."

Publisher's note: At a time when regional newspapers are cutting back and news deserts are emerging across the country, pioneering collaborative journalism efforts are growing to fill the void.

The GJR's September cover story featured collaborative journalism projects across the country that are filling the news void. One was "Solving for Chicago," a solutions-based collaborative consisting of 20 print, digital and broadcast newsrooms that came together under the management of the non-profit Local Media Association.

Now St. Louis has a new news nonprofit - River City Journalism Fund - born this fall to fund reporting projects that traditional news outlets are having trouble covering.

River City is the idea of two veteran journalists - Sarah Fenske, recently the host of St. Louis on the Air at St. Louis Public Radio and now executive editor of Euclid Media Group and Richard H. Weiss, a former Post-Dispatch editor whose Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson reporting project grew out of the Ferguson demonstrations that followed the police killing of Michael Brown in 2014.

Endorsing the project is the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, another organization with deep St. Louis roots. Its executive director is Jon Sawyer, former Washington Bureau Chief of the Post-Dispatch, and its chair is Emily Rauh Pulitzer. The eight-member new board of River City includes a diverse group of St. Louisans known for their good works and acumen.

GJR asked Fenske and Weiss to explain their project.

New River City Journalism Fund stimulates local reporting

By Richard H. Weiss and Sarah Fenske

Just over four years ago, Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson, a non-profit racial equity storytelling project, got rolling in St. Louis with a series of in-depth stories about the challenges local African American families have faced over several generations in realizing the American Dream.

Now this fall, with the nation --- and the region -- facing more challenges than ever and local media hard-pressed to cover them adequately, we want to do more. This month BFBF is announcing a new collaboration, a rebranding and a far more ambitious undertaking under the auspices of the River City Journalism Fund.

Richard Weiss: Finding common ground

I co-founded Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson with my wife and fellow journalist, Sally J. Altman. Together we recruited a diverse board of 15 civic leaders and stakeholders to guide the work and contracted with more than two-dozen local journalists and specialists to produce the stories.

Civic-minded citizens, the Pulitzer Center and the St. Louis Press Club generously donated to the cause, allowing BFBF to share dozens of stories with media outlets across the region in print, on television, on the air, online and through a variety of social media channels. Our partners included the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Riverfront Times, St. Louis American, St. Louis Magazine, St. Louis Public Radio, Nine PBS, KMOX, KTRS, the Jewish Light, and Health Progress, a journal of the Catholic Health Association headquartered in St. Louis. A year ago, we also began producing a monthly email newsletter -- STL Equity

Matters -- that is shared with more than 500 subscribers.

Earlier this year, we learned that Euclid Media CEO and Riverfront Times publisher Chris Keating had ideas of his own about building a sustainable model for non-profit journalism. We started talking with Chris, and not long after with Sarah Fenske, who had joined Chris as Euclid Media Group's executive editor.

Together we fashioned an approach that builds on the racial equity work that BFBF started but adds so much more in terms of broadening the mission and strengthening the revenue model.

So at this point, I'm handing off the narrative to Fenske, who is most familiar with the nuts and bolts of the new operation. But I am not going away and am currently serving as interim chairman of RCJF's Board of Directors.

Sarah Fenske: Allowing local journalism to thrive in St. Louis

The Riverfront Times came perilously close to shuttering for good in the early days of the pandemic. In March of 2020, the New York Times made the 43-year-old St. Louis paper Exhibit A in its story about how alt-weeklies across the U.S. had been decimated as their longtime advertisers shut down.

Just about every other paper featured in that New York Times story abandoned its print edition. But not the RFT. I can take no credit for this (after four years as the paper's editor in chief, I'd left prior to the pandemic to host a public radio show), but I still can't help boasting that they managed not to miss a single issue.

That's in part because the staff refused to quit, but it's also because readers stepped up. They valued the paper's coverage -- and they opened their

checkbooks. Today the RFT employs more writers and editors than it did before the pandemic. That's a testament to St. Louis and how it shows up for its institutions, even when those "institutions" enjoy raising hell and dropping the occasional f-bomb.

Seeing that support -- as well as the incredible patronage I witnessed during my three years at St. Louis Public Radio -- helped me understand that St. Louisans are willing to take action to support local news. And they could be a lifeline for an industry that is still surviving in St. Louis, but needs help to thrive.

That includes the Riverfront Times, but it's far from just us. St. Louis has a handful of legacy media outlets that have beaten the odds to employ editors and reporters who live here and are invested in this community -- but we need support to continue to do meaningful work, to dig deeply into the area's biggest issues, and to bring up new and diverse voices capable of telling the stories of St. Louis in all its complexity.

At the River City Journalism Fund, we plan to invest in local news on a host of topics -- education, the environment, social justice, the business community, the arts and more. At the same time, we will never depart from a core concept: addressing the need for better representation of historically marginalized people in the media.

We'll do that in three ways:

- Providing grants and stipends to writers in the St. Louis area, giving them the time and resources to tell the stories of St. Louis, and then make their work available for free in at least one local format -- in print, online, or through broadcast;
- Making grants to support editorial head-count, paid fellowships and paid



Board member Evita Caldwell speaks about the River City Journalism Fund at its launch party Oct. 12 at Bar Napoli.

Photo courtesy of Richard Weiss

internships at media outlets that serve St. Louis, with a focus on journalists from historically marginalized communities;

- Conducting forums to gain a better understanding of the information needs of St. Louis, particularly traditionally under-served communities.

We're adopting a proven model.

Across the country, legacy media are expanding their revenue pools to include philanthropic support. The nonprofit component allows engaged readers to support vital community assets — local independent publications — as they would libraries or museums.

And here's the key for St. Louis: The River City Journalism Fund won't compete with existing publications. Instead we will support and advance their work by underwriting ambitious journalism and additional reporting positions, allowing them to do more and do better. Bottom line: More in-depth stories that will help St. Louisans make positive changes in their communities.

With its 63106 Project, Before

Ferguson Beyond Ferguson commissioned journalists across the metro to cover a ZIP code in St. Louis that had been largely neglected by local media outlets. The series of stories held up a mirror to St. Louis — and found remarkable buy-in from local media outlets. Just about every publication in town ran at least one of the 63106 Project stories, and readers were the better for it.

Dick and I believe we can expand that model to cover more of these types of important stories, even as we help demonstrate to writers from all backgrounds that St. Louis is a place that will support their work and help them thrive.

High value and low overhead

The River City Journalism Fund's grant-making will be guided by our board of directors, a diverse group that includes lawyers, teachers, retired public servants, journalists and communications professionals. By giving their time to run the organization, the board ensures that the vast majority of donations goes directly to local journalism. We intend

to hire just one full-time employee, a development director. The board will administer donated funds without additional overhead.

As we seek support for these initiatives, we will continue the STL Equity Matters Newsletter, put the finishing touches on the 63106 Project, and also support Aisha Sultan and her 63106-inspired documentary, *Education Interrupted*, which will premiere in November at the St. Louis International Film Festival, and will be airing in December on Nine PBS. Next month, we also intend to launch our first project as River City Journalism Fund: a multi-part series that will run in the Riverfront Times and the Jewish Light, as well as potentially one other outlet, and that we hope will make a big splash.

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