

Impact Report

the
center for investigative
reporting



Introduction

An Inflection Point

It's a term we see and hear a lot. Vague? Sure. Overused? Probably. But, against the backdrop of rising authoritarianism, eroding trust in institutions, rampant disinformation, Big Tech gone wild, dwindling access to reproductive and transgender care, new and renewed fronts in the culture wars, a historically consequential election, and, well, you get the idea...is it safe to say we're at an inflection point? Without a doubt.

The merger of *Mother Jones* and the Center for Investigative Reporting is a response to the moment we're in. A true 360° newsroom drawing on decades of investigative experience, this is about producing the kind of journalism our moment demands, asking big questions, looking for throughlines and connections, and widening the aperture on the daily news cycle. And while the merger is just a few months old, we've leveraged a combined newsroom of 115 strong and produced the kind of impact we envisioned right out of the gate—drawing the eyes and ears of the public while moving our national dialogue around critical issues of race, equity, and the health of our democracy forward.

And before we dive into the work we've produced over these last few months, it's important to highlight an effort that has the potential to affect the field of investigative journalism as a whole. In late June, [as the AP reported](#), we filed a lawsuit against OpenAI (which makes ChatGPT) and its closest business partner, Microsoft, alleging that OpenAI used years' worth of content from *Mother Jones* and CIR without permission and in violation of copyright law to help build its chatbot system, joining a number of other newsrooms and content creators bringing suit to protect their intellectual property.

In this critical moment, impact matters. Here's how we've helped inform the public and move important national dialogue forward.

The Throughline

In the midst of noisy 24-hour news cycles, one of our hallmarks has been following the longer arc of a story across time, stitching together the throughlines other newsrooms fail to see:

- **In 2022**, *Mother Jones*' Samantha Michaels first reported on the state of [Oklahoma's "failure to protect" laws](#) that disproportionately targeted women for failing to protect children from domestic abuse. In May, the governor signed [the Oklahoma Survivors Act](#) into law, a move cheered by sentencing-reform advocates who are already moving to assist more than a dozen incarcerated people to petition state courts for reduced sentences.
- ***Victim/Suspect***, a 2023 CIR investigation and documentary film about how law enforcement agents turn victims of sexual assault into suspects by accusing them of filing false reports, was cited by a co-sponsor of a bill in Connecticut that recently passed [providing sweeping protections for victims of assault](#). It's been [nominated for three Emmy Awards](#), including Best Investigative Documentary.



- **Last year**, *Mother Jones*' Dan Friedman was among the first to report on the shady dealings of Guo Wengui, a Steve Bannon-affiliated [Chinese tycoon](#) who [easily penetrated the Trump world while under a counterintelligence investigation](#) and was [recently convicted](#) of fraud in a massive case pursued by the Department of Justice.



Blossom Old Bull visits the memorial placed where her son Braven died.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TAILYR IRVINE

Investigation

Bringing Humanity to Hard-to-Tell Stories

Samantha Michaels' yearlong investigation of a police chase that led to the death of 17-year-old Braven Glenn on the Crow Nation in Montana—and the larger issues surrounding tribal police forces—appeared in March with a [feature story](#) in the magazine and on *MotherJones.com*, a [Reveal episode](#), and a 22-minute [documentary film](#), along with social media storytelling on every major platform.

Sam continues to receive encouraging feedback from Braven's family and friends; other members of the Crow Nation; current and former members of Congress; academics and experts in Indigenous affairs; and former police officers, among others. In addition, several US senators sent a [letter to the DOJ](#) urging it to improve public safety on tribal lands, and Rep. Jared Huffman (Calif.) introduced the [Tribal Community Protection Act](#). His senior adviser expressed, "Thank you so much for passing this along and for your work in general on such an important topic. It's a priority for the congressman, and I appreciate you elevating this!"

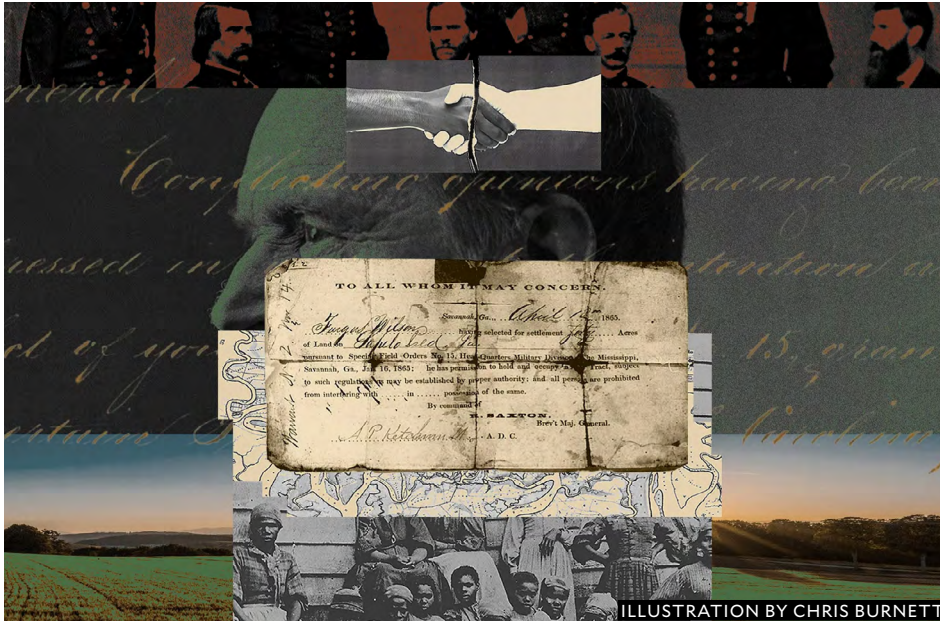
For more than a decade, *Mother Jones* has been investigating the causes behind mass shootings, with National Affairs Editor Mark Follman providing the kind of depth and nuance needed to tell the story of the lasting impacts on the people and communities affected by these horrific events. His latest, [Lessons From a Mass Shooter's Mother](#), was a probing profile of Chin Rodger, whose quest to prevent another gun tragedy began following her own son's shooting massacre in 2014. The feature story in *Mother Jones* was one of our most-read online stories in the first half of the year, but it was our [Reveal radio program and podcast](#) that allowed audiences to get an intimate look into Rodger's life's work to prevent future mass shootings.

[Longreads](#) summed it up well: "Follman's piece is essential reading, going beyond the headlines and assumptions about mass shootings to illuminate root problems and cracks in various systems..."

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In Montana, we like to complain about helicopter journalism, this idea that reporters with a big microphone come in and tell a story: this is such the antithesis of that. It's so refreshing to see someone with such a large base come in and do the work, report on the ground.”

—Austin Amestoy, Montana Public Radio, "Morning Edition" host & reporter



Investigation

Reporting at the Intersection of Race and Justice

[40 Acres and a Lie](#) is a groundbreaking multiplatform investigation from CIR and the Center for Public Integrity that uncovered the names of more than 1,200 formerly enslaved people who received land grant reparations following the Civil War only to have them taken back by the government and returned to former plantation owners. Featuring six articles in *Mother Jones* connecting the past to the present in places like [Edisto](#) and [Skidaway](#) Islands, a [searchable land title database](#), and a [three-part radio and podcast series from Reveal](#), this historic investigation contributes to the ongoing national conversation about reparations and the connection between systemic racism and intergenerational wealth.

The editorial package ranked among our highest page visits. CNN, [PBS NewsHour](#), and NPR's [Fresh Air](#) all dedicated segments to this reporting, republished by numerous media outlets, including *Essence*, *Word in Black*, and the *Richmond Free Press*, and was [recognized with the July Sidney Award](#) by the Sidney Hillman Foundation.

Gender Justice

Inside the Movement to Resurrect Conversion Therapy

Embedded in a Las Vegas Hampton Inn reporting on the resurgence of [conversion therapy promising to alter gender identity and sexual orientation](#), *Mother Jones* reporter Madison Pauly showed how a small, influential organization—the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity—is pushing back on gender-affirming care that, as one keynote speaker declared, was “evil” and part of a “New World Order.” Madison’s feature in *Mother Jones*, accompanied by a first-person [video](#) and [republished by LGBTQ Nation](#), shines a light on the ongoing efforts to repackage old, debunked medical practices—known to increase suicidality among those involved—that align with broader cultural attacks on the trans community.

The Latest From CIR Studios

Described by [RogerEbert.com](#) as the “‘holy shit’ documentary of the year,” CIR’s [The Grab](#) debuted in theaters on June 14th and quickly rose to the top of Apple’s documentary film chart and the only documentary in its top-100 films. Featured on [Amanpour & Company](#) and in [Salon](#) and [the Hill](#), *The Grab*’s wide appeal included an appearance by journalist Nate Halverson on comedian Theo Von’s popular podcast, [This Past Weekend](#), quickly garnering hundreds of thousands of views from what we’re sure isn’t our typical audience (and it didn’t hurt that actor Mark Ruffalo also [posted](#) about the film online). [With a line to get in stretching down the block at the Telluride Film Festival](#), the film opened to strong audiences in New York, San Francisco, and elsewhere.

Chronicling the covert grab for water, land, and food resources by wealthier countries, and its implications as populations continue to rise and these resources grow more scarce globally, the film points us toward a future where the next feared conflict—World War III—will be fought over food and water. Along with telling a troubling story with broad human rights consequences, Halverson and filmmaker Gabriela Cowperthwaite paint a vivid picture of what deeply reported, long-term investigative journalism looks like, and show us exactly what’s at stake at this critical inflection point.



Our Unique Reach

Instagram

1.6 million
reached**2.2 million**
video views**870,000**
content interactions

TikTok

1.9 million
video views**266,000**
likes

YouTube

445,000
views**5.9 million**
impressions**20,000**
hours watched

Facebook

2.2 million
reached**87,000**
video views

ILLUSTRATION BY NICOLÁS ORTEGA

Voting Rights

**Shaping the
National Conversation
on Minority Rule**

In his new book, *Minority Rule*, Mother Jones' Ari Berman shows how the January 6 attack on the Capitol was only one of the most recent attacks on the will of the majority, a thread running through American democracy from its earliest days that includes voter suppression, election subversion, gerrymandering, dark money, the takeover of the courts, and the whitewashing of history. As we shift into what will surely be a national election marred by attempts at undermining majority rule and electoral integrity, Ari's reporting was widely featured in the national media, including high-profile appearances on NPR's [Fresh Air](#), [MSNBC](#), [CNN](#), and [WNYC](#), and cited in publications such as [the New Yorker](#). His work continues to drive the national conversation on voter suppression and minority rule, as noted by Hillary Clinton and other prominent leaders.

“

Voting rights journalist @ariberman has been detailing threats to our democracy for years, and his new book *Minority Rule* is a timely and essential read. He expertly shows how Republicans are trying to rig our political system—and shares how we can fight back.”

—Hillary Clinton on X