

Impact Report



The Throughline

One of our hallmarks has been following the longer arc of a story across time and stitching together the throughlines other newsrooms fail to see.

- One year ago, we reported on the [successful effort by a group of activists in Connecticut to put an end to exorbitant rates for phone calls made from prisons](#), ending a practice that disproportionately affected people of color and cost families upward of \$10 million per year. In July, the [Federal Communications Commission voted to end the practice nationally](#), dropping rates for 15-minute calls from prisons as low as 90 cents, down from rates as high as \$12.10.
- In 2019, *Reveal* reporter Will Evans reported on an [alarming trend at Amazon's warehouses](#): a rate of injury twice that of the national average. Evans later reported on the [lengths Amazon went to cover up its safety crisis](#). When Sen. Bernie Sanders took up the cause and demanded that [Amazon release its records related to employee injury](#), the company balked, but thanks to a Freedom of Information Act request, [CIR successfully sued the federal government to release injury and illness records](#). Sanders released a [damning interim report](#) showing the extent of worker injury at Amazon, including how nearly half of warehouse employees suffered some form of injury during Prime Day week in 2019.

Introduction

Cutting Through the Noise

What used to be a once-every-four-years blitz of election media coverage after Labor Day is now an ever-present news cycle churning out the latest from the campaigns and candidates. And while the sheer amount of information is often a challenge for many of us to keep up with, it's the rapid spread of mis- and disinformation that's pulling at the fabric of our democracy. What we lose in all the horse-race coverage is the wider story, the ways in which policies and platforms impact our daily lives and what those approaches to governing mean for broader issues around race, justice, and equity. CIR's journalism is meant to reach people where they are, providing much-needed analysis and context to the most complex issues of our day. In this frenzied election season, providing thorough, trusted reporting has never been more critical, and we're proud to show the impact of that reporting in this update.

Headline of the Month

White Man Tells Black Journalists His Black Opponent Is Not Black

July 31, 2024

After Donald Trump questioned Kamala Harris' Black identity in front of the National Association of Black Journalists, our [headline](#) reverberated throughout social media, from [Brian Stelter](#) on X and [Jennifer Rubin](#) in the *Washington Post* to comments ranging from "[Now THIS is how you write a headline](#)," to, simply, "[perfection](#)."



ILLUSTRATION BY JASON RAISH



PHOTOGRAPH BY NATE GOWDY

Politics

On the Ground at the Republican and Democratic Conventions

In the lead-up to the Republican National Convention in July, we took a look at Project 2025, the far-right effort to shape the party's platform and overhaul the federal government. [Despite Donald Trump's claims to the contrary](#), we showed how [Project 2025 is tied to his campaign and how effective it's been—for his opponents](#)—in tying him to unpopular policies. Our reporting on what you didn't hear at the convention—namely, the omission of any discussion about abortion—spoke loudly, with [efforts at moving a total ban on abortion forward](#) that was later cited by outlets like [The 19th](#), [Jezebel](#), and [Vanity Fair](#).

It wasn't just Republicans making headlines over the summer. With [Joe Biden passing the torch to Kamala Harris](#), many media outlets drew on our expertise to provide history and context to the handoff between candidates. [Jamilah King](#) seemingly appeared *everywhere*, including [WNYC](#), [Frontline's The Choice](#), the [Guardian](#), and in [Vox's video "Kamala Harris, Explained in 7 Moments,"](#) discussing the reporting she's done dating back to Harris' early days running for attorney general of California. [Nina Martin's moving portrait of the candidate's influential mother](#) provided even more insight into what drives Harris.

Our reporting leading up to and during the Democratic convention in Chicago explored the fissures on the left around the war in Gaza. [Noah Lanard](#) broke the story of Georgia state Rep. [Ruwa Romman's planned speech to the DNC](#) on behalf of the Uncommitted movement in support of a ceasefire in Gaza, a scoop that was widely picked up by the likes of the [American Prospect](#), the [Atlantic](#), the [Guardian](#), [MSNBC](#), the [New Republic](#), [New York Magazine](#), and [Rolling Stone](#), with more than 1 million views online in the post's first 24 hours. Reporting from [Sophie Hurwitz](#) on [uncommitted voters' hopes for support from Harris on a ceasefire](#) and [Abby Vesoulis' profile of Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson's own history as a political demonstrator](#) were cited in publications as diverse as [Salon](#), the [New York Times](#), [Chicago Tribune](#), and [Teen Vogue](#).

Politics

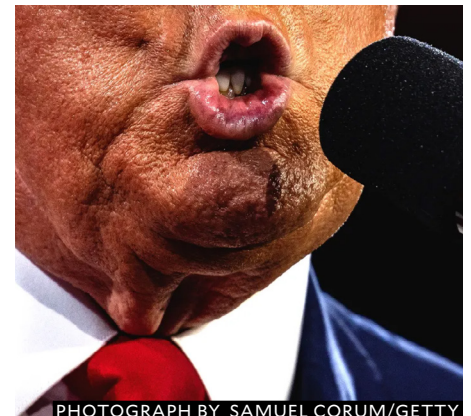
Linking Extremist Language to Political Violence

The right's embrace of violent, extremist language—and the groups pushing those agendas to the forefront—is, of course, not new, but in the throes of the campaign, it's taken on added relevancy. While outlets like the [New Republic](#) and the [New York Times](#) cited David Corn's work chronicling vice presidential candidate JD Vance's embrace of extremism, [Mark Follman, building off earlier reporting, showed how that language has increasingly been directed toward Trump's political enemies](#) in the wake of the attempt on Trump's life at a Pennsylvania rally. [Follman's explainer video about the Trump campaign's dangerous lie—that Democrats tried to kill him—is part of a larger pattern of inspiring violence among his supporters, reporting that was amplified by Newsweek and through an appearance on John Fugelsang's podcast.](#)

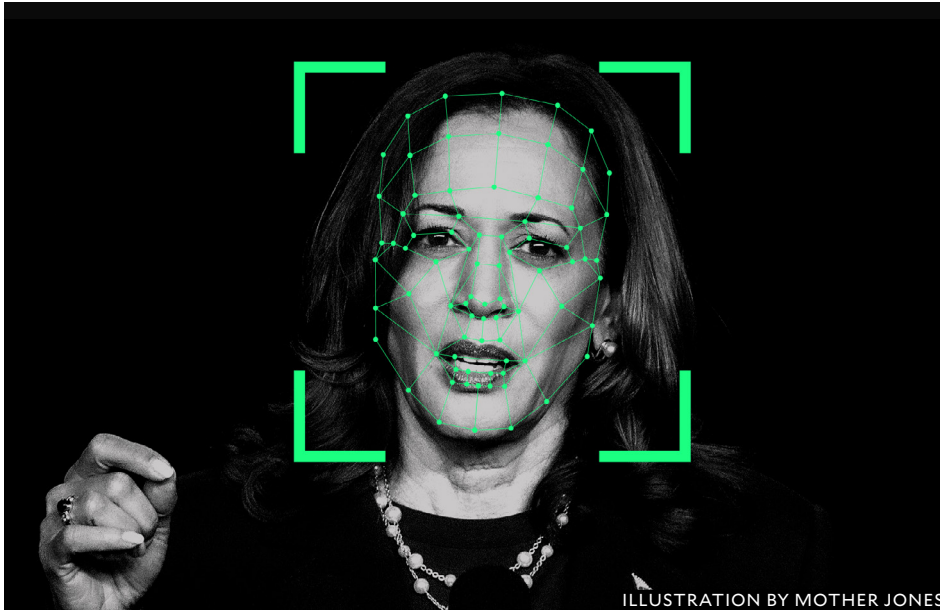
“

Trump has been told about the dangers of his rhetoric—they were highlighted for him by his own advisers.”

Mark Follman,
Mother Jones national affairs editor



PHOTOGRAPH BY SAMUEL CORUM/GETTY



Disinformation

Putting the Check on Disinformation

Following the appearance of a doctored video on X (formerly Twitter) purporting to show Kamala Harris struggling to put a coherent thought together, former President Donald Trump posted the video on his Truth Social site coupled with a rant calling Harris “DUMB!” and “extremely Low IQ,” quickly amplifying it across social media. Julianne McShane reported how the video, along with a similarly manipulated video of Harris shared by Elon Musk just eight days earlier, [appeared to be in violation of both the X and Truth Social terms of service](#). When she reached out to a Trump campaign spokesperson about the video Trump posted, she was initially told, “Your phone or computer must be fucked up because the audio/video matches up,” but X soon labeled the video “manipulated media” after McShane’s reporting went public and was noted by [MSNBC’s Joy Reid](#), [Thom Yorke](#), and [The Don Lemon Show](#), among others.

Not long after joining the *Mother Jones* newsroom, technology and disinformation reporter Anna Merlan began reporting on Musk, whose leadership at X has coincided with an explosion in racist and antisemitic content on the site. Her reporting highlighted Musk’s [attempts at bullying advertisers back onto the site](#) through legal threats, including a recent turn [subpoenaing public interest groups](#) like the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Center for Countering Digital Hate that have expressed their concerns to prospective advertisers on the platform under Musk’s direction.

Gender Justice

Reproductive Rights and Health

Maddie Oatman’s [“Rags to Riches”](#) looked into the “new science of periods”—the advances made in utilizing menstrual blood to better understand the health and wellbeing of the bodies it comes from, along with the continued reluctance in some corners of the scientific community to look past outdated taboos. Oatman’s work, including her deeply personal insights on infertility, led to appearances on [Press Play With Madeline Brand](#), [The Joan Esposito Show](#), and NPR’s [All Things Considered](#).

Awards



- *Reveal’s* [“Hidden Confessions of the Mormon Church,”](#) probing the lengths the church goes to in keeping child sexual abuse secret, was a finalist for the Institute for Nonprofit News’ [Best Investigative Journalism award](#).
- The Online Journalism Awards also selected three episodes as finalists: Excellence in Social Justice Reporting for [“They Followed Doctors’ Order. The State Took Their Babies.”](#) and for [“A New Police Force Chased a 17-Year-Old to His Death. Then It Vanished.”](#) and Excellence in Digital Video Storytelling for [“After the Crash.”](#)
- Julia Lurie’s [investigation into a health care giant profiting off the failing child welfare system](#) in Alaska, originally appearing in the September+October 2023 issue of *Mother Jones* and later as a *Reveal* episode, has been listed as a finalist for the [Loeb Awards](#), one of journalism’s highest honors in business and finance reporting.
- Following the far-reaching work he’s produced discussing race, history, and contemporary politics, Garrison Hayes earned the prestigious [Salute to Excellence Award for Commentary/Weblog](#) from the National Association of Black Journalists.



By the Numbers

Over the course of the summer, we saw a massive uptick in viewership across all social media platforms:

YouTube

1.4 million
views in August

15x increase
over prior month

X

2.7 million
views in August

20x increase
over prior month

Instagram

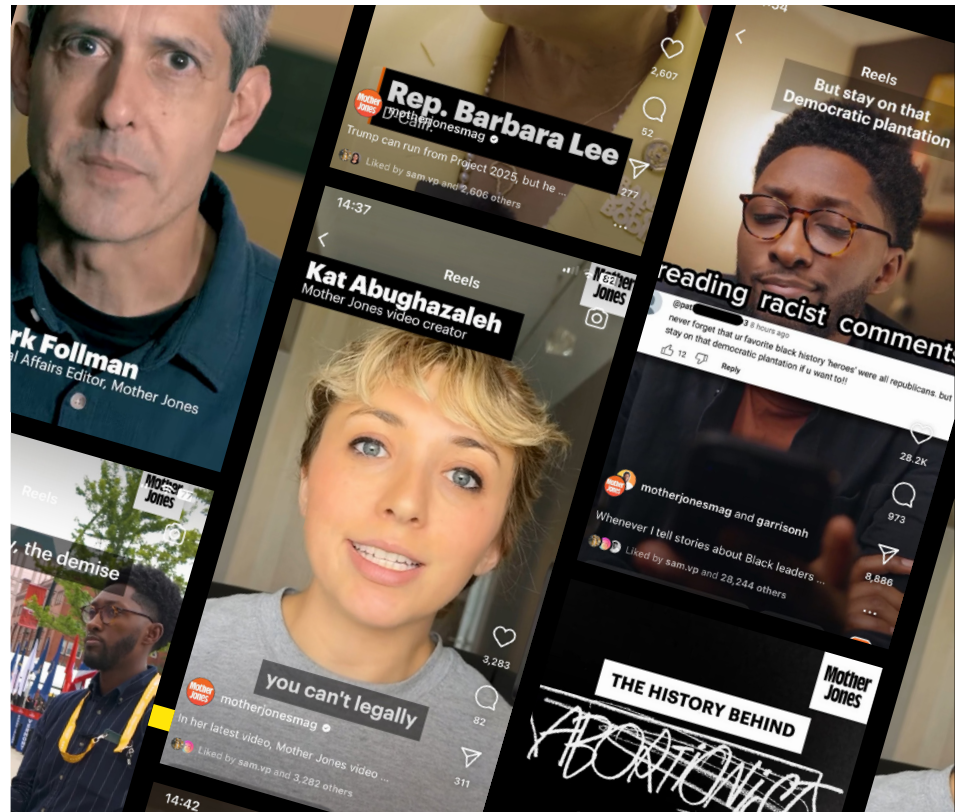
1.5 million
views in August

2x increase
over prior month

Threads

494,000
reached in August

10x increase
over prior month



Elections

The Power of Short-Form Video

With strong evidence suggesting that this election will be decided by younger voters, we knew that compelling short-form video would help us reach an audience that disproportionately gets its information from social video platforms while also countering rampant disinformation and the appeal of outrage-peddling social media influencers.

In probing an underreported facet of conservative support, Garrison Hayes' [compilation of interviews from Milwaukee during the Republican convention exploring "Black MAGA"](#) saw an explosive rise on social media, garnering more than 60,000 new followers with an astounding 1 million views in its first week on YouTube and previewing additional reporting to come this fall on the topic. [Hayes' take on Donald Trump's appearance at the National Association of Black Journalists](#), where the former president claimed to be "the best president for the Black population since Abraham Lincoln," systematically dismantled the claim, noting how "painfully obvious it is that Donald Trump is out of his historical and social depth when talking about what's good for Black people."

From the moment Kamala Harris was elevated as the frontrunner on the Democratic side, Kat Abughazaleh showed how the right began framing Harris and her candidacy in thinly veiled sexist and racist language. Abughazaleh shows that by turns [undermining Harris' intellect](#) and calling her a "DEI candidate"—an explainer [lauded as "simply brilliant"](#) on X—the right's attempts at castigating Harris follow a pattern dating back to her 2020 candidacy, mirroring a similar playbook [attempting to sow doubt about vice presidential candidate Tim Walz's record](#). And she demonstrated how the simple word "weird" helped Democrats frame an extremist conservative agenda.