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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



When The Marshall Project - Cleveland reported its first story more than a year ago, no one knew quite what to expect, including me. I am a lifelong Clevelander, and have spent 30 years covering this city as a journalist. Over the last two decades, I've seen our local news environment shrink. With fewer resources and reporters, it's a recipe for injustice.

We've seen corruption and lack of oversight in policing, discriminatory prosecution, and overpopulation in jails and prisons. All of this is much worse when local media doesn't have the capacity to hold the criminal justice system accountable.

That is why much of our early work has been spent listening. Listening to the voices of communities who have routinely been either ignored or misrepresented in our local media, most notably when it comes to reporting on our justice system. People with authority and responsibility for criminal justice need to feel the pressure to change.

The impact you'll read about below shows we're just getting started. And with your support, feedback and partnership, we will keep a vigilant eye on our criminal justice system in service of a fairer, more just Cleveland for everyone.

Yours in community,
Phil Trexler

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Why Impact Matters

We are a journalism outlet, not an advocacy organization. We don't approach any issue with an outcome in mind. Our reporters examine all sides of an issue and follow the facts where they lead. We focus on criminal justice as an arena where power is often abused. Our goal is to expose injustice.

We track the impact of our journalism through three important groups:

- policymakers
- advocates and criminal justice experts
- other media outlets

We believe each plays a critical role in improving a system that touches the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ohioans every year. In the last year, we have published critical investigative stories, prompting impact from all of these important sectors. This Impact Report provides a few examples.

BARRED



In Cuyahoga County, [a senior judge was recently removed](#) from a case after The Marshall Project - Cleveland [investigated](#) her questionable relationship with a court-appointed receiver. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze violated court rules when she steered a contentious but lucrative divorce case to her own docket and appointed the receiver, a lifelong friend. The FBI has now launched an investigation into Judge Celebrezze's actions.

CONSENTING IN CLEVELAND

We [dug deep](#) into the federal consent decree and the changes inside the Cleveland police over the last seven years. We examined court records to help residents see what they are and are not receiving for the millions of dollars the decree has cost taxpayers so far. To get as many eyeballs on our work as possible, we co-published with six local newsrooms. The impact was felt, and the very next week, the federal monitor issued a strongly worded report identifying several ways in which the Cleveland Police Department had not made sufficient progress and why the city should not be relieved of supervision. The monitor described Cleveland police practices as "disturbing" and "alarming" in his 75-page report, which we covered [here](#).

Driving While Black in Bratenahl



Two months after we published a story on “driving while Black” in the suburb of Bratenahl, the police department started requiring handwritten daily traffic logs from officers, recording the race of the person stopped. Our investigation, co-published with News 5 Cleveland, found that an estimated 60% of those ticketed since 2020 were Black, even though 75% of Bratenahl residents are White. These findings were extremely difficult to piece together because Bratenahl police were not regularly recording the race of the drivers whom they stopped. Because of our reporting, that’s changed.

By March 2023, the race was noted in every record of a traffic stop. Recording race data makes it easier for the public to see whether traffic stops are unfairly targeting Black drivers.

At the state level, an Ohio lawmaker [vowed to introduce legislation](#) that requires police agencies across the state to record the race of the people they stop for traffic violations.

Meanwhile, just one month after publishing our story, we noticed that Bratenahl officers issued significantly fewer traffic citations.

GIVING LICENSE

Sometimes our work has an impact even before it’s published. [Our reporting](#) with News 5 found that the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles had issued nearly 200,000 new driver’s license suspensions in 2022 for debt-related reasons, a staggeringly high number with a big impact on those who can’t pay the fines. But after our initial interview with a local judge on license suspensions, the Cleveland Municipal Court started hosting community clinics to help residents get their licenses back, even before we had a chance to publish. In addition, Ohio lawmakers are poised to move legislation to help affected residents.

A HEFTY PRICE TAG



Cleveland installed 1,500 surveillance cameras around the city, which came with a hefty price tag of \$7 million. Local officials had refused to tell the public about how they were being deployed. After we published [our story](#), Mayor Justin Bibb announced he was forming an advisory committee to examine how police technology affects communities of color — a hopeful sign of increased transparency in the city’s criminal justice system.

MORE TRANSPARENCY

The Cleveland Police Department publishes an internal bulletin for officers, and the director of public safety made the decision to stop publishing the names and badge numbers of police officers who were subjected to disciplinary review. After we [published a story](#) exposing the decision, the department quietly reversed course and put the names and badge numbers back into the bulletin.

In Partnership

One of our greatest strengths is our ability to partner with local media organizations to reach those directly affected by the criminal justice system. A note of thanks goes to the following media partners who have helped deliver our news to a broad and diverse audience in the Cleveland community.

Cleveland Observer The Chronicle-
Cleveland Scene Telegram
Ideastream The Land
News 5 Cleveland The Real Deal Press
Ohio News Connection WOVI
Signal Cleveland

REACHING ALL OHIOANS, INSIDE AND OUT



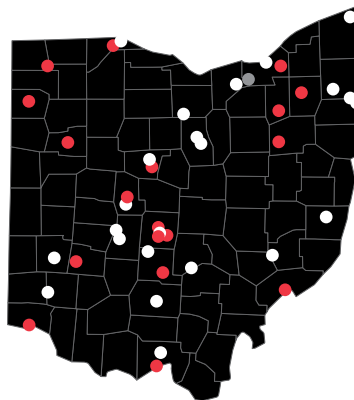
As outreach manager for The Marshall Project - Cleveland, my job is to build relationships with those who have firsthand experience with the justice system. That includes working with corrections officials to get our journalism to more people behind bars.

Receiving knowledge on the inside is incredibly important. I know what it feels like to receive bad information based on a rumor circulating on the rec yard. I served 23 years straight within the Ohio prison system before earning my parole. *News Inside* is our print publication specifically for incarcerated audiences. When I was struggling to figure out how to gain my freedom, it would have been a valuable resource. It provides accurate information concerning new laws, shares relevant news stories and features stories on formerly incarcerated people who are doing amazing work within the walls and among the community.

I can now proudly say that *News Inside* is available in all Ohio state prisons and the Cuyahoga County jail. And

PRISONS AND JAILS WHERE NEWS INSIDE IS AVAILABLE

● Digital ● Print ● Print, Digital



in our latest issue, we included a special insert for Ohio prisons and jails that explains recent changes to state laws that have a direct impact on those incarcerated. People in prisons and jails deserve to know more about the system in which they live their lives, and I am committed to getting that information to them.

Yours in community,
Louis Fields