

IMPACT REPORT 2022

In a year of outstanding journalism at *Mother Jones*, it was hard to choose the best, but we managed to narrow it down to the most impactful. Without further ado ...

THE JONESIES

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022
INTRODUCING THE JONESIES

M

Mother Jones' journalism is what happens when you take boundless curiosity and add deep commitment to democracy and justice. In 2022, the journalists at *Mother Jones* followed that impulse, delivering powerful reporting that led us toward stories no one else was paying attention to, and into places no one else dared to go.

It was an eventful year! From scoops and exposés to newsroom-spanning reporting packages, our journalism covered it all: political corruption, injustice in our legal system, the culture wars, and beyond.

We delivered dispatches from traditional power centers like DC, New York, and California, and from across the country in states like Georgia, Missouri, Utah, Michigan, and Arizona—even as far afield as Ukraine and Brazil. Our reporting was cited thousands of times by lawmakers, scholars, activists, and other journalists. It was read and viewed millions of times.

So this year, we were compelled to highlight some of our most viral, moving, and vibrant journalism. What better way to do that than hand out some awards to the reporters, stories, and beats that changed the game this year? Join us for The Jonesies...

MOST SENSATIONAL

Scoring an additional award for “confirming our worst fears,” David Corn’s scoop about the Kremlin and Tucker Carlson was our most-read story of the year

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST SENSATIONAL

M

Mere weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine, the Kremlin issued a set of talking points for state-friendly Russian media: [Use more Tucker Carlson clips](#). What could be more effective propaganda than this popular American host repeating the Russian party line? But the world wouldn't have known about Putin's Tucker edict if it weren't for leaked Russian government documents obtained by DC Bureau Chief David Corn.

Reaction to this scoop was swift. It garnered nearly a million views on our site; both Stephen Colbert and Trevor Noah featured it on their shows; and it prompted a long internet rant from none other than disgraced former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly.

It was also an important complement to our overall coverage of the Ukraine invasion, which included analysis of its effects on food systems and global energy independence, alongside deeply personal accounts of life inside the war. Former *Mother Jones* fellow Molly Schwartz, who'd been on a reporting fellowship in Russia when war broke out, wrote of her own escape and then reported from Poland for weeks afterward on the challenges facing refugees and journalists in the region, appearing on MSNBC to discuss her stories.

890,455

reads on **MotherJones.com**

MOST MONUMENTAL

Reporter Dan Friedman's
scoop of leaked audio of
Steve Bannon explaining how
Trump would launch the
Big Lie was the tape heard
'round the world

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST MONUMENTAL

Last we heard, presidential elections were still held in November. So why was Steve Bannon caught on tape in October 2020 saying Trump had a “strategy” for declaring victory on election night—no matter what the returns were saying? Ten days after reporter Dan Friedman published his story on this leaked audio, it was shared during the summer’s final televised hearing of the January 6 Select Committee (and again at its hearing in October). It became a key piece of evidence in the committee’s report recommending criminal charges.

According to Nielsen data, nearly 18 million people across 10 cable networks tuned in to the hearing. This figure does not include online viewers—nor does it include the dozens of other media outlets and journalists who wrote about, tweeted, or otherwise amplified the story, including the *Washington Post*, *Business Insider*, *Rolling Stone*, *Politico*, the *Guardian*, CBS, CNN, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Our own video highlighting this shocking audio was our most-watched of the year, garnering 4.45 million views across all our platforms.

4.45 MILLION

**video views
across platforms**

VIDEO

MOST VILLAINOUS ORIGIN STORY



Straight from the horse’s mouth,
Steve Bannon outlines the origins
of the Big Lie in leaked audio

MOST EXHAUSTING

Reproductive rights
suffered a crushing blow
in 2022 and *Mother Jones*
reporters covered this
seismic news from every
possible angle

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST EXHAUSTING

You probably remember where you were the day *Roe* fell. *Mother Jones* journalists do too: They were out reporting within minutes, publishing no fewer than 15 stories that day, and more than 100 in the months to come. Becca Andrews' haunting dispatches from Southern abortion clinics gave us a window on both despair and celebration, while Pema Levy and Stephanie Mencimer provided deep historical context on how the Supreme Court got to that point. These stories spoke to a vast swath of readers: *Mother Jones*' reproductive justice coverage consistently drives new audiences to our work, as posts and stories travel far outside our core readership. Videos posted on our social channels from the chaos of *Dobbs* day were some of our most engaged with and widest-reaching all year.

But the story did not end with the momentous decision. It began there. *Mother Jones* journalists are staying on the beat, shining a light on every part of the issue, and working with other newsrooms to maximize impact. We partnered with Rewire News Group, a publication focused on reproductive and sexual health, rights, and justice, to publish a comprehensive package on where our country goes from here. And in partnership with *Reveal* from the Center for Investigative Reporting, senior editor Kiera Butler exposed the online disinformation that is now targeting not just abortion, but birth control—a story recognized by the Global Investigative Journalism Network.

3.3 MILLION

**impressions on gender
justice videos across
social media platforms**

VIDEO

MOST UNIQUE POV

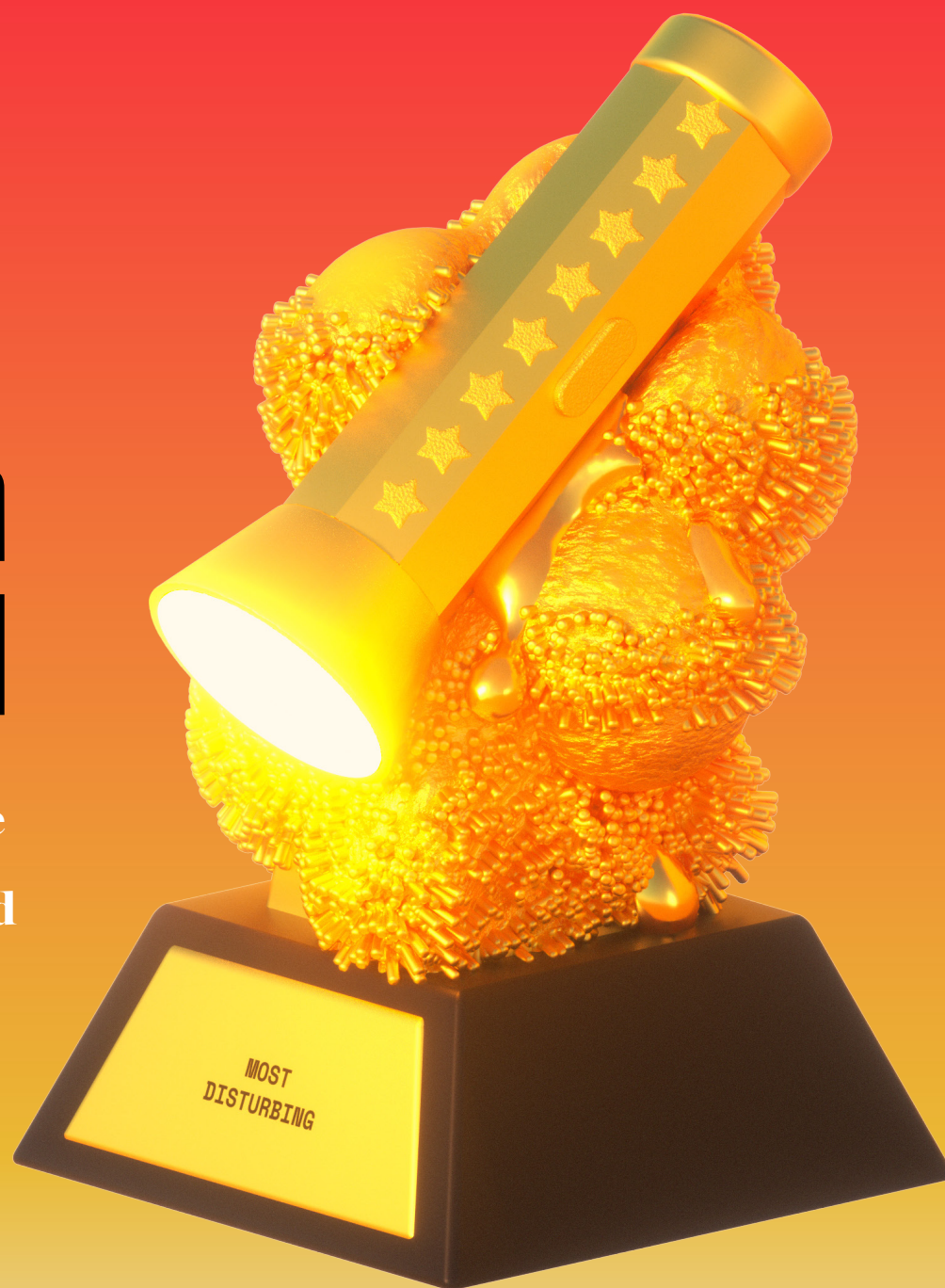


Inae Oh and Kiera Butler take the issues we're all talking about and come at them from fresh—and fiercely challenging—points of view.

MOST DISTURBING

Giving new meaning
to the phrase “We go there
so you don’t have to,” our
disinformation beat shined
a light on some truly
dark places

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST DISTURBING

“Underlying social structures—those that disproportionately place the burden of child care on mothers—make women susceptible. Purveyors of disinformation deliberately exploit those vulnerabilities.”

—Kiera Butler,
Mother Jones senior editor

In a story that received almost no other media attention but was one of the most-read stories on our site all year, reporter Ali Breland told the tale of [Amanda Moore](#), a woman who went undercover in MAGA world for months. It was an angle that only Ali, our leading expert on the most shadowy places on the internet, could have found. Reporting on fascists, fabulists, and memelords, Ali has exposed QAnon’s chief enabler and interpreted the Dark Brandon meme. He’s also written about some of the disinformation economy’s victims, like those who lost it all on the crypto exchanges, reporting that was cited by Sen. Elizabeth Warren in a letter to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

Ali is not the only *Mother Jones* reporter who makes a point of entering spaces where others fear to tread to investigate the way propaganda is wielded in culture-war battles. Kiera Butler has been paying close attention to how anti-vax, [anti-woke](#), and anti-trans influencers are courting online moms’ groups, garnering attention from advocates and media outlets alike. Stephanie Mencimer has gone deep on the right-wing conference circuit, where even far-right organizers respect her nuanced approach. Madison Pauly’s sharp backgrounder on one of the biggest cultural battles this year—the online crusades accompanying the Johnny Depp/Amber Heard trial—added critical context and substance to a story that elsewhere was covered with more heat than light. It was the second-most-read story on our site this year.

VIDEO

LOWKEY FUNNIEST



Abigail Weinberg and Stephanie Mencimer traveled deep into the heart of MAGA country and managed to find both humor and insanity while giving subjects a fair shake.

MOST AFFECTING

Reporter Samantha
Michaels spent a year
working to tell one woman's
harrowing story to ensure that
others wouldn't go untold

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST AFFECTING

W

When reporter Samantha Michaels learned that women who have been brutally abused are serving longer prison sentences than their abusers, she was first shocked and then determined to expose this injustice. She spent the following year investigating what are known as “failure to protect” laws—digging through countless court documents, speaking with advocates and policymakers, and working carefully and respectfully to gain the trust of women and families who might be willing to tell their stories. This resulted in a riveting exposé about Kerry King, who is serving 30 years in an Oklahoma prison while the

man who abused her and her child was incarcerated for just over half that time. *Mother Jones* digital producer Mark Helenowski teamed up with Samantha to produce an award-winning short documentary on this case, featuring activists, lawyers, and the people most deeply affected: King’s family.

Kerry King’s story is just one of many: Samantha’s investigation uncovered hundreds of cases where women, disproportionately women of color, have found themselves convicted of crimes when an abuser hurt their children. Data reporter Ryan Little helped Samantha conduct a groundbreaking review of about 1.5 million cases in Oklahoma—information they had to painstakingly scrape and analyze with tools Ryan built himself, so they could find out how common these convictions were and whom they affected.

This story was shared by high-profile journalists at the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Boston Globe*, *Insider*, *Bloomberg*, the Marshall Project, and ProPublica; even the *Hollywood Reporter* pushed this important story to its audience. Criminal justice advocates, legal bloggers, and lawyers from organizations like the ACLU also amplified the story and have used it in evidence for other cases, curricula, and lobbying efforts. More than half a dozen state lawmakers from both sides of the aisle wrote to share that they planned to sponsor legislation in their states to reform these laws. Samantha appeared on NPR’s *All Things Considered* to discuss the story, which has been republished in several outlets. This reporting package scored an Anthem Award, which honors mission-driven journalism that sparks change and inspires action. It was also nominated for two National Magazine Awards—the Oscars of the magazine world—for reporting and video, and won in the video category.

EIGHT

lawmakers
reached out about
changing laws

VIDEO

MOST LIKELY
TO MAKE US CRY



This award-winning short documentary features firsthand accounts of the failures of failure-to-protect laws

MOST HOPEFUL

Taking our award for most likely to offer solutions to what seems like an intractable problem, *Mother Jones*' gun violence beat offered a surprising dose of optimism

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST HOPEFUL

It's an indictment of America today that a reporter on the gun violence beat could easily be busy every day just writing news updates. But national affairs editor Mark Follman, reporting on this topic now for over a decade, has taken a different tack. As we lived through the déjà vu of repeated tragedies—in Uvalde, in Buffalo, in Colorado Springs, and elsewhere—*Mother Jones'* reporting focused on what can be done to prevent the next shooting, rather than the endless doomcycle of horror, thoughts and prayers, and no policy movement. Steeped in the research on behavioral threat assessment, a powerful tool that has already prevented multiple tragedies, Mark published story after story showing that there are viable solutions beyond the gridlock.

As a result, Mark appeared all over the place—on CNN, NBC, NPR, and KQED, and in the *Washington Post*—changing the dominant media narrative around mass shootings. Editor-in-Chief Clara Jeffery appeared on CNN as well, in a segment about how the news media can better cover mass shootings. Ten years after *Mother Jones* created a mass shootings database that has been cited as an authoritative source by countless journalists and researchers, that data remains one of the most-visited spots on our website.

192,000

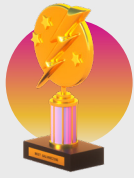
**visits to our mass
shooting database**

MOST GALVANIZING

**Reporters Sandy Tolan
and Euclides Cordero Nuel
spent two years investigating the
exploitative Dominican sugar
industry, and delivered a
devastating report that spurred
congressional intervention**

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST GALVANIZING

For more than three decades, journalist Sandy Tolan has been working on the untold story of abusive labor practices rampant in the sugar cane industry. Then he joined forces with local Dominican reporter Euclides Cordero Nuel, and in 2021 the pair published a powerful exposé in *Mother Jones*, in partnership with *Reveal* from the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR). It cast a bright light on the corrupt labor practices in sugar camps run by Central Romana, one of the biggest suppliers of sugar to the United States, and its owners, the billionaire Fanjul brothers.

While investigating, the reporters were contacted by the House Ways and Means Committee, and within weeks of publication in September 2021, the committee had issued a letter calling on the Biden administration to investigate forced labor in the Dominican Republic. As a result of this explosive story, which also earned an Overseas Press Club Award, Euclides and his family were forced to go into hiding. *Mother Jones*, CIR, and others worked to ensure his safety in the months after publication. In December, stories erupted that a work camp operated by Central Romana had been destroyed, displacing dozens of workers, just days before an official US visit. By Thanksgiving 2022, the House committee had issued a withhold release order that would ban sugar from Central Romana and other exploitative sugar companies. As of today, Central Romana is not allowed to send sugar to the United States, based on credible evidence of forced labor—evidence first reported in the pages of *Mother Jones*.

“Workers around the world deserve basic rights and protections, and a workplace free of forced labor.”

—House Ways and Means Committee

VIDEO

FURTHEST TRAVELERS



Jackie Flynn Mogensen and Isabela Dias took us beyond national borders this year, whether it was inside Brazilian political movements or onto a plane full of monkeys

MOST MIND-BLOWING

Readers have grown
to expect that our journalists
highlight underexplored
currents in our society, and
in 2022 we made sure to do
so in splashy fashion

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST MIND-BLOWING

P Private equity has become one of the most powerful hidden forces in our economy, touching nearly every sector of our lives, but it is barely covered outside the business pages. Hannah Levintova set out to change that, rallying the newsroom to produce a formidable package of 15 stories, including in-depth features, first-person accounts from those affected by private equity, and video investigating the fleecing of the American economy.

The package galvanized activists and led to several media appearances—including before the New York Financial Writers' Association and on the popular podcast *Lovett or Leave It*—where Hannah continued to illuminate how pervasive and pernicious the impact of private equity is on our lives. It also showed what the newsroom can do when it comes together to tackle one topic from many angles. This package was among the examples that led the American Society of Magazine Editors to nominate *Mother Jones* for a National Magazine Award for General Excellence and received two honorable mentions from the Society for Advancing Business Editing and Writing.

TWENTY-EIGHT

**editorial staff worked
on the package**

MOST DELIGHTFUL

Our search to tell stories
in the most compelling ways
has led us to expand our visual
imaginations and capture the
attention of new audiences

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

MOST DELIGHTFUL

Today, it's just as likely that someone is getting their news from TikTok as from a newspaper. In 2022, our first year on the platform, our videos were watched more than 1 million times. On Instagram, our videos were watched nearly 9 million times. Overall video views increased 20 percent in 2022 from the previous year, critically helping to reach new audiences.

As part of the work to turn the next generation of news junkies on to *Mother Jones*, we launched a Creator in Residence program in 2022 to match innovative online storytellers with the support and resources of our newsroom. Our inaugural creator is [Garrison Hayes](#), a former pastor based in Nashville, known for producing TikTok videos on topics such as Black history, faith, politics, and popular culture. His first video for *Mother Jones* focused on the Senate runoff in Georgia and highlighted the contrast between two different visions of Christianity, with incumbent Sen. Raphael Warnock's religious lineage tracing back to the civil rights movement, and challenger Herschel Walker advocating for right-wing Christian nationalism. Garrison produced an engaging digest of the issues at play. The video launch was followed by a social media blitz of over 30 clips, segments, and teasers across Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, collectively amassing nearly half a million views.

17.1 MILLION

video views in 2022

VIDEO

MOST LIKELY TO
TAKE US TO CHURCH



In Garrison Hayes' first video as *MoJo's* creator in residence, he explored how Christianity was on the ballot in the Senate runoff

No awards show would be complete without a list of people to thank. We'll keep it short (don't play us off!), but we'll start with the most important: you.

THANK YOU

Mother Jones





IMPACT REPORT 2022

THANK YOU

Our readers and donors are some of the most loyal and engaged in the news biz and we couldn't do our work without your support. It's only with your help that we can make impactful journalism. And to ensure you never miss a story, don't forget to sign up for the *Mother Jones* Daily: motherjones.com/newsletters

CREDITS

Last but certainly not least, we'd have no Jonesies without the hard work of the following people:

Report: Beth Eisenstaedt

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Web Development: Daniel Borges, Robert Wise

Project Support: Sydney Sims