SUMMER 2026

Impact Report

THE CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

ILLUSTRATION BY MAX-O-MATIC

Five Decades of Fearless Journalism

Fifty years ago, as the country marked its bicentennial, still reeling from President Richard Nixon's resignation and the end of the Vietnam War, an upstart independent investigative journalism magazine published its first issue. The prospects for American democracy looked grim at the time, but it was that post-Watergate moment—and the demand it created for journalism willing to hold power to account—that set *Mother Jones*' course for the five decades that followed. Now, with the guardrails of democracy being tested once again, and with legacy newsrooms from CBS News to *60 Minutes* and the *Washington Post*—among too many others—captured or cowed, *Mother Jones* stands ready for another 50 years of fearless, truth-to-power journalism.

The Throughline

We follow the longer arc of a story across time, stitching together the throughlines other newsrooms fail to see.

- ***Reveal*'s 2023** investigation into states removing mothers' custody of their children because they are on doctor-prescribed addiction-treatment medication led to new laws in Virginia and New Jersey barring hospitals from reporting women to child protective services simply for taking prescribed addiction-treatment medications during their pregnancies.

- **Noah Lanard's** February profile of US Rep. Cory Mills brought to light a litany of accusations against the Florida Republican, including sexual misconduct and stolen valor. Following the resignations of two House members in April 2026 amid allegations of sexual assault, fellow Republican Rep. Nancy Mace introduced a resolution to expel Mills for similar actions.

- **In 2023,** Julia Lurie reported about residential healthcare provider Universal Health Services' practice of keeping foster children in psychiatric facilities long past the need to do so, padding its bottom line. In May, both chambers of the Alaska legislature passed a bill to ensure greater oversight of foster youth in psychiatric facilities, becoming law in June. Lurie's reporting was cited by one of the bill's co-sponsors.

- **In February,** Hannah Levintova and Dan Friedman wrote about a peculiar contribution made by a charity established by Bill Pulte, then-director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, that appeared to be directed toward President Donald Trump's legal defense despite outward claims of "assistance to underserved people." As Levintova and Friedman noted, Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ron Wyden followed that reporting by sending a letter to Pulte demanding answers to the questionable donation.

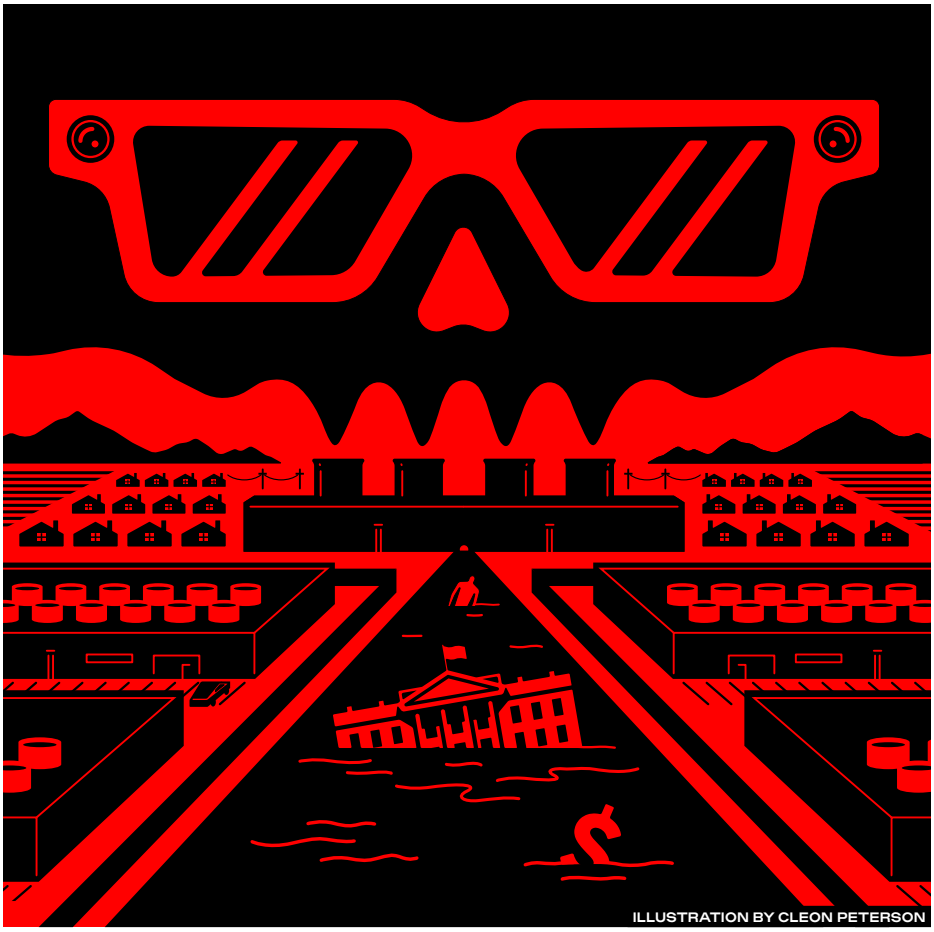

ILLUSTRATION BY CLEON PETERSON

POLITICS

Power Hungry

With a who's who of tech oligarchs—Zuckerberg, Bezos, and Musk among them—paying homage at President Donald Trump's 2025 inauguration, it appeared that the tech right's ascendancy had reached a zenith. The *Mother Jones* May+June issue's feature package, *Power Hungry*, explored how leading tech figures are exploiting their proximity to the administration and examined the implications of AI technology roiling our world, from data centers gobbling up land and natural resources to gene-editing startups promising superbabies, all guided by a vision among leading tech figures like Peter Thiel likening the AI revolution as divinely ordained.

Tim Murphy discussed his reporting on massive data centers upending communities on the *Bill Press Pod*, the *Michelangelo Signorile Show*, and the *Pitchfork Economics* podcast, while Abby Vesoulis' examination of the emerging industry promising to allow parents to "optimize" their offspring for superintelligence was cited by *KFF Health News*, listed by the *Best of Journalism* Substack, and selected by *Longreads* as one of its Editors' Picks. Bob Lord, senior vice president for tax policy with Patriotic Millionaires, penned "The American Experiment Has Been Infected by Oligarchs"—reporting that was promoted by Rep. Summer Lee in describing the impetus behind her introduction of the OLIGARCH Act.

It's not just major tech titans exploiting the rules for their gain. As Dan Friedman and Nick Schwellenbach reported earlier, the Department of Homeland Security awarded a nearly $1 billion contract to Salus Worldwide, led by a Trump insider, to manage "self-deportation" flights. Citing their reporting, six US senators sent a letter to Salus Worldwide inquiring about the company's contracts with DHS.

TECHNOLOGY

The Emerging Danger of AI Chatbots

Building on a history of reporting on the field of behavioral threat assessment, Mark Follman investigated the emerging danger of AI chatbots fueling acts of violence, including the mass shootings in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, and at Florida State University. In discussing the threat with mental health and law enforcement leaders, Follman found that many of those looking closely at the issue have determined that chatbots are uniquely capable of accelerating violent thinking and planning. As he describes, the companies behind these platforms show little interest in flagging troubling activity to law enforcement officials.

To see firsthand how AI platforms can be used to further acts of violence, Follman used ChatGPT to simulate planning a mass shooting—demonstrating on video how the chatbot provided him with extensive advice and encouragement on weapons and tactics, even after he discussed emulating the Uvalde shooter's choice of weapon.

With reporting widely cited by outlets including MS Now, *Futurism*, and the *New York Times*, Follman discussed his investigation on *Slate*'s *What Next: TBD* podcast. In June, the state of Florida, citing Follman's work, sued OpenAI for failing to protect the public from encouragement of self-harm, violence, and eating disorders.

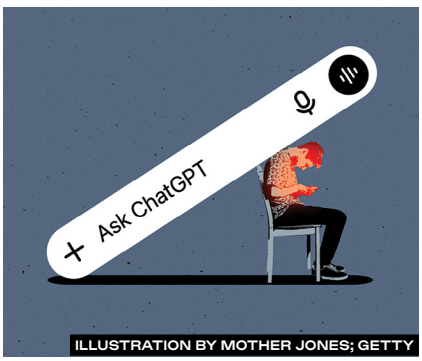

ILLUSTRATION BY MOTHER JONES; GETTY

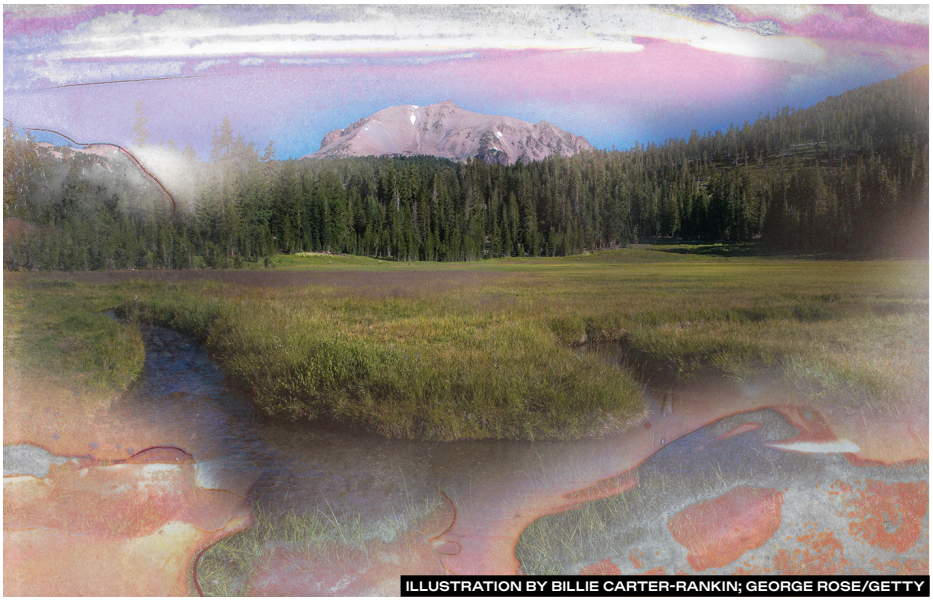

ILLUSTRATION BY BILLIE CARTER-RANKIN; GEORGE ROSE/GETTY

ENVIRONMENT

The Herbicide Quietly Destroying Our Forests

Glyphosate, the compound more commonly known as Roundup, has been the subject of scores of lawsuits in recent years alleging that the herbicide is making people sick—claims backed up by the World Health Organization's determination that it's a probable carcinogen. Nate Halverson dug into the state of California's increasing reliance on glyphosate in forests managed by the US Forest Service and private companies, with reporting in *Mother Jones* buoyed by a companion episode of *Reveal* and video demonstrating the stark contrast between untreated lands and those treated with glyphosate. Additional reporting by Halverson revealed that the Forest Service had already begun denuding state lands near Lake Tahoe with glyphosate, raising the ire of locals, including Olympic gold medalist Hannah Teter, and leading to a change.org petition calling for the cessation of spraying in the Tahoe Basin.

While the Supreme Court heard arguments in April on whether Roundup's parent company, the multinational pharmaceutical firm Bayer, deserved protection from lawsuits, Halverson made appearances on outlets including KQED (NPR-San Francisco) and *Democracy Now*, and his reporting was picked up by news outlets including *CalMatters*, *KFF Health News*, the *Daily Mail*, *Grist*, and the *Daily Beast*, among others.

Rep. Jim McGovern cited the investigation on social media, linking the Trump administration's executive order boosting glyphosate production to other environmentally dangerous policies. Rep. Chellie Pingree took to Bluesky to repost Halverson's reporting, noting, "This is a BOMBSHELL story—and one that makes my blood boil." In June, Pingree, along with Rep. Jared Huffman, sent a letter to the Forest Service demanding answers to questions raised in Halverson's reporting.

Further reporting by Halverson showed that, in determining the product's safety, the Environmental Protection Agency relied on a glyphosate study that was heavily influenced by Monsanto, which at the time was Roundup's parent company. Despite the EPA's own inspector general finding the research compromised, in late June, the Supreme Court ruled that Monsanto/Bayer could not be held liable in the case of a man who argued that Roundup's labeling did not warn that it could cause cancer, agreeing with the company that the EPA had determined it safe—despite, as Halverson noted, the agency's reliance on debunked science.

IMMIGRATION

The Pain of Family Separations

Samantha Michaels' latest dispatch about the real-world implications of Trump's immigration policies brought home the chaos and pain these practices wrought on families. Michaels chronicled the Perez family of Florida, with both parents in ICE detention centers in different states, as they awaited a court hearing that would determine whether their mother would be deported. Her work was cited by *Politico's Florida Playbook*, the *Sunday Long Read*, and *Talking Points*. One reader online posted, "read this and make these atrocities stop."

GLOBAL EVENTS

World Cup

While the World Cup brought the beautiful game to North America, *Reveal* zeroed in on two key questions surrounding the games: why so many people have been priced out of attending and who is gaining from the unprecedented amount of money that FIFA, soccer's governing body, is generating from the tournament. Alex Nguyen's interview with political scientist Jules Boykoff—cited by *Washington City Paper*—explored how sportswashing has become another tool in the authoritarian playbook. Nguyen's reporting, picked up by *Vox*, detailed how Trump's immigration policies are favoring white South Africans—the same policies denying entry to Africa's Referee of the Year prior to the World Cup.

ILLUSTRATION BY MOTHER JONES; GETTY

APRIL 1—JUNE 30

By the Numbers

26.3M
video views across platforms

217.2%
increase from summer 2025

4.6M
total engagements

35.6%
increase from summer 2025

72.6M
impressions

43.7%
increase from summer 2025

Top Social Stories

We Are Bombarding America's Forests With Roundup By Nate Halverson (April 2026) 87K views

Trump's Easter Message to Iran: "Open the Fuckin' Strait" or "You'll Be Living in Hell" By Alex Nguyen (April 5, 2026) 61K views

We Asked the White House If Trump Was Considering Nuking Iran. Its Response Was Chilling. By Noah Lanard (April 7, 2026) 53K views

Memphis Is "Under Full-Blown Occupation" by ICE. Here's Why You May Not Know That. By Samantha Michaels (May 18, 2026) 43K views

The Real Reason Tucker Carlson Is Turning on Trump By Alex Nguyen (April 21, 2026) 42K views

To support CIR's independent, unflinching journalism today, please scan the QR code.

ILLUSTRATION BY MOTHER JONES; LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ELECTIONS

The Gutting of the Voting Rights Act

The Supreme Court's gutting of the Voting Rights Act, coming just months before the midterm elections, has stripped away decades of legal voting protections and, as Ari Berman reported, threatens to take voting rights back to the Jim Crow era. Berman and Pema Levy teamed up with Garrison Hayes to discuss the implications of the court decision in a widely viewed video, with Levy noting that any state could, "under the guise of partisan gerrymandering, eliminate the voting rights of minority voters simply because they don't vote for your party"—themes they both explored with the CIR community in a webinar discussion moderated by CEO Monika Bauerlein in early June.

Berman expanded on his reporting through appearances across the media landscape, including the *Don Lemon Show*, *No Lie with Brian Tyler Cohen*, the *Joy Reid Show*, the *Majority Report*, the *Daily Blast with Greg Sargent*, Crooked Media's *Strict Scrutiny* podcast, MS Now's *All In with Chris Hayes*, and *Fresh Air*, among others. In reposting Levy's article likening the court's decision to the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case that established the "separate but equal" doctrine, Jamelle Bouie of the *New York Times* noted, "the basic logic of *Plessy*...undergirds every Roberts court ruling on the state's ability to deal with the effects of racism."

> **The basic logic of *Plessy*... undergirds every Roberts court ruling on the state's ability to deal with the effects of racism.**
>
> **Jamelle Bouie, columnist for the *New York Times***