



First
Look
Media
Works

Annual
Report

2019



The
Intercept_

FIELD_
OF_
VISION

PRESS
FREEDOM
DEFENSE
FUND

Contents

Note From the CEO	2
The Intercept	5
Field of Vision	17
Press Freedom Defense Fund	27
Financials	34
Supporters	35

Note from the CEO

Welcome to First Look.

Our mission is to support fearless investigative journalism, produce documentary cinema that explores the world through new perspectives, and defend those who are unjustly threatened in the pursuit of a free and open society and press.

Building on the successes of 2018, First Look delivered exceptional impact in 2019 through each of our three signature programs.

The Intercept broke news and ground on many fronts, further cementing its international reputation for intrepid reporting. The Iran Cables, a years long bombshell investigation in partnership with the New York Times, revealed Iran's vast influence in Iraq, government corruption on an unimagined level, and the costs of the U.S. invasion of Iraq to its own geopolitical position in the region. Exposés of corporate chicanery in the plastics industry sparked the introduction of legislation in Congress and a public reckoning for Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Coverage of a leaked trove of secret government chats catalyzed a national conversation in Brazil about abuse of power and judicial overreach and led to a Supreme Court decision supporting press freedom and the release from jail of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. On the climate front, The Intercept hosted "The Right to a Future," featuring Senior Correspondent Naomi Klein on stage with teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg.

The Intercept saw significant increases in its membership program, details of which you'll find later in this report. And it received many awards, among them Radio Television Digital News Association's 2019 National Edward R. Murrow Award and the Best of Photojournalism Award from the National Press Photographers Association.

In 2019, Field of Vision (FOV) supported filmmakers from communities whose voices have been historically ignored, won many awards, and recruited a new managing director to help steer its growth. Last year, FOV had 48 films in development or production, and I'm proud to report that FOV's commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, core to its mission, continued to be reflected among the filmmakers FOV supported: 54 percent identified as women, 43 percent were people of color, and two people were transgender.

FOV initiated a relationship with Korean director Yi Seung-Jun and funded "In the Absence," which was viewed 2.3 million times on its way to being shortlisted for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject. FOV ended 2019 with films in 104 festivals (more than doubling an ambitious goal for the year), 16 awards, and 13 nominations overall, including two for Oscars.

The Press Freedom Defense Fund expanded its mission to protect and defend journalists and their sources. Its collaboration with other NGOs amplified the Fund's impact, including through its formation, with the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, of a pro bono law firm, Lawyers for Reporters, to provide access to legal counsel for newly formed and small news organizations. The Fund strengthened its longstanding partnerships with the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the Freedom of the Press Foundation, among many others, to extend its global impact.

Maria Ressa, renowned journalist and a Time magazine 2018 Person of the Year, along with her online news publication Rappler, continued to be aggressively pursued by Rodrigo Duterte's regime in the Philippines. The Fund continued its financial leadership in supporting Maria in her globally consequential defense. So, too, did the Fund stand by National Security Agency whistleblower Reality Winner by arranging pro bono counsel as she sought clemency. The Fund provided domestic legal resources to help seven editors and reporters defend against efforts to prevent publication of articles critical of public institutions. It also provided training for lawyers across the country on defending reporters and their sources. By the end of the year, the Fund had participated in 15 amicus curiae efforts in support of core First Amendment freedoms.

As we compile this report in mid-2020, deep into the international COVID-19 pandemic and the uprising for social justice and racial equity following the police killing of George Floyd, we are proud of the many ways First Look took action during these crises. We will be certain to detail those activities in our 2020 Annual Report, and even now see that our rapidly growing membership is on track to increase 50 percent or more by the end of the year. Such signs of support invigorate our mission to exercise and defend free expression for a strong democracy and vibrant culture. We welcome you to our community.



Michael Bloom
Chief Executive Officer



Scott Warren, a volunteer with No More Deaths visits the site of now-closed copper mines outside Ajo, Ariz., on July 10, 2018. Photo: Laura Saunders for The Intercept

The Intercept

The Intercept was founded in 2014 as an investigative news publication engaged in fearless and adversarial journalism. That mission remains at the center of what The Intercept does.

In 2019, Intercept journalists exposed a cruel tangle of inequity and abuse in our world. Their work — aggressive and euphemism-free — included investigations of the U.S. government’s crackdown on undocumented immigrants and the humanitarians who wish to help them; political corruption in Washington, D.C. among both major parties; the scourge of capital punishment; and misinformation campaigns by far-right groups, as well as the president of the United States. The Intercept also engaged in innovative digital projects, such as a collaboration between artist Molly Crabapple and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on the Green New Deal.

In an era of economic and political adversity for most news outlets in America, The Intercept deepened its coverage of a society in crisis. We published a series of sharp-edged articles in 2019 about law enforcement abusing and harassing Black people — a year before the Black Lives Matter movement would be galvanized by the police murder of George Floyd. The Intercept also exposed the flip side of law enforcement’s racism with an eye-opening investigation of the FBI’s repeated failure to treat far-right violence for what it is: terrorism.

In addition to the groundbreaking articles published in 2019, prior work by The Intercept received acknowledgment of its significant impact. In a historic decision in September 2019, a federal judge ruled that a secret U.S. terrorism watchlist published by The Intercept in 2014 violated the rights of Americans who were on the list. A few months earlier in 2019, the Federal Election Commission announced one of the most significant enforcement actions in its history, citing a 2016 investigation by The Intercept that revealed a Super PAC supporting the presidential candidacy of Jeb Bush had illegally accepted financial donations from a Chinese corporation.

The Intercept turned five years old in 2019. The half-decade mark — reached as our staff produced more stories than in any prior year, with more visitors and membership signups than before — constitutes a milestone. The Intercept has created a unique and durable role for itself in the world of nonprofit journalism, proving the necessity and urgency of its progressive concept.

Racism and Bias in Policing

The recent rise in far-right violence has led to a recognition that law enforcement agencies have historically paid insufficient attention to the threat posed by white extremists. In a major investigative series that relied on extensive data analysis, The Intercept examined federal prosecutions since 9/11 and found that the Justice Department routinely declined to bring terrorism charges against right-wing extremists even when their crimes



Illustration: Katherine Lam for The Intercept

appear to have met the legal definition of domestic terrorism. The series, titled “The Threat Within,” also revealed how the FBI made ecoterrorism its No. 1 domestic threat, despite the fact that the movement had never killed anyone. Our reporters examined the long history of the Justice Department and the FBI exaggerating threats from not just environmentalists, but other left-wing actors — even creating out of whole cloth new categories of extremist ideologies, such as “black identity extremism.” These stories, coming before the police killing of George Floyd, presciently cast a spotlight on the indelibly racist and biased nature of policing in America.

Abuse of Immigrants

The Intercept’s intense coverage of immigration was two-pronged, with investigative reporting on the government’s crackdown on humanitarians who dared to stand in its way, as well as exposés on the racism within the ranks of law enforcement authorities on the border. The powerful tenor of our coverage was conveyed in the headline for one of our major immigration stories: “Scott Warren Worked to Prevent Migrant Deaths in the Arizona Desert. The Government Wants Him in Prison.” The Intercept revealed that the head of the Border Patrol, Carla Provost, was a member of a secret Facebook group filled with racist content (Provost, who retired in January 2020, was grilled about the group during a congressional hearing). One of our stories on this private Facebook group revealed the names of more than 20 agents whose postings were violent, racist, and misogynistic; six of them were subsequently fired. Our staff also connected the dots on an underreported phenomenon: It wasn’t just activists who were harassed by U.S. authorities for

their work on the country’s southern border, but also journalists and lawyers. The Intercept’s story exposing that unconstitutional harassment was cited in multiple lawsuits and in reports by the American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International.

Misinformation

The Intercept published a series of investigative articles that led the way in debunking a conspiracy theory that the Republican Party circulated to undermine the impeachment of President Donald Trump. The baseless theory held that as vice president, Joe Biden tried to protect his son’s business interests in Ukraine. The Intercept’s Robert Mackey, who had reported on Ukraine for a number of years, wrote several early and influential articles that exposed the lies being circulated by the GOP and Trump himself. Ukraine’s leading anti-corruption activist cited our work as showing that the conspiracy theory was “absolute nonsense.” In addition, The Intercept’s James Risen, whose original reporting on Biden in 2015 was distorted by the conspiracy theorists, cleared the air in an unforgiving article. “It’s strange to see my journalism twisted, perverted, and turned into lies and poisonous propaganda by Donald Trump, Rudy Giuliani, and their enablers,” Risen wrote. “But that’s what has happened to a news story I wrote four years ago.”

Iranian Intelligence Files

While leaks of U.S. intelligence documents have become almost routine since the disclosures by NSA contractor Edward Snowden in 2013, it is virtually unheard of for an American news organization to publish a cache of sensitive documents from a foreign intelligence agency. But in an unprecedented leak from one of the world’s most secretive regimes, an anonymous source



Illustration: The Intercept

provided 700 pages of Iranian intelligence reports to The Intercept, explaining that they wanted to “let the world know what Iran is doing in my country Iraq.” The documents exposed Tehran’s vast influence in Iraq, detailing years of work to co-opt Iraq’s leaders and infiltrate every aspect of its political life. The Intercept devoted significant time and resources to translating the documents

from Farsi to English, and then co-published a major story about them with the New York Times. In addition, The Intercept published several other articles drawn from the files — revealing Iran’s secret war against the Islamic State and a historic summit with the Muslim Brotherhood in Turkey — as well as a widely viewed video documentary about the project.

The Democratic Party’s Future

The battle in 2019 for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination was a struggle between progressives like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren and centrists like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. The Intercept’s reporting examined two areas that were under-covered during the campaign: The popularity of progressive positions on, for instance, Medicare for All and the Green New Deal, and the disconnect between centrists and the constituencies they claim to represent. The Intercept revealed, for instance, that prominent Black politicians whom the Pete Buttigieg campaign listed as endorsing his “Douglass Plan” had not, in fact, endorsed it. Another story revealed that Biden, a day after attending a climate forum, went to a fundraiser co-hosted by the founder of a fossil fuel company. The Intercept also published scores of articles revealing the corrosive influence of money and lobbying on politics and policymaking, with a special emphasis on the energy industry, big pharma, Silicon Valley, private prisons, and surveillance companies. Meanwhile, a widely circulated article by Mehdi Hasan noted an inconvenient truth about Democratic Party politics: On a variety of key issues, including higher taxes on the wealthy, free college tuition, and increasing the federal minimum wage, progressives “are the true centrists, the real moderates; they represent the actual political middle.”

Brazil’s “Car Wash” Scandal

The impact of The Intercept’s journalism reaches well beyond U.S. borders. In June, The Intercept and The Intercept Brasil began publishing a series of

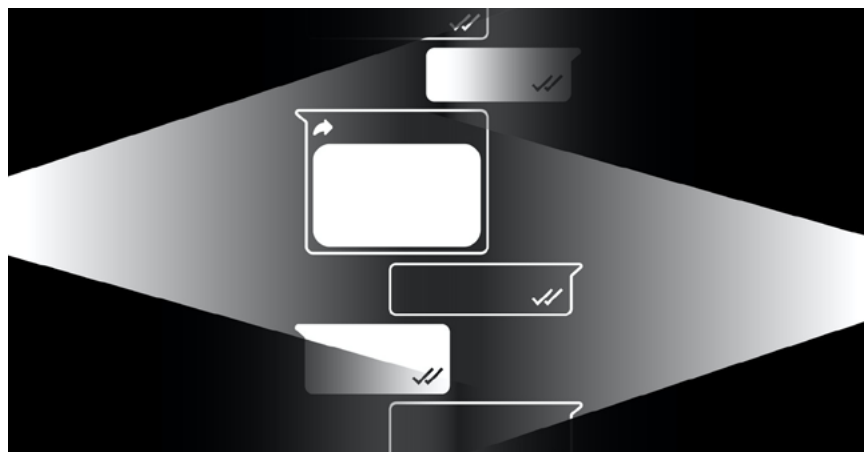


Illustration: The Intercept

blockbuster investigative articles that led to the release of the country’s former president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, from prison. Lula had been

imprisoned as part of an anti-corruption investigation known as Operation “Lava Jato” or Car Wash. His removal from the political scene opened the path for Jair Bolsonaro to become Brazil’s leader. However, the leak to The Intercept’s Glenn Greenwald of chat logs, audio recordings, videos, and other documentation revealed that the prosecutors in the Car Wash probe had collected illegal evidence and secretly conspired to undermine Lula’s right to a fair trial. These stories changed the public’s perception of the once pristine reputation of the Car Wash prosecutors, most notably Justice Minister Sergio Moro.

Video: “Message From the Future” With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

In 2019, The Intercept’s team of video journalists demonstrated the breadth of their capabilities, producing an array of short documentaries and op-ed videos, as well as broadcasts of live events. One of the most innovative and



Still: A Message From the Future/The Intercept

popular videos of the year was a collaborative work between artist Molly Crabapple and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, titled “Message From the Future,” which invited viewers to imagine a future in which the Green New Deal had been realized. The video became an award-winning sensation viewed more than 12 million times on a variety of platforms. Another award-winning production from the video team was a live event, called “The Right to a Future,” which featured climate activist Greta Thunberg in conversation with Naomi Klein, a senior Intercept columnist. The team also created a searing short documentary, using surveillance footage from an ICE detention facility, about the final hours of a mentally ill detainee whose neglectful treatment at the facility led to his suicide.

Environmental Justice

The narrative favored by industries that pollute the Earth tends to be simple: They are doing better all the time and on a path to sustainable operations that won’t harm the environment. The Intercept’s environmental reporter, Sharon

Lerner, has for years debunked these lies, and in 2019, she produced a series of stories that led to major companies abandoning the lobbyists that were disseminating them. Her 9,000-word story, “Waste Only: How the Plastics Industry Is Fighting to Keep Polluting the World,” helped force companies including PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, and Dow to announce that they would leave the Plastics Industry Association, which had been involved in years of deceptive lobbying campaigns. Another story, “A Tale of Two Toxic Cities,” exposed the unequal federal response to pollution in two communities — one mostly white and one mostly Black. That story examined 109 census tracts that had an elevated cancer risk from air pollution and led to communities across the country realizing that their air was contaminated with carcinogens. One of those communities, Covington, Georgia, subsequently shuttered a medical sterilization facility that had indelibly polluted the air.

Death Penalty Database

The death penalty is the most severe and controversial punishment that a government can impose. Forty-three years after the Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment, it was pretty much impossible to find reliable



Illustration: Karolis Strautniekas for The Intercept

nationwide data on the number of people who were placed on death row and what had happened to them. How many were executed, how many died awaiting execution, how many were exonerated or had their sentences commuted — and did the race of the condemned influence those outcomes? In a major investigative project, The Intercept painstakingly examined death sentence records across the country and came up with the first definitive count: since 1976, 7,335 death sentences were handed down, 1,448 people were executed, 2,752 were currently on death row, and 3,135 were no longer on death row. The project revealed that the racial imbalance of death sentences — with Black people being disproportionately represented — has actually worsened over the years. The dataset assembled by The Intercept is proving essential to death penalty scholars and litigators.

PODCASTS

In 2019, The Intercept grew the audiences of its main podcasts, “Intercepted” and “Deconstructed,” while also unveiling the first season of “Murderville,” a true-crime podcast hosted by reporters Liliana Segura and Jordan Smith. In “Murderville,” Segura and Smith uncovered the stunning tale of what



Photo: Ryan Christopher Jones for The Intercept

happened when law enforcement in Georgia locked up a murder suspect who was innocent, while the real killer remained free to continue a lethal crime spree. Set in Adel, a small town, the series begins with a murder that took place in 1998, when a single mom was killed by gunshot at the local Taco Bell. Police investigators quickly put a man in jail, but some 18 months later, a second brutal murder shocked Adel again. Segura and Smith spent three years interviewing residents, law enforcement, witnesses, and families of victims. “Murderville” laid bare the consequences of one wrongful conviction. The podcast launched in late November 2018 and has been downloaded more than 3.6 million times. It was a finalist for a Deadline Club award and was named by Oprah Magazine as one of the 12 best new podcasts of 2019.



Photo: Elise Swain/The Intercept

The Intercept’s flagship podcast, “Intercepted,” hosted by co-founding editor Jeremy Scahill, challenged dominant media narratives throughout 2019. “Intercepted” was one of the only journalistic efforts to examine how the long

history of America’s imperialism still plays a fundamental role in our foreign policy. With over 6.4 million downloads in 2019, the podcast offered its listeners a range of sharp insights on U.S. intervention in Iran, Venezuela, and Haiti, among other countries. One of the year’s most popular episodes was cheekily titled, “Regime Change We Can Believe In.”



Photo: The Intercept

“Deconstructed,” hosted by Senior Columnist Mehdi Hasan, combines in-depth political analysis with hard-hitting interviews of some of the most influential voices in the U.S., with guests ranging from politicians to activists, scholars and decision makers. High-profile guests in 2019 included Rep. Ilhan Omar, Pete Buttigieg, Beto O’Rourke, Sen. Bernie Sanders, Arundhati Roy, Cornel West, Michael Moore, and Julián Castro. The audience for “Deconstructed” rose 48 percent from the previous year, with over 3.8 million listens in 2019.

THE INTERCEPT BRASIL

The Intercept Brasil, with its own staff of journalists in Rio de Janeiro, had a blockbuster 2019. The “Vaza Jato” series, based on exclusive leaks of sensitive conversations between government prosecutors, revealed serious abuses and political bias in the government’s Operation Car Wash anti-corruption investigation. It sent shockwaves through the national political establishment and is attributed with leading to ex-President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva’s early release from prison. The Intercept Brasil also had many other groundbreaking investigations throughout the year.

An exclusive investigation (published in English and Portuguese) revealed Fiat Brazil’s history of collaboration with the military dictatorship’s secret police during the 1970s and 1980s, prompting a government inquiry into the company’s alleged violation of workers’ human rights during that tragic period of Brazilian history. TIB also published exclusive recordings of secret meetings in which officials in the far-right Bolsonaro government revealed their plan to colonize and deforest the Amazon. The article caused an uproar. The plan was killed and the general who led the project was fired, reportedly because Bolsonaro blamed him for the leak. The story also caused the government to reverse a plan to permit a luxury hotel to be built on Indigenous land against

the wishes of local leaders. In another story, TIB reported that a federal regulator allowed doctors to administer treatments on pregnant women against their will; the measure was eventually overturned. And TIB published a consequential #MeToo story about a well-known media personality who was fired after TIB released recordings in which he threatened to kill his ex-fiancé.

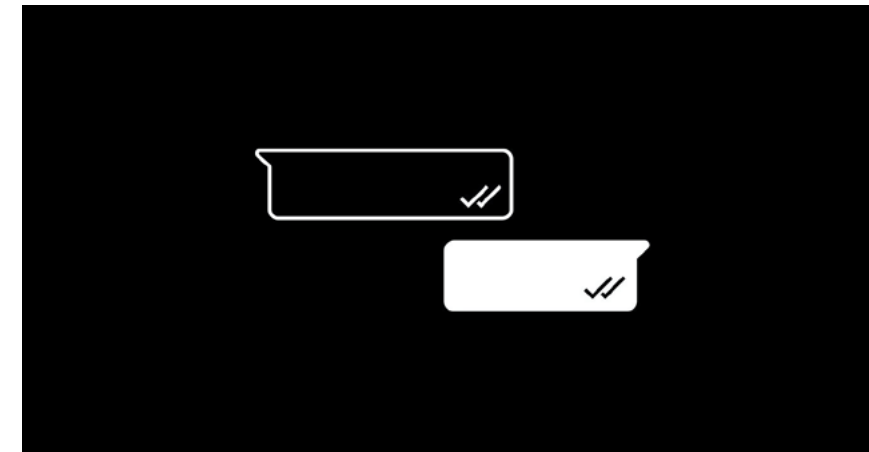


Illustration: The Intercept Brasil

In 2018, The Intercept Brasil had the most successful crowdfunding campaign in the history of journalism in Brazil. Fueled by its hugely impactful “Vazo Jato” reporting, more than 16,000 people joined The Intercept Brasil’s new membership program in 2019. The organization now boasts the single largest recurring membership program, media or otherwise, in the entire country.

AWARDS

The Intercept and The Intercept Brasil won 10 journalism awards in 2019, and their articles were finalists for dozens of other prizes in the U.S. and abroad, including an Edward R. Murrow Award, a Sigma Delta Chi Award, a Society for Environmental Journalists Award for Reporting on the Environment, a Southern California Journalism Award, and Brazil’s Vladimir Herzog Award, one of the most prestigious journalism awards in Latin America.

AUDIENCE

The Intercept, which has always punched above its weight in audience and impact, honed its audience strategy in 2019, emphasizing reader engagement and maintaining a diverse pool of traffic sources.

A dynamic, 24-hour approach on Twitter continued to see great success, with an overall growth rate for The Intercept’s main account of 37 percent — more than double our growth rate the year prior. Combined with the reach of our writers, The Intercept has millions of followers on Twitter. The year saw a renewed effort to capture West Coast and international readers, with a data-focused approach that drove our late-evening strategy.

On Facebook, The Intercept's overall engagement continues to rank among the very highest for top-tier news publishers, with shares and overall conversation routinely outpacing those of much larger publications, while still adhering to the high journalistic standards that our readership has come to expect. On Instagram, after experiencing explosive growth over the previous year, we developed a new approach to producing top-notch graphics and visuals to increase engagement with readers. But audience enlargement wasn't just about Twitter and Facebook. We strengthened our presence on platforms like Apple News and other publishing partners, and further bolstered our YouTube presence, where subscribers increased by 143 percent. As a result of those efforts, we are often able to drive tens of thousands of page views to our pieces from a variety of sources, developing the widest entry point possible for new readers.

MEMBERSHIP

In 2019, The Intercept had a landmark year for its membership program, which has emerged as a model for the news industry because of its fast growth and intense member commitment. More than 34,000 people in the United States stepped up to invest in The Intercept's reporting with their membership gift — a 90 percent increase from 2018. In their own words, Intercept members see the news organization as “vital to maintain[ing] democracy in the face of increasing fascism.” They support The Intercept because it is “continually finding the stories that nobody else is reporting on” and is “willing to bring anyone to task that needs it.”

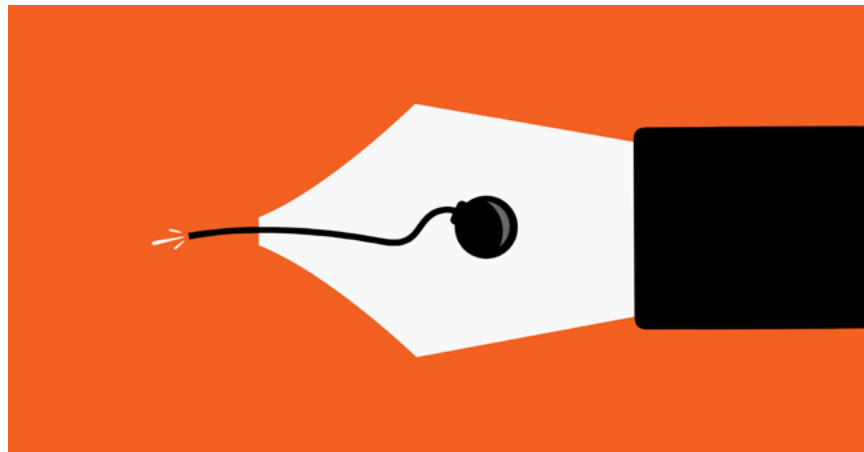


Illustration: Angus Greig for The Intercept

Overall, more than 50,000 people supported The Intercept as members in 2019, giving gifts between \$1 to over \$10,000 USD. Said one supporter, “I should pay for them because our world is under attack and truth needs to see the light of day. Responsible paid journalists are our best hope against totalitarianism.”

LOOK AHEAD TO 2020

In 2020, The Intercept has aggressively reported the story of the coronavirus pandemic at the same time that the newsroom was living through it. The Intercept's mission proved perfectly suited to covering this worldwide catastrophe, and its stories have landed with powerful impact at a critical time. From reporting on big pharma's profiteering at the expense of public health, to the privacy encroachments of newly prevalent technologies such as Zoom, to the desperation unfolding in prisons and ICE detention centers and the callous treatment of “essential” workers, to police brutality and the protests for Black lives, The Intercept has used its reporting muscle to grapple with the issues that have shaped our lives and our democracy at this unprecedented moment.

FIELD_ OF_ VISION



Still: America/Field of Vision

Field of Vision

Since its founding, Field of Vision has been committed to supporting visual journalism and cinematic filmmaking from around the world. The voices it supports tell the most pressing stories of our times through innovative approaches and from different and wide-ranging perspectives.

For far too long, the field of documentary filmmaking has been dominated by the perspectives of a very limited few, at the expense of marginalized communities. Field of Vision's core mission is to disrupt and shift this paradigm to one of expansion, innovation, and inclusion both in front of and behind the camera, and to advocate for filmmakers in how they're supported, both within their practice and within the wider field.

Field of Vision is a filmmaker-driven organization that supports timely and creative responses to unfolding political moments, such as President Rodrigo Duterte's deadly anti-drug campaign in the Philippines, the protests in Hong Kong, and the rise of right-wing extremism in the United States. In tandem, it prioritizes and supports the long-term career sustainability of the artists who tell these vital stories.

In 2019, Field of Vision made significant progress in supporting more crucial storytelling than ever before. Early in its inception, Field of Vision focused primarily on short films and episodic series. In 2018, Field of Vision decided to expand the funding of feature-length projects and create a greater strategy within this space. Now, Field of Vision has 48 films in production or development: 29 features and 19 shorts.

Field of Vision's model for feature funding is guided by core values, of supporting filmmakers and advocating for them within the field. Our goal within the feature-filmmaking space is to be more expansive with grants and investments in projects that are both ambitious in scale and manifest bold and risk-taking artistic vision. As always, Field of Vision seeks to challenge entrenched beliefs, and the feature-length projects we work with both expand the stories filmmakers tell and challenge what is seen as commercially viable.

Both the features and shorts supported by Field of Vision have premiered at top-tier film festivals such as Sundance, Cannes, TIFF, the Berlinale, SXSW, Hot Docs, Tribeca, and International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, among many others, and have garnered numerous accolades and awards.

2019: A YEAR OF EXPANSION

Building on the successes of previous years, 2019 was a milestone year for Field of Vision. We furthered our commitment to supporting cinematic innovation, advocacy, and inclusion; generated revenue for the first time; substantially increased online viewership; and expanded our mission to include support for emerging film organizations.

Since our inception, Field of Vision has championed diversity in the documentary field. We prioritize working with artists from as many different lived experiences as possible and believe that supporting their work is vital to our success, as well as to the long-term sustainability of the documentary field. As of 2019, 54 percent of the filmmakers Field of Vision supported identified as female, and 43 percent identified as people of color.

In 2019, Field of Vision generated revenue for the first time, the beginning of a long-term strategy toward greater sustainability. This revenue generation was due in part to our first major sale of the award-winning short film “Ghosts of Sugar Land” to Netflix, a meaningful success in terms of reaching a wider, more mainstream audience for our projects.

Field of Vision’s goal to reach more viewers is also reflected in the engagement with films published directly on our website and social media channels. The online audience for our short films grew by 68 percent in 2019 through concerted planning, strategy, and partnerships with outlets such as The Guardian, the New Yorker, and the arts and culture magazine Hyperallergic.

In addition to providing project-based funding and yearlong creative fellowships to filmmakers and artists, Field of Vision has evolved its mission to include supporting emerging nonprofit film organizations. The first step in this new path is the sponsorship of No Evil Eye Cinema, an underground micro-cinema that aims to redefine the creative and social parameters of film by curating an eclectic mix of films and accessible educational workshops. Their goal is to cultivate community dialogue and critique, foster a physical space for creatives and community members who have historically been ostracized from cinephilic spaces and denied access to art and cultural resources, center youth and teen creativity via workshops, and deliberately carve a space with an anti-colonial perspective.

In line with our evolution into a broad supporter of films, filmmakers, and the documentary field at large, we appointed our first-ever managing director and two other full-time staff positions, as well as an editorial intern.

SUCCESS STORIES

Below are some of the projects that represent Field of Vision’s long-term commitment to supporting filmmakers who are dedicated to making bold, artistic, and groundbreaking documentaries.

America

Directed by 2018 Field of Vision fellow and frequent collaborator Garrett Bradley, “America” is a modern-day silent film that challenges the idea of Black cinema as a “wave,” or “movement in time,” proposing instead a continuous thread of achievement. Inspired by “Lime Kiln Club Field Day,” the first known film to feature an all-Black cast, “America” reinterprets a lost history in African-American cinema. “America” is Bradley’s third film with Field of Vision. Her other projects include “Like,” a short film about laborers within the “click-farms” of Bangladesh, and “The Earth is Humming”, an exploration of how disaster preparedness shapes everyday life in Japan and has evolved into a major industry.

In an unprecedented move in the distribution and promotion of short films, the Brooklyn Academy of Music curated “Garrett Bradley’s America: A Journey Through Race and Time,” a special weeklong program that situated “America” as the focal piece. The program included screenings and conversations with acclaimed Black filmmakers like Julie Dash (“Daughters of the Dust”) and Oscar nominee RaMell Ross (“Hale County This Morning, This Evening”), and events that included scholar and MacArthur Fellow Saidiya Hartman, live musical accompaniment by the late legendary jazz drummer Jimmy Cobb, and a retrospective of Bradley’s work. The BAM series rightfully situated Bradley and her work in the ever-expanding independent film canon.

Hyperallergic named the program one of the Top 10 Brooklyn Art Shows of 2019, further validating Field of Vision’s belief in the value of short films, and of the combined merits of vital stories and visionary artistic approach.

Field of Vision’s ongoing support of Bradley and her work is exemplary of the kind of impact the organization hopes to continue to have with filmmakers: going beyond a single-project focus, elevating and providing a meaningful platform for artists who are consistently challenging narratives, and creating and exploring artistic innovation.

“America” will be released in 2021.

Ghosts of Sugar Land

Directed by 2019 Field of Vision fellow Bassam Tariq, “Ghosts of Sugar Land” focuses on a group of young Muslim-American men as they ponder the disappearance of their friend “Mark,” who is suspected of joining the Islamic State, against a backdrop of increasing Islamophobia in the United States.

The film won the short film jury award for nonfiction at the Sundance Film Festival and was later sold to Netflix – Field of Vision’s first major sale of a short film to the streaming platform. It was also included on the 2019 Oscar shortlist for Best Documentary Short Subject.



Still: Ghosts of Sugar Land/Field of Vision

“Ghosts of Sugar Land’s” trajectory demonstrates our core belief in the importance of filmmakers telling stories from within their own communities, and that they result in not only authentic and compelling films, but also commercial and critical success.

Scenes From a Dry City

When Cape Town officials began warning citizens about the imminent arrival of “Day Zero,” the date on which the city’s water taps would be turned off following three years of persistent drought in the region, South Africa-based filmmakers Francois Verster and Simon Wood immediately began filming. Verster and Wood’s documentary short “Scenes From a Dry City” looks at the terrifying march toward “Day Zero” from the perspective of Cape Town residents, particularly those who are Black and working class.



Still: Scenes From a Dry City/Field of Vision

After a successful festival run, the film debuted online in partnership with The Atlantic in March. Since then, it has been programmed around the world,

including a special screening at the Stockholm International Water Institute, as part of an effort to raise awareness regarding international and national water issues.

“Scenes From a Dry City” exemplifies the continued success Field of Vision has had throughout its history of putting out timely, creative responses to current and unfolding events, with local filmmakers going beyond the day’s headlines to give an in-depth and artistic perspective on the unfolding situation.

In the Absence

In 2017, Field of Vision reached out to celebrated South Korean filmmaker Yi Seung-jun to explore making a film about the Candlelight Revolution, a series of protests against South Korea’s then-president. The filmmakers instead suggested that a more vital film would be to depict the mishandling of the 2014 Sewol ferry incident, in which over 300 people, mostly high school students, drowned – a major factor in the growing outrage against the president at the time.



Still: In the Absence/Field of Vision

The resulting film was “In the Absence,” a breathtaking and never-before-seen play-by-play of the ferry sinking and the gross negligence perpetrated by the national government. Combining astounding footage and testimonials from the victims’ families and rescue divers, “In the Absence” gives a unique and complete picture of the tragedy.

The film premiered at DOC NYC, where it won the short film jury prize and qualified for the 92nd Academy Awards. “In the Absence” debuted online in partnership with the New Yorker in April 2019 on the five-year anniversary of the sinking of the Sewol ferry. Since its online release, the film has been viewed over 2.3 million times.

“In the Absence” was included in the 2019 Oscar Shortlist for Best Documentary Short Subject and was nominated for an International Documentary Association Award for Best Short. The film was also licensed by Al Jazeera.

“In the Absence” is representative of Field of Vision’s “filmmaker-driven” ethos: When a filmmaker’s vision is placed at the forefront of the commissioning process, the highest caliber of filmmaking, acclaim, and audience will follow.

The film’s trajectory demonstrates Field of Vision’s ability as a funder and commissioner to identify vital stories and the filmmakers who tell them.

XY Chelsea

Whistleblower Chelsea Manning had been making headlines since 2013. A former U.S. Army intelligence analyst, Manning released classified documents that highlighted the torture of detainees at the hands of the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2016, after a conversation with filmmaker Tim Travers Hawkins, and recognizing the importance and urgency of her story, Field of Vision brought the film into the company for further development. It became the first co-funding partnership on a film for both Field of Vision and Topic Studios.



Still: XY Chelsea/Field of Vision

Manning was ultimately convicted of violating the Espionage Act and received a 35-year prison sentence in an all-male maximum-security prison, which was eventually commuted by President Barack Obama in 2017. What began as a very specific film on Manning and her sentence became something very different, and the narrative had to change drastically once Manning was released. Shot over two years and featuring exclusive interviews and behind-the-scenes verité with Manning, the film picks up on the momentous day in May when she leaves prison and follows her through her journey of discovery, while also examining her place in the conversation on national security and the fight of the transgender community for rights and visibility.

“XY Chelsea” went on to great success and premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival. It was nominated for two News and Documentary Emmy Awards and eventually released on Showtime.

The Proposal

For her first film, world renowned artist Jill Magid wanted to bring the work of Mexican architect Luis Barragán back to life. Barragán was one of the most celebrated architects of the 20th century and after his death in 1988, much of his work remained locked away in a Swiss bunker, hidden from the world by one collector who kept it inaccessible to the public.



Still: The Proposal/Field of Vision

After originally conceiving of and releasing the project as a gallery-based art installation, Magid approached Field of Vision with the idea for a short film in 2015 in a further attempt to resurrect Barragán’s work. Though internationally recognized in the art world, Magid had never made a film. Field of Vision supported her in this new medium by assisting her in building a team and guiding her through the production process for over three years. As the project evolved, Field of Vision further became a major supporter for what eventually resulted in a feature-length film that saw great commercial success. “The Proposal” is an engaging and hypnotic examination of artistry, a testament to an architect’s life and work, but also a film about copyright law and accessibility that interrogates notions of ownership.

The film premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and was then released theatrically in 23 cities by Oscilloscope Laboratories, with its NYC theatrical premiere at the IFC Center. The film was released digitally on multiple platforms, furthering its global audience. While widely successful, “The Proposal” also importantly illustrates Field of Vision’s commitment to collaboratively supporting the creative process from concept to completion, even with those practicing primarily in other art forms.

UPDATE ON PREVIOUS SUCCESS STORIES: 2019 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS

Following Oscar and Primetime Emmy nominations for “Strong Island” in 2018 – which made history as director Yance Ford became the first transgender director to be nominated for an Oscar – two Field of Vision-supported films earned Academy Award nominations in 2019.

Marshall Curry’s “A Night at the Garden,” a documentary short on a 1939 American Nazi rally in New York City, received an Academy nomination for Best Documentary Short Subject. Originally the film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and later debuted online at The Atlantic with over 3 million views.

“Hale County This Morning, This Evening,” an experimental meditation on Black life in the deep American South directed by first-time filmmaker RaMell Ross, received an Academy nomination for Best Documentary Feature. “Hale County” was also nominated for a 2019 Primetime Emmy Award for Exceptional Merit in Documentary Filmmaking and for two 2019 Independent Spirit Awards. “Hale County” previously won the Creative Vision Jury Award at Sundance. Field of Vision supported the film very early in its development.

Both films have been lauded for shedding much-needed light on the current sociopolitical moment through artistic filmmaking.

LOOK AHEAD TO 2020

In the first few months of 2020, four Field of Vision-supported films premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival: “Disclosure,” which examines the representation of transgender people in film and television; “The Fight,” which has unique access to several lawyers of the ACLU; “Church and the Fourth Estate,” a harrowing short film about sexual abuse in the Boys Scouts of America and the organization’s ties to the Mormon Church; and “Do Not Split,” a short film that was filmed on the ground during the 2019 Hong Kong protests.

In 2020, Field of Vision will expand Field Notes, which began as an interview series with Field of Vision filmmakers, into an online publication and forum for the discussion of nonfiction filmmaking. Field Notes will be an online journal for original writing on nonfiction filmmaking, which will create a new space for greater writing about the artform – something the documentary community has long been asking for. It will include commissioned essays, conversations, and journalism from a wide range of filmmakers, artists, and critics.

The Field of Vision website will be built into a destination for filmmakers and raise our profile in the field. It will showcase the feature-length films we fund and expand resources for filmmakers, including, in partnership with the Freedom of the Press Foundation, an online security guide for filmmakers who want to protect themselves, their footage, and sources.

As the Covid-19 pandemic began to unfold in early 2020, Field of Vision consulted with filmmakers on the effects they were facing and quickly responded to the needs faced by a largely freelance, independent filmmaking community. Adapting our organizational priorities, we set up a free virtual consultation and mentorship service for filmmakers in early March. In early April, we launched, in partnership with Topic Studios, a \$250,000 Documentary Freelancer Relief Fund, open to freelancers in the documentary field worldwide. In addition to publishing a supplementary resource directory for filmmakers, we partnered with Sundance and Doc Society to create a new risk assessment resource for documentary filmmakers as they navigated the health and safety challenges raised by the pandemic.



Philippine journalist Maria Ressa (center) gives a statement after posting bail at a regional trial court in Manila on February 14, 2019. Photo: Noel Celis/AFP via Getty Images

The Press Freedom Defense Fund

The crisis facing journalism has been brewing for some time. Not only are resources dwindling for news organizations to engage in enterprise reporting that holds powerful institutions — governments and businesses alike — accountable, but journalists also lack the muscle to battle legal threats devised to silence that reporting. Powerful actors have weaponized libel and privacy laws to silence those who report consequential stories. The threat of government retaliation against sources who seek no reward but the satisfaction of revealing official misconduct is palpable and restricts the free flow of information necessary for democracy. The Press Freedom Defense Fund was created in 2017 to provide necessary resources to reporters, news organizations, and sources facing these crippling legal threats.

THREE PROGRAMS, ONE GOAL

As it has grown, the Fund has engaged in three distinct and complementary programs serving journalists:

- Defending reporters and sources
- Providing legal support for operational needs
- Training and education

Each contributes to the overall mission of First Look Media Works: supporting fearless investigative journalism, producing documentary cinema that explores the world through fresh new perspectives, and defending those who are unjustly threatened in pursuit of a free and open society and press.

DEFENDING REPORTERS AND SOURCES

The heart of the Fund is the provision of grants to support the legal defense of reporters and under-resourced news organizations burdened by defamation lawsuits or threatened with legal action to compel the disclosure of confidential sources. Without access to the resources to defend themselves from legal threats, our applicants would self-censor, which means information of public importance would not be published. What's more, they might proceed with inadequate representation, increasing the risks of civil and criminal penalties and lasting damage to fundamental First Amendment values. The Fund is unique in its commitment to provide legal resources to whistleblowers who face prosecution and incarceration under the Espionage Act and other laws that are used to retaliate against those who disclose information of public importance.

To fulfill its mission, the Fund provides defense resources to those subject to retaliation from government and corporate institutions because they have disclosed information that an informed electorate needs to know to participate meaningfully in the democratic process. We select recipients primarily based on whether their defense contributes to First Amendment jurisprudence, particularly in protecting the free flow of information from source to reporter, and whether the reporter or source has other means to mount a robust defense.

We focus in particular on core areas of news coverage such as national security, financial dealings, law enforcement, the environment, and immigration policy. However, the Fund will consider any case that jeopardizes the source-reporter relationship, here and abroad.

The Fund provides grants to support legal defense, but does not pay all of the legal expenses in any particular case. The grants are designed to encourage more media lawyers to take on these difficult cases. The Fund works closely with our colleagues in the media bar, structuring our support in such a way that unlocks the most value for our grantees.

The Fund works with the Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press to help identify and screen applicants in the United States. It has relationships with other international press organizations, including the Committee to Protect Journalists, to help identify applicants overseas.

The following are some of the grantees to which the Fund provided critical support for their legal representation in 2019.

Defending Against Defamation and Retaliation

Rappler Inc.: Rappler Inc. is an interactive investigative news platform led by Maria Ressa, located in and covering the Philippines. The Fund supported their defense of several criminal and civil actions brought in retaliation for Rappler's critical reporting about the Duterte regime.



Activists join journalists in a protest against the Security and Commission's move to revoke Rappler's license. Photo: Bernice Beltran/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Feyziyev v. Journalism Development Network: Journalism Development Network is a nonprofit investigative news organization dedicated to uncovering government and business corruption internationally. The Fund supported its litigation costs in a defamation action in London by an Azerbaijani businessman exploiting the U.K.'s punitive libel laws and legal process. The case settled on terms favorable to Journalism Development Network.

Stambul v. Perfetto, et al: A small investigative news organization helmed by veteran Venezuelan journalist Fiorella T. Perfetto in Florida was sued over its reporting on a local business's activities. The Fund supported its successful appeal of an order denying reversal of a default judgment for defamation.

Krawatsky v. the Jewish Week, et al.: The Jewish Week is a nonprofit newspaper that reported on sexual abuse allegations against a religious leader. The Fund supported its defense in the religious leader's defamation suit.

Protecting Sources and Newsgathering

Anonymous v. Anonymous: The Fund supported the successful unsealing of court records and defense against a subpoena to compel a freelance investigative reporter covering the financial industry to disclose confidential source information.

Breuder v. Board of Trustees of Community College and Lakeside EMS LLC v. County of Effingham: The Fund supported the opposition to compel a small investigative news site reporting on local government to identify confidential sources and newsgathering information in two separate matters.



Security camera image of San Francisco police entering journalist Bryan Carmody's home, May 2019.

Carmody v. City of San Francisco: The Fund supported a freelance videographer in his successful contesting of an unlawful and unconstitutional seizure of his newsgathering materials by the San Francisco Police Department investigating an alleged leak.

PETA v. Nathan Winograd: The Fund helped an online citizen journalist successfully defeat a subpoena seeking to compel the revelation of confidential sources in an important confirmation of California reporter's privilege.

Defending Whistleblowers

Rui Pinto prosecution: The Fund supported the defense in Europe of a jailed whistleblower who allegedly revealed financial wrongdoing by European football teams.

Signals Network Foundation: The Fund supported public advocacy efforts on behalf of Rui Pinto.

Reality Leigh Winner: The Fund supported clemency advocacy by defense attorneys.



Whistleblower Rui Pinto talks with journalists as he arrives outside the Metropolitan Court in Budapest, Hungary, for a hearing on March 5, 2019.

PROVIDING LEGAL RESOURCES FOR OPERATIONAL NEEDS

In the course of its grantmaking in specific legal matters, it has become apparent to the Fund that “fight for existence” legal battles are not the only threats to journalism. Many individual journalists and news organizations lack the resources to obtain basic legal services to support initial formation, corporate governance, risk management, and, ultimately, sustainability. To leverage its support of individual reporters, the Fund has partnered with the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice to create Lawyers for Reporters, a pro bono law firm that provides access to counsel to news organizations from their inception through their development as community resources.



Reality Leigh Winner. Illustration: Matt Williams for The Intercept

Clients of Lawyers for Reporters include print and online publishers; radio, television, and internet content providers; freelance writers, photographers, documentarians, and videographers, as well as investigative, advocacy, and academic publishers of public interest content. Nonprofit clients of the firm receive legal services pro bono; for-profit clients receive information through nonprofit intermediaries or negotiated arrangements. Lawyers for Reporters is intended as a resource available to any news organization that needs legal services to help meet its operational needs.

News organizations need support for the business of journalism — corporate, transactional, employment, real estate, tax, and nonprofit formation and governance advice. They need prepublication review, copyright and trademark clearance, licensing, and newsgathering advice. They need legal help to face libel, privacy, copyright, or other litigation threats. Understanding these needs, Lawyers for Reporters will provide these services with both its internal capacity and a network of existing law firms that provides high-quality services pro bono.



Jim Risen interviews Maria Ressa, New York City, September 2019. Photo: Kate Myers for The Press Freedom Defense Fund

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Since its inception, the Fund has considered training and education integral to its mission. The Fund has sponsored and supported a wide variety of training programs for reporters, lawyers, and nonprofit leaders, as well as educational outreach to the general public. Through panel discussions, lectures, roundtables, and online seminars, the Fund educated these constituencies in these following areas:

- Threats to journalists
- New threats under the Espionage Act
- The Computer Fraud and Abuse Act
- Whistleblower defenses
- Subpoena defenses
- Newsgathering and intellectual property
- Obtaining media liability insurance
- Social media

LOOK AHEAD TO 2020

The Fund responded decisively to the multiple historic crises facing the U.S. in 2020, from the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on the economy to the civic strife and unrest arising from the unjustified killings of Black Americans.

- The Fund allocated \$200,000 of its 2020 grantmaking budget to provide emergency cash payments to U.S.-based journalists experiencing financial hardship as a direct result of the pandemic.
- It partnered with the National Press Photographers Association to leverage extensive legal advocacy programs to defend and protect journalists arrested or injured while covering major news stories, in particular during the nationwide Black Lives Matter protests.
- Through Lawyers for Reporters, the Fund has helped dozens of local and public interest reporting entities to incorporate, achieve tax-exempt status, avoid publication liability, obtain insurance, and protect intellectual property.

2019 Financials

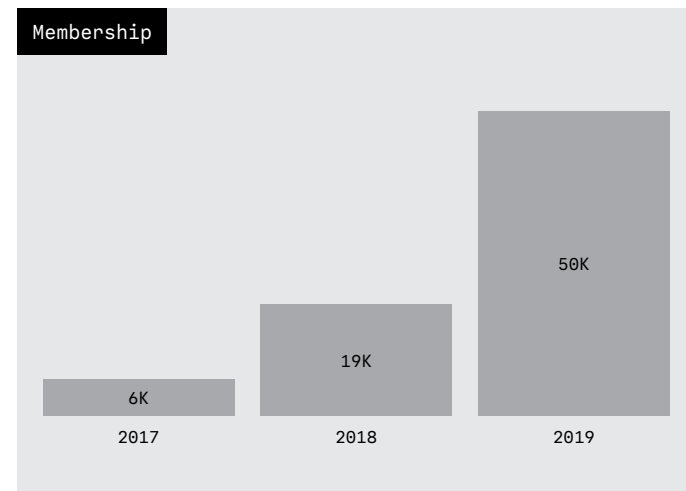
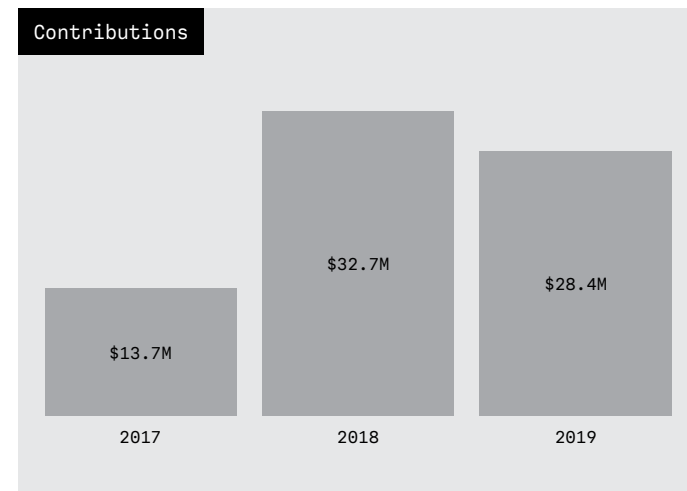
First Look relies completely on the generosity of individual donors and foundations to support our belief that freedom of expression and the press are vital to a healthy democracy and a vibrant culture. We believe in accountability and transparency in how we use those valuable donations to fulfill our mission.

In 2019, First look saw donating members more than double to 50,000, with substantial support coming from our membership program in Brazil.

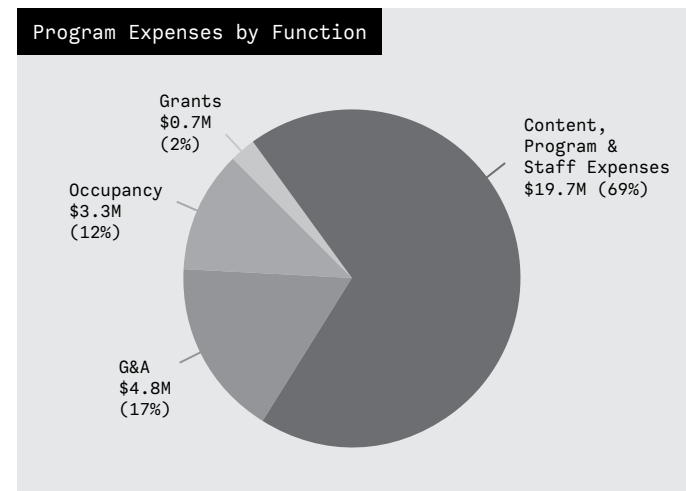
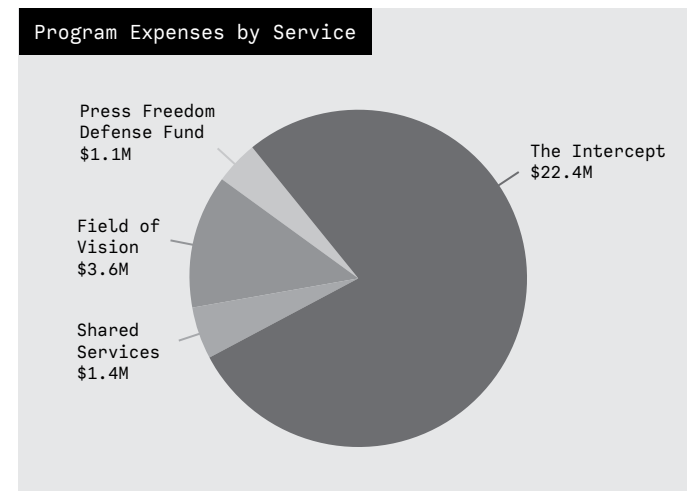
We continued our fierce journalism through The Intercept's reporting and podcasts, increased the diversity of voices and stories told through Field of Vision-funded documentaries, and remained steadfast in our commitment to the defense of whistleblowers and sources via the Press Freedom Defense Fund.

First Look had 88 dedicated and passionate staff in 2019 who executed our mission every day.

Revenue



Expenses



The information presented here is extracted from First Look's audited financial statements and presented for convenience. First Look's Form 990 returns are available at our website: firstlook.org. Our audited financial statements are available on request.

Our Supporters

Our work in 2019 was made possible with the support and generosity of our supporters and paying members. Our sincere gratitude to all of the following people and institutions who donated \$1,000 or more to First Look Media Works, and to our 50,000-plus members.

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Pierre M. Omidyar
Jeffrey R. Alvord
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Pat Christen

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Please contact: Kate Myers, Executive Director,
Revenue & Operations, First Look Media Works
philanthropy@firstlook.org.

First Look strives to provide accurate donor information. We apologize for any inaccuracies or unintended exclusions in our reporting.

Informed society and healthy democracies are at risk. Faith in public institutions continues to drop, distrust and division increase by the day, overt and covert repression make information harder to obtain and convey, and the advent of “alternative facts” is disabling society from meeting on common ground.

Independent journalism and freedom of expression, bulwarks of the American way of life for more than two centuries, are in precarious condition.

The 2020 election cycle will draw more attention and more money than any previous such period. But long after November’s results are in, and regardless of the outcome, the need for fearless, adversarial reporting will be ever more vital to a functioning society.

First Look was conceived in the belief that free expression and a free press, joined by fiercely independent perspectives, are essential to functioning democracies and inclusive cultures. We believe in the power of media to hold the powerful to account, to shape culture with voices that reflect who we really are, and to uphold the First Amendment by protecting journalists and their sources.

That conviction underpins the core purpose of First Look: to improve society by creating and supporting independent journalism and media.

This work needs as much support as possible, as rapidly as possible. Please join us as we continue our work to strengthen our democracy.

