



Fund for
Investigative
Journalism

October 2019 News

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Our 50th Anniversary Dinner



Sy Hersh at Our Dinner

The Fund for Investigative Journalism held its 50th Anniversary Dinner at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on October 24th.

The dinner honored Sy Hersh, one of FIJ's early grantees who reported on the My Lai massacre, which earned him a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting.

Hersh regaled dinner guests with reminiscences about his work in an interview with FIJ's David Boardman.

Sy Hersh at the dinner. Photo by Joy Asico



Lottie Joiner and Christina Goldbaum

Other speakers were former FIJ grantees Christina Goldbaum, whose freelance work in Somalia on a U.S.-led Special Forces offensive that killed unarmed Somali farmers won her a Livingston Award; and Lottie Joiner, a Diversity Fellow who headed an investigation on prison recidivism for USA Today. The reports won two Emmys for videos produced by videographer Jarrad Henderson.

Goldbaum, who joined The New York Times as a metro reporter in 2018, said FIJ's funding helped her to spend months speaking with survivors and others in Somalia.

Joiner, who is now an FIJ board

member and editor of The Crisis Magazine, the official publication of the NAACP, said that as a journalist who has spent most of her career in the black press, "the fellowship was invaluable to me."

*Joiner (left) Goldbaum (right).
Photo by Joy Asico*

Our Grantees' Work



Race, Land and Justice

More than two decades ago, a group including the white sheriff of Limestone County, Ala., rustled and slaughtered more than 60 head of cattle owned by Michael Stovall, a black farmer. They then dumped the carcasses into graves dug up on the farmer's land. That was the finding of a Department of Agriculture special investigation. But the culprits remained free, and the farmer went to jail because officials accused him of starving the animals to death.

FIJ grantee Katti Gray delves into this story and others that look at how the USDA has engaged in actions that have eroded black farm ownership.

Michael Stovall inside a chickenhouse that was to be part of a USDA-financed farm expansion that never happened. Photo by Katti Gray



A Family's Struggle With the Mental Health Care System

"WAITING FOR TEARAH," a film directed by FIJ grantee Juliana Schatz Preston is an intimate portrait of a mother struggling to find mental health care for her child. Shot over two years, this vérité film tells the story of Shayna, a single parent of three girls on the brink of losing her home due to medical costs, while her eldest daughter, Tearah, waits for months in a psychiatric hospital. Day after day, Shayna navigates a complicated maze of government agencies as she fights for much-needed treatment for Tearah.

The film was broadcast by Frontline and featured in the **Double Exposure Investigative Film Festival & Symposium 2019** in Washington, D.C.

Photo by Frontline



Local Communities Fight Oil and Gas Projects in the Pacific Northwest

“Holding the Thin Green Line,” a radio documentary by FIJ grantee Barbara Bernstein, tells the stories of communities fighting fossil fuel industry projects in the Pacific Northwest.

The **first hour** follows the efforts of activists in Tacoma and Kalama, Washington, to stop construction of the world’s largest methanol refinery and delves into the saga of Puget Sound Energy’s effort to build a liquid natural gas facility at the Port of Tacoma.

The **second hour** tells the stories of citizen push-back against the construction of what could become the largest liquid natural gas (LNG) export terminal on the West Coast. This mammoth facility is being proposed for Coos Bay, Oregon. It would be fed by a 240-mile-long pipeline transporting fracked gas across four counties in southern Oregon, disturbing 480 rivers and streams in its wake.

Photo by Barbara Bernstein



Teachers and School Officials Get Off Easy on Sexual Assaults in Southern California

A two-year **investigation** by The Voice of San Diego of sexual misconduct by teachers and other public school employees found that the employees seldom face termination, but often leave with hush deals that protect reputations and enable them to continue working in education.

Records obtained show some teachers were quietly reprimanded for years as complaints piled up. Other times, school districts moved teachers from school to school after finding they violated sexual harassment policies with students. In one case, a Southwestern College educator resigned with a non disclosure agreement after committing sex acts with students in his office. He then went on to work at San Diego City College.

Loxie Grant, one of at least four women who have said physics teacher Martin Teachworth harassed them when they were students at La Jolla High School. Photo by Adriana Heldiz

Half the Judges in Venezuela are Linked to the Ruling Party



FIJ grantee Joseph Poliszuk of Armando.info, an online publication in Venezuela, finished a three-year investigation on the independence of judges in Venezuela. He and his partners at Armando.info created a website that tracks 6,000 judges throughout the country, finding evidence that 50 percent of the justices in the country were selected for those positions because of political ties to the Maduro government. Poliszuk and his colleagues at Armando.info are now living in exile in Colombia after facing legal problems in Venezuela because of their journalism work. English versions of some of the stories are **here**.

Two Funding Grants

The Nara Fund, a long-standing supporter of FIJ, gave \$25,000, acknowledging the “central role investigative journalism plays in preserving our democracy.”

The Morton K. and Jane Blaustein Foundation, another loyal funder, nearly doubled their renewal grant from last year, approving a \$50,000 award.

Challenge Grant

We could still use contributions to meet the terms of a \$10,000 challenge grant given to FIJ for our 50th Anniversary. **Please Donate.**

News About FIJ

FIJ Grantee Katti Gray Interviewed by CBSNews

Gray talks about her story on Michael Stovall, a black farmer who is trying to clear his name on a wrongful animal cruelty conviction, and about the plight of black farmers generally.

Partner News

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists is seeking proposals for longform writing and investigative journalism for its new digital site. For more information reach out to Ricardo Sandoval-Palos, rsp1958@gmail.com

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