



Fund for Investigative Journalism June News



Grantee's Investigation Leads to Debt Relief for Detroit's Overtaxed Residents

Months after FIJ grantee Mark Betancourt and Christine MacDonald's [2019 investigation](#), which found that payment plans offered by Detroit to city homeowners to alleviate debt and avoid foreclosure left residents in deeper debt and at greater risk of losing their homes, [new legislation](#) has begun to offer relief.



The report, published in the Detroit News, was the first to put a dollar amount on the overtaxation city residents had suspected for years and led to protests and calls for action from residents, think tanks and community organizations alike. Finally, in March, after intense pressure from residents, along with Betancourt and Macdonald's continued

reporting on the issue, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed new legislation to wipe away much of the delinquent debt for thousands of low-income Detroit homeowners.

"The new law allows the city to wipe away taxes retroactively for the first time for those who likely would have qualified," [Macdonald's report](#) states.

You can read the initial report [here](#).

Grantee Spotlight: Ruslan Gurzhiy is Bringing the News to Russian Immigrants Living in Sacramento

Since 2014, Ruslan Gurzhiy, founder and editor-in-chief of [Slavic Sacramento](#), has been working to uncover and report on the challenges faced by Russian immigrants living in the U.S. As an immigrant from the Soviet Union himself, Gurzhiy said he started Slavic Sacramento, California's only Russian news source, because of the struggles his community faces in acclimating to America.

"When Russians come here, we don't have an understanding of culture, of mindsets," he said. "This misunderstanding leads many Russians into manipulation and being taken advantage of."

Gurzhiy and his team cover a wide range of issues affecting Russian immigrants, from housing fraud to discrimination in [American hospitals](#) to abuses of power by Russian religious leaders. Gurzhiy said he believes his job is one of educating -- to empower his community with information.

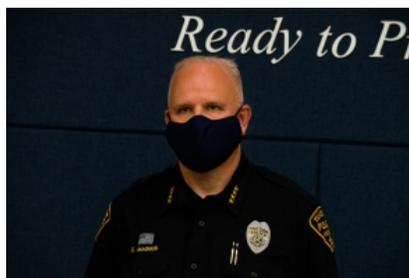
"I want to let Russians know there is an alternative route, that you don't need to live in an unjust society," he said. "If they can better understand what is happening around them, they can see that."

Now, he said, with the coronavirus pandemic taking hold, especially in the large religious community among Russians where he said secrecy is a foundation, it is more important than ever to get people the information they need.

"People are dying," he said. "And information is being withheld and we're being lied to. Something needs to change."



Grantee Uncovers Unreported Death of Man in Police Custody



Investigations by FIJ grantee Dylan Smith at the Tucson Sentinel have uncovered details about the [April killing of 27-year-old Carlos Adrian Ingram-Lopez](#) by three Tucson police officers.

The death, as Smith reports, was not disclosed to the public until this month, a delay that one source said was, "an attempt at a white wash," according to Smith's report.

The three officers involved, as well as Tucson Police Chief Chris Magnus, resigned this week following in-depth reporting from Smith and calls for reform from city officials.

You can follow the Sentinel's reporting on this case [here](#).

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We have launched a new series of live discussions to give insights, share lessons and provide resources for investigative journalists covering complex issues. With panels comprising diverse, experienced professional journalists, we hope to provide a unique set of experiences and advice. You can watch a full recording of our first discussion on police misconduct below.

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Our Emergency Rolling Grant Programs

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