



# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS FOUNDATION

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2020 IMPACT REPORT





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News & Observer photojournalist Julia Wall reaches for relief from the effects of a chemical spray used during a march to the polls and social justice rally in Graham, North Carolina on Oct. 31, 2020.

*Courtesy: Anthony Crider*



# A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Dear Readers,

The term *unprecedented* seems to most accurately define the year we have faced.

Between the rapidly evolving public health crisis around COVID-19, the presidential election, and the protests surrounding racial and social injustice, press freedom has been at the forefront of it all.

Attacks against the press have also escalated to even more dangerous levels than we could have ever predicted. Our [U.S. Press Freedom Tracker](#) project recorded an incredible surge in aggressions against journalists this year, documenting more than 1,000 press freedom violations from across the United States. The numbers paint a dire picture: a 600% increase in serious incidents compared to 2019.

[SecureDrop](#) has also become increasingly vital to journalists covering the COVID-19 pandemic, where whistleblowers have risked their lives to tell the public the truth. Doctors, nurses, and others at the front-lines of the pandemic in the U.S. have brought attention to unsafe labor conditions, government failures, and health care horror stories.

It is clear that the need for an independent and vibrant press is more urgent now than ever. We could not be more grateful to the brave journalists and whistleblowers who report on these important stories and bring critical information to the public.



If the next year is anything like 2020, our plans may have to change, but our mission will not: we will continue to protect, defend, and empower journalism in the public interest. And that hard work wouldn't be possible without our many incredible supporters.

Thank you for all you do to help protect press freedom.

Sincerely,

—

Trevor Timm  
Executive Director  
Freedom of the Press Foundation



# OUR MISSION

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“A cantankerous press, an obstinate press, a ubiquitous press must be suffered by those in authority in order to preserve the even greater values of freedom of expression and the right of the people to know.”

—Judge Murray Gurfein, *Pentagon Papers case*, June 17, 1971



FPF 2020 IMPACT REPORT

Founded in 2012, Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that protects and defends public interest journalism in the 21st century. We believe that a thriving free press—one that can change the course of history—depends not only on strong advocacy, but also on actively empowering journalists and whistleblowers to do their job in the face of adversity.

We monitor and document virtually every press freedom violation in the United States. We build secure communications tools used by the world’s top investigative news organizations. We teach journalists how to keep themselves and their sources safe in the digital age. And we engage in public and legal advocacy to defend press freedom in the U.S. and around the world.

Our goal is to protect and promote the basic human right of freedom of the press in a world where surveillance, censorship, and hacking risks are becoming more sophisticated and pervasive. These threats can keep the public from learning vital information about their governments. It’s our job to defend the public’s right to know.



# WHAT 2020 HAS TAUGHT US

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The small team at Freedom of the Press Foundation has been working well beyond capacity this year to document attacks against the press, build secure communication tools to better protect journalists and their sources, and engage in public and legal advocacy on critical issues affecting journalists' rights in the U.S. and around the world.

The series of unpredictable events this year led us to a period of adaptation as newsrooms closed around the country and journalists shifted to working from home. But it also confirmed to us how incredibly important digital security tools are to journalists working in the field, as they faced more threats than ever.





# MAJOR PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

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Protecting High Stakes, High Impact Journalism

## Monitoring Press Freedom

This year, both verbal and physical threats against the press in the United States have escalated exponentially. Our **U.S. Press Freedom Tracker** project, launched in 2017, documents and counts virtually every type of press freedom violation in the United States—from journalist arrests, camera searches and seizures, subpoenas, and physical attacks to surveillance orders and whistleblower prosecutions. The Tracker is the first and only website to provide reliable, easy-to-access information on the number of press freedom violations, and fills a crucial gap in the journalism landscape.

## Building the Next-Generation of Secure Communications Tools

For seven years, Freedom of the Press Foundation has led the development of **SecureDrop**, an open source whistleblower submission system that enables journalists to communicate with anonymous sources in a safe and secure manner. SecureDrop is currently available in 20 languages and it is used by over 75 major news organizations worldwide (including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *NBC News*, *ProPublica*, *ICIJ*, *The Center for Investigative Journalism*, and many more). It is seen as an increasingly vital tool for all news organizations to offer to whistleblowers, and it has been the source of countless important investigative stories over the past several years.

We also systematically track how news outlets are protecting their readers. **Secure the News** tracks the adoption of HTTPS encryption, which protects readers from invasive surveillance, by news organizations around the world. In 2020, we started tracking whether news sites provide onion services (to offer readers anonymity and censorship resistance using the Tor network), and we started investigating technology like *The Markup's* “Blacklight” tool to check for invasive tracking technologies often introduced via online advertising networks.



## Empowering Journalists

It has never been more important for journalists to protect their sources using technology and encryption tools from the moment they start speaking to them—and Freedom of the Press Foundation is the only US-based non-profit organization who has a team of experts who assist journalists in protecting themselves online through the **Digital Security Training Program**.

We operate a growing team of digital security trainers who regularly provide journalists, documentary filmmakers, and media organizations important training on how to protect themselves and their sources online. These trainings include how to lock down your accounts to prevent hacking, how to protect your anonymity online, how to mitigate potential harassment or doxing, and how to encrypt a variety of communications methods such as text messages, phone calls, and emails. Well over 3,000 journalists have attended at least one of FPF's trainings over the past three years.



## Advocating for the Press

In order to fulfill our mission of protecting and promoting the basic human right of freedom of the press, we engage in **public and legal advocacy** around critical press freedom issues. Our advocacy efforts focus on press freedom include issues such as excessive government secrecy, the persecution of whistleblowers, the dangers of surveillance of journalists, the importance of the Freedom of Information Act, and protecting the right to publish. We have a large social media following, a well-read website, and robust media profile to push our message centering on strong press freedom rights for all. Additionally, we have a high profile board of directors who allow us to amplify our message even further.



# SPECIAL UPDATE: THE U.S. PRESS FREEDOM TRACKER

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Launched in 2017, the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker has grown into a robust repository of four years worth of documentation on press freedom violations in the United States, compiling hundreds of individual stories as well as easily-understood statistics across nearly a dozen categories;

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In a year marked by a global pandemic, national election and protests for social justice and against police brutality, the Tracker fielded a more than 1200% increase in reported press freedom violations than the previous year;

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Relied upon by international advocacy organizations, congressional bills on journalistic safety and local and international news outlets for information about on-the-ground press freedom in the U.S., the Tracker has become the canonical site for information—it was cited more than 600 times in the last 6 months alone.





# BY DEC. 31, 2020, THE TRACKER HAD DOCUMENTED:

**123** journalists arrested in the course of their work

**329** journalists assaulted in the course of reporting

**76** journalists who had their equipment damaged

**12** journalists who had their equipment searched or seized by law enforcement

**13** subpoenas or legal orders filed for journalist testimony or work product

**6** journalists denied access to public government events



# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

## SecureDrop

In 2020, SecureDrop was adopted or reinstated by *The Markup*, *The Center for Public Integrity*, *The Public Source*, *Technoplace*, *Investigace.cz*, and *TechCrunch*. FPF also assisted existing SecureDrop users with the implementation of new protocols to safely review SecureDrop submissions under COVID-19 lockdown conditions.

We put the next generation of SecureDrop, the *SecureDrop Workstation*, into the hands of journalists as part of a first-of-its-kind pilot. This new version offers journalists a more chat-like experience for interacting with anonymous whistleblowers, while maintaining critical security protections for journalists and sources. Our pilot users are reporting a dramatic reduction in time-on-task, enabling them to check SecureDrop more often and respond to sources more quickly.

We are now undertaking a second independent security audit of the *SecureDrop Workstation* and preparing for wider deployment in 2021.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

### Digital Security Training (DST)

Our four-person digital security team trained over 1,200 journalists, media makers, students, and members of civil society. We introduced our training work to a number of new and budding journalistic communities this year, including online conferences, journalism students at a number of university programs, and an online discussion with an audience of over 14,000 viewers.

As the pandemic changed the way journalists work, our team responded with a suite of new educational services and resources to meet their evolving security needs. We shifted our training approach to include exercises that encourage engagement and deep learning while training over the conferencing platforms newsrooms now rely on. We also published a slew of resources as a response to the emergent needs of the community, from “working from home” security to digital safety at protests.

We also engaged in new partnerships with other organizations. PPF joined the Coalition Against Online Harassment, spearheaded by IWMF and Craig Newmark Philanthropies. We strengthened our partnership with Yubico, to distribute and train on Yubikeys for multifactor, authentication, and encryption use on both desktop and mobile platforms.





## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

### Advocacy & Activism

Freedom of the Press Foundation led the way in analyzing and presenting critical U.S. Press Freedom Tracker data. From a collection of blog posts highlighting trends from press freedom violations as they happened through to the December release of a new *Journalists Under Arrest* report, we used the valuable data our colleagues at the Tracker collected and reported to present policy arguments and advocacy.

Our [first-ever survey of newsroom tiplines](#) looked at a landscape of over 80 news outlets. The resulting article and infographic present the most comprehensive overview available of how media organizations can talk to whistleblowers and receive sensitive tips.

As the Julian Assange extradition trial proceeded in London, our coverage helped shape the conversation about its dangers to press freedom. For a variety of reasons, even news outlets that had previously attested to the significance of his trial were slow with coverage; our explanatory articles and [the expert testimony of board member Daniel Ellsberg and executive director Trevor Timm](#) filled a gap in the public understanding of the trial.





HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

# NEW BOARD MEMBER: WESLEY LOWERY

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Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF) is proud to welcome award-winning journalist Wesley Lowery as the newest member of its board of directors, beginning in 2021.

Lowery covered criminal justice issues for the Washington Post from 2014–2019 and led the team that won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for the Post’s meticulous [investigation and documentation of police killings in the United States](#). He is the author of *They Can’t Kill Us All: Ferguson, Baltimore, and a New Era in America’s Racial Justice Movement*. Lowery now serves as a correspondent for CBS News and 60 Minutes and has recently contributed to *GQ Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *Newsweek*, and *The New York Times*.





# EXPANSION IN 2021

## **SecureDrop / *The Next Generation***

**Migration to the SecureDrop Workstation /** To make SecureDrop easier to use, we will assist current SecureDrop users with the migration to the next generation of the software. We also plan to add new functionality for managing tips received via Signal tiplines and for redacting sensitive documents.

**Security Updates /** We will also assist all current SecureDrop users with the migration to the latest Long Term Support release of the Ubuntu operating system (used for the SecureDrop server) and to the latest version of onion services (used to protect source anonymity).

**Expanding Partnerships /** To make the project even more sustainable, we will develop deeper partnerships with news organizations using SecureDrop, including new service agreements for priority support and for custom development work.

## **Digital Security Training / *Maintaining Partnerships and Expanding Our Network***

**Expanding Remote Services /** We will be formalizing the training and auditing methods we developed in response to the pandemic so that our team is prepared to offer a hybrid suite of trainings. We'll be ready and able to educate and support journalists in a variety of formats, as the world transitions in response to a new presidential administration and the ongoing pandemic.

**Publishing New Resources /** We will publish much-needed resources on new and timely topics. 2021 will see the culmination and public release of more than a year's worth of research and writing on protecting the digital security of documentary filmmakers. As a response to an escalation in the frequency and severity of harassment campaigns targeting journalists, we'll focus our editorial efforts on creating resources to help journalists prevent and respond to online harassment.

**Diversity & Inclusion /** In order to train a more diverse group of journalists in 2021, we have to introduce ourselves to new networks first. This means more outreach into communities of color through our presence at conferences organized by and for BIPOC journalists.



## **U.S. Press Freedom Tracker / *Expanding Reporting Capabilities***

**Documentation of Violations** / Given the explosive growth in the number of press freedom violations reported to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker in 2020, the team will continue to shift resources to ensure the documentation of those violations—and any incoming throughout 2021—are thoroughly reported and widely shared.

**Additional Team Capacity** / In 2021, the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker will expand its reporting capabilities through adding news contributors and by welcoming its first Spring reporting intern, a Fulbright scholar from the University of Missouri's School of Journalism.

**Engagement & Partnerships** / We'll renew our focus on engagement, to keep the public aware of ongoing threats to press freedom via multiple platforms. And we'll continue to liaise with established partners while committing to an outreach plan that includes geographically and demographically diverse new partners.

## **Advocacy & Activism / *After the Press Freedom Crisis?***

**Press Freedom Policy** / Press freedom violations have come from Republicans and Democrats alike, but we are cautiously optimistic that we will see progress after the most antagonistic administration in modern history. In 2021, we plan to push for long-standing press freedom policy objectives.

**Virtual Events & Resources** / This year we hosted our first virtual events for supporters, featuring live video conversations with investigative journalists, the developers working every day on SecureDrop, and more. In the next year, we will expand those offerings to reach more of the people passionate about press freedom and to develop long-term video resources on the topic.

**Newsletter Updates** / A migration to a new email newsletter platform will allow us to expand both the breadth and the depth of how we communicate with supporters. We'll be able to bring more regular coverage of our work and also expand our editorial offerings.



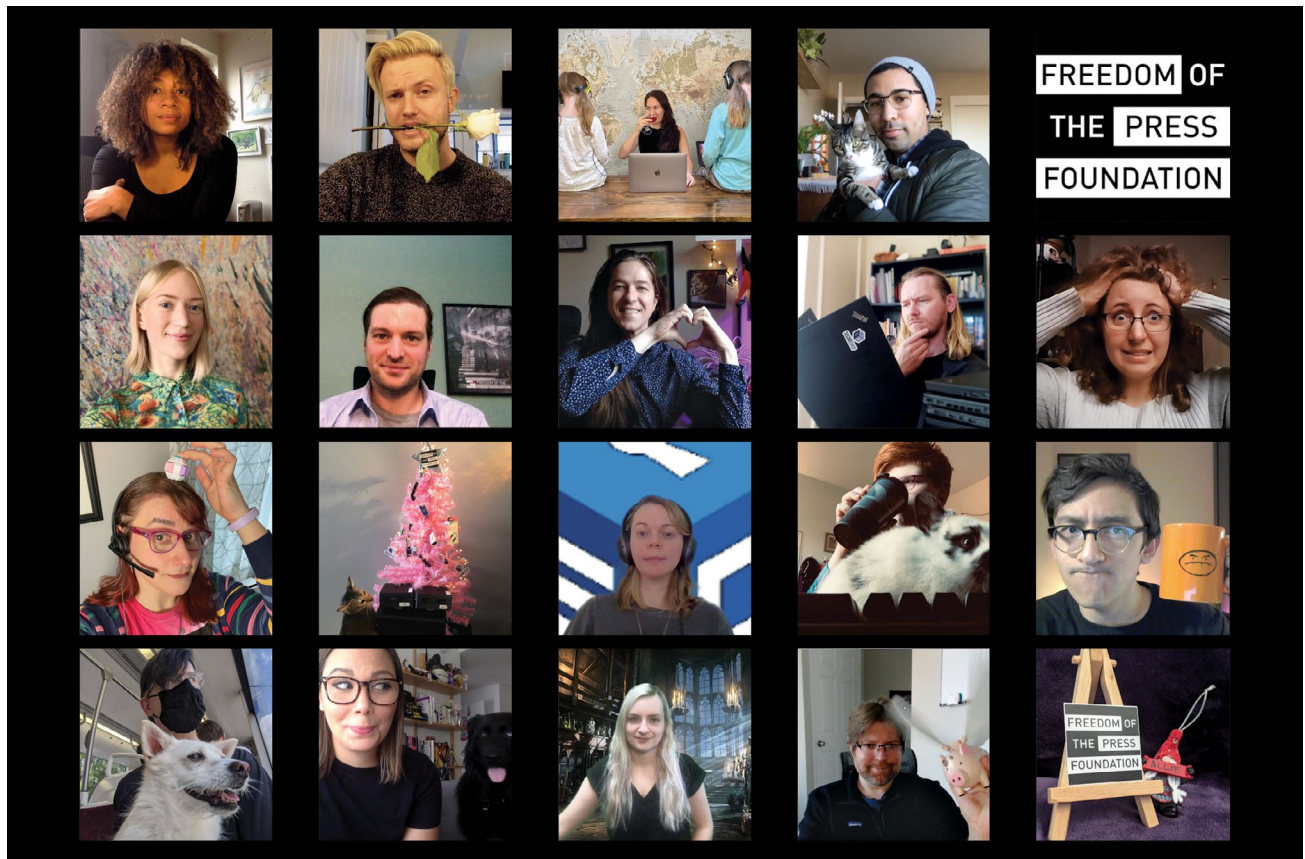
# STAFF MEMBERS

FPF is headquartered in San Francisco, with staff in Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Canada, and India.

**Trevor Timm** / Executive Director  
**Louise Balsmeyer** / Director of Development  
**Conor Schaefer** / Chief Technology Officer  
**Erik Moeller** / Principal Project Manager  
**Harlo Holmes** / Director of Digital Security  
**Olivia Martin** / Deputy Director, Digital Security  
**David Huerta** / Digital Security Trainer  
**Martin Shelton** / Principal Researcher  
**Rowen S.** / Newsroom Services Coordinator  
**Kevin O’Gorman** / Newsroom Support Engineer  
**Parker Higgins** / Director of Advocacy

**Kirstin McCudden** / Managing Editor of the Tracker  
**Stephanie Sugars** / Reporter for the Tracker  
**Mickael E.** / Lead Developer of SecureDrop  
**Kushal Das** / Developer of SecureDrop  
**Allie Crevier** / Developer of SecureDrop  
**John Hensley** / Developer of SecureDrop  
**Maeve Andrews** / Senior DevOps Engineer  
**Keturah D.B.** / Site Reliability Engineer  
**Jennifer Helsby** / Principal Research Engineer  
**Harris Lapiroff** / Principal Web Developer  
**Ryan Rice** / Operations Assistant

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# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**President /** Edward Snowden

Laura Poitras

Daniel Ellsberg

John Cusack

Glenn Greenwald

Rainey Reitman

Micah Lee

Trevor Timm

Wesley Lowery (*beginning 2021*)

John Perry Barlow (*in memoriam*)



# FINANCIAL REPORT

Complete audited financial statements and IRS 990 forms are available at FPF's website, <https://freedom.press>.

*Please note: all figures are preliminary and unaudited.*

## Revenue

Foundations & Corporations	\$1,760,000
Major Gifts & Individuals	\$1,270,000
Online Revenue	\$135,000
Services Income	\$130,000
Other	\$92,500
Total	\$3,387,500

## Expenses

Staffing	\$2,733,422
Technology	\$423,202
Additional Expenses	\$230,000
Total	\$3,386,624



# MAJOR SUPPORTERS

*Freedom of the Press Foundation is extremely grateful to our supporters, partners, and friends whose generosity makes our work possible. Thank you for all you do to help protect press freedom.*

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Acton Family Giving  
Anonymous  
Bessemer National Gift Fund  
Committee to Protect Journalists  
Craig Newmark Philanthropies  
David D. Dodge Foundation  
David Heinemeier Hansson  
FLC, Foundation of Philanthropic Funds  
The Ford Foundation  
James B. McClatchy Foundation  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation  
Metabolic Studio  
The Omidyar Group  
The Reva and David Logan Foundation  
Vital Projects Fund  
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund  
Yelp Foundation  
Yubico

*\*Please note: we only provide the names of funding sources who have previously given permission to release their information.*

