

# RETROREPORT

Independent • Objective • Nonprofit

We use history to explain our world,  
and we show why it matters.



Annual Report 2019

# EXPLORE THE HISTORY BEHIND THE HEADLINES



## Mission

Retro Report's mission is to arm the public with lessons from history that yield a more complete picture of today's most important stories. We correct the record, debunk myths and provide historical context to the fast-paced news of our world today through investigative journalism and narrative storytelling.

# From Our Executive Producer

Friends:

As I look back over our work in 2019, I'm proud to be able say that it was a year of exceptional growth. The premiere of our new broadcast series, Retro Report on PBS, energized all corners of the newsroom. Working in close partnership with the PBS national organization, we sharpened our storytelling, built an arsenal of production skills and devised new strategies to work nimbly and respond quickly to news developments. The result is a series of eight one-hour episodes that were broadcast in prime time, showcasing some of our best work. I hope you'll review the episodes. [streamingpbs.org/show/retro-report-pbs](https://streamingpbs.org/show/retro-report-pbs).

Our work with PBS enabled us to reach a wide national audience with new stories and significant updates to many in our archive, adding value and longevity to our online living library. In collaboration with PBS, we partnered with member stations to help them tell stories that connect local communities with their own unique histories.

Throughout the year, we continued to pursue our mission of community engagement, creating award-winning new stories touching on immigration, suicide prevention, artificial intelligence and more.

On behalf of all of us at Retro Report, thank you for your continued interest and support, which help to make our work possible.

With gratitude,



Kyra Darnton, Executive Producer



Kyra Darnton  
Executive Producer



## 2019 Awards and Nominations



**Emmy Awards:**  
**Operation Ceasefire**  
 Nominee, Outstanding Editing

**Future of Aging**  
 Nominee, Outstanding Business, Consumer or Economic Report

**Edward R. Murrow Awards:**  
**The Future of Gaming**  
 Winner, feature reporting.

**Webby Awards:**  
 Retro Report nominated for best News & Politics series;

**All in the Game: the Black Athlete in America**  
 Winner, Best Sports video

**Why We Can't Have a Civil Conversation About Guns**  
 Nominee, best News & Politics video;

**Future of Gaming** Nominee, best technology video.

**WAN-IFRA 2019 North American Digital Media Awards:**  
**The Future of Aging**  
 Winner, Best Use of Online Video

**Telly Award:**  
**Future of Aging**  
 Winner, Gold Telly Award for best online news feature.

“Today, more information is available than ever before, and it’s coming from countless sources — with varying degrees of credibility. *Retro Report on PBS* takes viewers on a journey into the most important stories of the day, looking at them through the lens of their often surprising historical roots, providing new insights while correcting the record and exposing myths.

— Perry Simon,  
 Chief of Programming and  
 General Manager, PBS



At a September launch event for RETRO REPORT on PBS, veteran journalist Charlayne Hunter-Gault led a discussion panel with Retro Report’s executive producer, Kyra Darnton; hosts Masud Olufani and Celeste Headlee; and New Yorker humorist Andy Borowitz.

### Retro Report on PBS

In October, we launched **RETRO REPORT on PBS**, hosted by journalist Celeste Headlee and artist Masud Olufani and featuring New Yorker humorist Andy Borowitz. The eight-episode series offers viewers a fresh perspective on current headlines, revealing their unknown — and often surprising — connections to the past. The series gave us the opportunity to reach millions of new viewers.

**We’re engaging with local journalists and communities.** As part of this collaboration with PBS, we piloted our Retro Local initiative to engage communities and connect local stations with our journalism and storytelling, connecting the headlines to their historical roots through both editorial support and funding.

Our partnerships with PBS have been firing on all cylinders: We’ve enjoyed enthusiastic viewer feedback for segments we produced for other PBS programs, including Frontline and American Experience.

### Retro Report in the Digital Domain

**Meanwhile, the digital media world has been giving us millions of reasons to have faith in our mission.** We’ve seen evidence that we can reach viewers both inside and outside of the traditional news market. Our catalog of videos on YouTube, Apple News and partner websites attract more than 2 million views per month.



The Retro Report on PBS team:  
 Andy Borowitz, Celeste Headlee  
 and Masud Olufani.

# New Releases for 2019

## Lingering Peril From Lead Paint

Released: October 22, 2019

Producer: Jill Rosenbaum

Associate Producer: Sandra McDaniel

Editor: Bret Sigler



About half a million children — disproportionately children of color — have dangerously high lead levels in their blood, mostly from exposure to peeling paint and contaminated dust. The fight over who should pay for lead cleanup has lasted for decades. This video was presented as part of the series RETRO REPORT on PBS.

## DNA Clues Solve Crimes... With a Privacy Cost

Released: October 8, 2019

Producers: Bret Sigler and Matt Spolar

Editor: Bret Sigler



Data from consumer DNA testing kits are helping the police to close cold case files, including a long-unsolved murder from the 1980s. But their use is raising new concerns about privacy protection. This video was presented as part of the series RETRO REPORT on PBS.

“As I child I had lead poisoning. People don't realize exactly how many people have been affected by this. The paint manufacturers were irresponsible by not making it clear how dangerous lead was. It's about time that they paid for the damages.

— YouTube viewer

“Using DNA for low-grade, victimless crimes is cost-prohibitive for now, but as analysis gets cheaper I fear police will use it for the same types of racial targeting they use today.

— Jami Lyn, YouTube

“ I logged out of Facebook...  
don't miss it. It added zero  
value to my life.”

— Hey Jude, YouTube

## Online All the Time? Researchers Predicted It

Released: October 7, 2019

Producer: Kit R. Roane

Associate Producer: Katherine Wzorek

Reporter: Meral Agish

Editor: Anne Checler



Social media's power over consumers is not by chance, it's by design. Theories pioneered decades ago by the psychologist B.F. Skinner lie at the root of today's multi-trillion-dollar "attention economy." This video was presented as part of the series RETRO REPORT on PBS.

“ Awesome work as usual.  
It should take a while for  
self-driving cars to be fully  
reliable but in the meantime,  
we can use the technology as  
a very good and trustworthy  
co-pilot.”

— J.C. Reynardus, YouTube

## Can We Teach Cars How to Drive? It's an Uphill Challenge

Released: July 12, 2019

Producers: Erik German and María Villaseñor

Editor: Gella Zefira



Autonomous vehicle technology has gotten better in the last decade, and the hype has gotten bigger. Are we truly close to robots being able to drive us anywhere safely? This video was created with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and presented by The New York Times.



## AIDS: From Ryan White to Today's Silent Epidemic

Released: October 30, 2019

Producer: Meral Agish

Editors: Anne Checler, Sandrine Isambert and Lila Place

Senior Producer: Kit R. Roane



Rates of H.I.V. infection have fallen in many places, but the AIDS crisis persists in some parts of the country. What can be learned from history — and specifically the story of Ryan White? This video was presented as part of the series RETRO REPORT on PBS.

“ I don't think he wanted the role that he was put in, but at the same time, he saw how much people needed to be educated.

— Jeanne White-Ginder

## Sexual Misconduct at Work, Again

Released: October 8, 2019

Producers: Miriam Weintraub and Jennifer Oko

Field Producer: María Villaseñor

Editor: Pilar Rico

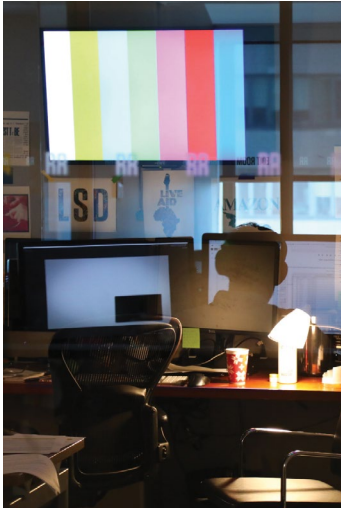


“ Companies love arbitration. It keeps their ugly cases out of the public view... It's all about silence.

— Susan Antilla  
Journalist and author

The #MeToo movement is shedding renewed light on sexual harassment at work. The fight has a decades-long history. This video was created in collaboration with Type Investigations and presented as part of the series RETRO REPORT on PBS.

# Advancing Our Mission: Goals for 2020 and Beyond



## Vision for Our Future

Retro Report is growing as a trusted resource that students, teachers, journalists and the general public can turn to for insights rooted in history. In 2020 we will continue our pursuit of stories that have been underreported, misreported or forgotten. Our outreach and engagement efforts will target audiences that will most benefit from our work.

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## Editorial Focus

Original reporting deepens our expertise in specific subject areas.

- **Public Health and Medicine:** In a new partnership with Scientific American, we will focus on public health issues that deserve our attention and that our approach can better illuminate. These stories will expand the public health concentration we established in 2019 with pieces on suicide prevention, lead paint poisoning and AIDS.
- **Preserving History:** We will continue to produce stories that build our living library and bring history that is taught in the classroom to a contemporary news audience. These will include the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.
- **Media Literacy:** Retro Report's unique contribution to the 2020 election coverage will be to use media criticism and history to help viewers understand the forces that have led to an increasingly complicated relationship between the press and the public, and what that means during a presidential campaign.

## We will set a steady cadence of digital programming and public engagement:

- A new dedicated production team will ensure Retro Report's digital lessons from history are up to date and vibrant, adding fresh insights — and added value — to conversations about current events.
- Our weekly email newsletter will share new videos and updates to archived pieces, essays grounded in history and smart recommendations on what to read, watch and hear.
- Major projects will be presented in partnership with other news organizations, guided by a distribution and engagement plan using social channels and outreach events.
- We will roll out a curriculum beta test for high school and college teachers to bring Retro Report to classrooms.



# Financial Report

REVENUES	
Founder's Grant	\$6,266,667
Individual Donations	130,833
Grants	50,000
Production & Shared Ad Revenue	413,680
In-Kind Contributions	256,815
Other	10,942
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,128,937</b>

EXPENSES	
News Salaries	\$3,671,810
Non-News Salaries	414,339
Field Production	417,865
Production Costs	519,779
Benefits, Taxes, Insurance	1,036,170
Occupancy & Office	361,815
Marketing & Outreach	71,161
Professional Services (Includes in-kind services)	695,968
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,109,502</b>



Notes: Figures are unaudited. Totals include in-kind costs but do not include fixed assets depreciation costs.

Upon request, we will provide you with a description of our programs and activities for which donated funds will be expended. A copy of our most recently filed financial report is available from the Charities Registry on the New York State Attorney General's website ([www.charitiesnys.com](http://www.charitiesnys.com)) or, upon request, by contacting the New York State Attorney General, Charities Bureau, at 28 Liberty Street, New York, New York 10005, or us at 633 Third Avenue, 16th Floor, New York, New York 10017. You also may obtain information on charitable organizations from the New York State Office of the Attorney General at [www.charitiesnys.com](http://www.charitiesnys.com) or (212) 416-8401.

## Media Partners

Thank you to the media partners who distribute our work to their audiences, and to those editorial teams who collaborate with us on distribution and reporting. We reach audiences across evolving digital platforms with videos, a newsletter, YouTube playlists, Instagram stories and Spotify playlists related to our documentaries.



We are seeking partners committed to helping us inform and elevate the conversation around issues of national importance through short digital videos and community engagement events informed by contemporary history. If you are interested in supporting Retro Report, contact Craig McMurray, VP Development, at [cmcmurray@retroreport.com](mailto:cmcmurray@retroreport.com) to discuss opportunities.

# Your Support Keeps Us Going



## A Message From Craig McMurray, VP Development

The generous support Retro Report received in 2019 from foundations and individual donors alike was instrumental in advancing our mission. Our ability to tell the stories behind the headlines was made possible through the generous contributions of many. We are grateful for the passion, interest and confidence that our donors, partners, and collaborators have expressed. We extend our deepest gratitude and hope to earn your continued support.

## Supporters

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New donors in **bold**. \*Monthly donors.

## NewsMatch

As we did in 2018, Retro Report participated in NewsMatch, a national matching-gift campaign in support of nonprofit newsrooms like ours. From Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, 2019, 57 donors, 12 of whom were new, raised over \$48,000 in support of our mission, helping to strengthen a free press and restore trust in news media.

NewsMatch is supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Democracy Fund, Facebook Journalism Project, Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation, Jonathan Logan Family Foundation, Natasha and Dirk Ziff, Present Progressive Fund at Schwab Charitable, Spitzer Charitable Trust, and REI Co-op, in partnership with The Miami Foundation, the Institute for Nonprofit News and the News Revenue Hub.

Thanks to NewsMatch donors, whose contributions were doubled, our 2019 campaign was a success.

## Won't You Join Us?

Retro Report is stronger than ever thanks to a growing community of supporters and funding partners. Every tax-deductible donation we receive helps us create new documentaries and update our library. Thank you for being an important part of our continued growth.

To learn how you can support Retro Report, please contact:

Craig McMurray, VP Development: [cmcmurray@retroreport.com](mailto:cmcmurray@retroreport.com), or call 646-869-0722.

**DONATE**

## Board of Directors 2019

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### **Christopher Buck** *Founder and President, Retro Report*

Mr. Buck developed Retro Report's concepts over a 10-year period in collaboration with co-founder Larry Chollet. Mr. Buck is a former television editor, most recently as a senior editor with the National Basketball Association. He is president of the Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation. Mr. Buck graduated from Emerson College with a B.S. in Communications.

### **Nick Ascheim** *Senior Vice President-Digital, NBC News and MSNBC*

Mr. Ascheim has also served as Senior Vice President, Consumer Digital at BBC Worldwide North America. He earned a B.A. in English at Cornell and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School.

### **Richard Tofel** *President, ProPublica*

Mr. Tofel oversees ProPublica's non-journalism operations, including communications, legal, development, finance and budgeting and human resources. Previously, he was assistant publisher of The Wall Street Journal. He served as vice president, general counsel and secretary for the Rockefeller Foundation and as president and chief operating officer of the International Freedom Center, a museum and cultural center that was planned for the World Trade Center site.

### **D. Ben Benoit** *Executive Director, Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation*

Mr. Benoit has over 30 years of experience assisting individuals and organizations with financial services. He was a senior vice president at U.S. Trust, now Bank Of America Private Bank.

### **Brewster Kahle** *Founder, Internet Archive*

Mr. Kahle founded the Internet Archive, a nonprofit digital library offering free universal access to books, movies and music, as well as 362 billion archived web pages. He graduated from M.I.T., where he studied artificial intelligence.

### **Dana Wolfe** *Former Founding Executive Producer, Intelligence Squared*

Ms. Wolfe is a five-time Emmy Award winning journalist, television and debate producer. She serves as executive director of the Rosenkranz Foundation. After more than a decade as a producer at "Nightline," Ms. Wolfe became an independent media consultant. She earned a B.A. at York University and an M.A. in International Studies from New York University.

## Masthead

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**COMING SOON:**

Producer Scott Michels interviewed Gloria Steinem for an upcoming Retro Report on domestic violence.



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We want to hear from you. Follow us on social media:

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