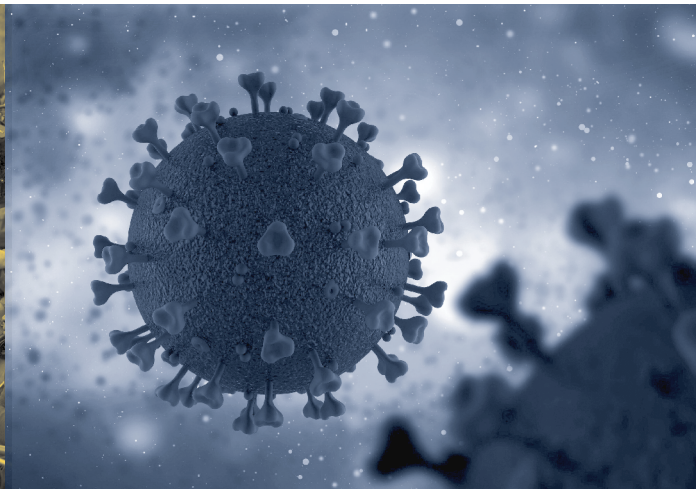


RETROREPORT

Independent • Objective • Nonprofit



Lessons From History

2020 Annual Report

OUR MISSION

Retro Report's mission is to inject context into today's news cycle. We use the clear lens of history to bring a greater understanding of current events and to fight misinformation.

OUR HISTORY

Retro Report was launched in 2013 to serve as a counterbalance to the 24-hour news cycle, addressing the emerging problem that the incentives driving news coverage no longer aligned with the public good.

Using investigative reporting and narrative storytelling, our 250 short documentaries have reached tens of millions of viewers through longstanding partnerships with The New York Times, PBS, The New Yorker and others.

We've been recognized with multiple Emmy Award nominations, Edward R. Murrow Awards, Webby's, a Gerald Loeb Award and more, and our documentaries have been showcased at film festivals across the country.

RETRO REPORT IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers, especially social studies teachers, tell us that our videos solve a growing problem in their classrooms: bringing history to life for their students. Our growing archive of over 250 short documentary videos makes use of first-hand accounts and rich archival video to provide deep, fact-based historical context.

In 2020, we launched **Retro Report in the Classroom**, a free, easy-to-use resource for middle school, high school and college educators. We have expanded our reach to teachers through partners including Common Sense Media, PBS Learning, New American History and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

STRATEGIC VISION

Today, 6 of 10 Americans don't trust the media to report the news accurately. At the same time, two-thirds of Americans don't know enough basic history to pass the U.S. citizenship test. The solutions to these two problems are intertwined: News reporting is more accessible with historical context, and history curriculum can be more relevant if infused with current events.

We have created a nonprofit newsroom dedicated to injecting history and context into the news cycle and creating engaging content for the classroom. We're building a resource for students, teachers, journalists and the general public that illuminates connections between the past and the present. Our work fosters critical thinking and civic-mindedness, counteracting partisan politics and the rancor of social media.

Message from the Executive Producer



Dear friends,

2020 was a difficult year for all of us at Retro Report, and I can't begin to express how proud I am of every single member of our staff for working so hard to consistently do good work under challenging conditions. They not only managed to report, film, edit and release stories remotely over the past year, but were invigorated by our mission to provide historical context as we all confronted one of the biggest stories of our lifetime.

Beginning in March, we worked to help viewers understand the coronavirus outbreak spreading across the globe by looking back at the lessons that could be gleaned from previous outbreaks in our history: how American Samoa avoided the 1918 pandemic, the way immunity was treated as an indicator of social status after the yellow fever epidemic of the 1800s, and the failure of the public health system during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.

I'm also really proud that we were able to provide context to the 2020 election with our first feature-length documentary, "Enemies of the People," which aired on VICE-TV and provided critical context for President Trump's toxic relationship with the press.

Finally, we listened to teachers who were struggling to respond to the challenges of teaching online and launched our education initiative, **Retro Report in the Classroom**. I'm excited to share that we've heard from social studies teachers that our archive of videos is helping them solve a growing problem in their classrooms: how to bring history to life for their students at a time when an understanding of American history and civic literacy are diminished.

Thank you all for your support. We couldn't do this work without you.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyra Darnton". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kyra Darnton, Executive Producer



THE EPPY AWARDS

The Domestic Violence Case That Turned Outrage Into Action

Best News or Event Video



THE WEBBY AWARDS

Coronavirus Reignites a Fight Over Rights of Detained Migrant Children

Honoree for Best Video: News and Politics



MILITARY REPORTERS & EDITORS JOURNALISM AWARD

She Rocked the Pentagon

Television: Large Market

In 2020, we organized two interactive online events to connect viewers with experts who shaped our reporting. We used surveys and call-outs as part of our community listening strategy to learn about new and existing audiences.

UNFAIR HOUSING PRACTICES IN FRESNO

Retro Report presented an online panel discussion with four experts who discussed the challenges created by a 100-year history of housing inequality in Fresno, Calif., where longstanding practices have put communities of color at risk of losing their homes and their lives during the coronavirus pandemic. This event was part of “Hitting Home,” an ongoing multicity, multiplatform reporting project providing historical context for the nation’s growing lack of affordable, safe housing.

RETROREPORT INVITES YOU

HOUSING IN FRESNO: Targeting Challenges With Lessons From the Past

Speakers: Shamus Roller (National Housing Law Project), Brandt Snow (Central California Legal Services), Mario Gonzalez (Centro La Familia Advocacy Services), Dymna Ugwu-Oju (Fresno Bee, President, The Fresno Bee), Ben Metcalf (Terner Center for Housing Innovation (University of California))

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 11 a.m. PST (2 p.m. EST)

REGISTER: retroreport.eventbrite.com

Support is provided by The James Irvine Foundation, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation and the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund.

COVERAGE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

“The Burning Bed,” a co-production from The New Yorker and Retro Report, explores the history of society’s response to domestic violence and illustrates flaws in the way the criminal justice system responds to the issue today. In an online seminar with subject-matter experts, moderated by Retro Report producer Scott Michels, the discussion centered on the ways domestic violence is covered by news organizations, and how they can do better.

RETROREPORT INVITES

COVERING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: HOW CAN WE DO BETTER?

Speakers: Melissa Jeltsen (HuffPost), Rosalyn Warren (Global Investigative Journalism Network), Ashley Southall (The New York Times), Andrea González-Ramírez (GEN Medium)

For Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Retro Report is hosting a panel with experts and Kelli Owens, from NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Open to media professionals, students and storytellers.

Wednesday, Oct. 21, 6 p.m. EST.

Moderated by Retro Report producer Scott Michels.

REGISTER ON [RETROREPORT.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://retroreport.eventbrite.com)

As a news organization committed to adding historical context to today's most important headlines, Retro Report sprang into action to help viewers understand the coronavirus outbreak spreading across the globe. We produced 10 short films that examined the far-reaching impact of Covid-19 and the lessons that were available from history. Here are some highlights. View the full playlist on [YouTube](#).

What the Bungled Response to H.I.V. Can Teach Us About Dealing With Covid-19

Released: July 1, 2020



Allan Tannenbaum/Getty Images

“By the early 80s, when AIDS emerged, we had let our public health infrastructure deteriorate and it was poorly funded, really poorly structured.

— Allan Brandt, medical historian

PRODUCER: Jill Rosenbaum
EDITOR: Brian Kamerzel

The AIDS pandemic was marked by a slow response and a lack of clear public health messages and testing. Despite those lessons, we were unprepared for Covid-19.

“I wondered why the United States was so unprepared. There was a lot we could have learned from the failed response to the last major pandemic, H.I.V./AIDS, including about leadership, and the conflict between politics and public health.” — Jill Rosenbaum, Producer

American Samoa Dodged a Pandemic in 1918. Here's What We Learned.

Released: April 27, 2020



Michael Runkel/
Alamy Stock Photo

“During the 1918 outbreak, the list of communities that avoided the onslaught of disease was tiny: a rural town in Colorado, a naval station in San Francisco Bay, a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients in upstate New York. Like American Samoa, they were small and isolated.

— From the script

PRODUCER: Matt Spolar
SENIOR PRODUCER: Erik German
EDITOR: Cullen Golden

When a deadly pandemic spread across the globe in 1918, American Samoa recorded no infections. A few dozen miles away, Samoan islands occupied by New Zealand were hit hard. Today the territories' divergent fates hang ominously over a new health crisis.

“Telling the story of American Samoa in a way that made a far-flung, long-ago event approachable was a way to provide context for the shadowy spread of COVID-19, and to show America had once taken pride in the severity of its response to an epidemic.” — Matt Spolar, Producer

Why History Urges Caution on Immunity Testing

Released: May 13, 2020

“Epidemics and pandemics provide any society great challenges. But the real danger is that these moments exacerbate all sorts of existing inequalities that we already have in our societies.

— Kathryn Olivarius
Assistant history professor,
Stanford



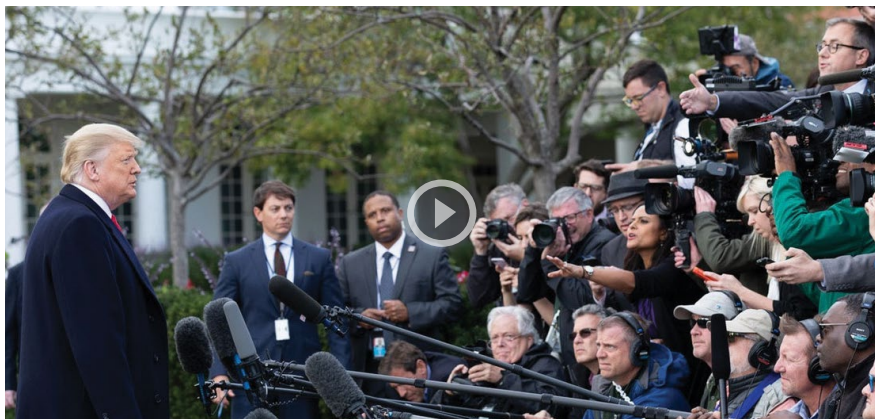
AP Photo/Seth Wenig

PRODUCER: Kit R. Roane
EDITOR: Cullen Golden

In the rush to re-open the world's economies, an idea has been taking shape: field a workforce of survivors who can be shown to have Covid-19 antibodies. But history urges caution. Science historians and ethicists say a great deal can be learned from times when desperate people would “buy the pox.”

“The idea behind a “Covid passport” was that it might allow re-opening of economic activity. I discovered that others had attempted such a system before, when Yellow Fever was the scourge of the Antebellum South. The result? People sought out infection.” — Kit R. Roane, Producer

The toxic relationship between Donald Trump and the press was a hallmark of his presidency. Journalists who covered the 2016 presidential campaign now offer a candid analysis of their role – and missteps – as he rose to power. We produced this popular long-form broadcast documentary video on election coverage in partnership with Vice News.



Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian

Enemies of the People: Trump and the Political Press

Released: October 9, 2020

“ We have to think really hard about how everybody behaved. And it needs to be a ruthless telling of the history if we’re going to learn anything from it.

— David Remnick, *The New Yorker*

PRODUCERS: Susie Banikarim and Victor Couto
SENIOR PRODUCER: Karen M. Sughrue
EDITOR: Bret Sigler

Journalists who covered the 2016 presidential campaign offer a candid analysis of their role in President Trump’s rise to power and the decline of public trust in news.

Eye On Politics



Poll Watchers and the Long History of Voter Intimidation

Released: Nov. 1, 2020

PRODUCER: Scott Michels
EDITOR: Heru Muharrar

Poll watchers operate under strict rules. President Trump’s call for his supporters to guard polling places during the 2020 election raised concerns about the potential for voter intimidation. This story was supported by the Economic Hardship Reporting Project.

“ We want to know that eligible voters will not be disenfranchised. . . . The problem is when it crosses the line into intimidation and harassment.

— Professor Rick Hasen, University of California, Irvine



The Rise of the Political Meme

Released: Jan. 29, 2020

PRODUCERS: Matt Spolar and Sianne Garlick
EDITOR: Heru Muharrar
ADDITIONAL EDITOR: Cullen Golden
ARCHIVAL RESEARCHER: Emily Orr

Political memes are, in the words of one expert, “the people’s editorial cartoons.” As election season heated up, they were weaponized by the left and the right to score political blows, sometimes below the belt.

“ Memes are condensed expression. They’re shorthand. Just add water, and they become something bigger.

— Professor Henry Jenkins, University of Southern California



Political Debates: What the Unforgettable Moments Reveal

Released: September 24, 2020

PRODUCERS: Hal Hansen, Erik German and Meral Agish
EDITOR: Sandrine Isambert
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: Victor Couto
ADDITIONAL EDITOR: Heru Muharrar

Tell-all moments in political debates are embedded in political folklore, from knockout one-liners to astonishing gaffes. High-stakes debates put candidates in the hot seat. But are they helpful to voters?

“ The idea that Kennedy won because he had the better makeup job, I think, has left us with a distorted view of how the presidential debates work.

— Professor David Greenberg, Rutgers

2020 RELEASES: Confronting Domestic Violence

A new documentary presented in collaboration with The New Yorker looks at a landmark domestic violence case, and what has (and has not) changed in the years since.

The Domestic Violence Case That Turned Outrage Into Action

Released: July 9, 2020



Lansing State Journal via
USA TODAY NETWORK

PRODUCER: Scott Michels

EDITOR: Anne Checler

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: Sandra McDaniel

ARCHIVAL RESEARCHER: Charu Raman

The “Burning Bed” case — when Francine Hughes killed her abusive husband — made headlines in the 1970s and caused a national outcry. Today, despite stronger protections, millions of women a year are still abused by a partner. This video was accompanied by an essay for [The New Yorker](#) by Annie Boots.

Retro Report producer Scott Michels moderated an online seminar for journalists, spotlighting subject-matter experts. Their conversation touched on the ways domestic violence is covered by news organizations, with a goal of developing a list of best practices.

“ You could see his arms just swinging and just hear him hitting her.

— James Hughes,
Francine Hughes’s son

“ You couldn’t tell anybody or you’d get beaten up worse. So women had kept silent. Now they took to the streets.

— Ann Jones, Author,
‘Women Who Kill’

“ I don’t know if I can describe it to you, but it was the most alone feeling in the whole world. I could hear the kids crying and hollering, ‘Mommy, are you all right?’

— Francine Hughes

“ The Francine Hughes case was eye opening for a lot of people. But I think it was also an anomaly, because she was acquitted.

— Tiffany Smith,
Attorney, @OhioJPC

WE'RE BRINGING RETRO REPORT TO THE CLASSROOM

In 2020, we launched a prototype of **Retro Report in the Classroom**. Our goal: to build a free, easy-to-use resource for educators in middle schools, high schools and colleges that is based on our growing archive of over 250 short documentaries.

According to a report card issued by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, history scores have declined from 2014. Only 15 percent of eighth-grade students scored proficient in U.S. history, and only 25 percent hit the proficiency mark in civics.

Yet despite the low scores, today's students are increasingly interested in civic engagement. Educators are charged with providing students not only with a solid foundation of historical facts, but also critical thinking skills, helping them to understand the ways lessons from the past affect their lives today.

Middle school and high school social studies teachers tell us that our videos solve a growing problem in their classrooms: how to bring history to life. Our 10- to 15-minute videos make use of first-hand accounts and rich archival video to link past and present, providing students with deep, fact-based historical context.

We deliver our stories and resources in a format teachers and students prefer, regardless of grade level. Teens and young adults appreciate video as a format for learning. A recent study showed that 82 percent of Generation Z prefers learning from YouTube videos over textbooks.

The response to this initiative has been overwhelmingly positive. Nine out of 10 teachers surveyed said they would recommend it to a colleague and 70 percent said they could use it in their classes. In addition to teachers themselves, our partners in this venture include education leaders like Common Sense Media, PBS Learning, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, National History Day and New American History.

In 2021, our goal is to support thousands of teachers through **Retro Report in the Classroom**. We will accelerate our outreach and expand our content offerings and teacher training.



“ I teach three different versions of American History classes, and this website is pure gold.

— High school teacher

“ I've been using Retro Reports in the classroom going on three years now. It's great to see this new student-focused content.

— High school teacher



A MESSAGE FROM THE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

As the coronavirus pandemic disrupted daily life and dramatically changed the way we work, our Retro

Report team rose to the challenge with resilience and creativity, producing 10 stories that explored the impact of Covid-19 and the lessons learned from history. Following the deaths of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor, we tackled the issue of racial unrest with a look back to the 1960s for context. Generous grants from the Pulitzer Center, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Economic Hardship Reporting Project are supporting an ongoing project on affordable housing. These efforts and many others reflect our deep commitment to informing the public on issues that matter most by adding historical context. All of this work is made possible through the extraordinary support of our donors and patrons, to whom we are incredibly grateful. *Onward!*

Craig T. McMurray

HOW TO DONATE

Every tax-deductible donation we receive is used to create new documentaries and update stories in our archive.

To learn how you can support Retro Report, please contact **Craig McMurray**, VP Development: cmmurray@retroreport.com, or call **646-869-0722**.

DONATE

SUPPORTERS

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Robin and Ralph Arditi | Dennis Embry | Craig McMurray | Kit Roane |
| Sarah and Doug Banker | Martha Fleischman | Friedrike Merck | The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation |
| Robin and Ben Benoit | Flood-Gamble Foundation, Inc. | The Miami Foundation | Daniel Rubey |
| Nancy and Thomas Berner | Judith and David V. Foster | Jessica Mingus | Jean Rutter |
| Bonnie Bertram | Sianne Garlick-Wilson | Timothy Mohr | Leslie Sanders |
| Raymond Bonner | Kyra Darnton and David Grann | Benjamin Moore | Laila Schirrneister |
| Gwendolyn Bounds | Kimberly Conner and Nicholas Groombridge | Amy Mullen | Laila Schirrneister |
| Barbara and Gary Brandt Family Foundation | Andrew Guglielmo | Liza Bailey and Michael Musgrave | Hara Schwartz |
| Tom Brown | Mary Grace Herrington | National Institute of Health Care Management Foundation | David Septimus |
| Brown Institute for Media Innovation | Olana Hui | Michael A. Neufeld | Richard Shea |
| Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation | James Irvine Foundation | Caroline Niemczyk | Ruth Lande Shuman |
| Kevin Burke | Brewster Kahle | Christine Bockelmann and Floyd Norris | Sierra Health Foundation |
| Burnt Umber Productions | Randi Keim | Anne and Frederick Osborn III | Bret Sigler |
| John Chacho | Michael Kingery | William Overall | Christine Spolar |
| Gayle Watkins and Andy Chmar | Constance Klein | Lauren Patti | Jody and Stephen Spolar |
| Robert Conner | Victoria Lynn Peebles and Douglas L. Land | Karen and John Petry | Hume R. Steyer |
| The Christopher and Elizabeth Davis Fund | Linda Lane | Katherine S. and Joseph T. Plummer | Karen Sughrue |
| Randi and Howard Davis | The Lanegate Foundation | John Pokorny | Richard J. Tofel |
| Stacey Farley and Peter J. Davoren | Arthur Lieber | Michael Potter | Al Tompkins |
| Danielle Donnelly | Wendy Traynor and Harold Mason | Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting | Anne Upson |
| Michael P. Dowling | Fredric Maxwell | Alison Spear and Alex Reese | Lori Verzillo |
| Nancy Durr | Colleen McCarthy | Juan C. Reynardus Tejada | Lucy R. Waletzky |
| Economic Hardship Reporting Project | Scott McLeod | | Ben Warren |
| | DJ McManus Foundation | | Sarah Weiser |
| | | | Nettie White |
| | | | Dana Wolfe |
| | | | Neal Zuckerman |

FOUNDATION DONORS



2020 Revenue

Founder Contribution	\$ 5,041,667
Individual Donations	314,016
Grants	377,994
Production & Shared Ad Revenue	452,046
In-Kind Contributions	255,611
Other	14,527
Total	\$ 6,455,861

2020 Expenses

News Salaries	\$ 3,119,446
Non-News Salaries	493,358
Field Production	113,107
Production Costs	353,948
Benefits, Taxes, Insurance	1,005,403
Occupancy & Office	269,173
Marketing & Outreach	57,975
Professional Svcs (Includes In-Kind Svcs)	540,458
Total	\$ 5,952,868

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) 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 or (212) 416-8401.

OUR PARTNERS

Thank you to the partners who support and distribute our work, and to the editorial teams that collaborate with us. We reach audiences across evolving digital platforms with videos, a newsletter, YouTube playlists, Instagram and Twitter stories, and online articles related to our documentaries. We are seeking partners committed to helping us inform and elevate the conversation around issues of national importance through short videos and community events informed by history.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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.

FOUNDER

Christopher Buck

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Kyra Darnton

V.P. BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Tom Brown

V.P. DEVELOPMENT

Craig McMurray

EDITORIAL STAFF

SENIOR PRODUCERS AND PRODUCERS

Bonnie Bertram
 Laurence B. Chollet
 Karen M. Sughrue
 Erik German
 Noah Madoff
 Sandra McDaniel
 Scott Michels
 Kit R. Roane
 Jill Rosenbaum
 Matt Spolar
 María Villaseñor
 Sarah Weiser

ARCHIVAL PRODUCER

Rebecca Losick

ASSOCIATE ARCHIVAL PRODUCER

Andrew Mayz

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Jean Rutter

EDITORIAL PRODUCER

Sianne Garlick

ENGAGEMENT PRODUCER

Isadora Varejão

FACT-CHECKING

Joseph Hogan

EDITORS

Jeff Bernier
 Anne Checler
 Brian Kamerzel
 Heru Muharrar

POST-PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Ryan Brown

GRAPHICS & EDITOR

Cullen Golden

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Victor Couto

IT & MEDIA MANAGER

Aaron Thomas

CONTRIBUTING PRODUCERS IN 2020

Susie Banikarim
 Bret Sigler
 Sara Taksler

COLUMNIST

Clyde Haberman

INTERNS

Kirk Cohall
 Emily Orr

BUSINESS STAFF

HEAD OF STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Colleen McCarthy

COPYRIGHT ATTORNEY

Nick Crovo

DONOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Emily Wolkoff

DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

Randi Keim



Join The Conversation


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

 RetroReport.org/Newsletters

 [@RetroReport](https://twitter.com/RetroReport)

 [@RetroReport](https://facebook.com/RetroReport)

 YouTube.com/RetroReport

 [@RetroReport](https://instagram.com/RetroReport)

 [Apple News](https://apple.news)

RETROREPORT
Independent • Objective • Nonprofit

633 Third Avenue
16th Floor, New York, NY 10017
212-987-0209

RetroReport.org