THE APPEAL

IMPACT REPORT
2021–2022
In August 2021, Reginald Randolph was sentenced to prison for up to four years for stealing cold medicine. Reginald was almost 60 years old, and for most of his life he had struggled with substance use disorder, mental illness, and chronic homelessness.

When The Appeal’s reporter, Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg, first spoke to Reginald, he had already spent more than 800 days at the Rikers Island Jail Complex in New York City. Blind in one eye and losing vision in the other, he was scared about his future as he awaited transfer to state prison.

The article Elizabeth wrote did what so much journalism about incarcerated people fails to do: It treated Reginald like a person. From a traumatic childhood to life on the streets, Reginald’s story was that of someone who needed support but was criminalized instead.

This story is not only about Reginald. It’s also about the nearly 2 million people, disproportionately Black and brown, who are locked up in jails and prisons on any given day in the United States. It’s a story not only about injustice, but also about what could be different.

Elizabeth’s reporting showed how the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office had opportunities to break the cycle of incarceration and spare Reginald from Rikers, but chose not to. The story sparked a public outcry and prompted state lawmakers to call for clemency.

Within two months, the DA agreed to release Reginald into a supportive housing program.

But this story almost didn’t happen because several months earlier, in June 2021, The Appeal shut down.

Staff knew the impact of The Appeal’s journalism was too important to let go, especially at a time when backlash to criminal justice reform was on the rise. So we came together to continue our vital work.

We rebuilt from the ground up as a new nonprofit newsroom with an innovative, worker-led model. It took four months of working without pay before we were able to resume publishing. When we did, Reginald’s story was the first we told.

Since then, our journalism has contributed to key changes in the criminal legal system, from a judicial ruling against criminalizing abortion in Arizona to a Department of Justice investigation into the New York Police Department’s pattern of mistreating sexual assault survivors.

It’s not only these immediate impacts that are important. Crucially, The Appeal’s reporting also influences how other media cover criminal justice and shapes the public discourse to transform prevailing ideas about public safety.

We envision a world where systems of support and care, not punishment, create public safety.

Getting there requires rigorous reporting that challenges injustice and catalyzes change. This is the path The Appeal is blazing.
OUR MISSION

**Expose** the harms of a criminal legal system entrenched in centuries of systemic racism.

**Equip** people with the information necessary to make change.

**Elevate** solutions that emerge from the communities most affected by policing, jails, and prisons in the U.S.

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OUR REPORTING

100+ original articles and newsletters

- **Prosecution**: 44%
- **Politics**: 37%
- **Alternatives**: 16%
- **Criminalization**: 14%
- **Policing**: 12%
- **Punishment**: 9%

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**Equity in focus**

- 50+ freelancers across the U.S.
- 32% BIPOC
- 14% incarcerated or formerly incarcerated
- Pay $1 / word

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**Audience listening**

- Surveyed 200+ readers to learn how our reporting can meet the needs of the communities we serve.
- Launched an “Alternatives” section to report on public safety models that don’t rely on policing and incarceration.

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**Most read**

We are aware that things are bad — we’re living it. What we want is to see that things can be different.”

— SURVEY RESPONDENT

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**Most shared**

AFTER 51 YEARS IN PRISON, LOUISIANA’S LONGEST-SERVING INCARCERATED WOMAN IS FREE

‘IT’S A MONEY GRAB’: BILLIONS IN COVID RELIEF GOING TO FUND POLICE AND PRISONS
The Department of Justice opened an investigation into the New York Police Department’s Special Victims Division following reporting by The Appeal that the unit’s officers routinely mistreat sexual assault survivors.

After The Appeal uncovered widespread Legionella bacteria contamination in the water in Illinois prisons, local activists launched a campaign for greater oversight of the state’s correctional facilities.

A federal judge ruled against an Arizona law criminalizing abortions, based on a legal motion citing The Appeal’s reporting on this issue.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights cited three stories from The Appeal in a report that concluded the U.S. bail system “tears apart individual lives, families, and entire communities.”

The Appeal’s journalism achieves concrete outcomes toward transforming the criminal legal system. Since relaunching in 2021, our reporting has:

- Spurred action on inhumane law enforcement and prison conditions.
- Bolstered efforts to change unjust laws and policies.
- A federal judge ruled against an Arizona law criminalizing abortions, based on a legal motion citing The Appeal’s reporting on this issue.
- The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights cited three stories from The Appeal in a report that concluded the U.S. bail system “tears apart individual lives, families, and entire communities.”
The Appeal’s impact goes beyond the stories that we publish. We also influence the way news media and pop culture treat criminal justice issues.

- “Last Week Tonight with John Oliver” featured The Appeal’s reporting during an episode focused on debunking copaganda. Reporter Meg O’Connor worked with producers behind the scenes to develop the show, which reached millions of viewers.

- A screenwriter for the CBS police drama “East New York” said O’Connor’s reporting inspired an episode about law enforcement mishandling sexual assault cases.

- The Appeal’s reporting has been cited in dozens of news reports, radio programs, and law review articles.
AWARDS

Winner:
How the NYPD’s Troubled Sex Crimes Unit is Set Up to Fail Victims
by Meg O’Connor

Finalist:
Excellence in Social Justice Reporting
For stories by incarcerated writers
The Appeal published in partnership with Empowerment Avenue

Honorable Mention:
Best Non-Traditional News Organization
# OUR TEAM & SUPPORTERS

## LEADERSHIP

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tara Francis Chan</td>
<td>Managing Editor &amp; Operations Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Molly Greene</td>
<td>Strategy &amp; Legal Director</td>
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## EDITORIAL TEAM

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anna Simonton</td>
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<td>Ethan Corey</td>
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<td>Jerry Iannelli</td>
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<td>Meg O’Connor</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg</td>
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<td>Nick Wing</td>
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## BOARD MEMBERS

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<tr>
<td>Jody David Armour</td>
<td>Roy P. Crocker Professor of Law, University of Southern California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethan Corey</td>
<td>Research &amp; Projects Editor, The Appeal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craig Hunter</td>
<td>VP, Editorial Director, One Day Studio at Teach for America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnny Perez</td>
<td>Director of the U.S. Prisons Program, National Religious Campaign Against Torture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zara Rahim</td>
<td>Strategic communications expert, cultural and political commentator, producer, and advisor</td>
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<td>Josie Duffy Rice</td>
<td>Former president of The Appeal; podcast host, Crooked Media; journalist, writer, and consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liliana Segura</td>
<td>Senior reporter, The Intercept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasper Wang</td>
<td>Co-Owner and Vice President of Revenue &amp; Operations, Defector Media</td>
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## FUNDERS

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