

TAKE US WITH YOU: DISCLOSING NEWSGATHERING IN  
INVESTIGATIVE PODCASTS

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by  
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## INTRODUCTION

My love for radio and audio storytelling stemmed from obsessively listening to the radio from a very young age, specifically a local Milwaukee morning program. Funnily enough, it took me until my junior year to realize audio storytelling was a viable option to pursue. It was through working with the wonderful reporters at KBIA that I realized how much skill and art went into creating a compelling piece of audio. Between producing podcast episodes for KBIA, producing Global Journalist and producing EU Confidential, I decided that production was the path I wanted to pursue after concluding my studies.

This master's project was sparked, in part, by the reason I decided to pursue a master's degree in journalism. Upon the completion of my undergraduate degree, I still felt as though I had a lot to learn about audio storytelling and producing. I'd like to lead a team of audio producers years down the line. It's a role that requires a greater depth of leadership skills and journalistic ethics than what I possess. Some of the skills come from experience in Mizzou's newsrooms while others stem from understanding why we do journalism, not just how we conduct journalism. Classes like Media Ethics provided a good ethical foundation for working through questions of news judgment. Working in the newsrooms provided critical learning opportunities to hone reporting, production, and editing skills. By taking up a leadership role within the convergence newsroom and stepping into a supervising producer role with Global Journalist, I was able to figure out how to manage and lead teams of reporters and producers. I'm so grateful for those

opportunities because they taught me invaluable lessons in terms of what it takes to create a compelling story while managing interpersonal dynamics, so the team runs smoothly.

The research aspect of my master's project was inspired by the investigative podcasts I enjoyed consuming. Looking at how and why investigative journalists are disclosing reporting and newsgathering in their podcasts interested me from a production standpoint since I hope to pursue journalistic podcast production directly after school. Interviewing reporters and producers about the techniques they used and the decisions behind why the techniques were employed was a wonderful opportunity to peer behind the curtain, so to speak, and learn about how a show is created.

Disclosure of newsgathering and reporting has its roots in transparency and audience trust, which is a salient topic in the current news environment. As one of the producers interviewed for this project pointed out, audience trust has been eroded. Both trust in the news outlet and trust in the individual facts presented within a piece.

Journalists aren't excused from telling stories with journalistic integrity and ethics just because the investigative reporting is packaged in a podcast. Part of a journalist's responsibility is to relay where facts are coming from and tell the audience how you know what you know. Traditionally, this is done through citing sources. With the longform audio format, investigative podcasts are using reporters as characters to allow the audience to see the reporting and newsgathering process.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

First, the literature review will begin by exploring the theoretical framework for this research. Gatekeeping theory identifies how and why certain information becomes news as well as the factors that influence newsmakers' decisions in terms of what information reaches the public. This theory helps frame the conversation as to why investigative podcasts allow aspects of the newsgathering process to be included in the final product, thus reaching the public. Following the discussion of gatekeeping theory, the literature review will define newsgathering and the newsgathering process.

The literature review will then discuss the history of podcasts followed by a dive into the intersectionality of journalistic podcasting and investigative reporting. The aim of the pairing is to explore what storytelling techniques are being used to include the newsgathering process and why journalists are including these techniques in the final product.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The phenomenon of investigative podcasts transparent inclusion of the newsgathering process will be examined using gatekeeping theory as a lens. Acknowledging that it is difficult to accurately define journalism or pinpoint journalism's role within society, journalism's primary purpose "is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing" (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Since

the production of news is restricted based on resources and the medium's capacity in which the news outlet distributes the content, not all of the information that has the potential to become news is chosen and thus it is up to journalists to select what information is gathered, shaped and distributed (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009).

Gatekeeping theory has its roots in “Kurt Lewin’s (1947) social psychological theory of how people’s eating habits could be changed” and shows that the path and outcome of certain items depends on forces “constraining the flow of items through gates” (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). When the theory was applied to journalism by David White in 1949, Shoemaker, Vos and Reese pinpoint the gatekeeper’s decisions as a main, yet subjective, factor that influenced the flow of information through the channel, which led to the identification of the selection process as a “source of news bias” (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). Other factors include “newsroom norms, ownership, competition, official and corporate sources, and public sentiment” (McElroy, 2013). Though the role of gatekeeper within the consideration of news doesn’t stray from those working within the news outlet, scholarship expanded the factors influencing gatekeeping decisions to include five levels of analysis: “individual journalist level, the organizational level, the extra-media level, and the social system level” (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). The authors go on to explain that understanding how the forces, which are the factors that influence decisions about information, requires analysis of the five levels’ interactions to understand outcomes of information (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009).

The role of gatekeeper shifts with the advancements and changes in the field of journalism, with some shifts, like changing demographics not resulting in major changes (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). While other changes like advancements of technology proving to be a more major influence on the shifting, and in some instances diminishing, role of gatekeeping (Singer, 2006). Singer's study "suggests an evolution in online journalists' thinking about the nature of information" shifting to the delivery of credible information and perhaps "stepping back from the gate," especially as interactivity with the audience increases and journalists take on a greater level of curation duties (Singer, 2006). McElroy's analysis also highlights the shift in gatekeeping due to the influx of participatory journalism enabled through advancements in technology (McElroy, 2013). Though the role of gatekeeping may be shifting with technology, the factors that influence the role of the gatekeepers like newsroom norms and public sentiment still remain influential.

When applying this theory to the research, gatekeeping comes into play when the journalists within the reporting, editing or producing process decide what part of the newsgathering process to include in the podcast. Furthermore, the research uses gatekeeping theory to examine how journalists incorporate the newsgathering process into the audio story and what purpose inclusion serves.

## **The Newsgathering Process**

Newsgathering is the backbone of the profession. Journalists or practitioners use the newsgathering process as a way to "collect information with the intention of turning it into news" (Zelizer & Allen, 2010). Essentially, it's the method of assembling news or

“turning raw information into a processed news story relative to the constraints of the medium in which it is being relayed” (Rupar, 2006; Zelizer & Allen, 2010). Within the field of journalism, there are a multitude of ways journalists find, research and source their information (Deuze, 2005). Professional norms within the field come into play in newsgathering, like not obtaining information through payed interviews and not coercing information (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Deuze, 2005). Overall, the newsgathering process doesn’t factor in the piece’s success or the quality of the process. If information was gathered for the purpose of transforming it into a consumable piece of news, no matter the platform, then the process to obtain that information falls under newsgathering.

## **Investigative Journalism**

Muckraking, scandal spotlighting, and corruption exposing pieces of investigative journalism throughout the 1900s helped redefine the purpose of journalism (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Reporting with the aim to expose corruption or check those in power existed in the U.S. before the country was founded and before journalism became easily accessible via the penny press even though the genre of investigative reporting didn’t begin to form and popularize until the early 1900s. (Aucoin, 2005; Oppenheimer, 2017). Investigative journalism acts, in a way, as a “custodian of consciousness” due to the moral dimension introduced. (Glasser and Ettema, 1989; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). The reporting serves multiple purposes within society “uncovering and documenting unknown activities” contributes information to society where as interpretive reporting provides the public with concise analysis and context while the third category, reporting on investigations, keeps the public informed of the activity of institutions that are hard to

check as a single citizen (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Though different categories, investigative reporting is identified by the inclusion of “original work, concealed information otherwise hidden to the public and reporting that is in the public’s interest” (Abdenour, 2018). The literature suggests that ages where investigative journalism thrives coincide with ages of social, cultural or political unrest (Lanosga, 2014; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Aucoin, 2005; Oppenheimer, 2017).

Some argue that all reporting should be somewhat investigative in nature and all journalism should aim to inform the consumer, investigative reporting’s aim tends to be more watchdog in nature. Watchdog journalism acts as a check on power as it “aggressively serves the public’s need for important information concerning matters of public welfare” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Furthermore, the principle behind watchdog journalism extends beyond serving as an unlegislated fourth branch of government, essentially acting as the people’s check of power on the government, and surveys other “powerful institutions within society” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001).

Beyond the purpose of reporting, investigative journalism separated itself through the “intensification of traditional reporting methods” and the “skills required to dig up information, more-than normal stamina, and tough-mindedness” (Aucoin, 2005). Original practices of investigative journalism, like reporters utilizing undercover tactics, were replaced by “clearly established methodologies, goals, values, standards, and rewards that embraced and extended journalism’s long tradition of exposure and crusading for reform” during the second half of the 1900s (Aucoin, 2005; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). From

an outside perspective, investigative journalists may walk the line between advocacy and objectivity if they seek reform but they tend to investigate “violations of widely shared values” (Glasser and Ettema, 1989). For the most part, investigative reporters observed these values and standards as the reporting transferred to different mediums like radio, television and online platforms.

Print’s strong tradition for investigative reporting flourished online due to the quasi-infinite amount of space in which to disclose documents (Dalton, 2017). The quality of investigative reporting produced for television has been criticized and one may be able to point towards the intersection of the cost to conduct investigative reporting and the financial concerns of commercial news organizations (Abdenour, 2018). Results of Abdenour’s research found that there is a strong connection between investigative journalism and competition, meaning that competition can drive the production of investigative journalism. However, the study also found that investigative journalism is produced infrequently at U.S. television stations and that level may decrease as local television stations consolidate, lowering the level of competition within the region, thus reducing the station’s competitive monetary need to sink resources into expensive investigative reporting (Abdenour, 2018).

Part of what makes investigative journalism impactful is how the reporting can harness the emotionality of a situation, hooking the consumer in and giving the audience a reason to care (Sillesen, Ip, and Uberti, 2015). Journalists often employ the “power of storytelling” through narratives aiming to “extend empathy for the individual to the group,

correct injustice, and inspire change, or at least awareness” (Sillesen, Ip and Uberti, 2015). Interestingly, the study found that narrative stories tend to result in readers “feeling a higher degree of compassion and empathy.” The authors point to the engagement of narrative stories transporting consumers to a specific scene, which makes the audience feel as though they are experiencing the moment, enabling the audience to connect on a level where the subjects feel more like real, relatable people rather than characters (Sillesen, Ip and Uberti, 2015). Furthermore, empathy is sparked through this narrative immersion and the “more transported you feel, the more likely you’ll be to change your opinions and beliefs about the real world,” the study found.

## **Audio Journalism**

Audio storytelling excels at transporting the audience due to the intimacy of the medium in which the audience feels as though the reporters are speaking directly to them (Larson, 2015). Audio excelling at and relying on narrative radio journalism and personal audio storytelling shouldn’t be surprising, Lindgren argues, and the informality of podcasts allows for journalists to approach stories with even more of a conversational style and tone, which makes them sound “relaxed and personal” (Lindgren, 2016). Levels of intimacy are created in part by how the audience consumes the piece, headphones creating a barrier between the listener and the environment, while the journalist’s voice, combined with a compelling narrative, taps into the conversational aspect (Lindgren, 2016). The personalization aspect stems from audio’s unique ability to force an audience to use their imagination, since audio doesn’t provide visuals, which may help listeners feel more connected to the subjects and characters featured in the journalism pieces (Lindgren, 2016).

Audio not only allows the audience an in-depth experience, the lack of bulky equipment can allow sources in an audio story to relax and not worry about their appearances being scrutinized like they may for a video interview (McHugh, 2015). Furthermore, “audio is a powerful medium, whose non-intrusiveness, affective resonance and enveloping nature make it particularly suited to capturing intimate personal narratives” (McHugh, 2015).

But radio journalism can be more than just creating an intimate piece of audio, narrative journalism infuses personality to “turn the dry and scholarly into utterly compelling storytelling” making “complex issues...entertaining and simple” essentially making “journalism fun” (Lindgren, 2016). When something is fun, people tend to enjoy the experience, or in audio journalism’s case - the consumption, more. There is a rising trend in journalism to humanize news and personal narratives work to humanize the subject but the use of the host’s personality could perhaps help to humanize journalists (Larson, 2015). These advancements may have paid off. Audio as a news medium is ‘viewed more fondly’ over other mediums since it is highly portable, engaging through the use of personality and narrative, and succeeded to “invade these personal spaces” that allow the audience to connect with the journalist and humanize the subject so “we [as an audience] trust it more and often rely on it more” (Berry, 2006).

## **Podcasts**

In the world of audio storytelling, podcasts are a relatively new phenomenon. Podcasts are hard to describe due to the lose formatting, low barrier to entry and variety of programs. However, the core of a podcast is quite simple. Podcasts at the most basic level are audio files available for consumption on a digital platform. NPR describes it as “a piece of audio that you can listen to on demand” and the content varies from a show-like structure to more episodic storytelling (NPR, 2018). Podcasts maintain many traits from the traditional radio format, with the exception of exploration due to the medium’s liberation of form and genre (Berry, 2006; Lindgren, 2016).

The medium as we currently know it is approximately a decade and a half old (Quah, 2017). Though the term ‘podcast’ was coined by The Guardian in 2004; the first modern podcast is generally thought to be Christopher Lydon’s Open Source, an RSS feed of audio files released in 2003 (Frary, 2017, Locke, 2017).

Early pioneers of the medium thought the digital platform could “erase the limitations of radio” and be a space “where people could use four-letter words and speak a kind of raw, angry opinion that a great mass of the population believes and wants to hear” (Locke, 2017). Tech enthusiasts, comedians and the highly opinionated first took advantage of the niche, but free medium, to publish audio files resembling rough talk shows, interviews or monologues (Quah, 2017; Ulandoff, 2015). Journalism and podcasting began converging when traditional programs like This American Life, a public radio program focusing on long-form storytelling, and NPR’s Planet Money followed suit and began experimenting with the medium (PBS Newshour, 2014). Podcasting is a “low-

reach, high-engagement medium” that was “bubbling” below the mainstream surface looking for something to breakthrough, Larry Rosin, president of market research firm Edison Research, told CNBC (Bishop, 2014).

The crossover between traditional audio journalism broadcast via radio waves and new audio journalism published via podcasts shouldn’t have been shocking. Podcasts aren’t reinventing the wheel. Instead, the less regulated or standardized platform was viewed as an opportunity for experimentation and innovation within audio storytelling. Since producers use the format to experiment with “journalistic forms of expression,” the integrity of the reporting found audio journalism hasn’t waned (Lindgren, 2016). Furthermore, podcasts shouldn’t be seen as a rival to radio and instead viewed as “niche content and on-demand listening” (Berry, 2015).

Though the medium was growing in popularity, it wasn’t until the launch of ‘Serial,’ a This American Life spinoff, that podcasts truly broke into the mainstream (McHugh, 2016; PBS Newshour, 2014). Serial intersected investigative journalism and compelling storytelling in a way that tapped into the realm of entertainment. The true-crime “breakout hit” closely resembles other true crime programs popular on television while remaining to present an episodic narrative “which the audience could engage with intellectually and emotionally” (Berry, 2015). In essence, the attention that Serial, and the other podcasts people discovered as a result of Serial’s popularity, ushered in a “boom of independent narrative formats informed by the editorial values and production expertise of public service media” (McHugh, 2016). The “hand-held, spoon-fed, and host-driven”

narrative format, McHugh's research found, is intentional and has set the tone for the wider podcasting industry.

As of 2019, podcasting continues to emerge as a prominent medium for a wide variety of content. Approximately 144 million people in the U.S. above the age of 12 have listened to a podcast in the last decade, which is an increase from 22% to 51%, according to the 2019 Infinite Dial survey (Edison Research, 2019). Apple Podcasts, one of the most popular podcast distribution apps, estimates that there are over 550,000 active podcasts published as of June 2018 (Winn, 2018). Nearly half of that listening takes place at home, which is a departure from radio, which relies on listenership at work or commuting. Since a majority of people listen to podcasts on their mobile devices, the industry can track the number of podcast downloads. Between 2014 and 2018 the number of all-time episode downloads through Apple Podcasts jumped from 7 billion to 50 billion (Locker, 2018).

It's not just journalism that occupies the podcast space. The industry is abundant with entertainment-driven programs that may resemble talk shows or that curate content, relying on background research to compile an episode. Prior to the internet lowering barriers to entry, audio needed a publicly accessible platform with which to distribute the product (Heise, 2016). Now, anyone with basic audio recording equipment, like a recording app on a smartphone, can create a podcast and upload it to a publishing site for free where it can be accessed by audiences for free (Berry, 2006). As far as information reaching audiences, "there is no gatekeeper controlling who can and who cannot transmit in this space" (Berry, 2006). Academia points out that this lack of gatekeeping may be handy in

certain political climates or countries that may restrict the flow of information through censorship (Frary, 2017). However, if a podcast is produced within a news organization, it still is subjected to gatekeeping within the news production process.

### **Investigative Journalism and Podcasting**

Investigative journalism “found a home” in podcasting due, in part, to the medium’s malleable formatting and opportunity for immersive storytelling (Dalton, 2017; Mullin, 2016). Investigative podcast topics span from issue-based reporting to in-depth political examinations to true-crime shows. One of the new opportunities the medium provides investigative reporting is the “emphasis...on deep audience engagement and a more deliberate focus on impact,” said Christa Scharfenberg, head of the studio at the Center for Investigative Reporting. “This requires us to appeal to a broader audience with more accessible storytelling while adhering to the core principles of watchdog, public service journalism,” Scharfenberg continued (Quah, 2016).

Accessible audio stories tend to tap into already existing narrative storytelling techniques. Producers of This American Life tend to tell audio stories in sequence of events. This allows the audience, which doesn’t have the ability to rewind on live radio, to follow along, according to Ira Glass (Abel, 2015). Chronological structuring can be naturally applied to investigative podcasts. Investigations are often revealed in a sequence of events partially because that’s how events played out in the first place and partially because that’s how journalists came to understand their information. The later part of the rational is the newsgathering process.

Overtly explaining each step in the newsgathering process can seem counterintuitive. Editors and producers have traditionally emphasized eliminating extra details that muddle the story. Podcasts are now demonstrating that inclusion of details in the newsgathering process are no longer detracting from the story line, but are instead being woven into the fabric of the story.

Inclusion can be pretty seamless; it may seem like first-person narration instead of explanation when integrated into the storyline of the final product. This transparent inclusion of the newsgathering process can make the audience feel as though they are a part of the investigative team, besides showing the journalist's work (Blandling, 2018; Silverman, 2014; Picard, 2014; Singer, 2007). The elements of the newsgathering process including: providing sourcing, background information, data, and documents can transform a program from "trust me journalism to show me journalism," impacting the overall credibility of the reporting (More and Reich, 2018).

## **Literature Gap**

Academic research has yet to explore details about the newsgathering process in the final product of an investigative podcast. This study will help establish whether journalists are including more of the newsgathering process in investigative podcasts, what narrative storytelling techniques are used to show this process, how the journalists decide what to include, and what the journalists are trying to accomplish through the utilization of these techniques.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction**

Audio excels at immersing the audience in a story by creating scenes in which natural sounds, reporter observations and interviews can be intertwined to replicate the feeling of being in a certain environment. Audio features, longform reporting and documentaries have been utilizing this type of scene building for years to make the audience feel as though the listener is standing next to a reporter in the field.

Investigative podcasts have capitalized on melding audio storytelling techniques, like scene building, with reporting and newsgathering transparency. This is done by building scenes that aim to immerse the audience in the reporting while simultaneously showing the audience how the team found facts and voices by disclosing the reporting and newsgathering process. This trend of disclosure is relatively easily achievable because reporting and newsgathering occur whether or not the process is included in the piece of investigative journalism.

During the reporting process the investigative team records audio for a few reasons. First and foremost is for the team to tell the story they are reporting. This tape is the audio version of what would be gathered during the reporting process no matter the medium. For example, this would include normal interviews with sources for the purpose of obtaining information.

The second reason audio is gathered is for transparency purposes. For example, this can be tape gathered in the field by reporters digging through files. Or observations of what a certain place looks like to help corroborate a source's experience. Or a scene of the reporters conducting an experiment to prove a claim presented during the reporting.

This tape can manifest in a lot of different ways, but the overarching intent is to provide transparency to the audience.

The third reason to gather audio during the reporting process is to create an immersive listening experience. Scenes allow the audience to visualize events while characters help the audience track the story. Investigative podcasts have been using the reporting process as a way to build scenes to immerse the audience and create a more active storyline. Some podcasts have been utilizing the reporters as characters to maximize effect. For example, this audio can sound like reporters knocking on sources' doors. Or color narrating an event they are at. Or interacting with a source in the middle of an interview, showing the humanity, reactions and methods of thinking for both the reporter and the source, painting a more complex picture of the interview.

The interesting part of collecting tape is that the purpose of one piece of audio isn't mutually exclusive. One piece of audio can help with the storyline while providing additional transparency.

Once the audio is gathered, the journalists act as gatekeepers determining what audio and parts of the reporting and newsgathering process are included in the final podcast. They also use the gathered tape and combined it with storytelling techniques while producing to enhance the narrative arc and provide additional transparency.

## **Research**

In order to understand the role of reporting and newsgathering within investigative podcasts, I listened to more than 20 investigative podcasts to hear what aspects of the newsgathering process were being disclosed to the audience and how the information was being conveyed. Then I spoke with eight journalists across seven

investigative podcasts, a total of nine seasons, to learn about the storytelling techniques they used and the intention behind their decisions.

I found that journalists include the reporting and newsgathering process in investigative podcast to provide transparency and active, engaging storytelling. Journalists wanted to show the audience how they know what they know. Transparency can serve proof of reporting as well as a way for the audience to understand how the sausage is made. Since the journalists are operating in a creative, longform format, the reporting and newsgathering process can manifest in elements like active scenes, first person narratives from reporters included as characters, and even journalists conducting their own experiments on tape. These elements are often flushed out, compared to an audio feature running in a newscast. Transparency within that scenario will often be a quick citation like, [fact], according to [record] obtained by [news organization] from [source]. Within the podcast's elements, there are storytelling techniques like color commentary or explanations that provide additional transparency.

On a broad level, the transparent inclusion of the reporting and newsgathering process seemed to be intentional. But when it came down to specific storytelling techniques, transparency seemed to be an added bonus but not the main reason a certain piece of was included in the podcast. For example, a lot of podcasts use signposting or montages at the beginning of an episode to help the audience track where they are in the story. While the inclusion of this element can increase transparency by clearly outlining what pieces of an argument will be addressed within an episode, transparency isn't the driving factor.

The analysis also found that there is a debate between journalists interviewed about how big of a role should the reporter play within the podcast. Traditional journalistic practices advise journalists to stay out of the story so the focus can be on the subject. But utilizing the reporter as the main character can also help the flow of the episode and give the audience stakes since they are often following the reporter over multiple hours of storytelling.

- *Bear Brook* is an investigative podcast produced by New Hampshire Public Radio. The show investigated a cold case. A barrel with two bodies were found in the 1980s next to Bear Brook State Park. For years, the police were hung up on identifying the Jane Does. Then another barrel was found years later with two more bodies. It wasn't fresh. It had been there in the woods, only 300 feet away, when the first barrel was found. Moon follows along as investigators and citizen sloughs begin to crack the case with new methods to identify both victims and suspects. Jason Moon is the reporter and host of *Bear Brook*.
- Season one of *Bundyville* looks into the Bundy's influence in the political landscape of the West, specifically the discussion of self-governance, federal oversight, and constitutional interpretation. Host and reporter Leah Sottile looks beyond the family to understand violent events inspired by the Bundy's ideology. Season two, *Bundyville: The Remnant*, looks at the wider impact of movements and attacks spurred by anti-government rhetoric. Peter Frick-Wright was one of the producers for both seasons of the show.

- *Chapo: Kingpin on Trial* dove into Chapo's upbringing, rise to power and influence within the drug trade - up though his trial. Keegan Hamilton was a reporter and host for the series produced for Vice News.
- *In the Dark* is an investigative podcast from APM Reports. Season one looked into the death of Jacob Wetterling. Season two investigated the case of Curtis Flowers, a man who had been tried six times for the murder of four people in Winona, Mississippi. Natalie Jablonski produced for both seasons.
- *Last Seen* told the story of the characters, events and investigation surrounding the Gardner Heist in Boston where millions of dollars' worth of priceless art was stolen and had yet to be recovered. Stephen Kurkjian was a consulting producer for the podcast. In the years following the heist, Kurkjian continued to report and investigate for the Boston Globe and for his book on the heist.
- *The Pope's Long Con* investigated Danny Ray Johnson, a Kentucky preacher and politician with a penchant for embellishing qualifications and spewing controversial perspectives from the pulpit. He also allegedly assaulted a minor. R.G. Dunlop reporter and produced the story.
- Jacob Ryan also reported and produced *The Pope's Long Con*.

- *White Lies* investigated what caused Reverend James Reeb's death in Selma, Alabama in 1965. Reeb, a white civil rights supporter, came to Selma during the civil rights movement. The podcast also addresses the south's ongoing reconciliation with the past. Chip Brantley reported and produced the show.

## Why Podcasts?

*Serial* is widely credited as the show that put podcasts into the mainstream. It's viral success not only spurred audio storytelling within the medium but its entertainment and reporting blend created an opportunity in the podcasting market for other investigative reporters to package their work into podcasts and have an audience. *Serial's* viral success also seemed to set the storytelling style for investigative podcasts. As a *This American Life* spinoff, *Serial* combined investigative journalism and compelling storytelling into an episodic narrative that "the audience could engage with intellectually and emotionally," according to Richard Berry whose research looks at *Serial's* impact on podcasting.

"One story told over the course of a season of episodes really allows people to get into the story, feel connected to it," said Natalie Jablonski, *In the Dark* producer. "[The audience] wants to know what happens week after week. They seem to get really invested in the story and the people in the story."

Creating compelling narratives and disclosing how a reporter finds information isn't new, Chip Brantley, *White Lies* reporter, pointed out.

Nonfiction writers, like Robert Caro, have talked about their process within their stories, Brantley explained. Documentaries, both audio and video, have scenes showing

the journalist following the story. Television news has reporters out in the field talking to sources or reporting live from a scene. Investigative podcasts take narrative cues and storytelling techniques about information disclosure from a variety of mediums.

But for Brantley, the ability to recreate a scene that captivates an audience is where podcasting as a medium excels.

“The ways in which the reporting process shows the thrust of the story [creates] really interesting narratives that work really well in audio,” Brantley said. “Especially if the stuff you are looking for is in secret basements, airplane hangars and people’s garages are stock full of stuff.”

Audio storytellers paint these visuals by combining narration, interviews, natural sounds, archive tape and sound design. And with the lax time restrictions allotted to longform audio storytelling in podcasting, journalists can form extensive, creative scenes. Following the action through scenes lets events unfold within the audio, according to Jablonski.

“I think the podcast is actually a really great format for investigative journalism because you do have more expansive amount of time to go on a journey with the reporter,” Jablonski said. “We have more time and space to show the process behind what we do and the process of finding stuff out.”

When *Bear Brook* reporter Jason Moon was told his feature would be turned into a podcast, he capitalized on the additional space by expanding his reporting and reaching out to sources that he wouldn’t have time to include if the story was being packaged to run on the radio during a newscast. There are multiple ways to tell a story and the method of delivery tends to outline reporting boundaries. This doesn’t mean Moon wasn’t doing

his due diligence when he began reporting. Instead, it acknowledges that there is a base level of reporting needed to accurately tell a story. Depending on the story's deadline or time restrictions, a reporter will meet the base level of reporting. But if the reporter has additional reporting time, resources and time for the piece, they can explore additional avenues by interviewing fringe sources or digging into additional data.

While podcasting can give reporters the time to reach out to additional sources, how does the medium impact a source's willingness to speak on the record? On one hand, the voice is identifiable - especially when combined with a name and description. The *Last Seen* team experienced difficulty asking sources previously cultivated for Stephen Kurkjian's reporting for the Boston Globe or his book, both print mediums, to come on the record. Especially since newspaper reporters do their work through whispers, Kurkjian explained.

It's "hush, hush hush, you know? And you test their account, try to confirm it with other people because they don't want to be on the record," he said. "But if you're going to play in this game, you're going to have to use that tactic of allowing people to be on background, and therefore not named."

Even though Kurkjian was a part of the *Last Seen* team, it was a big ask to go back to sources and request they tell their story again, this time on mic. Especially since the sources for this story "were not accustomed to speaking publicly" about their involvement in potentially shady dealings.

"It was tough to go back to them and say, "Listen, you did great for the book, but I'd like you to speak up." And I would say, probably a third of them would. Two thirds wouldn't... the lawyers all would. But not their clients."

If the sources refuse to go on tape, the investigative reporters shouldn't disregard the source just because they won't be a useful voice. It is still the investigative journalists' responsibility to report the truth. As Kurkjian puts it, "voice is important - but not as important as getting to the bottom of things."

There are a few ways investigative podcasts can deal with a source not wanting to appear on tape. One, the reporter can summarize the source's information in the narration, citing them to provide transparency. Two, if the source wants to speak on background the information can still be used. But anonymity creates an issue of transparency for the reporters. Three, the reporters can attempt to obtain and corroborate information given to them off the record with other sources, so the same facts are usable. If the information is corroborated, then you can potentially go back to the off the record source and see if they want to re-evaluate. The *White Lies* team did that with sources. Sources gave them information that helped shape their reporting, so they independently reported and confirmed information that they could take back to the source. One of their sources wanted to protect another person involved with the beating. The source only went on the record after the other person was no longer alive. But after he passed, they followed up and were able to persuade her and got her voice on tape, which was more compelling and transparent than having the reporters summarize the interview in the narration.

On the other hand, audio's lack of visuals can persuade sources to speak on record. Sources may feel more comfortable going on the record during an audio interview rather than a video interview. The lack of a visual component allows for a layer of

privacy. Depending on the investigation, reporters may be dealing with apprehensive sources.

“The only reason that [Chapo’s mom and sister] agreed to talk to us was because it wouldn’t be on camera, said Keegan Hamilton, *Chapo: Kingpin on Trial*. “That it would be their voices and not their faces.”

Trading in video equipment for audio equipment allowed the Vice News team to be more “low-key” when reporting in places like Chapo’s hometown. The team didn’t hide equipment or attempt to sneak around.

“Anybody who was there and looking around could see what was going on,” Hamilton said. “Certainly, Chapo’s family knew right away that we were in town and wanted to talk to them.”

Video forces a simple narrative. Simplicity helps the audience the plot and the characters, he explained. Despite the immersive quality of video, it is rather constrained to what the journalist can capture on camera. While podcasting “allows you to step back, add some context, and really tell the story in the same nuanced way as written content but in a way that it is a little more dynamic” for the audience.

For Hamilton, the dynamic storytelling comes from compelling scenes with reporters that allow a somewhat ‘playful’ or conversational tone with reporters that drops the fourth wall.

“It’s like ‘hey, we’re reporters. This is how we are doing our story. Come along with us. Sit shotgun with us as we go out into the mountains to Chapo’s hometown. Or go to Juarez and go to the morgue.’ You want people to feel like they’re there with you,” he added.

Access to sources is extremely important during the reporting and newsgathering process. Besides information and interview gathering, audio access helps journalists obtain tape for transparency and tape for storytelling. Audio storytelling can both help and hurt the journalists' access, which in turn impacts the tape gathered. When it comes down to it, podcasts' strength as a compelling medium for investigative reporting stems from the ability to create immersive scenes, which provides transparency when the scenes include the reporting and newsgathering process.

### **Technique: Tape it All**

Scene creation is a cornerstone of narrative storytelling within investigative podcasts. Scenes are how journalists immerse the audience into the story. The way to ensure you have enough tape to bring the audience into the moment is by taping other parts of the reporting process the journalists don't have to rely on splicing together interviews and studio tracking.

"We recorded everything," Ryan said. "We recorded us just driving around looking for people to talk to. We recorded ourselves before and after interviews. We recorded faxing stuff and we recorded printing things off. Just because you never know what you're going to want to use in the end. We taped everything that we could possibly tape. And then we whittled it down to what you heard."

Reporting trips are investments and can't always be repeated if it wasn't caught the first time. *Chapo: Kingpin on Trial* featured a lot of traveling. The audience heard reporters at the airport, arrive to locations, and testing levels prior to interviews and in

between narration. The Vice News team deliberately captured the small moments, according to Hamilton.

“It’s little touches like that,” he said. But the podcast needs to strike a balance “because people want to feel like they’re there, or make it feel immersive, but you don’t want to bore people with the actual like process of reporting too much.”

Those moments are captured by taping everything. That production philosophy also applies to things like reporters looking at documents for the first time. Genuine reactions are hard to recreate. Besides, recreating moments can get into ethical gray areas. So it’s best to err on the side of rolling.

“You never know if there’s something good in there... we want [the reporter] to just talk about it on tape,” explained *Bundyville* producer Peter Frick-Wright. “And if it’s not good, then we just don’t have to use this tape. There’s nothing lost.”

*Caliphate* mastered this. Producer Andy Mills followed around reporter Rukmini Callimachi to capture her while reporting. She narrated what she was doing in the moment and there was dialogue between Callimachi and Mills when they discussed why she was doing what she was doing. As a result, *Caliphate* had a lot of active scenes and moments where the audience experienced a moment of reporting alongside Callimachi.

*White Lies* also used this trick. It took reporters Brantley and Beck Grace months to track down the fourth attacker. They ended up talking to him the week before he passed away. The attacker’s passing was a crucial piece of information but also had implications when it came to the question of justice. Brantley had gone down to Selma to follow up with sources while Beck Grace was in his office that day when Brantley contacted Beck Grace and said they needed to record themselves. The audience

experienced Beck Grace's genuine reaction when he learned that the man they'd been tracking down, one of the only living people from the night of the attack, had passed away.

*In the Dark* also taped quite a bit of the reporting process. The audience heard as reporter Madeleine Baran walked the route the suspect, Curtis Flowers, would have taken as he walked to Tardy Furniture, where the murders took place. They listened as she was waiting to speak to DA Doug Evans. They heard Baran knock on doors of potential sources. Tape of the process adds "storytelling and drama," according to Jablonski.

"We do want to show our process. I think people, our listeners respond to that well," she said. "We want them to know that we've put a ton of work into this finding and like you could trust us because here's tape of us in this factory, digging through documents."

Jablonski added the tape also proves that *In the Dark*'s reporting is thorough and that the team "goes to great lengths to find stuff out," which is something their audience likes knowing.

### ***Tape for Transparency***

Recording the newsgathering process can serve as a record of the investigation's reporting process. This can be helpful to reporters when trying to fact check. It can also help prove that they did try to reach out to a source, in case there was a complaint or a legal challenge. But it can also be used for transparency within the final product. By including this tape in the podcast, the team is giving the audience proof of the reporting.

“Any type of proof... especially in the world that we live in where everybody thinks that any type of news story that holds someone accountable is fake... is incredibly important,” Ryan said.

Reporting conveys what information was obtained and to a certain extent who or what it was obtained from. But transparency of the reporting and newsgathering process allows the audience to understand how the reporters obtained information, when they obtained information and why they obtained information from certain sources.

For Moon, transparency surrounding the reporting and newsgathering process can act as “virtue signaling that we did our due diligence” and can “show the public how journalism works.”

Transparency upfront preempts potential questions about how a reporter knows something is factual or where a reporter obtained a piece of information.

“We try to answer those questions before we ever put it on the air or went on our website with stories, to make sure that we told our listeners or readers how we knew what we knew,” Dunlop said.

To Hamilton, listeners are “savvy” and understand that published journalism traditionally is a “polished” product. But, he said, the audience wants “the ability to understand how the sausage is getting made.” Which is a decent point in a time where public trust in media isn’t high. Perhaps the public will trust a report if the reporters allow the audience to understand the reporting process.

While it isn’t a storytelling technique, another way to deliberately provide transparency is by releasing information that couldn’t fit into the podcast. Investigative

podcasts are often produced in tandem with news organizations that have an online platform.

For example, *The Pope's Long Con* set up a website to publish a written story along with pictures, evidence mentioned in the podcast and other documents used in the investigation. The audience could dig through documentation themselves if they wanted to verify a piece of information. Plus, documents act as proof of reporting and backup statements.

"All the documents [on the website] are strictly for transparency's sake," Ryan said. "We want to be able to prove everything and have the receipt. Some of those receipts come through in sound waves."

*Last Seen* released Kurkjian's reporter's notebook on its website in part due to the fact that the case was still open and the podcast's aim was to lay out what happened during the heist, the state of the investigation and theories both current and debunked - instead of trying to solve the crime. The podcast couldn't thoroughly cover all of the theories, even theories that were covered in Kurkjain's book, so his reporter's notebook was published as a way to provide the audience with a way to obtain that information.

Whether it be providing additional information during the podcast or on an additional platform, transparency helps the audience understand the story and the newsgathering and reporting process.

### ***Tape for Narrative Storytelling***

Narrative storytelling is the other main motivation for taping the reporting and newsgathering process. Ira Glass pointed to the unfolding of events, chronologically, as a

way to hook people into a narrative, in the book, *On The Wire*. By telling a narrative story event by event, the audience can easily follow what happened – implicitly providing more transparency of how an event happened than a brief summary. Essentially, the audience gets a granular understanding of how events went down while helping to increase tension.

“If you know that I called 30 wrong numbers and knocked on 10 wrong doors, by the time you finally hear this person's voice, you're sort of yearning to hear it,” Moon said.

Frick-Wright approaches narrative storytelling as if the story was an audio screenplay. When he is piecing together the story, he's looking to add narrative tension and figure out the drama happening within the series, during individual episodes, and down to singular scenes.

“You have your opener, and then you have your first complicating action,” Frick-Wright explained. The audience should be able to “visualize all these things as much as possible... your story will be stronger the more [the audience] can visualize what's happening.”

The way this is accomplished, according to Frick-Wright, is through active tape. “If you listen to something like *Caliphate* which is 90% active tape, or off the cuff conversations, that one is so compelling because it's all happening there, you're hearing these things, you're with them in the process, you've just got scene after scene after scene of active tape. And it's beautiful. It's an excellent, excellent podcast,” he said.

Active tape can be collected by following a reporter around gathering natural sound of them interacting with sources or the environment. Or it can be recorded by

having the reporter and producer narrate what they are doing in the moment. The effect of this technique can sound like observation or color commentary.

For example, the *Last Seen* team was down in Florida following a lead on the location of the missing art pieces. They ended up having to sneak around because, though this was their lead, they passed the information to the proper law enforcement channels and then proceeded to get shut off from communication. The reporters staked out at the neighbor's house across from the lot where the FBI was digging. The reporters narrated where they were and what they could see going on in the lot. The color narration helped to heighten the tension of the moment. Instead of just telling the audience that they tracked down a lead but it turned up empty, the audience was waiting with baited breath as the excavator uncovered the septic tank instead of the missing art.

To summarize, collecting tape during the reporting process is beneficial when attempting to show your work and narrate the story. The purposes of the scenes aren't mutually exclusive. The same active tape can create tension, raising the stakes of an interview, while providing the audience with enough information for them to feel as though they are embedded with the reporter.

### **Technique: Making the Reporter a Character**

Collecting tape to create scenes often requires a character to tether the audience within the moment. This can either be the source or the reporter. Traditionally, journalists refrain from becoming a character in the story because the story they are telling isn't about them. However, some investigative podcasts combine the events of the story being

covered with the journalists' reporting journey. It's in those podcasts where the journalists end up becoming characters.

*Caliphate* is good example of journalists becoming characters within the story. Callimachi's reporting is integral to the whole narrative since she is currently creating the story. She is investigating who the members of ISIS are, how ISIS operates and the motivation behind the organization. Episodic and longform reporting exists surrounding the group's creation and attacks they carry out. But investigating ISIS isn't the same as investigating a murder or a theft where one definitive account of what happened can be pieced together based on research and reporting. Instead of hooking onto one source or one event, Callimachi is the main character guiding the audience through the story.

Since she is the main character, quite a bit of the active scenes feature her reporting and newsgathering. The producer, Andy Mills, is helping to create active scenes and dialogue by talking to her during parts of the reporting process where there normally wouldn't be dialogue. These scenes serve multiple purposes within the story. One, they are active scenes that allow the audience to feel as though they are in the room, similar to Mills, observing Callimachi's reporting process. Two, that window into her process provides transparency for the audience. Three, the combination of those two purposes creates a captivating narrative. The inclusion of the scenes causes the audience to get to know Callimachi on a more personal level, as the audience would with a main character, instead of the reporter being largely faceless. As the audience becomes familiar with Callimachi, they begin to have a vested interest in her as a character in the narrative. Once the audience has buy in or a reason to care about the character and/or the subject

matter, then it seems as though the podcast can be a little bit more creative with the narrative arc.

Furthermore, journalists can also help the audience contextualize events within the story through the main character's reactions and interactions. For example, near the beginning of the podcast Mills asks Callimachi if she is scared as they are waiting for a former ISIS member to show up for an interview. She cuts the mic in the moment but retells the story during a sit-down with Mills. The story centered around how she dealt with the potential danger of investigating ISIS while contextualizing the gravity of her beat. She called 911 in a panic after someone knocked on her door after a credible threat was made on her life by ISIS. And though the FBI informed her local law enforcement agency, the 911 operator didn't believe her. It turned out to be a city worker knocking on her door to deliver a message. But in the moment, she didn't know that and the potential of danger was very real to her. The anecdote was impactful not only because of the drama, but it also orientated the audience to her perspective and the way she acts in certain situations. That character knowledge base can be tapped into throughout the podcast to quickly spark tension if she deviates from the audience-understood norms.

"There's something to be said for listeners connecting with the host and the voice that they're hearing most, but usually that person is just not as intriguing as the story that they're trying to tell," according to Hamilton.

*Chapo: Kingpin on Trial* had a similar narrative style to *Caliphate* where the plot moved along through active tape. Interviews, narration, and explanation were frequently combined with the active scenes. The closest thing the *Chapo: Kingpin on Trial* got to a reporter as a main character was fixer, Miguel Angel Vega. Vega was supposed to be in

the podcast as a source and in the active scenes during the reporting trips. But Hamilton said Vega's voice ended up being throughout the whole show in a way that almost rivaled a host's position to "tell the story the way that it needed to be told - from two sides of the border." Hamilton and producer Kate Osborn were very present within the podcast's active scenes since the scenes comprised of their on-the-ground reporting. Similar to reporters stepping into a main character role, they provided observations, color narration during their travels and even directly disclosed their reporting plan to the audience.

Yet, they weren't the central characters in the story. The audience didn't learn much about their personalities or how they react in certain situations. There was an introduction at the beginning outlining Hamilton's reporting background as a way to qualify him as a trusted source who knows what he is talking about based on years of reporting. As a bonus, building up the reporter's character can establish trust with the audience, which is something that can be transferred from season to season, even if the topics change.

Moon agreed. "If you're going to spend this much time with the narrator, you need to know, 'why them?' Who is this person and why are they the ones that are telling the story?"

Besides providing the audience with qualifications and a description, Moon suggests having the reporter address their view of the story before they started reporting.

For example, this can sound like: 'Before I started working on the story, I thought [topic] was all just [assumption]. But then I learned [information].' This signals to the audience that the reporter set aside any initial bias and learned while reporting. By signaling the reporter's change of opinion, the audience's interest may spike because of

the potential for surprising information or information that may change their assumptions.

Besides, Moon said, the description helps to ground the reporter in detail.

But an introduction isn't the same as getting to know Hamilton or Moon as a character. They chose to make this distinction, Hamilton said, because including the reporter's feelings in the moment or how the reporter got to a particular story can distract from the story they are trying to tell.

*In the Dark* and *White Lies* struck a balance between having a majority of active scenes featuring the reporter and keeping the reporter predominantly out of the narrative except when necessary.

"We want to show our process, but we also don't want it to kind of dominate the story," Jablonski said. "We do want to be restrained because the story is fundamentally not about us."

*White Lies* included Brantley's and fellow reporter Andrew Beck Grace's backgrounds in the narrative because their perspectives influenced the reporting. Brantley said they needed to fill the audience in on the fact that they were two white men from the south reporting on a civil rights story. Their upbringings informed the "strategy of silence" they encountered while reporting. Though they grew up with the story of the civil rights movement and "strategy of silence, [which] is still a part of Southern culture," they weren't from Selma nor were they personally attached to anyone involved in the crime. All of which is important to disclose. Especially since their race may have potentially been a factor when sourcing. In the podcast, a fellow Southern, white male investigative journalist got KKK members and white supremacist to talk to him and give

him information, despite his work, because he wasn't seen as a threat. The color of his skin created potential access to men that would be unreachable if he wasn't white.

Not addressing their demographics and perspectives was out of the question. But since they had to address the elephant in the room, they also ended up using the reporters as characters when trying to balance the podcast's tone.

"It is a heavy story and we didn't want it to feel heavy all the time," Brantley said. "One way to mitigate that heaviness or at least operate in a different register, going back to the album idea, was to include these moments when we are just being ourselves over the course of reporting."

Dunlop also "wasn't too keen on injecting" themselves into the storyline and their narrative style, in turn, focused more on creating scenes with interview, narration and archive tapes instead of following the reporters around. Appearances by Ryan or Dunlop were "kept to a minimum" and only used when its "really important to the narrative as a whole" because the story wasn't about them. And inclusion in the story can "deflect attention from what the story is really about," he said.

Ryan agreed. "We weren't the story. We wanted to take people on a story, not be part of it."

In the end, it wasn't up to *The Pope's Long Con* team whether or not the journalists appeared in the story. The subject of the feature refused to talk to them, so they included scenes where the reporters tried in person to talk with him. Unfortunately, the journalists became part of the real-life story and played a larger role in an update episode because the subject of their investigation ended up taking his own life.

“Reporters better get it right because if we had gotten it wrong in this case...if people had been able to show ‘hey, you misrepresented this, this was false, this was misleading, it would have been a disaster,” Dunlop said. “As it turned out, really nobody laid a glove on us in terms of our reporting and the accuracy of it... The issue was he's dead. We're all sorry he's dead, but we're not responsible.”

Despite the size of the narrative role the journalists plays in the podcast, they will still be linked to the story by nature of reporting. Because of this, the onus is on the journalists to make sure the reporting is thorough, fair and accurate.

There have been a few podcasts that live in the ethical in-between when it comes to the reporter’s role within the podcast and the intention of the podcast. *Missing Richard Simmons* and *S-Town* were both spurred by a personal connection between the reporter and the subject of the story. In terms of news judgment, one was dealing with a public figure while the other was a private citizen. However, there was the slight hang up of the subjects of the podcasts not wanting there to be a podcast about their lives. Nevertheless, both podcasts focused heavily on the personal connection while the reporter served as the main character and guide throughout the investigation. *Up and Vanished* also lives in an ethical gray area. Not only did the host tell the audience he was looking into the cold case because he wanted to create a show like *Serial* but he also was releasing episodes as he was reporting. It was a live investigation where he published theories and interviews that he was still in the process of corroborating, which is dangerous for the host and the subjects of the investigation.

## Transitioning from Reporting to Production

Outlining the story can occur during reporting to determine where the story's holes are and inform the continued reporting. Often teams will sit down together to review the reporting and begin making decisions about the structure of the story. The *Last Seen* team sat down at least once a month, Kurkjian said, to track progress and potential content landing in each episode. But once most of the reporting is complete, the teams will move on to storyboarding.

"We scripted out what we thought was the story and then whatever fit in there, fit in there," Ryan said. "There's a lot of editing, a lot of cutting out certain bits and redoing certain bits."

A lot of hours are spent writing, editing and piecing together the narrative. For Frick-Wright, a successful investigative podcast comes down to storytelling.

"If you do an investigation, you have something really interesting," Frick-Wright explained. "But if you tell the story poorly, people almost hold it against you... it's almost worse to tell a story badly than to not tell it at all."

What helps the writing and editing process is knowing where the story ends, Jablonski said, before putting together the first episode. This can be a failsafe to ensure the team's understanding of the story doesn't change in an impactful way causing surprise during publishing.

"We do a lot of story-boarding and outlining before we start actually putting the episodes together," she said. "One of the tricky things about doing this sort of serialized narrative podcast is that, if you change something in episode one, like you decide to add a scene or like subtract it, it might have a ripple effect down the line in your structure."

Brantley and Beck Grace were told to approach the structure of the podcast as if they were making an album. The episodic narrative needs to be cohesive but individual episodes can “operate differently than others. They don’t need to follow the same pattern and registers of sequencing...as long as they are strung together with enough of a through-line,” according to Brantley.

Story structure is where journalists can act as gatekeepers. It’s the journalist’s responsibility to tell an accurate story. But how that story is told is up to their discretion and editorial judgment. This means the journalists decide which voices the audience will hear, what to cover in narration, which parts of the story merit an in-depth explanation.

“It’s important to have the reporting drive the story...the narrative versus including a bunch of tape or scenes that don’t go anywhere,” Jablonski said. “It all needs to be in service of the reporting and findings.”

In terms of figuring out a story structure that balances the investigation’s journey and the finding, there are a few different approaches and techniques the interviewed journalists pointed towards. One type of podcast, like *Believed*, *The City*, *Midnight Oil* and *Chapo: Kingpin on Trial*, ect., “reverse engineer” the story. They started out with an event or a person whose story was somewhat known and then shaped the reporting around the known narrative.

“A lot of these podcasts are built where someone basically knows what the story is going to be, what everyone’s going to say before they got the skills to be interviewed,” Hamilton said.

Quite a few podcasts follow this structure to some extent because investigative podcasts tend to be a more comprehensive retelling of a story. Often some, or all, of the

story is already known. Through research and media archives, the journalists can get a grasp on the key moments or figures in the story. Then, through reporting and newsgathering, they go deeper into the story, find additional voices and advance the plot. This is why the investigative process is often intertwined with a narrative retelling of the original story. Furthermore, this type of podcast seemingly relies more on chronological storytelling within the structure.

While other podcasts, like *Caliphate* and *Bundyville*, structure a podcast by trying to answer open ended questions. Each episode focuses on “trying to understand a facet of that overall thing,” Frick-Wright said. It often follows the journalist’s investigation more than the original story’s timeline. Because of this, scenes with reporting or newsgathering are used to move the plot forward and the background, explanation and archival media is used during the narration.

“Getting access to information is both what we would like to do to tell the story and also an interesting process,” Frick-Wright explained. “And interesting processes are narratives.”

Reporters and producers working on this type of investigative podcast rarely know absolutely everything about the story they are covering due to a limitation of access and information, he continued. Filling in those information gaps with voices often comes down to a matter of access. If voices aren’t available, then the host’s narrative tracking will fill in important information.

“Every complication has to have a resolution,” Frick-Wright said. “The overall complication of the series is one thing and then, sort of like chapters in a book, each

episode kind of has its own complication and its own resolution. And ideally those things fit within each other."

Frick-Wright thinks about the structure like this: "If you say, 'Okay, the Bundy's, what's the deal?' The deal is multifaceted and interesting because it's been evolving for decades, and so then you just that, "Okay the relationship with the federal government, let's look at that and sort of find a complication and resolution within that." And then taking each one of those facets and finding a way to both ask and answer a question within an episode and move onto the next question by the end of the episode is kind of the narrative structure that we were working with for the series."

Then there are podcasts, like *In the Dark*, *Last Seen* or *White Lies*, that are focused around one event or issue but are structured to address different theories or to breakdown certain arguments per episode. These targeted breakdowns are structured in a way that still follows the overarching original storyline as well as the investigation by law enforcement agencies and the investigation by journalists. This structure often requires quite a bit of signposting and recaps to help the audience track what they already know and the characters they will have to focus on during the episode.

Signposting is widely used in public radio. Similar to a road sign, it indicates what's ahead. When applied to storytelling, signposting signals to the audience where the episode, or the larger storyline, is going. It's a hint as to what is coming ahead. Episodes are often split into acts with the climactic action often coming at the end of the second, beginning of the third act. The issue is the audience has to continue listening to the episode to get to that part. A quick signpost at the end of the first act can tease the climatic action while laying out a path for the audience to follow throughout the episode.

The cliché example is [shocking information]. ‘But before we get to that, we need to [understand how] and [why].’

One issue that both *In the Dark* and *White Lies* ended up dealing with during reporting, which they utilized in their narrative, was the issue of counternarratives. Conflicting accounts of events forced the journalists to get to the bottom of what happened. But it also provided an argument that they needed to debunk through their reporting. The counternarrative in *White Lies* helped to explain why the case remained largely unsolved decades later. It’s partially how silence allowed the attackers to escape justice even though realistically; the attackers should have been convicted.

“I got really interested in dueling narratives and why some people choose to believe the counternarrative that Rev. Reeb got killed on the way to Birmingham and really felt like the only way to dispel it was to hold it up and fact check,” Brantley said.

Though the *White Lies* team did debate how much credence they should allocate for the counternarrative because they don’t want to validate something that is clearly false. The way to walk that line, for Brantley, was to fact check everything and let people who are “espousing what seem like counternarratives...tell you what they think happened so you can understand why they think the way they think.”

This technique for understanding and addressing counternarratives can also be included in the reporting and newsgathering within the final product to explain this alternate perspective to the audience while the podcast’s narrative is working to debunk the counternarrative.

## Storytelling Techniques

There are quite a few storytelling techniques that the podcasts have employed to create compelling narratives while highlighting the reporting and newsgathering process. The first technique was already touched on in the part of the analysis talking about the reasons the reporting and newsgathering process needs to be captured on tape. Scene building is integral to capturing the audience's attention, dynamically moving along the plot, and helping the audience understand how the journalists know what they know.

"Those types of scenes allow us to show our work, the process, and the work that goes into some of these findings," Jablonski explained. "If we just come out and tell you we found this document that says X, Y, Z, that can go by fast, and often be a little dry."

Example: Scene from *Caliphate*. Appendix p. 102

Whereas scenes allow the journalists bring the audience along while reporting and brings the reporting process to life. Since the reporting process can take a long time and interviews aren't always set up within active scenes, Moon valued bringing the audience along to developments or events in the storyline. Creating scenes around the more recent events in the reporting process give the audience a sense of development.

"You can sort of be brought into that moment and sort of feel the story unfold like the same way we were, Moon said, "which seemed like a cool thing to try to do."

Besides building scenes out of following reporters, investigative podcasts also look to animate the document gathering and research processes.

"Scanning documents on its own is not necessarily inherently interesting," Jablonski said. "But when you talk about all the different places, we had to go to find the

documents and like all the weird situations we got it to find these documents, that kind of thing. It helps bring some drama and story into that aspect of it.”

Example: Scene from *Caliphate*. Appendix p.106

As mentioned before, color commentary and observations are a great way to help recreate these reporting scenes. Color commentary usually happens when the journalist is in the field speaking either directly to the audience or speaking to a colleague for the benefit of the audience. It is especially useful when trying to create that chronological unfolding of what happened when. Think of it as a play-by-play of sorts. Whereas observations are useful within the narration that is tracked later in a studio. They often sound like reflections and can fill in context needed to visualize a certain source, atmosphere or environment.

Example: Scene from *Last Seen*. Appendix p.107

Example: Scene from *Caliphate*. Appendix p. 112

Another storytelling technique is to include interactions with the reporter and source within an interview. This can be a follow up question asked within the tape or a humanizing back and forth between the two. These interactions can be pertinent to the context of the interview but don't have to be. Instead, these moments can provide levity and a break for the audience to process information.

Occasionally podcasts will conduct their own experiments as a way to gather evidence or negate an argument. For example, *In the Dark* was trying to figure out if District Attorney Doug Evans really had a pattern of striking people of color from juries after hearing anecdotal evidence from sources. The team then gathered and analyzed Evans' record and could show that Evans had a pattern of striking people of color from

juries. When the team combined this evidence with information about the jurors, he struck compared with the jurors he kept, they presented a strong argument that Curtis Flowers wasn't granted his constitutional right to be tried against jury of peers - which the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with. Another example of this experimentation on tape was *Atlanta Monster*'s attempt to figure out if a body of a certain height and weight really could have been thrown from a bridge into the river below without people on either side of the bridge hearing. The reporter ended up testing this claim by creating a makeshift body of similar weight and proportions, shutting down the bridge to throw this test body into the water and have people standing where the police were stationed that night to figure out if they would have been able to hear a splash.

Example: Scene from *In the Dark*. Appendix p.114

Explanations or asides can be really helpful when the journalists need to quickly fill the audience in on information. Often times this will be a brief history of how something got to where it is today or what the cultural impact of something. It's a way to take a step back and fill the audience in before moving on. *Chapo: Kingpin on Trial* had to navigate a lot background information while trying to intertwine Chapo's story with the current investigation. In terms of structure, they started off with strong, immersive scenes to signal to the audience that they were going to go on a journey with the reporters.

"But then we also had to step back and be like, "All right, what do people know about El Chapo?," Hamilton explained. The team assumed a baseline knowledge and then worked to fill in the gaps "in a way that fits the narrative arc and will allow listeners to

understand what's going on...before they're too lost and tuning out because they don't really understand who Chapo is and why [they] care about this guy."

Or the explanations or asides can be used to fill the audience in on what the reporters are thinking during a certain moment in time. It's almost as if the reporters are justifying their actions directly to the audience.

Example: Scene from *White Lies*. Appendix p.116

Investigative podcasts will supplement explanatory sections of the narrative with archival tape. This is done for a few reasons. One, it provides variety in a section that may border on sounding like a monologue. Two, archival tape can help recreate what something felt like in a certain time or place. Three, archival tape is often news clips formatted in a montage. This can be a form of proof for a claim or argument that the podcast is making. Outside, trustworthy sources reinforce the explanation's accuracy.

Example: Scene from *Bear Brook*. Appendix p. 117

There are also a few storytelling techniques used predominantly during the production stages that help the audience track plot points, characters and findings.

Signposts tend to be placed at the beginning of an episode or after a cold-open before the meat of the episode's plot begins. It's also usually very straight forward: 'This episode is about [topic]. So far, we know [evidence], [evidence], and [evidence]. Last time we head about [character's] involvement, which led to [outcome]. Today we are going to talk about [theory].' By giving the audience a map of the episode, the episode can be more creative in its structure.

Example: Scene from *In the Dark*. Appendix p.118

It's just sort of explicitly saying: it might not make sense, but trust us that it's going to go somewhere," Moon said.

Signposting essentially mitigates the audience's potential confusion and allow the episode to start from a beginning that seems unrelated but will eventually lead back to the original plot, Moon explained. This signaling of a slight deviation from the current narrative might sound like: 'Before we get to [plot point], we need to talk about [issue]. Moon also warned against using apologetic language when signposting, especially if the signpost is for an explanatory section, because it cheapens the section and dissuades the audience from finding value in what they are about to hear. When in reality, the explanatory section is often an essential part of the narrative.

Another way producers help the audience track where they are within the plot is to provide recaps and teasers. Similar to some forms of signposting, recaps can help catch the audience up with what they need to know to properly comprehend the episode they are about to listen to. There is a trend in investigative podcasts to create a "waterfall" of voices from the previous episodes. The waterfall hooks the audience back in since often the most shocking moments are included in the voices. Whereas the function of the teasers is to hook the audience into listening to the next episode. It signals that there is information or a part of the story that you don't know - but need to. It usually sounds like: "Next time on..."

"Everyone has stolen from Serial," according to Brantley. But creating a teaser "forces you to think about the momentum at the end of each episode carrying forward. So you are giving a listener [a hook], even if it isn't fundamental to the ultimate outcome of the story."

Sound design is also used strategically within investigative podcasts, which is a departure from traditional radio storytelling. Sound design is separate from mixing natural or ambient sounds within a scene. Instead, sound design is often the strategic addition of music used to set the show's tone.

"There's actually a whole musical vocabulary in [Bundyville], Frick-Wright explained. "Riffs and notes of things that happen and certain characters have certain sounds associated with them. It's subtle, we'd probably be doing our job wrong if anybody noticed."

It serves to further immerse the audience within a scene, help with the atmospheric delivery of information and pull people along the plot. It can also help with the pacing of the narrative.

## Conclusion

Investigative reporting podcasts are held to journalistic standards of accuracy, fairness and handling of truth when created by a journalist or a news organization. In some ways, it's even more important for journalists to approach a story with care since investigative podcasts are often comprehensive and have the ability to set the narrative surrounding a particular topic, especially if the podcast conducted a lot of new reporting. With that power comes the responsibility of the journalists to prove how they know what they know. Essentially providing proof of their reporting process.

This proof comes in a variety of forms within the podcast. On a basic level, the journalists will cite sources of facts to disclose where they obtained the information they are relaying. But journalists have begun intentionally incorporating the reporting and

newsgathering process into investigative podcasts to provide transparency. The audience doesn't have to wonder how the reporter found a source if they heard the reporter make calls, talk to a source who referred the reporter to another source who, in turn, who provided information in an interview. This is done intentionally on a broad level and in the newsgathering phase of reporting. Journalists tape themselves during the reporting process and sometimes creatively think about audiofying parts of the newsgathering process that isn't typically sound rich.

However, once they get into the producing phases, the story isn't built with the sole intention of transparency. Instead, the journalists focus on getting the story right. Then certain elements can be added to create active scenes or show the audience how the journalist know a certain fact.

One of the more widely used techniques within investigative podcasts is making the reporter a main character in the story. Not only does this provide the audience a guide through the plot, an additional level of transparency is provided to the audience by creating a step-by-step narrative of the journalist's reporting process. There is debate among journalists about how much this technique should be used. Some journalists feel that the inclusion of the reporter as a character pulls the audience's focus to the reporter, not the subjects.

By utilizing storytelling techniques during the reporting and production stages, the reporting and newsgathering process will end up helping the narrative by creating active scenes that allow the audience to feel as though they are investigating alongside the reporter, which serves to engage the audience while providing transparency.

## **APPENDIX**

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## ACTIVITY LOG

**Week One - Sept. 2, 2019 to Sept. 8, 2019**

**Work:**

Work at Slate has been going well! My first week was filled with tech training. I learned to run the two studios and connect up to the NY office. Slate's audio team is split between the two cities and often we have somewhat technically complex set ups for the recordings. I ended up running multiple recording sessions for shows spanning from politics to daily news to parenting. I also learned how to edit on ProTools, which is a different audio editing software, and publish on Slate's content manager system.

As far as assignments, I've been assigned my own show which I'm taking over as of today. It's called Spoiler Specials, which is a movie analysis show. A bit different from what I'm used to but it will be good to have the responsibility of a main producer. I'll also be editing the main interview for The Gist, which is a daily evening news, analysis and opinions program. I also found out today I'll be working on a fascinating new reporting project in collaboration with Trace, which is a nonprofit focusing on gun coverage in the US. Apart from those specific assignments, I'm also filling in as producer for shows that have DC-based guests.

**Seminar:**

Our seminar has been very interesting so far! We had a wonderful guest-speaker on Friday. Paul Overberg covers the census for The Wall Street Journal. He gave us insight on the upcoming census, issues surrounding the discussed the addition of a citizenship question and context on how the census is changing and what that means. In addition, he recommended a few resources for navigating the census and even pointed out

that the census combines disaster information from other agencies to create a profile of where and who is being affected.

We also attended the Friendly Fellows benefit at the Press Club. Besides being a fun evening, hearing from the fellows is always inspiring. Nearly every year Global Journalist interviews Friendly Fellows on the program. The fellows' insights into the impact of their own reporting as well as ongoing issues within their home countries is always compelling, so it was wonderful to hear the next batch of fellows.

### **Professional Project:**

Finally, as far as my professional project, I am finalizing the academic portion of the research, editing the structure of my document and the podcasts I want to interview for my portion of the research. I'm also doing specific research into the podcasts and creating individualized questions for each podcast alongside the general questions. I should be finished by the end of this week and send those your way - if you'd like.

## **Week Two - Sept. 9, 2019 to Sept. 15, 2019**

### **Work:**

Last week at Slate went pretty well. I taped my first episode of Spoiler Specials. Our critics discussed the new Downton Abbey movie. I edited the episode and only had one minor note for the hour-long ep. I'm now also the DC point producer for If / Then, which is the tech podcast, and Mom And Dad are Fighting, the parenting show. I've also done quite a few tapings for What Next, the daily news program.

Finally, I was briefed on and started research for the active shooter reporting collaboration with The Trace. I'm canvassing the country to find students who

participated in real-life simulation drills. I've also been collecting videos of drills for an audio compilation and/or b-roll.

**Seminar:**

We heard from Ayesha Rascoe, NPR's White House correspondent, and Mike McCurry, press secretary for the Department of State and the White House during the Clinton administration. Both of them had interesting insights into how the White House Press Corps operates.

It was so cool to meet Rascoe since I hear her reports all the time. She said it's sometimes difficult to set apart your reporting when everyone is getting similar information. Sometimes you have to match other reports since it's the big news of the day. But even so, she relies on context and scope of the events to differentiate her reports and better inform the audience. According to Rascoe, sources in DC often will give different levels of information, ie giving a statement on record but giving more information on background, off the record or deep background - which gets ethically complex. She only uses the source for one piece of info, not both. Also, corroboration is key when it comes to using anonymous sources.

McCurry had some really interesting insights as well. To him, the adversarial relationship between the President and the press is healthy and can help clarify policy. Often the preparation for briefings brought up questions that the president and policy makers needed to discuss and come to a conclusion. During briefings or interviews, one of the biggest blunders reporters made was not listening carefully. Often, he said, there were hints to the real answer and all the reporters had to do was ask the follow up question.

### **Professional Project:**

Finally, as far as the research project. I'm still finishing up making changes, adding research and finding contact information for the producers I'd like to request interviews from.

### **Week Three - Sept. 16, 2019 to Sept. 22, 2019**

#### **Work:**

This week at Slate went pretty well! I'm taking over the DC producing of If/Then and MADAFF, on top of my show. I've also picked up the DC producing of What Next and How To. My show, Spoiler Specials released its latest episode and I've started planning and prepping for the next ep. After the Oct. 4, Spoiler Specials is moving to a weekly show! Finally, I'm still helping out finding sources for the active shooter drills project.

#### **Seminar:**

During class this week we visited the Senate to learn about how the press operates. From hearings to hallway gaggles to press conferences, we saw where it all happened and heard specifics about what pieces of news are broken in what areas. For example, the Senators have to be invited by journalists to break news or answer questions in the Senate press room. We also met with Senator Blunt and his press secretary and comms director.

### **Professional Project:**

I'm finishing up the last few podcasts I've outlined. I wanted to listen to everyone I've picked to ensure they have an abundance of the elements I am looking to ask about.

In general, I didn't do a good job this week prioritizing my research. To spark additional urgency, I'm placing a hard deadline on myself of this Wednesday to have everything completed and sent over.

### **Week Four - Sept. 23, 2019 to Sept. 29, 2019**

#### **Work:**

I spent a majority of my time this past week researching local news reporting on active shooter drills at schools in New Jersey, looking through corresponding New Jersey law and digging through school websites to find contact information for PTO members. We are still in the researching and sourcing stage of the collaboration with The Trace but we'll be starting interviews soon. As far as production, I've been doing the majority of the tapings in DC, including quite a late night with the What Next team following the impeachment story. I'm also doing the recordings for The Waves, which is a panel type discussion program, and planning my next episode for Spoiler Specials. Finally, because there isn't an audio engineer in DC, I have had to troubleshoot quite a few big problems with the audio engineer in NY to get both the studios back in operation.

#### **Seminar:**

Class this week was really cool! We met with Tom Vanden Brook, who covers The Pentagon for USA Today, and Brigadier General Thomas Jr., who is the public affairs director for the Air Force. The discussion was rather insightful in terms of the realistic relationship between military public affairs directors and reporters. Tom gave us some tips on how to best operate within the relationship when working on stories or working to source or verify information.

### **Professional Project:**

Finally, I send over the changes to Associate Dean Kraxberger since she's my chair. I'll be reaching out to request interviews from the top six podcasts identified - I'll then keep working down my list of podcasts as needed. I made it through all 25 podcasts. Its my goal to have all eight interviews conducted and transcribed before Oct. 15 so I'll have two weeks to compile and analyze the research.

### **Week Five - Sept. 30, 2019 to Oct. 6, 2019**

#### **Work:**

This week was the first week that my show, Spoiler Specials moved to a weekly program. We released our Joker ep, which already has over 35,000 downloads - so that's pretty cool. I'm also beginning to take over Mom And Dad Are Fighting. It's a bit of a slow process since the official handover won't take place until mid-October but in the meantime I'm still taping the recordings. I've also worked on If/Then and The Waves. Finally, we had a full producer meeting for active shooter drill collaboration with The Trace. We are going ahead with the trial interviews in the tri-state area. I'm moving to sourcing our South and Midwest interviews.

#### **Seminar:**

This week we visited NPR for our seminar. Anna did a wonderful job giving our group a tour. It was really cool to see the studios and see these reporters I hear everyday on the radio. Beyond that, we met with Keith Woods, NPR's vice president of newsroom training and diversity. One of the more fascinating aspects of his talks was the role of diversifying not only the workforce but the environment so people within the workforce

feel valued and empowered to bring their truth to the job, if they so choose. He also gave us some tips on how to be intentional when trying to diversify sourcing.

### **Professional Project:**

Finally, I made the changes on the last round of feedback that I received on Friday, which was extremely helpful. I'm contacting and setting up interviews with the sources identified in the proposal. I'll keep the committee updated with my progress and/or any questions.

### **Week Six - Oct. 7, 2019 to Oct. 13, 2019**

#### **Work:**

This past week at Slate was business as usual. I produced this week's episode of Spoiler Specials on the new Breaking Bad movie: El Camino and began production for the next two episodes. I also taped the final episode of If/Then, segments for What Next and Mom And Dad are Fighting. I also taped an interesting segment for the new season of Fiasco, which isn't produced by Slate anymore, but is by the reporters who created the first two seasons of Slow Burn. The new season is about the Iran-Contra Affair and the interviewee was a CIA operative during the affair. It was a fascinating interview. Finally, I continued sourcing for the active shooter drill project.

#### **Seminar:**

During seminar this week we took our midterm and had a presentation from the Pew Center. They taught us about the flow of money between the federal fiscal budget and state budgets, where to find information about certain grants and the proportional

breakdown of allocated funds. It was extremely helpful to hear about the different pots of money.

**Professional Project:**

As far as the project - I interviewed R.G. Dunlop and Jacob Ryan who reported and produced The Pope's Long Con. I also interviewed Jason Moon with NHPR who reported and hosted Bear Brook. I am reaching out again to the others reporters and producers and expanding the asks to additional podcasts identified in the potential source list. I have listened to all 25 of the potential podcasts.

**Week Seven - Oct. 14, 2019 to Oct. 20, 2019**

**Work:**

This past week at Slate was busy but good! We had the first interviews for the active shooter project with The Trace. They went well, we'll be analyzing and making edits for the next round of interviews. I'm continuing to source the Midwest - I'm also helping out with the Baltimore and Louisville sourcing. My shows went well this week, we reviewed Parasite, the South Korean thriller, and I helped out with Mom and Dad are Fighting and Hit Parade production. Politico also used the studios and I helped out with that taping.

**Seminar:**

We met with the Center for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington during this past week's seminar. We learned about best practices when filing FOIAs and had a really interesting discussion with the communication director about how to maintain a good relationship with a watchdog organization when journalists are relying on them for data.

### **Professional Project:**

I've worked on scheduling other interviews and transcribing the interviews from the weekend. I've also been working to write up the notes I have on the techniques used in all the sample podcasts as well as analyzing them for larger trends. I'll keep everyone updated as I plot along.

### **Week Eight - Oct. 21, 2019 to Oct. 27, 2019**

#### **Work:**

This week was my first official week as producer for Mom and Dad are Fighting. As far as production, it's a larger lift than Spoiler Specials. Our three hosts are split among New Hampshire Public Radio, TNS in California and Slate in DC. On top of that, one of our three hosts is leaving after this week so I've been booking guest hosts running through December and finding studios for them. One of the fun tasks of producing so far is fielding and pairing down all the listener-submitted questions. Spoilers is going well. We reviewed Taika Waititi's newest film, Jojo Rabbit, which is a satirical look into Nazi Germany towards the end of WWII. This week we are moving away from our string on smaller films and back to the blockbusters with our spoiling of Terminator. Finally, the active shooter drills project is going well. I'm in Virginia today for a tape sync then racing up to Baltimore to join Elizabeth for a few interviews this afternoon and evening.

#### **Seminar:**

Though we didn't have class this past week, we did watch the Sunday news programs in preparation for the Meet the Press taping this coming Sunday. Some of the programs were interrupted by Trump's announcement of special ops' takedown of al-

Baghdadi. Meet the Press didn't get interrupted and was rather lucky with their bookings. They had White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien on to talk about the announcement. He was in the room with Trump as the op was being carried out, which was an interesting perspective.

### **Professional Project:**

As far as my research, I have five of the interviews done and two more scheduled. They've been good so far. I'm already writing up analysis based on my notes from the podcasts and the interviews. I'll add and tweak with the additional information from the interviews this week. I should be on track to have it over to my chair two weeks ahead of the defence.

### **Week Nine - Oct. 28, 2019 to Nov. 3, 2019**

#### **Work:**

This past week I produced MADAFF and Spoiler Specials per usual. For MADAFF, we dove into the ethics of imbibing while parenting and how to talk to young children about Alzheimer's. We reviewed the latest Terminator movie for Spoiler Specials. My voice even snuck onto that one - I ended up recording one of the ads. The ad copy was written from the perspective of the show's producer. As far as other producer work, we are in the planning stages prepping for the upcoming shows during the holiday season. I've done quite a bit of engineering for other programs. On Monday I ran down to do an interview in Virginia for How To!. It was quite a hectic day, I was supposed to do that tape sync, and then direct my own show from the road while driving up to Baltimore to help out with interviews for the active shooter project. But between DC traffic and the

phone signal I ended up having to direct the interview from a gas station parking lot, glamourous. I did make it over to Baltimore to help with Tuesday's recordings. The interview went well! The HS senior was well spoken, and it seemed like Elizabeth, the lead reporter, was happy to focus on the interview instead of having to mind the equipment.

**Seminar:**

Barbara Cochran ran seminar this week. We talked about Sunday shows' role in recapping and prioritizing the week's worth of news by interviewing important guests while setting the next week's agenda. It was really interesting to hear how producers would prioritize who they want on the show and negotiate how they book the guests. Not only do they have to factor what information / news making the guest is capable of, they have to weigh out how frequently the guests are interviewed and the guest's rank. The show's changes of booking the guest are weighed by the show's popularity and ratings. This administration, Barbra said, deviates from ratings and sends guests to shows that are favorable to the administration and / or journalists they aren't in arguments with.

**Professional Project:**

As far as the project, I am on track to have a final draft of my project (including analysis, proposal, reflections and proof of work) sent over by EOD tomorrow.

**Week Nine - Nov. 4, 2019 to Nov. 10, 2019**

**Work:**

This past week was pretty normal as far as Slate goes. I taped and edited a Spoiler Specials for Last Christmas, which was released on Friday. I also taped a spoiler episode

on Knives Out that will be running during the week of Thanksgiving. Mom and Dad are Fighting had a rather large technical meltdown since our ISDN and phone lines decided to quit just before the program. I had four hosts in four different locations, all with different methods of connecting. It was a mess but eventually we got everything up and going. The episode doesn't sound the best. The connection from New Hampshire to DC to Oakland to LA had about a 1.5 second delay. But it was the best that could be done under the circumstances. As far as the active shooter project, I've been listening to the interviews to help identify the best quotes.

**Seminar:**

This week we had two classes. On Friday we went to the Associated Press and met with their climate change reporter. He was fascinating and had some interesting insight on how you can successfully (and quickly) report when jumping into a highly scientific story. It's comforting to know that even top-level reporters ask experts to explain concepts to them as if the expert was talking to a neighbor or a child. Also, the reporter should be sure to summarize concepts and metaphors back to the experts to make sure the reporter truly has a grip on the concept. The Meet the Press taping was a lot of fun. The show predominantly focused on impeachment and thus the main interviews were with congressmen: Sen. Rand Paul, Rep. Jim Himes and Sen. Sherrod Brown.

**Professional Project:**

As far as the project - the analysis was sent over to my chair on Tuesday while the whole draft was sent over on Thursday. I'll send it over to the rest of the committee once I get the go ahead.

## EVALUATION

I worked at Slate Magazine in Washington D.C. during the Fall of 2019 to fulfill the professional experience component of this project. Within Slate Magazine, I worked closely with Slate Podcasts. The majority of the audio team is based out of Slate's New York offices. I worked about approximately 35 hours a week; hours fluctuated depended on additional audio engineering sessions.

While at Slate, my responsibilities included producing *Spoiler Specials* and *Mom and Dad are Fighting*. I provided production assistance for *Hit Parade*. I was also the D.C. point of contact for *The Waves*, *Working* and *If/Then*. Since the D.C. bureau has only two producers, we split additional audio engineering and guest coordination between the two of us. On that note, I helped out with fixing a lot of the technical issues the studio experienced during the semester. The technical director of audio is also stationed in New York so when something goes wrong in the D.C. studio, we coordinate with him to troubleshoot and fix the issue. Finally, I provided research and production assistance for an ongoing reporting project. Slate partnered with The Trace, a nonprofit news organization that focuses on gun issues, to understand how school-age kids, ranging from kindergarten to high school, experience active shooter drills.

When I joined in early September, there was only one audio producer, besides myself, stationed out of the Washington D.C. bureau. The second producer had transferred to New York to produce on another team, so I ended up taking over production for her show, *Spoiler Specials*, right away. *Spoiler Specials* is a show aligned with *Brow Beat*, Magazine's arts and culture column, and a rotation of hosts come on the program and spoil movies. We try to publish episodes on the day the movie is released.

Because there isn't a set host, pre-production involves coordination with the culture editor to figure out what movies are peaking interest, if and when screenings are available, who is attending the screenings, and coordinating a taping time. The show began as a bi-monthly release and was moved to a weekly release as the number of movie openings ramp up in the run-up to the holidays and award season.

One of the more difficult aspects of the production is balancing the roundtable discussion. Potential hosts purposely don't talk to each other about the movie prior to taping. But as the producer, I need to figure out what people thought of the movies while figuring out who would have good conversational chemistry. And then, on top of that, figuring out if the roundtable is balanced in terms of a diversity of voices. For example, we recently spoiled *JoJo Rabbit*, Taika Waititi's satire about Hitler Youth. The film's tone and nonchalance towards individuals participating in a genocide caused some controversy. We tried, in vain, to have a panel with at least one Jewish perspective. Due to the individuals who secured screening tickets at Slate, that wasn't possible. So, we moved on to the second factor - ensuring the guests have the authority to speak on the topic. We ended up booking Dan Kois on the program since he profiled the director and the controversy stemmed from the director's choice of tone for the film. It wasn't perfect, but it was a decent work around. It's important to make sure the guests you ask have some authority to speak on the topic.

One of the other difficulties I've had with the show comes down to the show's design. I go into each taping without having seen the film. Typically, producers want to have enough research in front of them to predict what the hosts or guests are about to say. But with this show, the hosts don't want to talk about the film all that much prior to

taping. They take notes during the screenings and usually one of them writes a review released around the same time as the podcast is released. But since I don't see the movie at a screening, the extent of my research is limited to what I can find online. This type of research is extraordinarily helpful when something like a controversy needs addressing. But it doesn't allow me to know if the hosts are hitting all the plot points that need to be discussed. Typically, producers are safety nets, but in this case, I fear my net has a few holes in it. I have prompting questions to help when the hosts get stuck. If there is a silver lining to this issue, it's that I'm essentially the stand-in for the audience who most likely haven't seen the movie. I can ask the hosts to clarify when their retelling of the plot doesn't make sense or if I need additional background to create a coherent storyline.

*Mom and Dad are Fighting* is my other main producing responsibility. I took over production from the previous producer in mid-October. Production-wise, this show is a heavier lift. We have three hosts stationed in three different locations around the country. And since the third host recently left the show to focus on New Hampshire political coverage, we have a variety of guest hosts from early November through December. I've been helping coordinate bookings and studios for the new guest hosts.

I also handle listener correspondence. Our middle block of the show is a segment where the hosts give advice to a listener. Listeners primarily submit their questions via email and voicemail. I sort gather a selection of emails for the hosts to choose from. It has been really interesting figuring out what kind of questions intrigue the hosts while sparking enough conversation for a 10 to 15 minute discussion. The questions have to be balanced yet varied in terms of issues, ages and previous show topics. Figuring out the show's news-values has been interesting since, though I am a product of parenting, I am

not a parent myself. Some issues that I may think are obvious actually spark quite a bit of discussion while others that I am intrigued by the hosts may find blasé. It also depends on who the guest host is, as we want to play into their parenting situation and expertise.

Both shows are quite playful in terms of tone. We often think of audio as a conversational medium, especially when it comes to podcasts. But this level of conversational scripting is definitely new to me and has been a lot of fun to explore. Writing in a host's voice is imperative because the show is largely live to tape. Though there is a lot of editing, interrupting and retaking certain pieces of script can majorly disrupt flow and sometimes you can even hear a shift in tone in the overall tracking. Clear scripting and ensuring the questions or lines are written in each host's individual voice is key to successful conversational flow.

The advanced editing required for turning these shows is significant and has been a wonderful learning opportunity. The shows are typically around an hour in length, including intros, outros and ads. We'll record approximately an hour and a half of tape, which needs to be cut down to an hour. The turn time is typically a half day from recording time to publishing. With three guests, multitrack editing is a must to ensure conversational flow. Also, there isn't time for a transcription, so I've learned to live edit. While directing the show, I'll take extensive notes of where cuts need to be made. This can be anything from content cuts to tonal shifts to interest flow to speaking flubs. These notes guide the edit, helping me hit deadline.

I've also been honing my headline and social media writing skills. I didn't come into the semester with a ton of experience crafting headlines, SEO lines, or text for social media posts - especially since the magazine takes a more opinionated, sassy tone. To be

honest, I'm still working on making my headlines and social media posts punchy and appropriately sassy.

Overall, I had a good experience this fall and picked up some valuable skills that will be extremely transferable within the audio field. I do wish I would have worked on some more journalistic endeavors but the magazine and podcasting sphere sort of exist in a gray area between journalism and entertainment at times. But I'm sure the production skills I've picked up will serve me well in my next journalistic audio project.

In terms of the research project, it was really exciting to talk to producers who I look up to in the field and who are creating inspiring work. Quite honestly, it was a bit nerve wracking reaching out and interviewing some of the producers just because I do admire their work. I had a little bit of difficulty getting producers and reporters to respond. It was a little awkward during the initial ask because I didn't know if I should just reach out to one person on the team or if I should reach out to multiple people at once to increase my chances that one person would respond. If I did reach out, should I include them all in one email, addressing everyone included in the email and conveying that I was looking to talk to one of the members of the team... or would that look like spam? After a few contacts to a team, I then moved on to the next round of podcasts. But those who were willing to be interviewed were very generous of their time.

One of the issues I didn't anticipate coming across in my research was the employment of tactics without explicit intention. Some of the techniques used to disclose the newsgathering process have multiple uses or follow standard audio storytelling protocol. I hesitate to say the techniques provided transparency by accident. But that doesn't mean techniques were deliberately and intentionally used either.

The effect this had on my research is that the research dives into scene building and the use of reporters as characters, in depth. It does answer the ‘what’ and ‘why’ (and implied ‘how’) parts of the research questions. But on a granular level, the ‘what’ section aiming to identify newsgathering techniques that are specifically used to provide transparency leaves something to be desired.

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

### Show Production - Main Producer

#### *Spoiler Specials:*

Downton Abbey - Sept. 20, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/spoiler-specials/2019/09/downton-abbey-takes-on-the-royal-family-and-their-servants>

Joker - Oct. 4, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/spoiler-specials/2019/10/joker-bleak-origin-story-in-spoiler-filled-detail>

El Camino: A Breaking Bad Movie - Oct. 11, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/spoiler-specials/2019/10/el-camino-a-breaking-bad-movie-spoilers>

Parasite - Oct. 18, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/spoiler-specials/2019/10/bong-joon-ho-parasite-in-spoiler-filled-detail>

Jojo Rabbit - Oct. 25, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/spoiler-specials/2019/10/jojo-rabbit-the-anti-hate-satire-about-nazis-in-spoiler-filled-detail>

Terminator: Dark Fate - Nov. 01, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/spoiler-specials/2019/11/terminator-dark-fate-in-spoiler-filled-detail>

Last Christmas: Nov. 08, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/spoiler-specials/2019/11/last-christmas-in-spoiler-filled-detail>

Knives Out: Nov. 29, 2019

To be released.

#### *Mom and Dad are Fighting:*

Parent Under the Influence Edition - Oct. 31, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/10/slate-parenting-podcast-drinking-while-raising-children-explaining-alzheimers-to-kids>

Into the Unknown Edition - Nov. 7, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/11/slates-parenting-podcast-moving-financial-stability-frozen-2>

## **Production Assistance and Audio Engineering**

### ***What Next:***

Anarchy in the U.K. - Sept. 5, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/09/boris-johnson-brexit-options>

Bolton Exits, but It's Still Trump's Show - Sept. 11, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/09/john-bolton-exits-foreign-policy-incoherent>

Trump Takes On the Auto Industry - Sept. 13, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/09/why-auto-makers-are-stuck-between-trump-and-california>

Trump and Modi's Rodeo - Sept. 20, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/09/trump-modi-india-texas-rally>

So, This Is Impeachment - Sept. 25, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/09/nancy-pelosi-finally-has-a-simple-corruption-story-to-tell>

Why Don't D.C. Residents Count? - Oct. 10, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/10/civil-rights-lawyer-wade-henderson-on-the-fight-for-dc-statehood>

This Week in Impeachment: Obstruct and Distract - Oct. 11, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/10/obstruct-and-distract-an-impeachment-strategy>

What Is Tulsi Gabbard's Deal? - Nov. 6, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/11/tulsi-gabbard-presidential-campaign>

### ***If / Then:***

Inside Uber - Sept. 4, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then/2019/09/travis-kalanick-uber-silicon-valley>

The Case for the Vape - Sept. 11, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then/2019/09/vaping-isnt-all-bad>

Breaking Away From Google - Sept. 18, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then/2019/09/how-to-completely-stop-using-google-gmail-and-gcal>

The Surveillance Is Coming From Inside the (Smart) House - Sept. 25, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then/2019/09/domestic-abuse-via-smart-home-tech-is-on-the-rise>

What It Takes to Study Online Harassment - Oct. 2, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then/2019/10/danielle-citron-gender-cultural-norms-online-abuse-harassment>

The People Who Hold the Internet Together - Oct. 9, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then/2019/10/content-moderators-people-who-clean-up-internet>

Smash Bros. Side Hustlers - Oct. 16, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/if-then/2019/10/coach-e-sports-superstar-mango-super-smash-bros>

### ***Mom and Dad are Fighting:***

Back to Work and Back to School Edition - Sept. 12, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/09/slates-parenting-podcast-on-dealing-with-going-back-to-work-and-gender-roles>

How to Be a Family Edition - Sept. 17, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/09/audiobook-excerpt-and-discussion-of-how-to-be-a-family-by-dan-kois>

Wrap It Up Edition - Sept. 19, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/09/slates-parenting-podcast-on-dealing-with-condoms-and-co-parenting>

Suburban Appropriation Edition - Sept. 26, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/09/slates-parenting-podcast-on-dealing-with-appropriation-and-body-positivity>

Birthday Parties and Birthday Suits Edition - Oct. 3, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/10/parenting-podcast-family-nudity-post-divorce-birthday-parties>

The Breast Milk Taste Test Edition - Oct. 10, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/10/slates-parenting-podcast-on-breast-milk-and-disruptive-kids>

You Need to Calm Down Edition - Oct. 17, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/mom-and-dad-are-fighting/2019/10/slates-parenting-podcast-on-yelling-at-kids-being-honest-about-mental-health>

### ***The Waves:***

The “Couples Therapy” Edition - Sept. 12, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/the-waves/2019/09/the-waves-on-boycotting-soulcycle-showtimes-couples-therapy-and-marianne-williamson>

The “Strippers Behaving Badly” Edition - Sept. 26, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/the-waves/2019/09/hustlers-no-caricatures-only-characters-a-different-kind-of-revenge-fantasy>

The “Impeachment Sisterhood” Edition - Oct. 10, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/the-waves/2019/10/whitewashing-impeachment-push-badasses-squad>

The “Bless This Mess” Edition - Oct. 24, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/the-waves/2019/10/the-waves-bipartisan-relationships-abortion-instagram-influencers>

### ***Hit Parade:***

State of the World Edition - Sept. 27, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/hit-parade/2019/09/rhythm-nation-was-the-sound-of-the-future-and-a-hit-machine>

The Lost and Lonely Edition - Oct. 31, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/hit-parade/2019/10/suburban-teens-turned-grim-80s-u-k-postpunk-into-chart-pop>

### ***How To! With Charles Duhigg:***

How To Go on a Family Adventure - Sep. 24, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/how-to/2019/09/the-key-to-an-epic-family-vacation-get-out-of-your-comfort-zone>

To be released - How To Online Date

### ***Working:***

To be released: Four episodes on programmers

### ***Dear Prudence:***

The “Upstaging the Bride” Edition - Oct. 18, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/dear-prudence/2019/10/mother-in-law-upstaging-wedding-dear-prudence-advice>

### ***The Gist:***

To be released: Interview with Steve Bullock, current presidential candidate.

***Decoder Ring:***

To be released: Gender Reveal Parties

***Slate's Culture Gabfest:***

“Voice Like a Jangly Bell” Edition - Oct. 23, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/culture-gabfest/2019/10/culture-gabfest-pain-and-glory-dolly-partons-america-lauren-gunderson>

***The Authority on: His Dark Materials***

His Dark Materials Season 1, Episode 1: “Lyra’s Jordan” - Nov. 4, 2019

<https://slate.com/podcasts/his-dark-materials/2019/11/his-dark-materials-recap-season-1-episode-1>

**Research and Production**

Active Shooter Drill Project [Headline and release date TBD]. The project is in collaboration with The Trace. I have been helping the reporters with research and sourcing of students from across the country.

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL**

### Introduction

There's an immersive quality about audio. Natural sounds setting the scene intertwined with conversational voices create an intimate listener experience. It can feel as though the listener is standing next to a reporter in the field. For years features and longform pieces have excelled at this type of audio storytelling. Now investigative reporting is using similar audio storytelling techniques within the podcast sphere.

Besides longform storytelling or features, the podcast medium lends itself to interviews. Podcasts like ProPublica's The Breakthrough, The Center for Investigative Reporting's Reveal and The IRE Radio Podcast feature investigative reporting. The reporters tend to share their pieces and break down how they conducted their investigations. While investigative reporting, interviewing, analyzing and verification takes time, so does the deliberate crafting of a final product to best engage with one's audience. Often journalists have discussed the challenges of striking a balance in their finished work between providing evidence of their reporting and the need for brevity to make a story more engaging for the reader, listener or viewer. Investigative reports, like most journalistic products, have storytelling constraints – be it word count, column inches in a newspaper or time allotment in a broadcast. Within those constraints, journalists strive to include enough evidence of their reporting to successfully convey their findings without sacrificing clarity or audience interest.

Similar to source attribution, evidence is needed to support arguments and conclusions. But sometimes evidence isn't easily conveyed. Video-based news outlets use graphics as visual aids to explain data or trends. Digitally published news outlets can embed original documents, statements and maps within the story to give the audience the opportunity to explore evidence without overwhelming the story. Investigative podcasts can set up websites to publish similar supplemental evidence. While these techniques bolster the overall product, an investigative podcast still needs to stand on its own when it comes to including evidence. Luckily, there aren't strict constraints when it comes to podcasting. An episode can be 15 minutes or 3 hours. The time limitations of a podcast are up to the podcast producer and the podcast publishing outlet's discretion. The leeway appears to give journalists more freedom to make decisions based on creativity and content. Investigative podcasts also seem to be taking advantage of this freedom by expanding upon the evidence they include about the newsgathering process in the final product.

Instead of conveying the conclusions of an investigation by combining evidence with anecdotes from sources, reporters are including audio that brings the audience into the story in a way that helps listeners feel like they're part of the hunt for sources and information. Listeners can hear as decisions are being made and documents rummaged through. Essentially, the audience is witnessing the newsgathering process. As an aspiring audio producer, I hope to learn more from investigative podcast producers about the specific narrative techniques they employ to showcase the newsgathering

process. My interviews will reveal how different techniques are being used and why different techniques are being used at different times.

### Professional Skills Component

During the Fall semester of 2019, I'll be fulfilling the professional skills component at Slate Magazine's bureau in Washington DC. Slate Podcasts is the audio branch of the magazine and it produces over 20 shows spanning from daily reporting to political analysis to entertainment conversations.

While at Slate I'll be producing shows, which includes preproduction research, booking guests and hosts, audio engineering, directing, postproduction, editing and publication. I'll also be researching and sourcing for a reporting project in collaboration with The Trace, which is a news organization that covers national gun issues and gun violence.

### Professional Analysis

#### Introduction

For my professional analysis, I will be examining what storytelling techniques journalists use to show the newsgathering process in investigative podcasts, why these storytelling techniques are used and how producers decide what parts of the newsgathering process to highlight with these techniques.

More than half of Americans over the age of 12 have listened to a podcast, according The Infinite Dial 2019 survey conducted by Edison Research and Triton Digital. Similar to other mediums, there is an abundance of podcast genres spanning from journalistic to education to entertainment. More than 750,000 podcasts currently occupy the sphere, according to the Infinite Dial 2019 survey. News is the third most popular genre of podcast, surpassed by education and comedy.

Investigative podcasts are a staple of the medium. Serial’s viral launch led the way (what year) for other investigations to be produced for the medium. The genre sits at the intersection of journalism, entertainment and curiosity. Investigative podcasts capture intrigue and harness an infotainment style that allows the genre to compete with some of the lighter, entertainment shows that occupy the podcast sphere (McHugh, 2016; Dalton, 2017). It’s basically an ability to “create an investigative hybrid that combines the most important elements of longform print reporting with the entertainment qualities that make podcasts so addictive” (O’Donoghue, 2018). Investigative podcasts can resemble true-crime style shows where the reporter “assumes the role of detective” and can come off “voyeuristic and occasionally exploitative” whereas other investigative podcasts dig into issues with a “more subtle, journalistic tone” (O’Donoghue, 2018).

Podcasts are a “perfect medium” for longer-form investigative journalism since the medium helps reporters tell stories in “creative and compelling ways, so people will actually pay attention,” said Christa Scharfenberg, head of studio at the Center for

Investigative Reporting (Quah, 2016). The Center for Investigative Reporting's program, Reveal, was designed to be entertaining with host Al Letson's "strong sense of character and place, with humor and irony when appropriate" adding another level of engagement for the listener. Since engagement can come with a content opportunity cost, Scharfenburg stressed the importance of a multi-platform approach to publishing. By publishing an extensive version of the report online, the investigators cover any bases that may have been forgone for the sake of producing a compelling program. Though the extra level of precaution is necessary, she takes the trade off because of the opportunity podcasting provides in terms of audience longevity. Podcast listeners will tune into long spans of content, Scharfenburg explains, whereas text stories are lucky to receive a few minutes of attention (Quah, 2016).

Though Scharfenberg calls the medium perfect, there are, of course, disadvantages to the medium in terms of using it as a platform and method for presenting investigative reporting. One of the drawbacks to audio is that producers need to be cognizant of how many voices they are putting into the piece. Listeners can only keep track of so many voices and adding too many may confuse the audience and detract from the message or findings (Dalton, 2017). Furthermore, limiting the voices may also unintentionally constrain the story's trajectory. Signposting, where the reporter clearly guides the audience by telling them what will be discussed next, is one of the tactics used to reduce confusion but can sound clunky (Dalton, 2017).

Audio lacks the ability to easily convey data or number-driven findings. Most people don't have an innate ability to hear multiple numbers and understand the implications so conveying important information that traditionally serves to prove or corroborate is difficult (Dalton, 2017; Karlsson, 2010). Investigative podcasts work around that disadvantage and find other ways to be transparent about where the information came from while corroborating evidence.

One recent podcast that exemplified engaging storytelling while delivering in-depth reporting is called *In The Dark*, an investigative podcast by American Public Media. In season two of *In The Dark*, Senior Reporter Madeleine Baran and her team spent months reporting in Mississippi trying to understand why one man, Curtis Flowers, has been tried for the same murders six times. According to the podcast, the situation is made more compelling because the prosecution lacks what the team calls “strong” evidence yet continues to retry the case, leaving Flowers in prison for 21 years.

The way *In The Dark* incorporates narration, explanation and reveals the newsgathering process in the storyline allows Baran to show listeners how the team reported their story, and came to know the information behind the reportage in the final podcast. The audience witnesses Baran interact with locals. The audience hears Baran try to track down sources by knocking on doors. They walk alongside her as she follows physical evidence trails. They tag along in the abandoned jail as she and the team processed rotting documents. They sat with her as she tried numerous times to talk with the district attorney responsible for Flowers’ recurring trials.

The program's ability to explain its findings and how reporters processed interviews and documents provides another layer of credibility to their reporting. So, when In The Dark's data analysis found that District Attorney Doug Evans's record of striking black citizens from the jury at a rate four times more often than striking white jurors, the audience is potentially more likely to trust the show's conclusion that Flowers may have not have been given the opportunity for a fair trial by a jury of his peers, considering Mississippi's racial and political climate. The team's work proved so credible that the defendant's team used the reporting in its next appeal and that was part of the crucial evidence that convinced the U.S. Supreme Court to hear Flowers' case (Baran and Yesko, 2018).

Though investigative podcasts aim to entertain, they still need to serve the audience by delivering well-sourced, factually-accurate reporting, per the expectations of investigative journalism (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Reporters and producers of these investigative podcasts spend hours newsgathering. If the investigative podcast consists of original reporting then the journalists will already be engaging in newsgathering since it's at the heart of producing journalism (Rupar, 2006). Traditionally the newsgathering process can be somewhat opaque, leaving readers in the dark about how reporters came to their findings (Blandling, 2018). However, investigative podcasts have been embedding their newsgathering practices within the storyline. The transparency allows the audience to feel as though they are tagging along with the reporters as they investigate.

## **Literature Review**

First, the literature review will begin by exploring the theoretical framework for this research. Gatekeeping theory identifies how and why certain information becomes news as well as the factors that influence newsmakers' decisions in terms of what information reaches the public. This theory helps frame the conversation as to why investigative podcasts allow aspects of the newsgathering process to be included in the final product, thus reaching the public. Following the discussion of gatekeeping theory, the literature review will define newsgathering and the newsgathering process.

The literature review will then discuss the history of podcasts followed by a dive into the intersectionality of journalistic podcasting and investigative reporting. The aim of the pairing is to explore what storytelling techniques are being used to include the newsgathering process and why journalists are including these techniques in the final product.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The phenomenon of investigative podcasts transparent inclusion of the newsgathering process will be examined using gatekeeping theory as a lens. Acknowledging that it is difficult to accurately define journalism or pinpoint journalism's role within society, journalism's primary purpose "is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing" (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Since

the production of news is restricted based on resources and the medium's capacity in which the news outlet distributes the content, not all of the information that has the potential to become news is chosen and thus it is up to journalists to select what information is gathered, shaped and distributed (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009).

Gatekeeping theory has its roots in “Kurt Lewin’s (1947) social psychological theory of how people’s eating habits could be changed” and shows that the path and outcome of certain items depends on forces “constraining the flow of items through gates” (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). When the theory was applied to journalism by David White in 1949, Shoemaker, Vos and Reese pinpoint the gatekeeper’s decisions as a main, yet subjective, factor that influenced the flow of information through the channel, which led to the identification of the selection process as a “source of news bias” (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). Other factors include “newsroom norms, ownership, competition, official and corporate sources, and public sentiment” (McElroy, 2013). Though the role of gatekeeper within the consideration of news doesn’t stray from those working within the news outlet, scholarship expanded the factors influencing gatekeeping decisions to include five levels of analysis: “individual journalist level, the organizational level, the extra-media level, and the social system level” (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). The authors go on to explain that understanding how the forces, which are the factors that influence decisions about information, requires analysis of the five levels’ interactions to understand outcomes of information (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009).

The role of gatekeeper shifts with the advancements and changes in the field of journalism, with some shifts, like changing demographics not resulting in major changes (Shoemaker, Vos and Reese, 2009). While other changes like advancements of technology proving to be a more major influence on the shifting, and in some instances diminishing, role of gatekeeping (Singer, 2006). Singer's study "suggests an evolution in online journalists' thinking about the nature of information" shifting to the delivery of credible information and perhaps "stepping back from the gate," especially as interactivity with the audience increases and journalists take on a greater level of curation duties (Singer, 2006). McElroy's analysis also highlights the shift in gatekeeping due to the influx of participatory journalism enabled through advancements in technology (McElroy, 2013). Though the role of gatekeeping may be shifting with technology, the factors that influence the role of the gatekeepers like newsroom norms and public sentiment still remain influential.

When applying this theory to the research, gatekeeping comes into play when the journalists within the reporting, editing or producing process decide what part of the newsgathering process to include in the podcast. Furthermore, the research uses gatekeeping theory to examine how journalists incorporate the newsgathering process into the audio story and what purpose inclusion serves.

## **The Newsgathering Process**

Newsgathering is the backbone of the profession. Journalists or practitioners use the newsgathering process as a way to "collect information with the intention of turning it

into news” (Zelizer & Allen, 2010). Essentially, it’s the method of assembling news or “turning raw information into a processed news story relative to the constraints of the medium in which it is being relayed” (Rupar, 2006; Zelizer & Allen, 2010). Within the field of journalism, there are a multitude of ways journalists find, research and source their information (Deuze, 2005). Professional norms within the field come into play in newsgathering, like not obtaining information through payed interviews and not coercing information (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Deuze, 2005). Overall, the newsgathering process doesn’t factor in the piece’s success or the quality of the process. If information was gathered for the purpose of transforming it into a consumable piece of news, no matter the platform, then the process to obtain that information falls under newsgathering.

## **Investigative Journalism**

Muckraking, scandal spotlighting, and corruption exposing pieces of investigative journalism throughout the 1900s helped redefine the purpose of journalism (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Reporting with the aim to expose corruption or check those in power existed in the U.S. before the country was founded and before journalism became easily accessible via the penny press even though the genre of investigative reporting didn’t begin to form and popularize until the early 1900s. (Aucoin, 2005; Oppenheimer, 2017). Investigative journalism acts, in a way, as a “custodian of consciousness” due to the moral dimension introduced. (Glasser and Ettema, 1989; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). The reporting serves multiple purposes within society “uncovering and documenting unknown activities” contributes information to society where as interpretive reporting provides the public with concise analysis and context while the third category, reporting on

investigations, keeps the public informed of the activity of institutions that are hard to check as a single citizen (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Though different categories, investigative reporting is identified by the inclusion of “original work, concealed information otherwise hidden to the public and reporting that is in the public’s interest” (Abdenour, 2018). The literature suggests that ages where investigative journalism thrives coincide with ages of social, cultural or political unrest (Lanosga, 2014; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Aucoin, 2005; Oppenheimer, 2017).

Some argue that all reporting should be somewhat investigative in nature and all journalism should aim to inform the consumer, investigative reporting’s aim tends to be more watchdog in nature. Watchdog journalism acts as a check on power as it “aggressively serves the public’s need for important information concerning matters of public welfare” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Furthermore, the principle behind watchdog journalism extends beyond serving as an unlegislated fourth branch of government, essentially acting as the people’s check of power on the government, and surveys other “powerful institutions within society” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001).

Beyond the purpose of reporting, investigative journalism separated itself through the “intensification of traditional reporting methods” and the “skills required to dig up information, more-than normal stamina, and tough-mindedness” (Aucoin, 2005). Original practices of investigative journalism, like reporters utilizing undercover tactics, were replaced by “clearly established methodologies, goals, values, standards, and rewards that embraced and extended journalism’s long tradition of exposure and crusading for reform”

during the second half of the 1900s (Aucoin, 2005; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). From an outside perspective, investigative journalists may walk the line between advocacy and objectivity if they seek reform but they tend to investigate “violations of widely shared values” (Glasser and Ettema, 1989). For the most part, investigative reporters observed these values and standards as the reporting transferred to different mediums like radio, television and online platforms.

Print’s strong tradition for investigative reporting flourished online due to the quasi-infinite amount of space in which to disclose documents (Dalton, 2017). The quality of investigative reporting produced for television has been criticized and one may be able to point towards the intersection of the cost to conduct investigative reporting and the financial concerns of commercial news organizations (Abdenour, 2018). Results of Abdenour’s research found that there is a strong connection between investigative journalism and competition, meaning that competition can drive the production of investigative journalism. However, the study also found that investigative journalism is produced infrequently at U.S. television stations and that level may decrease as local television stations consolidate, lowering the level of competition within the region, thus reducing the station’s competitive monetary need to sink resources into expensive investigative reporting (Abdenour, 2018).

Part of what makes investigative journalism impactful is how the reporting can harness the emotionality of a situation, hooking the consumer in and giving the audience a reason to care (Sillesen, Ip, and Uberti, 2015). Journalists often employ the “power of

storytelling” through narratives aiming to “extend empathy for the individual to the group, correct injustice, and inspire change, or at least awareness” (Sillesen, Ip and Uberti, 2015). Interestingly, the study found that narrative stories tend to result in readers “feeling a higher degree of compassion and empathy.” The authors point to the engagement of narrative stories transporting consumers to a specific scene, which makes the audience feel as though they are experiencing the moment, enabling the audience to connect on a level where the subjects feel more like real, relatable people rather than characters (Sillesen, Ip and Uberti, 2015). Furthermore, empathy is sparked through this narrative immersion and the “more transported you feel, the more likely you’ll be to change your opinions and beliefs about the real world,” the study found.

## Audio Journalism

Audio storytelling excels at transporting the audience due to the intimacy of the medium in which the audience feels as though the reporters are speaking directly to them (Larson, 2015). Audio excelling at and relying on narrative radio journalism and personal audio storytelling shouldn’t be surprising, Lindgren argues, and the informality of podcasts allows for journalists to approach stories with even more of a conversational style and tone, which makes them sound “relaxed and personal” (Lindgren, 2016). Levels of intimacy are created in part by how the audience consumes the piece, headphones creating a barrier between the listener and the environment, while the journalist’s voice, combined with a compelling narrative, taps into the conversational aspect (Lindgren, 2016). The personalization aspect stems from audio’s unique ability to force an audience to use their

imagination, since audio doesn't provide visuals, which may help listeners feel more connected to the subjects and characters featured in the journalism pieces (Lindgren, 2016).

Audio not only allows the audience an in-depth experience, the lack of bulky equipment can allow sources in an audio story to relax and not worry about their appearances being scrutinized like they may for a video interview (McHugh, 2015). Furthermore, "audio is a powerful medium, whose non-intrusiveness, affective resonance and enveloping nature make it particularly suited to capturing intimate personal narratives" (McHugh, 2015).

But radio journalism can be more than just creating an intimate piece of audio, narrative journalism infuses personality to "turn the dry and scholarly into utterly compelling storytelling" making "complex issues...entertaining and simple" essentially making "journalism fun" (Lindgren, 2016). When something is fun, people tend to enjoy the experience, or in audio journalism's case - the consumption, more. There is a rising trend in journalism to humanize news and personal narratives work to humanize the subject but the use of the host's personality could perhaps help to humanize journalists (Larson, 2015). These advancements may have paid off. Audio as a news medium is 'viewed more fondly' over other mediums since it is highly portable, engaging through the use of personality and narrative, and succeeded to "invade these personal spaces" that allow the audience to connect with the journalist and humanize the subject so "we [as an audience] trust it more and often rely on it more" (Berry, 2006).

## Podcasts

In the world of audio storytelling, podcasts are a relatively new phenomenon. Podcasts are hard to describe due to the lose formatting, low barrier to entry and variety of programs. However, the core of a podcast is quite simple. Podcasts at the most basic level are audio files available for consumption on a digital platform. NPR describes it as “a piece of audio that you can listen to on demand” and the content varies from a show-like structure to more episodic storytelling (NPR, 2018). Podcasts maintain many traits from the traditional radio format, with the exception of exploration due to the medium’s liberation of form and genre (Berry, 2006; Lindgren, 2016).

The medium as we currently know it is approximately a decade and a half old (Quah, 2017). Though the term ‘podcast’ was coined by The Guardian in 2004; the first modern podcast is generally thought to be Christopher Lydon’s Open Source, an RSS feed of audio files released in 2003 (Frary, 2017, Locke, 2017).

Early pioneers of the medium thought the digital platform could “erase the limitations of radio” and be a space “where people could use four-letter words and speak a kind of raw, angry opinion that a great mass of the population believes and wants to hear” (Locke, 2017). Tech enthusiasts, comedians and the highly opinionated first took advantage of the niche, but free medium, to publish audio files resembling rough talk shows, interviews or monologues (Quah, 2017; Ulandoff, 2015). Journalism and podcasting began converging when traditional programs like This American Life, a public

radio program focusing on long-form storytelling, and NPR's Planet Money followed suit and began experimenting with the medium (PBS Newshour, 2014). Podcasting is a "low-reach, high-engagement medium" that was "bubbling" below the mainstream surface looking for something to breakthrough, Larry Rosin, president of market research firm Edison Research, told CNBC (Bishop, 2014).

The crossover between traditional audio journalism broadcast via radio waves and new audio journalism published via podcasts shouldn't have been shocking. Podcasts aren't reinventing the wheel. Instead, the less regulated or standardized platform was viewed as an opportunity for experimentation and innovation within audio storytelling. Since producers use the format to experiment with "journalistic forms of expression," the integrity of the reporting found audio journalism hasn't waned (Lindgren, 2016). Furthermore, podcasts shouldn't be seen as a rival to radio and instead viewed as "niche content and on-demand listening" (Berry, 2015).

Though the medium was growing in popularity, it wasn't until the launch of 'Serial,' a This American Life spinoff, that podcasts truly broke into the mainstream (McHugh, 2016; PBS Newshour, 2014). Serial intersected investigative journalism and compelling storytelling in a way that tapped into the realm of entertainment. The true-crime "breakout hit" closely resembles other true crime programs popular on television while remaining to present an episodic narrative "which the audience could engage with intellectually and emotionally" (Berry, 2015). In essence, the attention that Serial, and the other podcasts people discovered as a result of Serial's popularity, ushered in a "boom of

independent narrative formats informed by the editorial values and production expertise of public service media” (McHugh, 2016). The “hand-held, spoon-fed, and host-driven” narrative format, McHugh’s research found, is intentional and has set the tone for the wider podcasting industry.

As of 2019, podcasting continues to emerge as a prominent medium for a wide variety of content. Approximately 144 million people in the U.S. above the age of 12 have listened to a podcast in the last decade, which is an increase from 22% to 51%, according to the 2019 Infinite Dial survey (Edison Research, 2019). Apple Podcasts, one of the most popular podcast distribution apps, estimates that there are over 550,000 active podcasts published as of June 2018 (Winn, 2018). Nearly half of that listening takes place at home, which is a departure from radio, which relies on listenership at work or commuting. Since a majority of people listen to podcasts on their mobile devices, the industry can track the number of podcast downloads. Between 2014 and 2018 the number of all-time episode downloads through Apple Podcasts jumped from 7 billion to 50 billion (Locker, 2018).

It’s not just journalism that occupies the podcast space. The industry is abundant with entertainment-driven programs that may resemble talk shows or that curate content, relying on background research to compile an episode. Prior to the internet lowering barriers to entry, audio needed a publicly accessible platform with which to distribute the product (Heise, 2016). Now, anyone with basic audio recording equipment, like a recording app on a smartphone, can create a podcast and upload it to a publishing site for free where it can be accessed by audiences for free (Berry, 2006). As far as information reaching

audiences, “there is no gatekeeper controlling who can and who cannot transmit in this space” (Berry, 2006). Academia points out that this lack of gatekeeping may be handy in certain political climates or countries that may restrict the flow of information through censorship (Frary, 2017). However, if a podcast is produced within a news organization, it still is subjected to gatekeeping within the news production process.

### *Investigative Journalism and Podcasting*

Investigative journalism “found a home” in podcasting due, in part, to the medium’s malleable formatting and opportunity for immersive storytelling (Dalton, 2017; Mullin, 2016). Investigative podcast topics span from issue-based reporting to in-depth political examinations to true-crime shows. One of the new opportunities the medium provides investigative reporting is the “emphasis...on deep audience engagement and a more deliberate focus on impact,” said Christa Scharfenberg, head of the studio at the Center for Investigative Reporting. “This requires us to appeal to a broader audience with more accessible storytelling while adhering to the core principles of watchdog, public service journalism,” Scharfenberg continued (Quah, 2016).

Accessible audio stories tend to tap into already existing narrative storytelling techniques. Producers of This American Life tend to tell audio stories in sequence of events. This allows the audience, which doesn’t have the ability to rewind on live radio, to follow along, according to Ira Glass (Abel, 2015). Chronological structuring can be

naturally applied to investigative podcasts. Investigations are often revealed in a sequence of events partially because that's how events played out in the first place and partially because that's how journalists came to understand their information. The later part of the rational is the newsgathering process.

Overtly explaining each step in the newsgathering process can seem counterintuitive. Editors and producers have traditionally emphasized eliminating extra details that muddle the story. Podcasts are now demonstrating that inclusion of details in the newsgathering process are no longer detracting from the story line, but are instead being woven into the fabric of the story.

Inclusion can be pretty seamless; it may seem like first-person narration instead of explanation when integrated into the storyline of the final product. This transparent inclusion of the newsgathering process can make the audience feel as though they are a part of the investigative team, besides showing the journalist's work (Blandling, 2018; Silverman, 2014; Picard, 2014; Singer, 2007). The elements of the newsgathering process including: providing sourcing, background information, data, and documents can transform a program from "trust me journalism to show me journalism," impacting the overall credibility of the reporting (More and Reich, 2018).

### *Literature Gap*

Academic research has yet to explore details about the newsgathering process in the final product of an investigative podcast. This study will help establish whether journalists are including more of the newsgathering process in investigative podcasts, what narrative storytelling techniques are used to show this process, how the journalists decide what to include, and what the journalists are trying to accomplish through the utilization of these techniques.

### Methods

The purpose of this analysis is to explore which storytelling techniques journalists use to provide evidence of the newsgathering process in investigative podcasts and why journalists are using these techniques. The researcher will better understand storytelling techniques through background research by listening to selected investigative podcasts. The background research will inform semi-structured interviews conducted with a member of the investigative podcast team selected. The interviews with reporters, producers, and editors will explore how the newsgathering process was included, how intentional these decisions were and examine why the newsgathering process was included.

### *Research Questions*

RQ1: What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency and evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process within investigative podcasts?

With the uptick in long-form investigative journalism utilizing audio as a storytelling medium, it's important to understand how the journalists show listeners how they gathered information. What does newsgathering sound like? Is it incorporated as a part of the plot? Does the reporter take the audience with them as they knock on doors or dig through archives? Or are the newsgathering techniques mentioned briefly as an explanation or detail? Understanding how journalists use this part of the reporting process in the final product is useful for other practitioners who are producing the same type of podcast.

RQ2: Why are journalists using storytelling techniques to provide more transparency and evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process in investigative podcasts?

While exploring how the news process is incorporated sheds light on how the process is operationalized within the podcast, it's also important to analyze intention. Was the newsgathering process added to boost the strength of the findings? Was it used to bolster the narrative? Was it added because this technique is seen as a professional norm in the investigative podcast field due to previous successful formats? The reasoning and intent behind why the newsgathering process was included will help other practitioners understand this trend.

#### *Data and Procedure*

The researcher will conduct eight semi-structured interviews with reporters, producers, and editors who create investigative podcasts. Semi-structured interviews create an exchange of information not easily obtained by other qualitative methods since the research questions explore the decision-making process by the investigative podcast's reporters, producers, and editors. The method allows the conversation to explore avenues not addressed in the questions but still allow for the interviewer to have a "degree of control" (Hanna, 2012). Though the researcher has produced, reported and edited podcasts, the researcher has not had the experience of working in these roles on *investigative* podcasts.

The purposeful sampling of investigative journalism podcasts is imperative. This is due to the existence of entertainment or curation-driven shows within the genre that aren't comprised of original reporting. Instead, the researcher will be using purposeful sampling to select units that "will yield the most relevant and plentiful data" (Yin, 2011).

The researcher will gather a pool of podcasts using recommendations from reputable trade organizations like Poynter and Columbia Journalism Review, 'best of' articles from organizations like The New Yorker and Hot Pod, and the 'most listened to' lists released by podcast platforms. The podcasts will be selected based on a few different criteria. The most important factor is the presence of original investigating and reporting. The second factor is that the investigation spans at least one season. In terms of potential sources to reach out to, podcasts typically will include credits at the end of each episode

or at the conclusion of a series. Often the credits include background personnel involved in the creation of the show, but who don't appear as a voice or who aren't referenced in the actual program. This includes positions like producers, editors, audio engineers or even additional reporters.

During research, a spreadsheet will be created to collect information including: the news organization at which the podcast was created, reporters voicing the show, producers and their specific role in the product, editors, and other personnel.

This list will be a guiding document to identify the key players in each show. Contact information will be collected on each individual via the station's website or calling the station. Phone numbers and email addresses will be added to the spreadsheet to create a comprehensive document. Once two roles are identified for each podcast, customizable email template and phone script will be created. The researcher will first reach out to potential interviewees with an email. If no response is obtained within four days of sending the initial email, the researcher will follow up with a phone call and an email. After the second contact, the researcher will reach out one more time via phone and email a week later before looking to interview a different podcast team. The researcher expects to conduct a majority of these semi-structured interviews via Skype, Facetime or phone due to the remote locations of the podcast teams.

In total, the researcher expects to conduct a total of eight semi-structured interviews spanning six podcasts. The aim of this study's use of qualitative research

methods is to reach saturation in terms of interview responses. When conducting interviews, typically 12 are needed to reach saturation (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). However, the requirement for the program is eight interviews so the researcher will evaluate after conducting eight interviews and if saturation hasn't been met, the researcher will continue interviewing until saturation is reached.

## **Potential Sources**

### **In the Dark**

#### **Season One Description:**

“The investigation into the abduction of Jacob Wetterling yielded no answers for 27 years. We investigate how law enforcement mishandled one of the most notorious child abductions in the country and how those failures fueled national anxiety about stranger danger, led to the nation's sex-offender registries and raise questions about crime-solving accountability.”

#### **Season Two Description:**

“Curtis Flowers has been tried six times for the same crime. For 21 years, Flowers has maintained his innocence. He's won appeal after appeal, but every time, the prosecutor just tries the case again. What does the evidence reveal? And why does the justice system ignore the prosecutor's record and keep Flowers on death row?”

#### **Samara Freemark - Senior Producer**

Bio: “Samara Freemark joined APM Reports in 2013. Before that she covered veterans' issues for the Public Insight Network and worked as a reporter and producer with Radio Diaries, where her work received the George Foster Peabody Award. Freemark has also worked as an environmental reporter, and as a staffer in the newsroom of WUOM Ann Arbor. She holds a B.A. from Swarthmore College and an M.A. in Urban Planning from the University of Michigan,” according to her biography on APM.

Email: [sfreemark@apmreports.org](mailto:sfreemark@apmreports.org)

#### **Madeleine Baran - Reporter / Host**

Bio: “Madeleine Baran is an investigative reporter for APM Reports and the host and lead reporter of the podcast In the Dark. Baran's work focuses on holding powerful people and institutions accountable. Her reporting has exposed flaws in law enforcement investigations, forensic science, state-run mental health institutions and other areas. In 2013 and 2014, Baran exposed

a decades-long cover-up of clergy sexual abuse in the Twin Cities archdiocese. Her reporting led to the resignation of the archbishop, criminal charges against the archdiocese, and lawsuits by victims of clergy sex abuse. In 2015, the archdiocese filed for bankruptcy. Baran's reporting has also appeared on NPR and has been cited by the New York Times. Baran has received numerous national awards for her reporting, including an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award, regarded as the Pulitzer Prize of broadcasting, a George Foster Peabody Award, a Gracie Award, and two national Sigma Delta Chi awards. Baran received her master's degree in Journalism and French Studies from New York University," according to her biography on APM.

Email: [mbaran@apmreports.org](mailto:mbaran@apmreports.org)

### **Caliphate**

**Series Description:** "An audio series following Rukmini Callimachi as she reports on the Islamic State and the fall of Mosul." She investigates the questions: "Who are we really fighting?" "Who is it ISIS appeals to and how?" "What did ISIS leave behind as Mosul crumbled?"

**Andy Mills** - Producer and Reporter (Audio), New York Times

Bio: "I'm a senior producer and reporter for The New York Times where I helped create The Daily & Caliphate. Previously, I spent five years as a producer for Radiolab. My work has appeared in The New York Times, NPR, ABC, BBC and hundreds of public radio stations around the US," according to Mills' website.

Email: [andy.mills@nytimes.com](mailto:andy.mills@nytimes.com)

**Rukmini Callimachi** - Correspondent for The New York Times, covering ISIS

Bio: "Rukmini Callimachi joined The New York Times in March 2014 as a foreign correspondent, covering Al Qaeda and ISIS. She is a three-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, including in 2014 for her series of stories based on a cache of internal Qaeda documents she discovered in Mali. She is also the winner of the George Polk Award for International Reporting, multiple Overseas Press Club Awards and the Michael Kelly prize," according to her Times' bio.

Email: [rukmini.callimachi@nytimes.com](mailto:rukmini.callimachi@nytimes.com)

### **Believed**

**Series Description:** "How did Larry Nassar, an Olympic gymnastics doctor, get away with abusing hundreds of women and girls for two decades? Believed is an inside look at how a team of women won a conviction in one of the largest serial sexual abuse cases in U.S. history. It's a story of survivors finding their power in a cultural moment when people are

coming to understand how important that is. It's also an unnerving exploration of how even well-meaning adults can fail to believe."

**Kate Wells** - host and reporter, Michigan Radio

Bio: "Kate Wells has been a reporter at Michigan Radio since 2012. She started covering the Larry Nassar sexual abuse case in 2016, and her reporting has been featured nationally on NPR. Her previous reporting runs the gamut, from the wrongful conviction of a 14-year-old boy in a quadruple homicide, to refugees building new lives in Michigan, to how swing voters helped Donald Trump turn the state red," according to her Believed bio.

Email: [kwells@umich.edu](mailto:kwells@umich.edu)

**Lindsey Smith** - host and investigative reporting, Michigan Radio

Bio: "Lindsey Smith is Michigan Radio's Investigative Reporter. She previously served as Michigan Radio's West Michigan Reporter. Lindsey helped cover the Larry Nassar sexual abuse case and led the station's award-winning Flint water crisis coverage. Her 2015 documentary about the Flint water crisis, Not Safe to Drink, won a national Edward R. Murrow Award, an Alfred I. duPont – Columbia University Award, and a Third Coast/Richard H. Driehaus Award. The Detroit chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists named her "Young Journalist of the Year" in 2014," according to her Believed bio.

Email: [lsmith@umich.edu](mailto:lsmith@umich.edu)

**Serial**

**Season One Description:**

"A high-school senior named Hae Min Lee disappeared one day after school in 1999, in Baltimore County, Maryland. A month later, her body was found in a city park. She'd been strangled. Her 17-year-old ex-boyfriend, Adnan Syed, was arrested for the crime, and within a year, he was sentenced to life in prison. The case against him was largely based on the story of one witness, Adnan's friend Jay, who testified that he helped Adnan bury Hae's body. But Adnan has always maintained he had nothing to do with Hae's death. Some people believe he's telling the truth. Many others don't."

Sarah Koenig sorted through thousands of documents, listened to trial testimony and police interrogations, and talked to everyone she could find who remembered what happened between Adnan Syed and Hae Min Lee. She discovered that the trial covered up a far more complicated story than the jury – or the public – ever got to hear. The high school scene, the shifting statements to police, the prejudices, the sketchy alibis, the scant forensic evidence — all of it leads back to the most basic questions: How can you know a person's character? How can you tell what they're capable of?"

**Sarah Koenig** - Host and reporter, This American Life

Bio: "Sarah Koenig is the host and co-creator of the award-winning podcast Serial. Launched in 2014, Serial is credited with bringing mainstream attention to the podcast format and has been downloaded more than 420 million times, making it the most listened-to podcast in the history of the form. Among other honors, Serial won the 2014 Peabody Award, the first time the award has been given to a podcast. In 2015 Koenig was named one of Time Magazine's "The 100 Most Influential People,"" according to her agent's website.

Email: [press@serialpodcast.org](mailto:press@serialpodcast.org)

**Julie Snyder - Editor, This American Life**

Bio: "Julie Snyder has been the guiding force behind two of the most successful ventures in audio broadcasting: she is the co-creator of the podcast Serial, which debuted in October 2014 and has been downloaded more than 420 million times, making it the most listened-to podcast in the history of the form; and for many years, she was the senior producer of the public radio show This American Life, which is heard by more than 4 million listeners each week," according to her agent's website.

Email: [press@serialpodcast.org](mailto:press@serialpodcast.org)

**Bear Brook**

**Series Description:** "Two barrels. Four bodies. And the decades-long mystery that led to a serial killer. A podcast about a cold case that's changing how murders will be investigated forever."

**Jason Moon - Reporter and host, New Hampshire Public Radio**

Bio: "Jason Moon began reporting on the Bear Brook murders back in 2015, when it was announced that new forensic techniques were being used to try to identify four bodies that were discovered in two barrels in the woods of Allenstown, New Hampshire. In early 2017, authorities revealed a break in the case that made it clear this story was bigger - and had more significance - than previously thought. That's when Jason and New Hampshire Public Radio's editorial team began work on what would become the Bear Brook podcast. Before coming to NHPR, Jason honed his reporting chops with a variety of public radio teams including StoryCorps, Transom.org, and WBHM in his home state of Alabama," according to his New Hampshire Public Radio website.

Email: [bearbrookpodcast@nhpr.org](mailto:bearbrookpodcast@nhpr.org) and [jmoon@nhpr.org](mailto:jmoon@nhpr.org)

**Taylor Quimby - Senior Producer, New Hampshire Public Radio**

Bio: "Taylor Quimby is a member of NHPR's Creative Production Unit, where he is Senior Producer of the environmental podcast Outside/In, and the serialized true crime podcast Bear Brook. Taylor pitches and produces stories, participates in and coordinates large group edits with other members of his station, and specializes in providing both gimmicky and subtle sound

design. As a musician, Taylor sometimes provides music for various programs and segments, and has written at least one very catchy podcast theme song,” according to his bio on the NHPR site.

Email: [bearbrookpodcast@nhpr.org](mailto:bearbrookpodcast@nhpr.org)

### **The Pope's Long Con**

**Series Description:** “What happens when the institutions we depend on fail at every level? What happens when lies go unchecked? From the pulpit to the statehouse, one man claims to serve his fellow man. But does he?”

**R.G. Dunlop** - Reporter and producer, Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting

Bio: “R.G. Dunlop is an award-winning investigative reporter whose work has exposed government corruption and resulted in numerous reforms. Dunlop is a three-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and was twice a member of teams that won George Polk Awards. He worked 35 years at the Courier-Journal in a variety of positions. Dunlop is a graduate of Miami University and earned a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University,” according to his KyCIR bio.

Email: [rdunlop@kycir.org](mailto:rdunlop@kycir.org)

**Jacob Ryan** - Reporter and producer, Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting

Bio: “Jacob Ryan joined the KyCIR team in December 2017. For three years prior, he worked as a WFPL News reporter and covered issues ranging from City Hall to transportation, public safety to housing. He is a graduate of Western Kentucky University,” according to his KyCIR bio.

Email: [jryan@kycir.org](mailto:jryan@kycir.org)

### **White Lies**

**Series Description:** “In 1965, Rev. James Reeb was murdered in Selma, Alabama. Three men were tried and acquitted, but no one was ever held to account. Fifty years later, two journalists from Alabama return to the city where it happened, expose the lies that kept the murder from being solved and uncover a story about guilt and memory that says as much about America today as it does about the past.”

**Andrew Beck Grace** – Narrative storyteller, host of White Lies

Bio: Teaches documentary film and journalism at the University of Alabama.

Email: [agrace@npr.org](mailto:agrace@npr.org)

**Chip Brantley** – Host of White Lies

Bio: Teaches journalism at the University of Alabama.

Email: [cbrantley@npr.org](mailto:cbrantley@npr.org)

### **Midnight Oil**

**Season One Description:** "Midnight Oil is the story of the pipeline that changed everything for Alaska and helped shape the modern environmental movement. The trans-Alaska pipeline turns 40 this summer. Alaska's Energy Desk is marking the anniversary with a podcast that explores how Prudhoe Bay was discovered and what followed: the booms and busts, social progress and scandals, engineering marvels and environmental disasters."

**Season Two Description:** "Season Two is called The Big Thaw. Last season, we looked back — at the state's roller-coaster history with oil. This time, we're looking forward, to one of the biggest question marks ahead: climate change."

**Rachel Waldholz**— Reporter at Alaska's Energy Desk

Bio: " Rachel Waldholz covers energy and the environment for Alaska's Energy Desk, a collaboration between Alaska Public Media, KTOO in Juneau and KUCB in Unalaska. Before coming to Anchorage, she spent two years reporting for Raven Radio in Sitka. Rachel studied documentary production at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, and her short film, A Confused War won several awards. Her work has appeared on Morning Edition, All Things Considered, and Marketplace, among other outlets.

Email: [rwaldholz@alaskapublic.org](mailto:rwaldholz@alaskapublic.org)

**Elizabeth Harball** – Reporter at Alaska's Energy Desk

Bio: "Elizabeth Harball is a reporter with Alaska's Energy Desk, covering Alaska's oil and gas industry and environmental policy."

Email: [eharball@alaskapublic.org](mailto:eharball@alaskapublic.org)

**Bundyville**

**Season One Description:** ""Bundyville" is a seven-part series chronicling the rise, fall and resurgence of the Bundy family, the armed uprisings they inspired and the fight over the future of the American West."

**Leah Sottile** – Oregon-based freelance journalist

Bio: "Leah Sottile is a freelance journalist whose features, profiles, investigations and essays have been featured by the Washington Post, The New York Times Magazine, Playboy, California Sunday Magazine, Outside, The Atlantic, Vice and several others. She is the host of the National Magazine Award-nominated podcast "Bundyville," made in collaboration with Longreads and Oregon Public Broadcasting. She is an occasional fiction writer, a one-time comic strip author and the former host of two very late-night heavy metal radio programs. She lives Oregon."

**Ryan Haas**— Oregon Public Broadcasting

Bio: "Ryan Haas is a news content manager and handles content partnerships at Oregon Public Broadcasting."

Email: rhaas@opb.org

## S-Town

**Season One Description:** “S-Town is a new podcast from Serial and This American Life, hosted by Brian Reed, about a man named John who despises his Alabama town and decides to do something about it. He asks Brian to investigate the son of a wealthy family who’s allegedly been bragging that he got away with murder. But then someone else ends up dead, and the search for the truth leads to a nasty feud, a hunt for hidden treasure, and an unearthing of the mysteries of one man’s life.”

### **Brian Reed – Host and executive producer**

Bio: “Brian Reed is the senior producer of the public radio show and podcast This American Life. In his seven years with the show, he has created some of the program's most ambitious stories, including “The Secret Recordings of Carmen Segarra,” an investigation into the Federal Reserve’s supervision of Goldman Sachs; “Cops See It Differently,” a nuanced look at the relationship between African Americans and the police; “Abdi and the Golden Ticket,” which follows a Somali refugee desperately trying to get to America; and “What Happened at Dos Erres,” the story of a massacre in Guatemala and its reverberations decades later, which earned him a Peabody Award.”

### **Julie Snyder – Executive producer**

Bio: “Julie Snyder has been the guiding force behind two of the most successful ventures in audio broadcasting: she is the co-creator of the podcast Serial, which debuted in October 2014 and has been downloaded more than 200 million times, making it the most listened-to podcast in history. Before that, for many years, she was the senior producer of This American Life, which is heard by more than 4 million listeners each week.

Email: press@stowntodcast.org.

## Atlanta Monster

**Series Description:** “It's 1979, and Atlanta is a city on the rise. It finds itself neck-and-neck with Birmingham as the hub of the New South. It's been branded, “the city too busy to hate.” But in the summer of '79, two kids go missing: 14-year-old Edward Hope and 13-year-old Alfred Evans. Both male. Both black. They would later be found dead. Murdered.

For the next two years, the city of Atlanta lives in fear. African American children, adolescents and young adults go missing, one by one, only to be found later, their bodies disposed of in remote areas. There was a real-life boogeyman on the prowl. Parents demand more attention and effort from law enforcement, as racial tensions rise. There are no leads. There are no suspects. But there is pressure to close these cases, and preserve Atlanta's status as a thriving metropolis.

As the list of missing and murdered rises to more than 25, the “Atlanta Monster” is seized. 22 years old. Black. Wayne Williams. He is convicted only of two adult murders, but authorities close the majority of the child killings, attributing them to Williams. The city returns to business as usual for most, but did law enforcement get the right man? Questions still linger today. This is the story of fear, a grieving city, and a search for justice: 40 years ago, and today.

### **Payne Lindsey – Host**

Bio: “Award-winning documentary filmmaker Payne Lindsey ventured into the field of podcasting in 2016, propelling a decades-old cold case into the spotlight with his debut podcast Up and Vanished. The project has garnered over 300 million downloads to date, but more importantly, resulted in two arrests. Now this citizen sleuth aims to tell the story of one of his hometown’s darkest secrets, one he grew up knowing nothing about. The story of Atlanta’s missing and murdered children.

### Potential Questions

Would you characterize your podcast as investigative journalism?

- What makes a good investigative audio piece?

How did your team conduct the investigation?

- When looking into an issue with the intent to create an investigative podcast, how much first-hand reporting did the team conduct?
- Did you intend to make this a podcast at first?

When the team is reporting, what aspects of the newsgathering process do you tape?

- Why did the team look to capture those elements on tape?
- What factors go into making that decision?

At what point in the reporting, producing process did the team have an idea of the podcast’s narrative style?

- Did this inform the storytelling techniques you were using? If so, how?
- As an audio reporter, how does the newsgathering process differ when conducting an investigation?

What storytelling techniques did the team employ? Ask for examples.

- Why were they used?
- What did you hope the techniques would add to the podcast?

Why did the team decide to incorporate the reporter as a character in the story?

- What advantages or disadvantages did the team see when using a present narrative figure?
  - o Follow up, if needed: Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- How did the team incorporate the reporter?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?

- Any recommendations for a team looking to set up a similar narrative structure to yours?

Reflecting on the season, how intentional was the inclusion of the newsgathering process?

- Why was it intentional/ or unintentional?
- What impact did the inclusion of the newsgathering process have on the final product?
- What impact did the inclusion of the newsgathering process have on the audience?

What does the inclusion do to transparency?

- You also published a print story with multiple documents.

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from podcasts / audio story to print stories?

Anything else?

*Only applies to a few podcasts:*

The team decided to perform its own experiment / crunch its own data. Why did you do this?

- Was the experiment conducted for audio explanation purposes? Or would the team have conducted the experiment regardless of the audio production?

## EXAMPLES: STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

### Scene Building

Scene from *Caliphate*

**Andy Mills:** Voice mail? Did it go straight to voice mail, or did it ring first?

**Rukmini Callimachi:** I think it went straight.

**Mills:** It went straight to voice mail when I called him this morning, too.

**Callimachi:** Let me try again.

[Phone rings]

[Music]

**Voice Mail:** Sorry, there's no more room to record new ——

**Mills:** Ah, yeah. I left a few.

**Callimachi:** Oh, did you?

**Mills:** Can you just fill me in, on microphone, what's going on?

**Callimachi:** So, about, about maybe an hour ago, I got a text message from our source. We were supposed to go back to see him this afternoon. He'd been delaying, and not responding to our text messages. And out of the blue, he texted me at 11:37 a.m., saying: "I'm done with this. Sorry. C.S.I.S. just came to my house and interviewed me. I'm done here." ----Scene from *Caliphate* – Transcription available on NYT's website.

### Audiofying Document Collection

Scene of *Caliphate*

[Music]

[Sound of fighting in the distance]

*Callimachi: Hey, Hawk? When you hear that, it's outgoing? Outgoing.*

**Mills:** I didn't know you are going right up to the front lines of the war against ISIS.

*Callimachi: There's a building that appears to have been airstrikered.*

**Mills:** And as the coalition soldiers are pushing ISIS back ——

*Callimachi: You guys, have these buildings been cleared?*

**Mills:** You are right there, directly behind them.

*Mills: What are you doing right now?*

*Callimachi: I'm trying to get out some trash bags. We're about to go into the building.*

**Mills:** And you pull out garbage bags ——

*[Sound of plastic rustling]*

*Callimachi: Hang on. Stick it here.*

**Mills:** Like, trash bags that you've brought from home ——

**Callimachi:** Right.

**Mills:** And you just start picking stuff up.

*Callimachi: Andy, look at this bunch of computers. Hard drives yanked out.*

**Mills:** Like, garbage out of buildings.

*Callimachi: So we basically have an ISIS stamp right here. So we're in the right place.*

## **Color Commentary and Observation**

*Scene from Last Seen*

*HORAN: It was tense. And after I left Amore's office, things got even more tense.*

*The landowner got jumpy about that expiring reward. His lawyer, who had been*

*in frequent contact with us, went around us and reached out to Amore, to register the claim before the New Year. Amore deemed the tip "credible," and he shared it with the Boston FBI. And that's when we ran headlong into a wall of silence. Amore stopped communicating. The Orlando landowner and his lawyer stopped returning our phone calls and emails and texts. We'd been shut out, exactly as I'd feared. But all that silence spoke volumes. We sensed that the dig was imminent. And we presumed that the FBI didn't want us to know that.*

**RODOLICO:** *When communications blacked out, we guessed. In the early hours of a Boston snowstorm, we flew to Orlando. And on the morning of Jan. 31, 2018, we hopped into our rental car and drove straight to the lot.*

**RODOLICO:** *Oh there's all kinds of digging equipment. Take your headphones off. I'm going to keep my mic low.*

**HORAN:** *Yeah, keep your mic low. So we've got — we've got a huge backhoe.*

**RODOLICO:** *There's a big backhoe on the street. Holy crap.*

**GPS:** *Your destination is on the right.*

**RODOLICO:** *We'd guessed right. The gate to the lot was locked. FBI agents were present. It was happening. Now, we told you that we staked out on a neighbor's porch. But we had to get there first, preferably without the FBI spotting us.*

**HORAN:** *OK. Here we go.*

**RODOLICO:** *We parked well out of sight. We shoved our mics into our bags. And we walked right past the dig site and into Roque Cartagena's house. A*

*photographer from The Boston Globe, John Tlumacki, was slung low in an SUV with tinted windows, taking photographs out the back. Inside, we peered through drawn curtains, trying to make sense of the movement across the street.*

**HORAN:** *The glare from this lake is making it really hard to see through these binoculars. But someone's — someone's plotted out the dig area. He's marking the grass right now. He's walking the perimeter. It does look to be about 15 feet across.*

**HORAN:** *Steve, Jack and I were now in the house with Roque Cartagena.*

**CARTAGENA:** *You can open the refrigerator and grab whatever you want.*

**HORAN:** *And his mother was there too, and his daughter, and grandkids, and cats, two Doberman Pinschers, and a very chatty bird. And about an hour into our stakeout, around 9:30 in the morning...*

**HORAN:** *Oh, they're digging!*

**RODOLICO:** *Whoa.*

**HORAN:** *The orange Doosan.*

**RODOLICO:** *The digger's on the move. Oh my, god!*

**HORAN:** *...is in motion.*

**RODOLICO:** *This is the spot. This is the spot.*

**HORAN:** *There! This is the spot. They are moving a lot of earth right now.*

**HORAN:** *We overheard Steve say to himself, "I can't believe this is happening."*

**KURKJIAN:** *This is... This is a culmination of, you know, eight months of good work. I've been on that lot by myself just wondering what's below the surface and,*

*look, the federal government is agreeing that there is a possibility that there is a recovery that could be gained here.*

**HORAN:** *We slipped onto the porch. We could see the whole lot, the digger, the agents. The Globe's photographer was now on Cartagenas' roof, perched there, shooting the action with a telephoto lens.*

**HORAN:** *They've stopped the digger. They're going in now with shovels.*

**RODOLICO:** *Throughout the morning, a pattern emerged. The digger dug, then stopped.*

**HORAN:** *Everyone has gathered around the hole and it looks like this crowd has doubled.*

**RODOLICO:** *People stared into the hole. Then the digger started up again.*

**RODOLICO:** *Somebody's climbing back into the digger.*

**HORAN:** *The digger is going back to work.*

**RODOLICO:** *They've got an eight foot tall pile of dirt that they're just adding more soil to.*

**RODOLICO:** *Remember our geologist, the one who identified the rectangular object below the surface? Well, now we could see him overseeing the dig. He was in the backhoe. Clearly, he was no longer our geologist. He was the FBI's. He was standing next to the hole, drawing a big box with his fingers over his head. Our new resident expert, Roque Cartagena, who was hours late for work at this point, was huddled on the porch with us, guessing at what they were seeing down there.*

**CARTAGENA:** *Yes, they did find something, I believe.*

**RODOLICO:** And in these tense, anxious moments, we noticed that Steve had left the porch and was standing in plain sight on the sidewalk.

**RODOLICO:** Steve's getting jittery. I can't blame him.

**HORAN:** I can't believe he hasn't climbed the fence.

**RODOLICO:** Any moment.

**KURKJIAN:** [In the distance.] Come on! Talk to me!

**HORAN:** The man who owned this lead, who'd done all the reporting that put the FBI on this lot, who had spent two years turning a tip from a gangster into a credible lead in the Gardner mystery, was restless.

**RODOLICO:** Steve is losing it. Yeah. All of us are being discreet, somewhat, on the porch. We think John the photographer is up on the roof. Steve Kurkjian is standing on the sidewalk in broad daylight, looking back at us every once in awhile saying very loudly, "They've found something. They've got something." He can't keep it together.

**HORAN:** I like his — I love his body language.

**RODOLICO:** He's inching closer to the road. He's almost standing in the street now.

**HORAN:** He's about to climb a fence. [Laughing.] And now he's got his iPhone out.

**RODOLICO:** He's got his iPhone out, over his head. Steve, can you come over here?

**HORAN:** Come over here so we can talk to you. Well then I'll go stand where you are.

**KURKJIAN:** Brad's in the hole. There's something. There is something there, Kelly.

**HORAN:** Steve looked the way we felt. The Gardner case does that to you. You get invested, obsessed even. We abandoned the porch and joined Steve on the sidewalk. It wasn't like they were going to stop digging just because three reporters from Boston were there.

**KURKJIAN:** They. See. Something.

**RODOLICO:** They see something.

**KURKJIAN:** They see something. Wouldn't you say, Jack? They see something?

**RODOLICO:** They see something. They're gesturing a lot.

**HORAN:** Well, look how he's digging. He's-- he's-- It's very ginger, what he's doing. He's like tapping the ground. FBI agents conferring.

**HORAN:** They scraped at the bottom of the hole with rakes. You could lose a person in that hole. The digger started up again. We were still on the outside — still far from seeing what the people around the hole were seeing. It was practically killing us.

*Scene of Caliphate*

[Sound of car idling]

**Mills:** So this is the police station.

**Callimachi:** Yeah.

**Mills:** Let's start at the jail.

**Callimachi:** O.K. So, we drive up to a building.

**Callimachi:** *They appear to have taken over a stately building in western Mosul.*

**Callimachi:** Most likely a municipal building belonging to the Iraqi government. Perhaps it was the stately home of a wealthy person.

**Callimachi:** *There's coils of barbed wire on the outside.*

**Callimachi:** It was heavily guarded.

**Callimachi:** *And sandbags all around the building on the balcony.*

**Hawk:** O.K., so, Rukmini?

**Callimachi:** Yep? Yeah?

**Hawk:** *It's only me, you and Andy are going in.*

**Callimachi:** O.K.

**Hawk:** *No security details with us, no nothing.*

**Callimachi:** That's fine. O.K.

[Car doors close]

[Music]

**Callimachi:** You, me and Hawk walk in.

**Mills:** Yeah.

**Mills:** *And we are currently in an Iraqi prison, where rooms are full of different ISIS members.*

**Callimachi:** And —

**Callimachi:** *Can I just say, I'm basically breathing through my mouth right now, because —*

**Callimachi:** The first thing that hit me was the smell. The smell of sweat, the smell of dirt.

[Clanging and background chatter]

**Callimachi:** And we begin passing these metal doors with big latches on them.

**Mills:** Um, there's, like, a grate in a window in some of the doors. And I remember when we passed one, you could see these faces peering out at you.

**Callimachi:** Mhmm.

*[Footsteps]*

**Mills:** Yeah, we're moving very quickly.

**Callimachi:** We're taken upstairs, and the security officials who run this prison

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**Hawk:** *[Arabic]*

**Callimachi:** Took us into one of their commander's offices.

**Callimachi:** *And this is the main facility where ISIS prisoners are transferred?*

**Callimachi:** There's a desk, there's a couple of chairs, the Iraqi flag.

**Callimachi:** *How many prisoners do they have here who are confirmed ISIS members?*

**Hawk:** *[Arabic]*

**Callimachi:** I explain our goal to the commander, who is sitting before us.

**Commander:** *[Arabic]*

**Hawk:** *So we have 700 detainees.*

**Callimachi:** I never know who they're actually going to bring out to see me.

**Hawk:** *Some of them were reported by the families or by sources. Some of them have their names match — like the same name as the database, saying that this is an ISIS member.*

**Callimachi:** But I make clear that I only want to see confirmed members of ISIS.

**Hawk:** *Two hundred of them willingly confessed that they've joined ISIS already.*

**Callimachi:** And I do that because according to Iraq's counterterrorism law from 2005, there are only two outcomes for confirmed members of terrorist groups like ISIS — life sentence or capital punishment — unless a judge sees fit to intervene. The reality is that once you're taken into a prison like the one that we were in —

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**Mills:** Mhmm.

**Callimachi:** Your chances of coming out are close to nil.

## Experimentation

*Scene from In the Dark*

*Madeleine: "Okay, so we are standing in front of Curtis Flowers' house, where he was living in 1996. And what we are about to do is walk the route that the state says Curtis walked that day."*

*Natalie: "And it's about seven o'clock in the morning."*

*Madeleine: "Yeah. So it's about the time that he would have started out, according to the state."*

*Natalie: "Okay so let's start walking."*

*Narration: According to Doug Evans, Curtis had walked everywhere that morning. He got up early on the morning of July 16, left his house on the west side of town and started walking east. In the neighborhood where Curtis lives, the houses are small and close together. It's hilly. The yards are short and some houses are practically up on the street. People are out in their yards waving to people as they drive by.*

*Nats of Madeline and Natalie: "Good, how are you?"*

*Narration: According to Doug Evans, Curtis walked out of his neighborhood, went east and crossed over one of the town's biggest streets, highway 51 and kept going.*

*Nats: "honk."*

*Narration: Curtis turned down a street that led to a small sewing factory.*

*Natalie: "We are coming up to Angelica drive."*

*Narration: He walked up to a parking lot, right outside the factory, and stole a gun from the glove compartment of the car.*

*Madeleine: "And then he's going to walk home."*

*Narration: Then he's going to walk all the way home, crossing Highway 51 back to his neighborhood.*

*Natalie: "So we are crossing 51. Now we are back on Curtis' side of town.*

*Narration: Curtis was at his house for a few minutes. Then he left again. This time to go to Tardy Furniture. Tardy Furniture was all the way on the other side of town on the side of town Curtis just was. So he headed east to go to the store.*

*Madeleine: "So we are crossing another busy street" ... "This is such a long walk."*

*Natalie: "It really is."*

*Narration: By the time Natalie and I were done, we had walked for an hour and 36 minutes. The route the prosecutor Doug Evans said he took was long. It was nearly four miles. And it's brazen. It would have taken Curtis all over the town of Winona that morning...*

## **Explanation**

*Scene of White Lies*

*(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)*

**GRACE:** So what could we possibly hope to understand about him? What were we even doing here? Was it wrong to try and extract something from this man whose mind was so clearly diminished, especially if what he'd said was true, that all he did was kick one of them? According to Alabama law in 1965, everyone who was involved in the attack could be charged equally with murder.

But still, if he didn't swing the club that caused Reeb's fatal injury, how culpable was he really, especially if he couldn't remember the attack? Should a person who has no memory of his role in a crime be held responsible for that crime? Anyway, it was so long ago. Why go back? Why dig this up? Why reopen these old wounds, bother this old man? That was then. What's past is past, water under the bridge.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**GRACE:** But you know what? That's bulls\*\*\*. We know it's not true. The past is not past. Bill Portwood escaped justice in 1965. And so did the men who were tried for the murder, acquitted by that all-white jury in a total sham of a trial - and the counternarrative that sprung up in its wake, a story to blame Reeb's death on the civil rights movement itself instead of these vicious thugs who attacked the ministers because they saw them as race traitors; and all these white people who had willed that counternarrative into existence and let it fester for decades.

And now Bill had willed himself to forget his own role in the murder. And we were sitting there evaluating whether that willful forgetting could exempt someone from punishment. Is this what it means to be white, to grant Portwood the benefit of the doubt? This hobbled old man sitting in front of us isn't just an

*87-year-old suffering from dementia. He's a 34-year-old in khaki pants and shirt on Washington Street who's avoided punishment for over 50 years.*

### **Supplementary Explanation**

*Scene from Bear Brook:*

*[GSK News Compilation ~00:40]*

*...A major breakthrough in case dating back to the late 70's as authorities...*

*...police believe they have solved one of the nation's enduring mysteries. They announced an arrest in the case of the Golden State Killer...*

*...they now have the Golden State Killer in custody. And they used DNA testing to find him...*

*...a former police officer. He's accused of going on a 10 year rape and murder spree...*

*...at least 12 murders and more than 50 rapes.*

*[GSK phone calls tape] ...gonna kill you, gonna kill you...*

### **Signposts**

*Scene from In the Dark*

**Baran:** *The case against Curtis Flowers came down to three main things. The route. The gun. The confessions. This is an episode about the gun.*

*Scene from White Lies*

**HORAN:** So in this episode we're asking: What if Rick Abath didn't just make a mistake when he let the thieves into the Gardner Museum? What if buzzing them in was all part of a larger plan to rob it? What if Rick Abath was the inside guy on the largest art heist in history?

*Another scene from In The Dark – Season Two*

**Baran:** For the past year, I've been working with a team of journalists, looking into what happened in the case of Curtis Flowers

**Morgan:** It's been too long. Way too long. And Curtis is still in prison and they are dragging it on.

**Baran:** We've talked to hundreds of people who live in this part of Mississippi, and it's clear that the way people think about the Curtis Flowers case, for the most part, depends on whether they're white or black.

**Kenny Johnson:** When everyone basically knows the guy's guilty, how much more evidence do you need?

**Johnny Earl Campbell:** They got the wrong person. That's what I felt.

**Joann Young:** I know Curtis didn't do it. I would go to my grave believing Curtis didn't do it.

**Baran:** We've tracked down witnesses, lawyers, law enforcement, people who've never been talked to before. A lot of people have told us things about the case of Curtis Flowers that they've never told anyone else. It's been a long year. And I want to tell you about it.



## INTERVIEWS: QUESTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS

### THE POPE'S LONG CON - QUESTIONS

Podcast: The Pope's Long Con

From: Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting and Louisville Public Media

Reporters: R.G. Dunlop and Jacob Ryan

First – do you mind if I record our conversation? Second – preferred titles?

*Questions - What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency, evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process into investigative podcasts?*

*Why are you using these techniques to highlight the newsgathering process?*

I read in the “how we reported” note that y’all received a tip an off the record source and began investigating from there. At what point did you know that you were going to go forward with this investigation and that the reporting would take the shape of an investigative podcast?

Why did you choose to make a podcast?

Did that shift your reporting?

In the podcast we hear y'all going to Heart of Fire and being asked to leave. We hear you going to Louisiana and stopping by Danny Ray's parents' house. We heard y'all following up with people based on documents. But we didn't hear how you obtained the documents or work through them.

So, my question is - what aspects of the newsgathering process did you tape?

And how did you decide what was included in the final product? How intentional was the inclusion? What factors go into making those decisions? Was there anything you wish would have been taped?

At what point in the reporting or producing process did you have an idea of the podcast's narrative style?

Transitioning a little into storytelling techniques. Some storytelling techniques are sort of second nature to journalists – like using a narration or explanation to link quotes from multiple sources. While others like including the reporter as a character is less common.

What storytelling techniques did y'all use and how intentional were they used?

- By using these techniques, what did you hope to add to the podcast?
- Do you think they worked out well? Any techniques you wish you would have used?

Following up – y'all were present in the story. But not nearly as central characters as some reporters become in their investigative podcasts. That was a bit inevitable, especially in chapter six when y'all were talking about the story's repercussions.

- What were the advantages and disadvantages of this? Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?
- Do you have any recommendations for other investigative reporters looking to become a figure in the final product of their reporting?

So we talked about the inclusion of the newsgathering process and storytelling techniques but did y'all do anything else to increase transparency? (Print story with raw documents).

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from podcasts / audio story to print stories?

If you didn't include moments of newsgathering / reporting how would it impact the audience's perception of your findings?

Y'all published the report and the podcast all at once, right? You didn't release the chapters one at a time. When investigative reporting is released episodically and time passes before the audience hears additional evidence – is there any dangers?

Any advice for other investigative reporters publishing via podcast?

Would you have done anything differently?

Anything else?

### **THE POPE'S LONG CON - TRANSCRIPT:**

Interviewer: I had read, in the "How we reported" section, the note on your webpage, that you started this off of a tip, and began investigating from there. I was curious, at what point do you know that you were going to go forward with this investigation and the reporting would take shape in the form of an investigative podcast?

Ralph: Well, that's sort of two questions. I think we knew almost right away that we were going to go forward with the reporting. The podcast came a good deal later. Maybe Jake can speak a little more than that part of it?

Jake: Yeah, I don't know exactly when it was. I think once we decided that all the threads were coming together, and one thing led to another thing and led to another thing, and we had all this sound, we decided that we couldn't really do it in one story because people would, you know, it's hard to listen to just one long rambling story. So we decided to break it up, I guess for efficiencies sake.

Interviewer: So, were you guys originally just going to do a print story or did you already have the idea of doing an audio story, and then just decided to break it up episodically?

Jake: Yeah. Well, since we're a radio station, every story that we do is a print story and a radio story. So there was always an audio component to the story. We just didn't know

the extent of it until we kind of got into it and more reporting led to more findings, which led to more audio, which led to more thinking about how we would put it all together. And then, you know, with our former editor, Brendan McCarthy, we decided to do it in an episodic release, once we kind of outlined it.

Interviewer: Gotcha. So it didn't necessarily shift the reporting, so the reporting sort of carried out as normal? It was sort of the final product that shifted?

Jake: Yeah, I mean the framing of it as a podcast, as an episodic podcast, did not shape the reporting. I think that the reporting was going to be the reporting, regardless of how we released it. That was just what we thought was the best way to do it, I think.

Interviewer: Okay, that makes sense. So, in the podcast we hear y'all going to the Heart of Fire and being asked to leave. We hear you guys going to Louisiana and stopping by Danny Ray's parents house. And we heard you following up with your reporting based on documents, but we didn't necessarily hear how you obtained the documents that you worked through. So I guess my question is what aspects of the news gathering process did you guys decide to tape?

Ralph: What was the question? What aspect, did you say?

Interviewer: Yeah, like what aspects of the news gathering process? Because you obviously taped some of it, but I was curious, what aspects did you decide to tape, and why did you decide to tape them?

Jake: Oh, what did we decide to tape?, We taped everything that we could do. A lot of the documents, came from, you know, basic records requests. We've got a lot of sound and you know, hitting an email or we're filing some things. But we recorded scenes of us going to like, the city archives to look at microfilm. That didn't make it into the final

product. But I mean, we recorded everything. We recorded, you know, us just driving around looking for people to talk to. We recorded ourselves before and after interviews. We recorded like faxing stuff and we recorded printing things off. Just because you never know what you're going to want to use in the end. So yeah, we taped everything that we could possibly tape. And then we whittled it down to what you heard.

Ralph: And that taping included dozens and dozens of phone calls as well.

Interviewer: Yeah, that was nice. I think it was in perhaps chapter five, where we heard y'all call the original detective, and she just immediately said like, "I don't want to be interviewed. Goodbye." So we saw some aspects of that. That sort of led me to be curious. But that makes sense. I'm sure you all had a lot of tape to go through then, if you recorded everything.

Jake: Yeah, there was a lot.

Interviewer: So I guess, with all that tape being recorded, how did you decide what was actually included in the final product?

Jake: Well, you know, you script it out. We scripted out what we thought was the story and then kind of whatever fit in there, fit in there. There's a lot of editing, a lot of cutting out certain bits and redoing certain bits. I don't know. I mean that's a good question. Just kind of whatever makes sense in the end... did. I mean there's a lot of things that we really liked that didn't make it in there, but that's just part of it, I guess.

Ralph: This was a pretty long, complicated, laborious process. I mean, the story alone was complicated, it was like 10,000 words. That's a very, very long print or online story. And then you got a five part podcast on top of that. I mean, it was a grind, it really was.

Interviewer: Was any of those pieces of evidence from your investigative process, did you include it for transparency purposes as well? Like was any of those factors looked at when you were including certain elements?

Jake: Yeah, I think so. I think so. I think that might've been a piece as to why we recorded everything because for the proof aspect of it. Yeah, I mean you see that on the website, like all the documents are on there and those are I think strictly for transparency's sake. Like we want to be able to prove everything and have the receipt. Some of those receipts come through in sound waves.

Interviewer: Yeah. Your guys' website was probably one of the more... Like you guys included more documentation and just even down to the Facebook post. I've been looking at like 25 different investigative podcasts, and your guys' website was probably one of the more extensive websites that I saw. So that was really interesting.

Interviewer: I guess, going into it, at what point in the reporting or production process, this might be a little bit more nitty gritty into the production side of it, but at what point did you have an idea of your podcast narrative style?

Jake: The narrative style. I think, we had a couple of meetings like where we outlined it. Does that answer the question? I mean we sat down, me, Ralph and Brendan and we just outlined like what chapter it would be. [inaudible 00:07:31]. We just took note cards and filled out which chapters would be what. Does that-

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah. Okay.

Ralph: Lots of recording, if it could be recorded, re-recorded and amended. I mean this was not just a one-take kind of a process. It was multi, multi takes, hours and hours in

studio. That doesn't sound quite right. Let's amend this. Let's backup. There was a lot of editing and re-editing involved.

Interviewer: Did you have most of the reporting done at that point or were you guys still reporting?

Ralph: I would say most of it was done.

Jake: Yeah, most of the reporting was done by the time we got into the studio, for sure.

Interviewer: Okay, that makes sense. So, I guess, when you guys sat down to go through this and start scripting and editing and narrowing down what you wanted in both the print side and the podcast side, was there any specific storytelling techniques that you wanted in there? I mean there's common ones like using narration to link quotes, but there's also sort of less common ones. Like you guys included yourselves as characters a little bit. Not to the extent of some other podcasts do, but were there any other storytelling techniques that you guys intentionally used and thought about?

Jake: Not really. I don't think so. I can't think of anything.

Ralph: I don't think either of us was too keen on injecting very much of ourselves into the process, like "we did" or you know, "Jake said" or "RG said". I think we kind of kept that to a minimum and did that only when it was thought to be really important to the narrative as a whole.

Jake: Yeah, I think we kind of thought that, because we weren't the story. We wanted to take people on a story, not be part of it. I don't know. It's kind of hard [inaudible 00:09:37] to say that, but yeah, we didn't really think of any... You know, since we are a radio station and we do a lot of news features, we just kind of used that style, of just like basic radio storytelling, where we are the narrator-

Interviewer: Gotcha.

Jake: ... and we are not character. We tried to do that as best as possible.

Interviewer: Are there advantages to sort of keeping yourself out of the story?

Jake: I always think that there is an advantage of not being in the story for sure.

Ralph: I agree, because as Jake said a minute ago, we're not the story. Dan Johnson was the story. And the more you inject yourself into the story, I think, the more you tend to... deflect attention from what the story is really about, which was his life, his career, his lies, et cetera.

Interviewer: Oh absolutely. Was that sort of difficult, when you guys did chapter six and sort of the repercussions of the story? I guess, how did you guys approach that follow up piece?

Jake: Probably delicately, to say the least. Yes, we had to really consider what to say and what not to say and how to just, you know, even talk about it for the follow up, and try to keep it as, sorry, I got a phone call.

Interviewer: Oh no, that's okay.

Jake: And try to keep straight up news forward as possible and not get into, you know, what we thought and how we felt about the story, which I think was important to do. So we could keep it... Because it is news, you know? I don't think our intent was ever to get into our feelings or to have some like introspective take on the whole thing. We're news reporters. We're not, you know...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jake: Therapists.

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Ralph: That was not easy either, because you're talking about the days after he killed himself, correct?

Interviewer: I am, yes.

Ralph: Yeah, that was a rough time. Personally and professionally. None of us had ever experienced anything remotely like that. And you know, we had our own feelings to deal with, in addition to some of the feedback we got, which was very negative, i.e. you killed this man. And then you have to segue back to your professional, right, which was what are we going to do about telling our listeners and readers what happened here and how we're dealing with it. So, it was very difficult.

Interviewer: I suppose that's where the need for transparency comes in. I mean it seemed like you guys had already provided all the documentation and obviously, you know, all this... sort of insight into how you guys knew what you knew, was also included in the podcast. But... I suppose is there any recommendation thing going off of that, for other investigative reporters that are putting together pieces that maybe become podcasts, that come with pretty serious allegations and things along those lines? Do you have any recommendations on how they can also, you know, be transparent within their reporting, so the audience also knows just the level of fact-checking that goes into a report like this?

Ralph: Well, the first thing I would say is the reporters better get it right. Because if we had gotten it wrong in this case and think of his death, if people had been able to show, hey, you misrepresented this, this was false, this was misleading, it would've been a disaster.

Ralph: As it turned out, really nobody laid a glove on us in terms of our reporting and the accuracy of it. So we didn't have to worry about, did we tell the story completely, fairly and accurately about this man? The issue was, you know, he's dead. We're all sorry he's dead, but we're not responsible.

Ralph: So, I guess... report, report, report, fact check, fact check, fact check. I mean we did that over and over and over again until we were very confident that we had it right.

Ralph: They had sessions in the room where Jake and I are sitting now. We put the story up on the screen, go through it, literally line by line with editors, with lawyers, and everybody would question everything. How do you know this? Where did this come from, et cetera, et cetera. And all that was helpful in the end, to produce something that was bulletproof in terms of accuracy.

Jake: And I think it's important also to provide as much as you can, like we said on the document page, anything that you can have to show how you know what you know, I think, is helpful. Like the Facebook posts, any type of documents you can get, any type of audio that you can get. You know, we pulled the videos and stuff like that before they could take videos down. Any type of proof, I think now especially, in the world that we live in, where everybody thinks that any type of news story that holds someone accountable is fake. I think you got to be able to show your receipts at every step of the way, I think, is incredibly important. Whether that be you got tape of somebody saying something or you have a document, a police report, whatever it is.

Interviewer: And obviously this accuracy, the need for accuracy and the need for receipts comes before... In your guy's experience, it comes before... wanting to tell a story creatively or more sensationalistically, obviously?

Jake: Oh yeah. I mean like if we didn't have it, we wouldn't have told the story. I mean there is no story unless you have the proof of a story, I guess. You know what I'm saying? There's nothing unless it's there. I mean, if it's not real, it's not real.

Interviewer: Yeah. And that's where I've seen the separation when looking at some other investigative podcasts, between sort of the entertainment investigative podcasts or the journalistic investigative reporting podcasts. It seems like there's a callback to just basic journalism sort of following news standards, things like that. So... that makes sense.

Ralph: I think oftentimes when you read something or listen to something you ask, "How do they know that? Where did they get that?" And the fewer times people ask those questions about your work, I think, the better it is. And we try to answer those questions before we ever put it on the air or went on our website with stories, to make sure that we told our listeners or readers how we knew what we knew.

Jake: Yeah.

Interviewer: That makes sense. So, I just had a quick question. Even though this was released like episodically, it was all released at once, correct?

Jake: The online print was released all at once and then the original plan was to release each episode each afternoon on the radio, and then after it aired on the radio, to release it online. But then once he killed himself, we nixed the idea of releasing it piecemeal on the radio and just dumped it, all the audio online all at once.

Interviewer: Okay. So, was it after the fourth chapter, where the allegations came up? Sorry, I just want to make sure I have the timeline correct. So the print piece was published, and then he killed himself, and then you guys dumped the audio online as well?

Ralph: Yip,

Jake: Yeah. After he killed himself we put all the audio online.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ralph: Some of it was up, right? I mean, he killed himself on Wednesday...

Jake: And then we put the final two episodes up after that.

Ralph: Right.

Interviewer: The final two.

Jake: With each episode coming out online each day. But then once he killed himself, we put the final two episodes out online for everyone to hear, so then you could listen to it, all the way through instead of... Because we kind of felt like that was probably the right thing to do, instead of trying to, you know, advertise out a podcast about a guy who had just killed himself. So we just put it all out there and kind of just let it exist.

Interviewer: Is there any dangers, do you guys think, when releasing something episodically, where you guys have obviously reported out till the end but the audience only knows what you tell them up until, you know, the end of that episode, yet there's like a bigger picture to come? I mean obviously TV channels do this where they're like, "Coming up at 10, the rest of the story", but within those hours or days the audience is still a little bit left in the dark. Is there any danger in releasing things episodically when it comes to larger investigations like this?

Ralph: What sort of danger are you thinking of?

Interviewer: I don't know. Like you get half a picture of someone and then that's all the information you have, so you go out and like act on it or even like act differently, or your

opinion has shifted. I guess, maybe danger is not the right word? I was just curious. This isn't necessarily going towards my research.

Jake: Interesting question. I think we considered that, but I think we were also careful to, you know, in releasing it, like the first episode, you heard stuff that was going to be in the last episode, like-

Interviewer: That's great.

Jake: ... we teased out the whole story, even though we were releasing it piece by piece. So the whole story was out there already, even though we were just releasing it episode by episode.

Interviewer: Gotcha.

Jake: Yeah, I think there is risk there that you risk someone only hearing half the story, or just a part of the story, but it's kind of on the people at that point, because the whole story is out there already-

Interviewer: True.

Jake: ... so you just got to find it. And I don't think that we released it in a way that, you know, one episode stands alone and tells a different story than the whole thing does.

Jake: I mean each episode is almost a story in and of itself. So you kind of got the point with each episode. But, I mean, that's something that we even consider when we do, you know, smaller stories, if we're going to break them up into two parts or three parts.

Jake: Now on the radio, is that you risk people only hearing one part of that story. You know, for an example, one of our colleagues released the story a month or so ago and it was going to be two parts. One part was going to be, you know, kind of the problems that were found, and the second part was going to be the solutions. And then there was the

risk that what if someone only hears the solution or what's happening right? Then they won't think that there's an issue with the topic or vice versa. And that kind of is a short sell to the topic as a whole. So yeah, I think there's risk there, but I mean, you just got to be smart about it and it's, you know, kind of put the desire to be an entertainer aside for... You kind of just got to like throw it all up out there and then piece it out, as you can.

Interviewer: That makes sense. And it seems like, I'm sorry, go ahead.

Ralph: I'm just going to add, you also have the option of sort of... In the second or subsequent pieces you have the option of in your intro, remind the listener briefly what you told them before.

Jake: Sure.

Ralph: "Yesterday we said" or "We told you yesterday about the problems, including X, Y and Z, and now we're going to tell you about the solutions." So at least you give them enough information and a reminder, that hey, there was something that preceded this, and usually you can go find that if you want to.

Interviewer: Gotcha. Yeah, that makes sense and make sure, yeah, having all that information available so someone could go and find it, like you guys did with the whole story on your website.

Interviewer: I've been asking everyone that I have been interviewing this. Looking back, hindsight, is there anything storytelling-wise that you wish you would have done for this podcast and investigation?

Jake: I can't really think of anything, you know?

Interviewer: Okay.

Jake: I don't know.

Ralph: I would say no. You know, we had ample opportunity to think about that after he killed himself. Well, should we have done more or less or this or that? And I think we kept coming back to the same answer. You put it all out there. We put it out there fairly and accurately. And I think it's fair to say, I don't mean to sound crass, but we didn't have any regrets about what we published. I did not.

Jake: Yeah, no. I mean in terms of the story, you know, like the way we presented it, I was happy with the way we presented it. I don't think I would change anything about it, looking back.

Jake: And you know, of course there's some like little snippets of audio I wish we could've got in there, but we didn't, you know?

Jake: But [inaudible 00:23:55] that's just part of it, you know?

Ralph: We lobbied hard for the little anecdote about him carrying a live alligator around on the back of his motorcycle.

Interviewer: Oh, that was hilarious. Yeah.

Jake: Had that not have been in there, that's what I would have answered your question with. I mean we had to push really hard to get that in there. I think that was definitely a highlight for me, the alligator. Because some of our editors didn't like that, but we did, and we basically like put our foot down, like this is going in the story, because it's a gem of a piece of the story.

Interviewer: It really says something about his character too. When you're looking to build like this profile for people. It was, yeah, part of his personality. I felt like that sort of built him. That was an interesting little anecdote.

Ralph: It also represented yet another lie that he told, about how that thing played out.

Interviewer: That's true.

Jake: I'm just curious. I don't know who else you're talking to, but like do other people look back and would they just do things differently or... I'm just kind of curious, like what's the consensus on that question?

Interviewer: Technically y'all are my first interview, so I have them all planned out, that I was going to answer that, but, or ask everyone that. So, so far-

Jake: I'll be curious to [crosstalk 00:25:22].

Interviewer: Yeah. I'm interviewing the people that did Bear Brook up at New Hampshire Public Radio this afternoon. But yeah, I was sort of curious to see if like, you know, after everything is done, if people like look back and wish they've done other things or, I don't know. Hindsight's always 2020, but at the same time I feel like so much work-

Jake: You know, I think we have like a really unique operation here where we had, I mean seriously, we had so much time to do this. So we didn't really have, not the opportunity, but we weren't like pigeonholed in a way that, our editors are saying, you know, "Here's the cut off, get it out now". We don't have anything that we left out there. I mean they gave us time to fly down to Louisiana. I mean we got every opportunity to do this story the right way. So, I think that was a rare... support that we had, that I don't think a lot of people get, especially that are doing podcasts at a public radio station.

Ralph: I would just agree with what Jake just said. We had all the resources we need to get this done. Time, the money, the quality of editing. We had lawyering. I mean everything that you could need or want to do some piece of quality work, we had it, so...

We had no regrets about what we did, and no regrets about how we did it. And certainly no lack of resources to get it done.

Jake: Yeah.

Interviewer: Makes sense. Sort of a final question. Is there, I guess, any other advice for other reporters that will, sorry, I should say other investigative reporters that may want to use podcasting as their medium of release? Any advice or insights that you'd like to share?

Jake: No, just record as much as you can... you know? Make sure it's all right.

Ralph: You got to get the story. I mean, if it's not a good story, it's not going to be a good podcast.

Interviewer: That's true.

Jake: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jake: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, I really appreciate the time. Was there anything else that I didn't ask that you guys wanted to talk about?

Jake: No, I don't think so. Ralph?

Ralph: You got to have a minute. Just tell us a little bit about yourself. Where you're from, who you are and what you're doing? Is this some kind of a seminar you're doing this project for,

Interviewer: Oh, of course. So, I'm originally from Wisconsin actually, and then I got my undergrad for convergence journalism at the University of Missouri. And then I went

straight into my master's degree, and I'm getting my masters in radio production and investigative reporting.

Interviewer: So I've been working at their public radio station there. I did that all through undergrad and grad school, mainly as a producer. But for this final project, that is required to do to get your master's degree, it's part research and part professional project.

Interviewer: So, right now I'm actually out in Washington DC, producing podcasts for Slate. So that's the professional aspect of it. And then I was curious kind of, because eventually I would like to, you know, down the line, do investigative reporting for radio, or producing. So, I figured I'd look at, listen to sort of my favorite investigative podcasts, but also other award-winning ones in the last years or so.

Interviewer: Sort of do an analysis of them, and then follow up with y'all to actually, you know, hear how intentional the news gathering was or you know, sort of hear about the decisions behind how y'all put things together. So I guess... a little bit of a selfish project, but you know, I figured also if anyone else was looking to potentially produce an investigative podcast, it would also be somewhat helpful. So that's sort of the origin of it. So this whole...

Ralph: What's your postgrad plan? Do you have one?

Interviewer: Oh, finding a job somewhere. I've applied to a few places, but I'd really like to continue honing my reporting skills as well. Because obviously as y'all said, mentioned too, you can go into entertainment radio, but when you're going into journalistic radio, eventually it all boils down to the story. And you need to get the story right before you can tell a pretty story. So... yeah.

Ralph: Are you familiar with the investigative reporting center in Madison, that Andy Hall runs?

Interviewer: I am. In Madison, Wisconsin. Yeah.

Ralph: Yep.

Interviewer: Yeah. Actually, one of their reporters came and spoke at one of the graduations. That was really interesting. But also having the investigative reporters and editors on campus, they have, the [IRE 00:31:10] has been a really good resource too. So, anywho. That's about me.

Ralph: One other quick note, because if you're interested in investigative recording, I would say as our [inaudible 00:31:22] podcast said, this project began with a very innocuous tip, and we just kept building and building and building, and that's part of where the support came in because our editors allowed us to do that. I mean, who would care about this tip that some guy gave us? It didn't have any specifics really. And I had to go find records and then one thing led to another, to another, to another. I guess if you learn anything from this as a reporter, it's, you know, don't give up. You know, you got to keep pushing, and you never know where things will lead. And this is where it led for us.

Interviewer: How long did you guys' investigation take?

Ralph: How long did it take?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jake: I think nine.

Ralph: Nine, 10 months, from start to finish. Of course it spilled over into the next year because after he died, there were other sort of ancillary but related events. And so that

was into February or March of last year. Now the church has been sold and somebody else is going in there and [inaudible 00:00:32:31].

Jake: It never ends.

Ralph: It never ends.

Interviewer: How was it finding those documents? Did you guys have to do like a lot of Sunshine requests, or was it more like private documents that you had to go and piece together?

Jake: Some were requests? I mean I think just basic, you know, formal records requests.

Ralph: Records requests to both state and federal agencies, to a whole bunch of them.

There were court records we had to get that were in archives in Atlanta. Got a box of records from there. Cost a bunch of money. And you know, they were all over the place. At the state level, at the local level, at the federal level. We fired off a lot of requests, for sure.

Interviewer: Wow.

Ralph: So feel free to get back in touch with either or both of us, if something comes up for you, after you look at your notes and listen to this, and think about all the things you should have asked us but didn't.

Interviewer: I will.

Ralph: Or how we evaded your questions.

Interviewer: No. I mean, I really appreciate the time. Because when I was going into this project, I had no idea how intentional some of, you know, the inclusion was or how ingrained it is just in putting together news in general, you know? Especially news for

radio. Like how much of this was just cookie cutter. But I figured you'll never know if you don't ask the questions. So, I appreciate it.

## **BEAR BROOK - QUESTIONS**

Podcast: Bear Brook

From: New Hampshire Public Radio

Reporters: Jason Moon

First – do you mind if I record our conversation? Second – preferred titles?

Questions - What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency, evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process into investigative podcasts?

Why are you using these techniques to highlight the newsgathering process?

When heard about the Bear Brook murders in 2015 and begun digging into the story– at what point did you know that you were going to go forward with this investigation and that the reporting would take the shape of an investigative podcast?

Why did you choose to make a podcast? Did that shift your reporting? How was the reporting for this different than reporting for a feature?

How much of this podcast was original reporting and piecing together the past investigations? How did you approach incorporating this into the podcast? How did you begin to piece together the past? Research/interviews?

How important is it for you to show the reporting/newsgathering process?

What aspects of the newsgathering process did you tape?

We had scenes where the audience, in essence could tag along with you, as you go to press conferences... as you visit the seminary. How intentional and what do you think this adds?

How intentional was the inclusion of the newsgathering process? Why is it important for this to be included?

How / why did you decide to conduct your own experiments – i.e. 23 and me or the 300-yard test? What did you hope this would add?

And how did you decide what was included in the final product? How intentional was the inclusion? What factors go into making those decisions? How much was a team effort? Was there anything you wish would have been taped?

At what point in the reporting or producing process did you have an idea of the podcast's narrative style? Podcasts are sort of known for being the wild west of radio – you can be a bit more creative or experimental. How you felt about that potential and / or if you were still tied to journalistic expectations.

Transitioning a little into storytelling techniques. Some storytelling techniques are sort of second nature to journalists – like using a narration or explanation to link quotes from multiple sources. While others like including the reporter as a character is less common.

What storytelling techniques did you use and how intentional were they used?

- By using these techniques, what did you hope to add to the podcast?
- Do you think they worked out well? Any techniques you wish you would have used?

Following up – you were present in the story. But not nearly as central characters as some reporters become in their investigative podcasts. That was a bit inevitable, especially in chapter six when you were talking about the story's repercussions.

- What were the advantages and disadvantages of this? Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?
- Do you have any recommendations for other investigative reporters looking to become a figure in the final product of their reporting?

So we talked about the inclusion of the newsgathering process and storytelling techniques but did you do anything else to increase transparency? (Print story with raw documents).

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from podcasts / audio story to print stories?

If you didn't include moments of newsgathering / reporting how would it impact the audience's perception of your findings?

You published the report and the podcast all at once, right? You didn't release the chapters one at a time. When investigative reporting is released episodically, and time passes before the audience hears additional evidence – is there any dangers?

Any advice for other investigative reporters publishing via podcast?

Would you have done anything differently?

Anything else?

## **BEAR BROOK - TRANSCRIPT**

Speaker 1: When you had heard about the Bear Brook murders in 2015 and began digging into everything, at what point did you know that you are going to be producing and this was ... your reporting would take the shape of an investigative podcast?

Speaker 2: That's a good question. It wasn't like a definitive moment when that change occurred, but I would guess it was maybe three or four months after I first learned about the case. Originally it was going to be just a news feature story, so four to six minutes would air on our local broadcast of The Morning Edition and All Things Considered. But basically I was having a really hard time fitting the reporting I had done at that point into four, five or six minutes. So there was sort of some general talk amongst my editors at the time that like, "Well, why don't you sort of keep working on it and see where it takes you?" It was by no means like, "Okay, now do a six part series on this." But I guess at that point it was like, okay, this could be something longer than a four minute feature story.

Speaker 1: Got you. And when you decided to, or when you guys decided there was too much information and the story would better be told in a longer form piece, did that shift your reporting at all?

Speaker 2: It did in some ways. Well for one thing, when you're doing a longer form story you can introduce more characters, you can have more people in your story, right? Like if you're doing a four minute story, the sort of classic NPR feature story, if you have more than three voices, it's really tough because by the time you introduce someone, give some context, have a bit of their take, and then transition to the next thing, that's like a minute probably. So you can only do that two or three times in a piece before you just run out of room. So I certainly think I started reaching out and talking to sources that I probably wouldn't have if I had known this had to be a four minutes feature story. So people like the Morgans, probably I would have never talked to the family that lived

nearby whose son Jesse found the barrel and the kid. That whole story probably wouldn't have been a part of it.

Speaker 2: So definitely reaching out more ... I hesitate, I try not to use the word "lesser sources", but sources that people who weren't as integral to the actual events of the case but who had an interesting perspective on it or who felt it in some interesting way that wouldn't be essential to having ... you can make sense of the story without them, I guess is the better way to put it. But now that I had the time I thought, great, we can include them. That was one way my recording changed.

Speaker 2: And then another, I would say just in the more like mechanics of doing the reporting sort of stylistically, I started taping a lot more of the sort of reporting process, just things like ... I would start recording before I dialed the phone number for someone that I was trying to reach, or in the car on my way to see a source, because all of that kind of stuff could help sort of tell the story, in a way that you can't do that in a four minute feature. Again, you don't have time to be like, "Two months ago I took a drive out to so and so, and then" ... You know what I mean? It's becoming sort of a cliche now, but the car door closing, and you're walking up to the door and meeting the source and all that stuff. You don't have time for any of that in a feature. But again, now that I knew I had more time, I was like, "Well, I might as well roll on everything so that I have options when I get to that point when I'm writing." So that's another way things, you know, the sort of day to day change.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Actually those like little pieces are part of what I'm looking at in general because it seems like ... I mean you see this a little bit in documentary journalism and the longer form even written pieces sometimes, but it seemed like because podcasts

were a little bit of the Wild West in terms of format, it seemed like there was some more of these creative storytelling pieces that have been coming in, granted now they're a bit cliche. You're right. But I wanted to sort of ask and get your thoughts on if for you, when you were including some of this news gathering process, if it was more of like the creative storytelling, the audio B-roll per se, or was it ... did you see it as a way to be transparent as in how you were going about your investigation?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I think to an extent that's part of it. And whether it's to show people that we've done ... this sort of virtual signal that we did our due diligence here, or just to show that this took a long time and we had to do all these things to get to this person. That can also be useful in not only in like a, look what reporters do, and it's useful to show the public how journalism works. But it's also just useful as a narrative tool because then that sort of raises the stakes for that interview. If you know that I called 30 wrong numbers and knocked on 10 wrong doors, by the time you finally hear this person's voice, you're sort of like, yearning to hear it at that point, or hopefully if you've done it well. So it can have just a very kind of less I guess noble purpose, but it could just help tell the story of that. It's showing a bit of the machinery and how things are done.

Speaker 1: So I guess sort of going off of that, was there other pieces of that narrative ... Sorry, that wasn't a correct sentence. Was there other pieces of narrative technique that you used in the podcast that you intentionally included to sort of use to help out the narrative, to drive along the plot? This was sort of a hard story to tell. This is my opinion, it was a little bit of a hard story to tell chronologically because there were so many like layers to the story, and there's so many years hopping back and forth. I was curious, was there certain storytelling techniques that you used to help the plot out?

Speaker 2: I mean, basically we rely a lot on a very I guess classic or cliche public radio story telling technique of signposting, which is just at the beginning of ... When you create a narrative you often sort of sketch it out in like acts or parts of an episode. Often, stories without a lot of time posting, the producer or the storyteller sort of thinks about it in four acts maybe or something like that, but never makes that explicit in that storytelling. When we're signposting it's just sort of saying like, "Okay, that was one story. Here's the beginning of the next section." I mean, not quite that explicitly, but pretty explicitly. So there are sections when I think the top of one of the episodes we write something like, it's a complicated story. We could've told it from any number of different beginning points, but we're going to start from a different one that's going to seem unrelated, but eventually it's going to lead back. You know? So just sort of very explicitly saying ... in a sense what we're saying is look, this might not seem like a [inaudible 00:09:31] in at first. It might not make sense, but trust us that it's going to go somewhere.

Speaker 2: I think a mistake that a lot of people make though with doing that kind of sign posting is they will use the language that's sort of like apologetic. It's like, "Okay, bear with us," or like, "This might seem boring or like a radical, but hang in there." That sort of language it is like a [inaudible 00:10:08] stake in a lot of cases because it gives everything ... it sort of cheapens what you're about to hear because then the listener is like, "Oh well, I guess this is just like some necessary bit of exposition I need to get through to get back to the real story." Right? When if you're doing it well, the whole thing should be "the real story" or like essential parts of the narrative. So rather than signposts in a sort of apologetic way, this was common [inaudible 00:10:44] so there's

group edits we did where we had that language. The solution is really to not apologize or like justify why are you doing ... why are we taking this sort of detour or whatever it may be. Make the case for it.

Speaker 2: Instead of like when we're doing the whole episode about isotopes and the forensic testing to get [inaudible 00:11:16] very tempting to say, "Okay, I know you've been listening to a true crime story, but hang in there because we're going to be doing some hardcore chemistry for a bit." But instead we swap that language out with like, a forensic science has been one of the most important parts of this case and the only thing that's provided any evidence in the lack of witnesses and anything else. So this is everything to this case, you know? And with that intro into that sort of signpost to that section, hopefully it does a better job than like, "Okay, sorry but here's some science." You know? Anyway, I'm sort of rambling on your button.

Speaker 1: No, that's actually really interesting.

Speaker 2: This is what we tried to do.

Speaker 1: No, that's actually very interesting and very helpful because part of what I'm trying to do is put together how to take all this research and potentially put together a little bit of a how-to for investigative reporters that might be wanting to use podcasting for the first time for their medium as a way to release it. So that's actually perfect.

Speaker 1: So actually one of the scenes that ... or you had a few scenes like that that I thought it was really intriguing. Is it when you essentially allowed the audience to tag along with you as you went to the press conferences or visited the cemetery? I guess what was the thinking behind those scenes? Because other than that, we have a couple of other times where you are a character in the piece, but you certainly weren't a character

throughout the entire thing. So I was curious why in these certain aspects you decided to put yourself in the story.

Speaker 2: Yeah. That was something that I sort of struggled with in the beginning, coming from a more typical reporting background as a beat reporter and sort of resisting that suggestion that others had to sort of introduce myself in the stories. But also, I think it's important to do in these long form pieces for a couple of reasons. One is that I think anytime you're doing this kind of storytelling, you have to ... if you're going to spend this much time with the narrator, you need to know like why them. Who is this person and why are they the ones that are telling the story? Right? So I think even just by the fact that you need to answer that question, you have to say a bit about yourself and not a lot. I think it's really easy to over do it. So you have to be careful. But I think you just need some establishment. Who you are, why you're interested in this story or like what's your background with ... Like if you've been reporting on this for 10 years and now you got your [inaudible 00:14:23] Did you just stumble into it? All these things are going to influence how I hear the story.

Speaker 2: Then I think in terms of those particular scenes, why we sort of subtly inserted myself and others as characters [inaudible 00:14:50] is just because those were the moments where you could sort of be there with us in the sense of most of the reporting that we had done was already in the bag, was already stuff that we had interviewers who we tracked down before, you know, maybe months ago or what have you. But then by the time when episode seven is happening, the press conference was happening, it happened that day. So we wanted to give you, bring you to that moment. Especially because the listeners had been with us by then for the whole story, they were

invest. You can sort of be brought into that moment and sort of feel the story unfold like the same way we were, which seemed like a cool thing to try to do.

Speaker 2: But yeah, I think it's an important thing to try to do in these long form podcasts. But again, I think you have to be careful that you don't [inaudible 00:15:57] touch in terms of how much of a character the reporter becomes because you don't want to ignore or betray any bias you may have about the story. I think one trick that I've heard other people use in their podcasts is sort of, I guess we do this too, but it's to say it's for the reporter to kind of say what they thought of the story before they started recording on it. Before I started working on the story, I thought it was all just [inaudible 00:16:33] but then I learned, you know what I mean? That's like a simple thing that sort of signals that you went on a journey as a reporter and were surprised by things you learned, which [inaudible 00:16:47] the listener. You think, "Oh wow, there's surprises coming. I'm going to have my assumptions challenged as well." And it just sort of grounds the reporter in some little detail.

Speaker 2: I mean it's not unlike the way you want to introduce characters in the story. It's often about defining one, maybe two little details about them that illuminate something about their character or their disposition, is left ... A lot of people he'll make the mistake of like describing people by their physical characteristics in podcasts, which unless it's really essential to who they are, it's like almost always mistake I think. Unless the character has like a pink streak through her hair or like a Mohawk, you know what I mean? Something really striking that obviously tells you an important thing about that person's character. It's almost always better to just use the detail that's like about their life or their hobbies or even the way they talk. Little things could go a long way in

introducing people to the characters, and I think that goes for introducing reporters as well.

Speaker 1: Oh, so there's sort of a bit like when you were describing Roxanne, how she would describe things as goofy. Gotcha. Okay. One of the other things I really enjoyed, which I ... I enjoyed that you guys included your own experiments, like the 23 and Me, or going out and pacing out the 300 meters or the yards on the football field. I was wondering how that came about.

Speaker 2: So those were actually both Taylor's ideas, to his credit. The first one with the two barrels, that was his way of making us sort of address the question of, why wasn't the second barrel found? The problem was that we didn't really have a lot to say about that because there really wasn't a lot of reporting that we could do on that question. Obviously it looks really bad. I think most reasonable people would say that was a blunder, like you should have found a second barrel. But you know, we don't have access to the original investigative file because it's still open, and we don't exactly know how many officers were out there. Did they actually set up a perimeter, or how many days did they spend searching, you know what I mean? We don't really have facts about that additional investigation, and the only people we can talk to about are the police themselves. So it sort of left us in this problem of, there's not a lot of reporting to dwell on when it came to that question.

Speaker 2: And I was also wary of setting people up to think about this podcast as being a podcast that is sort of all about or is centered around how investigators botched the investigation because that's not what the podcast ... It's like getting that idea, they would be disappointed by the next episode. Being very aware that I'm like making this in

the shadow of podcasts like Jerry [Owen 00:20:35] and the Dark, whereas that is like a major part of the narrative is like, here's how police messed up basically. I didn't want to create that expectation. That's why in an early draft of the episode really didn't have a lot about it. It was a couple of lines in beginning of the second episode that was like, it took them 15 years to find it and sort of ... isn't that crazy? And then we were off. I can say that rightly [inaudible 00:21:08] felt like that's too quick. We can't just ... it sounds sort of like, is this even important to us if we just skim by it that quickly? And obviously, it is an important part of the story.

Speaker 2: So his idea was to ... if the state police's answer to why they didn't find it was 300 feet away, then let's go see what that looks like. We won't get any answers necessarily, we won't actually learn anything about the case itself per se, but we might shed a little bit of perspective on the arguments or the excuse on why they didn't find that then. I think it worked in the end. It's funny. That's also the sort of thing that's really easy to overdo and can easily veer towards another kind of minefield of podcasting, which is like the podcast host, with the hubris that think they're going to go solve the case on their own. Like the guy, I'm the guy with the microphone, and I'm going to go solve this decades old cold case because I care and the police didn't. You know what I mean? Like I get so many ads through [inaudible 00:22:35] podcasts that operate on that premise.

Speaker 2: So when we first put that scene in there of me [inaudible 00:22:43] yelling at each other in the woods, it was pretty close to parody. So we really, really trimmed it down by the final version. It's just like a few minutes maybe. But I think it's all about striking that balance. We wanted to say something about the fact that the second barrel wasn't found and sort of poke at that and tease it out a little bit, but we didn't want to get

carried away tromping around the woods, like pretending you're investigators. Again, a light touch. The testing, that was just a way to invent that scene to be in that section. That's a lot of explanation about how genetic genealogy works. Radio storytelling, you want to have at least a couple of ... at least a theme every so often so then you're somewhere, right? Where if you just ... like it's all just my script and no action happening on the case, then it can start to feel pretty stale pretty fast. So doing the test thing was just a way to have a moment where something's happening on tape where I'm looking at the results on the website or whatever. It's a tiny theme. It's a little thing, but it's important to have those to just keep the story moving where you have action happening in the tape.

Speaker 2: And it's not all just sort of voice from on high describing a system. Then you start the veer a bit towards kind of old school TV documentaries like Frontline or Nova, where it's just like narrator, narrator, narrator, narrator, and nothing necessarily unfolding in front of you. So yeah, both of it, that's why we did those things.

Speaker 1: Along that line, since investigative reporting is in a slightly different wheelhouse than some of these investigative entertainment podcasts that have come about since Serial and the like the guy with the stick, I'm going to go out and you know, sort of solve this cold case, rustle up things but yet not do it necessarily journalistically, though they are two different things. But since they're all competing in the same arena, did you feel any pressure to, I don't know, compete with that style of podcast?

Speaker 2: Do more entertainment?

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: No, not really. I think I was more conscious and self conscious about podcasts like Serial and S Town. To be perfectly honest, I was concerned about just sort

of seeing me like a pale imitation of that kind of thing. So that was more sort of ... that's where the anxiety that I had was based in.

Speaker 1: Gotcha. Let's see. A little bit into storytelling techniques, we've talked about some of them already, but was there any other storytelling techniques? Because sometimes these techniques like the use of narration in certain aspects or like you mentioned signposting before, they're pretty subtle but they do tend to help the audience out, especially since it is not a visual medium. So I mean you can scroll back, you can rewind it a little bit, but overall you need your audience to know where they are. Was there any other techniques that you guys intentionally used to help out with the plot?

Speaker 2: Let me think. Well, we had ... this is probably more subtle. Most people wouldn't realize there, and it may not have been useful at all, but in scoring the podcast we did try to use motifs for certain characters or kind of ideas that were similar moods. We wanted the [crosstalk 00:27:25] to sort of rhyme with each other, like phonically. So we had this motif where we have this piece of music that plays when describing how you got [inaudible 00:27:36] was like going nowhere. So I don't know if people noticed that, but maybe they did sort of subconsciously. I can't think of any others off the top of my head, but we definitely did that.

Speaker 1: Okay. No, that's actually really interesting. No one has yet talked about the scoring, but a good score can ... I mean we see this in movies all the time. There's a reason why it's its own category and they hire people out for it. Any who. Let's see, was there anything that you wished you had on tape that if you had the chance to, not re-report this, but if you had the chance to go back and get additional tape to help tell the story. Was there anything that you wish you would have gotten the first time around?

Speaker 2: I mean there's some people I wish I had talked to in my reporting in the first time around when they were doing that genetic genealogy to identify Lisa, the missing girl from California. They traced her family back to New Hampshire. Some of her extended cousins, as they were being identified by the kinetic genealogist were then turning around and helping with the project as volunteers. I wish that I had been able to ... that I had thought of reaching out to them, getting their voices together maybe for just ... I don't know, some kind of [inaudible 00:29:30] montage of them learning the story, deciding to help. But this is all very particular to the story. That's just like a small regret I have about the reporting. I think in general, if I had known that I was doing a podcast from the beginning, I would have ... there's some phone tape that I wish we didn't have to rely on, like we were kind of tape-centered. But no, otherwise, nothing big in terms of something that would've changed the way I did it throughout the process.

Speaker 1: That makes sense. Was there anything ... I suppose in terms of transparency, I think y'all ... well, compared to the other podcasts that I've listened to, you all did a pretty good job of being very transparent with how you guys knew what you knew, not necessarily ... you guys incorporated it well into the podcast. I guess was there any other ways that you incorporated transparency, that you incorporated things for the sake of transparency?

Speaker 2: I don't think so. I mean not outside of just like the way we wrote the thing. I'm trying to think of some of the trickier sections. Some of the stories about the rescues and the serial killer, having nightmares in the [inaudible 00:31:15] we want it to be clear that like that was sourced from notes that someone else took from phone calls with someone who was refusing to talk to me. We just wanted to be upfront and clear about

that, just as we would if we were reporting that on the radio, like normal stories. So yeah, I guess basically we just used the same set of rules in terms of that sort of stuff. Nothing was different.

Speaker 1: Makes sense. Do you have any advice for other investigative reporters looking to turn their reporting into a podcast?

Speaker 2: I mean I think the biggest challenge in doing that is sort of identifying their reason could be ... I think it's easy ... You could fall into a bad situation where you decided you want to do a podcast, but then you do some reporting and you find the story is really old. It doesn't have enough there for podcasts. And particularly in true crime, I think it can be really tempting for people because there's been these huge audiences out there for true crime podcasts. It's like an easy formula that's kind of sitting there waiting for you. But you really have to find a reason to tell the story that's not just like, here's a salacious crime, and let's relive all the dirty little details of it for our own amusement.

Speaker 2: Like the story about ... I think especially about the crime that has victims, you really have to have some justification for like, okay, what does this story tell us about something larger than itself? Is it telling us something about domestic violence or forensic genetic genealogy and [inaudible 00:33:31] concerned, or is it just a story about what happened and nothing more? I think my advice would be to really make sure that it's not the latter and not just the case of a crazy twist in it. You can have a crazy twist, but it just needs that sort of, so what? Otherwise, I think it's pretty easy to be irresponsible and exploitative, especially with true crime.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Unfortunately, it seems like that's been happening a little bit with a lot of the journalists ... sorry, not journalistic, the more entertainment side of that field,

which is just not good. Well, I don't want to take up too much of your time, but thank you so much. This has been extraordinarily helpful, so I really appreciate it.

Speaker 2: Sure. Happy to do it.

## **CHAPO: KINGPIN ON TRIAL - QUESTIONS**

Podcast --- Chapo: Kingpin on Trial

From: Vice News

Reporters: Keegan Hamilton – 206.660.0443

First – do you mind if I record our conversation? Second – preferred titles?

*Questions - What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency, evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process into investigative podcasts?*

*Why are you using these techniques to highlight the newsgathering process?*

There has been quite a bit of reporting on El Chapo – what was the motivation behind this podcast. What did you hope to add to the conversation?

Vice News is known for their in-depth documentaries - why did you choose to create a podcast? Did that shift your reporting?

The podcast was a mix of interviews and archive audio with in-person reporting. How did you balance?

You created vibrant scenes by taking the audience along while reporting the story – why did you decide to include these moments?

- In the moment observation was used heavily to recreate these scenes. What advantages/disadvantages does that vs. observation in the tracking have on the storyline?

How transparent would you say the newsgathering/reporting process was for the audience? Was that something that y'all actively considered?

- How important is it for you to show the reporting/newsgathering process?
- What aspects of the newsgathering process did you tape?

There are quite a few characters and events throughout the podcast. How did you help the audience track the details?

- Chronological explanation
- Sign posting
- Recalls “That is el Chapo’s brother.”

Can you walk me through how y'all approached the story-arch?

- Quite a lot of information – how did you go about first figuring out the structure?

Y'all worked closely with Miguel Angel Vega – his role was interesting because he served as a source but also somewhat of a reporter. How was that role approached?

- Any recommendations for other podcasts working with a fixer?

On that note, you and your producer were very much present in the storyline. We tagged along with y'all during reporting, heard observations and heard narration/tracking. Yet y'all weren't driving personalities in the story, unlike other podcasts. How did you approach this? Why did you do this?

- What were the advantages and disadvantages of this? Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?
- Do you have any recommendations for other investigative reporters looking to become a figure in the final product of their reporting?

So we talked about the inclusion of the newsgathering process and storytelling techniques but did you do anything else to increase transparency?

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from documentaries?

If you didn't include moments of newsgathering / reporting how would it impact the audience's perception of your findings?

Any advice for other investigative reporters publishing via podcast?

Would you have done anything differently?

Anything else?

#### CHAPO: KINGPIN ON TRIAL - TRANSCRIPT

Speaker 1: So I first wanted to ask, because a lot of these investigative podcasts that I've been looking at, they're somewhat already in the... They're not necessarily new topics and there had been back reporting on El Chapo as well. So I was wondering how you guys, what the motivation behind the podcast was, and what you guys hope to add to the conversation when initially looking to create your podcast?

Speaker 2: Sure. So the origin story here is that I had been reporting on the drug war and Mexico for a while leading up to this. And then especially after El Chapo was extradited from Mexico to New York, I was really covering that a lot, his extradition, and the lead up to the trial. And then in a conversation with my boss, our editor-in-chief at the time, Ryan McCarthy, who was sort of like, "You're doing good work here, what can we do to do this bigger and better, and set our coverage apart from everyone else's?" And he had been itching to do a podcast for a while. Vice had done podcasts but never a narrative investigative podcast.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: And the Chapo story is just so big that in order to really wrap your heads around it and do it justice, it was sort of like, "Well, we could do one podcast, but then that's really only going to scratch the surface. We might need multiple episodes," and that's when the talk of a series really got serious. And I think on one hand, VICE News and Vice, the company, were excited about it from a business perspective of, "Hey, this is something new and different than we have been doing. This is something that can get a partner like Spotify interested in funding." And for me and the folks on the editorial side, it was a new media to experiment with and just an opportunity to tell this story in a way that hadn't been told before.

Speaker 1: When you guys were talking about exploring the medium, was there any specific advantages you were looking forward to in presenting your story as an investigative podcast?

Speaker 2: I think for one thing, I mean what appeals to me about podcasting as a medium is that it's sort of like a really a sweet spot in between video and written editorial content. So I had produced video for VICE News before and I had written a bunch of long form features, but podcasting in a way, has the immersive sort of experience, the way that it allows listeners to interact with it and feel like they're there in the same way that video does, but it also... Anyone who's produced video will tell you, you have to really simplify the narrative. You can choose basically one storyline. You get three beeps maximum in a story, and podcasting has the same sort of room to digress than a written piece does, where you can talk about things that you didn't get on tape.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: If you do something on video, if you didn't get it on camera, it basically didn't happen. Podcasting, like editorial content, allows you to step back and add some context, and really tell the story in the same nuanced way as written content, but in a way that it is a little more dynamic for listeners. And that's what, at least to me, has the personal appeal there.

Speaker 1: That's actually a really interesting point because you guys, there was, I think some of the middle section of the podcast where you guys were going through more of the historical section. I feel like you might be right. You'd have to look at different styles if you're going to do an explanation in the video. So I guess when you were looking to strike a balance between the narrative, like boots on the ground, reporting scenes, and these archival, like "Here's what you need to know scenes," how did you guys look at structuring it? How do you guys look at balancing out the different styles?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean like you said, there was a conscious decision around episode three, I think, to take a step back and like, "What is the history here? How did we go from the early years up until the present day?" That just wouldn't have been possible in video. There is some archival from that era, archival video from that era, but of Chapo himself, there's virtually nothing. And the amount of material that came out during the trial that we didn't have access to when we were producing the podcast was significantly more than it was when we started it. So yeah, I mean, in terms of structure, we certainly wanted to start with some of our strongest scenes to grab people and let them know that this was going to be an immersive story where we were taking them on this journey with us, where we're going to Sinaloa, to Culiacan.

Speaker 2: But then we also had to step back and be like, "All right, what do people know about El Chapo?" What does the average American, average person, who hasn't been following the story really closely know, and my producer and I had some pretty funny conversations, like, "All right, what do we think someone knows about El Chapo?" We've got maybe drug trafficker, we got, maybe he's the guy who dug tunnels, and maybe he escapes. That's sort of the baseline knowledge that we assumed people might have. And so from there, it's filling in a lot of like, "All right, who is this guy? Why was he the tunnels guy? What's going on with these escapes?" And so those were sort of the, when we got that starting point, it was like, all right, how do we fill in these blanks in a way that fits our narrative arc, and that will allow listeners to understand what's going on, how we got here before they're too lost and tuning out, because they don't really understand who is Chapo, why do we care about this guy?

Speaker 1: So how did you guys then go about planning what you were going to be doing? Like I was saying, the boots on the ground reporting? What pieces of the story did you want to have these live scenes for, and how did you guys go about making those decisions?

Speaker 2: Well, I think if we could've gone back, we would've done something differently for sure. But part of our challenge here was we had a pretty short timeline to produce this show. The idea really started to come together, what was it? Last January, really, last February, March. And the trial of El Chapo, when we were obviously planning to start the rollout on the news side, was in November. Normally with a podcast like this, you have a year, year and a half, to put it all together. So we were really scrambling out of the gate to get as many elements as we could locked down. We knew, of course, that

we had to go to Sinaloa. We had to go to Culiacan, and we really wanted to go to Chapo's hometown. Some of my colleagues at VICE News had worked with Miguel Angel Vega as a fixer in Sinaloa before said, "If you're going to go to Sinaloa, you got to use this guy, he's the man. He can take you to La Tuna, El Chapo's hometown.

Speaker 2: So that was one of our first pieces of outreach with Miguel Angel, to say, "Hey, we want to do this. What's possible? What's not possible, what interviews can we get?" And he was pretty confident like, "Oh, you want to go to La Tuna? Yeah, I can do that. Let's plan it out." And then once we knew that that journey was going to be part of it, some of the other elements that we planned in Culiacan sort of came up around that where we said, "All right, we're really interested in talking to someone who's actively involved in the drug trade to learn about what that business is like. We want to talk to people who have been affected by this in some way. People who've lost family members."

Speaker 2: He was the one who said, "Well, I know about this group that goes out and searches for the remains of the disappeared, and after we had talked about planning this trip to La Tuna, all of these other elements that we got in Sinaloa sort of coalesced around that. And then later on was when we said we need to do something at the border. We need to go to Juarez to understand A, what was going on with Chapo's War for Juarez, and B, how does the history of the US Mexico Border of International Trade fit into this broader story about the view of the drug war and the drug trade.

Speaker 1: So one of the things that it seems like investigative podcasts tend to do a little bit, or allow for a little bit more than let's say video is like the point of access. And obviously like in some of the places that you were going, potentially having a big camera

crew is not necessarily ideal. Did you guys, I guess that was my assumption, is that a sort of correct assumption, and like what all did you guys tape? Did you tape about everything?

Speaker 2: I mean yes and no. Certainly it made it a little easier to go up into the mountains to Chapo's hometown with having just audio gear and no video gear. We were not the first American or international reporters to go up there. There had been a crew from Fusion that had done a video piece where they went to Chapo's hometown and in their case, they got basically like told to leave right away. They didn't get to see it. They had about an hour before somebody called them and said, you should really go now. And they had to basically hightail it out of there.

Speaker 2: So for us, we were definitely more low-key, we were pretty, we weren't trying to hide our microphones at all. Anybody who was there and looking around could see what was going on, and certainly Chapo's family knew right away that we were in town and wanted to talk to them. Obviously we got those interviews with Chapo's mom and Chapo's sister. And in that case I think the only reason that they agreed to talk to us was because it wouldn't be on camera, that it would just be their voice and not their faces.

Speaker 1: Oh, interesting.

Speaker 2: In other situations like the interview with the sort of mid-level drug trafficker, the heroin trafficker who we spoke to, that's something that I think we probably could have done a sit-down interview on camera with him, but it would have required doing it in silhouette, or having him wear a mask or something like that. Other elements that probably only worked because of audio, nothing really comes to mind. In hindsight actually there were some really visual things that I wish we had brought a film

camera for, so that we could have put some of that footage out online, or made a sort of companion piece for our TV show. Because for example, the morgue that we visited in Juarez was incredibly visual, just really striking, and we can only do so much with a verbal description and the sounds, where having a camera there and seeing like the blood on the floor is just a different ballgame than describing it.

Speaker 1: You mentioned you would do some other things a little bit differently. I was just curious as to like what that was in the reporting process. If you could go back and potentially re-report, or have a little bit more time.

Speaker 2: Yeah. I mean the, I think it was, like I said we were working on a really tight production schedule and so and in a lot of ways we sort of took what we could get and build this story around that rather than thinking about what the story that we wanted to tell and how we wanted to tell it and like trying to do more pre-interviews, and identifying characters, and shaping the reporting around our narrative instead of vice versa. That I think is what we would've done a little bit differently is we sort of went out into the field, we got lucky, we met a lot of really strong characters. We got good scenes, and then we came back and sort of reverse engineered it after the way a lot of these podcasts are built where someone basically knows what the story is going to be, what everyone's going to say before they got the skills to be interviewed. We didn't have that luxury here.

Speaker 1: Got you. So then when you guys went into these interviews in the field, I take it you had your research and your prior, reporting on like the drug war, but did you do anything else to prepare? Or were you're just like, we got to get this done. Let's see what we can find. We have this fixer in the field.

Speaker 2: In some cases, absolutely. Like with Chapo's mom, and sister, well we didn't know for sure we were going to get those interviews-

Speaker 1: That's true.

Speaker 2: Until they actually like, the moment that they agreed to sit down. But going into that, I had a lot of background knowledge. I knew what I wanted to ask them. But in other cases, like with the drug trafficker, like that was an interview that we knew that this guy was somehow involved in the drug trade, but in terms of details about who he was, his story, we didn't have the luxury of a pre-interview to have that knowledge to really ask more pointed questions or to shape the interview in a different way. We certainly had what we wanted to get out of someone who was involved in the drug trade, but it wasn't the same as having so much advanced knowledge of that interview that we could really make it work.

Speaker 1: One of the things I really enjoyed about your podcast and is like this element of like bringing the audience with you during reporting, and you and Kate had some very interesting scenes where you were basically like color narrating, traveling or it's like those B-rollish type scenes, but they're like audio B-roll in that way. I was interested to hear what you think, or I guess how intentional were those scenes, and like if they were really intentional, I guess, what value does that add to the podcast?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean I think that it's definitely an intentional decision to do that, and the value it adds is really making the listener feel like they're right there with you. Like you're along for this wild ride. I think now we're in an era where listeners are a little more savvy. They understand that what they hear is, in a lot of cases is like a very

polished production at the end of the day, and they want to be a little more raw and the ability to understand how the sausage is getting made, so to speak.

Speaker 2: You see that more and more. I mean look at what the New York Times are doing with their show The Weekly, which is the entire premise of the show is like, here's how we made this story. We're not going fully in that direction, but we also want to be a little playful, and let people know that like dropping third wall in a way where it's like, hey we're reporters. This is how we're doing our story. Come along with us, sit shotgun with us as go out and go into the mountains to Chapo's hometown, or go into Juarez and go to the morgue. You want people to feel like they're there with you.

Speaker 1: Perfect. Okay. So we were talking about bringing down like the third wall and letting the audience in. In terms of the need for transparency between you as the reporters and the audience, was there any part of the news gathering process that you definitely wanted on tape?

Speaker 2: I think, like I said, we want people to know how the sausage is made in a way, but we don't want it to be too bloody and messy. You got to be selective about what you're showing. So a lot of the stuff that you're talking about I think is like the travel case, right? Where it's like you're in an airport, you're getting into the car. The chatter before the interview. For example, like when we interviewed Felipe Calderon, the former president of Mexico, we included the question of what did you have for breakfast? Which is like what every producer and sound engineer asks to like test the levels of the microphone. So it's little touches like that, but you don't want to go too much, A, because it's kind of boring sometimes, and Be, just because people want to feel like they're there,

or make it feel immersive, but you don't want to bore people with the actual like process of reporting too much.

Speaker 2: And I mentioned the example of The New York Times Weekly show and one of the things I kind of find annoying about that is they go a little too much into like how they got the story. I was like, tell me the story, don't spend so much time going on like how you got it. So there's a balance that needs to be struck there, and you don't want to err too much into like the process, because while people might find a little sprinkle of that interesting, you don't want it to overpower the final dish, which is the produced episode.

Speaker 1: That makes a lot of sense. I suppose you guys, one of the interesting ways you did that, and I think it was the very first episode with the fixer, was sort of explaining while you were working with Miguel and like explaining how he has access to these sources, how was it working with a fixer? And how, he sort of became like a character, like a very prominent character almost to the point of like you and Katie to some extent as like the more driving hosts of it.

Speaker 2: Yeah. I mean, well anybody, almost anybody who's done international reporting has worked with a fixer. They are essential to the work of foreign journalists who are reporting on the ground, in usually very difficult situations. And you need somebody with local knowledge, with local connections who can open doors for you, connect you with sources. And the fixers are often the unsung heroes who are also wearing the hats of translators, drivers, and we going into it, were very cognitive of the fact that A, we don't want to use Miguel, and have him just be someone who's like completely erased out of the story. We were really self-aware and the fact that Kate and I

are two gringos who are parachuting into Mexico to tell this story, and we wanted to have the voice of a Mexican person who understands the culture, who speaks the language better than we do, who can really like have much more ownership and authority over the story than we can.

Speaker 2: We didn't know going in that Miguel how it was going to end up playing as prominent of a role as he did, but we knew that his voice was going to be in the episode, at least in the Sinaloa parts of it. Once we got on the ground, met with him, got to know him, interact with him, heard how good he was on tape. That's when Kate and I were like, "Look, this guy's great. We want to have his voice throughout the show, both to really tell this story the way that it needed to be told from two sides of the border. "

Speaker 1: This is a very like in the weeds question. So he like had some explanation sort of parts of the podcast. So like the normal like tapeish part, not tape, sort of the tracking, did you guys do that with him down there, or did you like have him go into a studio afterwards when you guys were...

Speaker 2: No we brought him up to the Vice office in New York for a week to track all of that.

Speaker 1: Okay. Yeah, I was just curious as to how that went down. So sort of on that similar topic, you and Kate were very much present in the story. We heard your observations, but you weren't necessarily like the main characters, the leading person in the sense of like having a full idea of like your personalities and like who you were. unlike some of the other investigative podcasts where the reporter is the main character, and you follow along with them throughout, and you get to know them. How come you guys approached it like that?

Speaker 2: Well, frankly, because the people we're talking to are way more interesting than me or Kate. That's something as a journalist, I'm always interested in telling other people's stories. This was by no means like a memoir. I did not want to be a main character in this story, because the stories of, basically every person we encountered, it's just more fascinating, more colorful than what we're bringing to the table. So, I was very happy to just be the host and narrator and reporter and be a little bit, not so much in the shadows, but not play up my own story of how we got there, my own feelings in the moment, or things like that that I find oftentimes with some of the other narrative podcasts is distracting from the story at hand. And I guess there's something to be said for listeners connecting with the host and the voice that they're hearing most, but usually that person is just not as intriguing as the story that they're trying to tell.

Speaker 1: That's a good point. I mean, I think from my research it seems like if they're like doing different investigations after each season, perhaps it might be useful to have one person that you get to know throughout all the seasons. But I completely agree in some aspects. It's one of the first tenants of journalism. You're not the main person. So it's really interesting to figure out who decides to go which way with incorporating the reporters.

Speaker 2: I will say that there is a time and a place for that, and a really good example where it was well done and appropriate was the New York Time's Caliphate podcast.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: With Rukmini Callimachi where that was the story of her reporting on ISIS, and there are moments in that podcast when she's in a panic and calling 911 because

she thinks some suspicious person might be at her door, where in order to really make that as dramatic as it was, you need to like understand who she is, and where she's coming from in a way that just wasn't necessary for us in this lifetime.

Speaker 1: That is a really good point. Yeah. Because yeah. I'm definitely including Caliphate in my research, because that, you're right, that was a really interesting way of storytelling that sort of departed from other ones that we'd seen in the genre so far. I'm just looking over my notes to make sure I've asked you just about everything that I was going to, and we might've already talked about this already, but was there, when you guys don't include moments of news gathering and your reporting, I guess how... no, I've already asked that, but like I guess, when you guys were putting it together, were you guys thinking about certain, wow, this, I apologize, this is not a very coherent question. There's so much that has to be cut. Was there certain scenes that you decided to cut, but like knew it would potentially affect the audience's perception of your reporting of your findings?

Speaker 2: I mean, absolutely there were things that we cut that were really, really hard to lose. I mean we did a whole bunch of reporting in Chicago that just never made it out there. We ended up in the last episode focusing on the wives of the Flores brothers to tell the Chicago story, but we met several very interacting characters in Chicago and had initially conceived of doing sort of the flip side to the mid-level trafficker that we met in Sinaloa on the streets of Chicago. Like who's like the Mexican American drug dealer in Chicago, and what's their life like and how do they fit into this bigger picture of drug trafficking, and how does the drug trade impact the violence on the streets of Chicago? Is

it really like the police are saying where these flow of drugs from Mexico is what's causing all of the shootings and homicides in Chicago?

Speaker 2: And at the end of the day we're like, this is just too much of a digression. We need to keep it tight, we need to keep it focused on tying it back to Chapo, which is how we got to the wives of the Flores brothers because they have a really interesting compelling story themselves. They're directly connected to Chapo, and it was just easier and I hope more compelling in the end, but it was hard, because we did interviews, we went out there, we had basically a whole episode that we could have done around that, but we just didn't, because we wanted to keep it tightly focused and not get too far into the weeds.

Speaker 1: That's interesting. Is there any other advice that you'd have for other investigative reporters who maybe it's their first time using podcasting as a medium. Perhaps it's not, but do you have any advice after having gone through this process yourself?

Speaker 2: I mean, yeah, two-fold. One would be plan ahead. As I said, we did the Chapo podcast on a very tight production schedule, and it would've been really nice to have an extra even three months, but like six months of just time to research, to spend more time stripping, to spend more time polishing and in the edit, certainly our [inaudible 00:29:16]and our editor/engineer really were killing themselves as we neared our deadlines to release it. And just having more time all around would've been very helpful. So if you're going to pick a project that has like a very firm, like you got to have it done by this time, make sure that your lead time is planned out accordingly. And number two is for somebody who maybe has never done this before, which I had produced one

episode of a podcast before, but never a series like this, is I guess realizing and embracing the fact that it's a team effort.

Speaker 2: And I had enough experience with video production to know that it's not just like one person who's going out and doing it. When Vice Produces a segment for TV, or a short doc, it's a whole team effort on the production side with shooters and production managers and editors and people in post-production who are all teaming up to work on the finished project. The podcasting team is a little bit smaller than that, but having other people to help other people with expertise, with technical skills, and getting feedback from people who know the medium is really important. And anybody who thinks they can go out and do this by themselves is lying to themselves, or doesn't know what they're doing. You really need a team to make it possible.

Speaker 1: That's true. That is very true. Was there anything that I haven't asked you that you think would be important to talk about?

Speaker 2: No. You had some great questions. I think we covered everything that's relevant and important.

### **LAST SEEN - QUESTIONS:**

Podcast --- Last Seen

From: WBUR

Reporters: Stephen Kurkjian 617-967-1390

First – do you mind if I record our conversation? Second – preferred titles?

*Questions - What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency, evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process into investigative podcasts?*

*Why are you using these techniques to highlight the newsgathering process?*

There has been quite a bit of reporting on the Gardner – including your own – what was the motivation behind this podcast. What did you hope to add to the conversation?

Why did you choose to create a podcast? Did that shift your reporting? How much re-reporting happened?

The podcast was a mixed interviews and archive audio with in-person reporting. How did balance?

Last Seen was an interesting mix of traditional narration mixed with interviews – and then there were these in person reporting scenes – that allow the audience to essentially tag along on reporting. What purpose did that serve for this podcast?

- Can you take me through the Florida dig?
  - o Y'all were very transparent that you were sneaking around. Why include something like that.
- Any advice for other reporters hoping to get similar tape?

You created vibrant scenes by taking the audience along while reporting the story – why did you decide to include these moments?

- In the moment observation was used heavily to recreate these scenes. What advantages/disadvantages does that vs. observation in the tracking have on the storyline?

How transparent would you say the newsgathering/reporting process was for the audience? Was that something that y'all actively considered?

- How important is it for you to show the reporting/newsgathering process?
- What aspects of the newsgathering process did you tape?

There are quite a few characters and events throughout the podcast. How did you help the audience track the details?

- Chronological explanation
- Sign posting
- Recalls

Can you walk me through how y'all approached the story-arch?

- Quite a lot of information – how did you go about first figuring out the structure?
- “Everything is feathers”

You worked with radio reporters – was this something out of their wheelhouse?

On that note, you and your producer were very much present in the storyline. We tagged along with y'all during reporting, heard observations and heard narration/tracking. How did you approach this? Why did you do this?

- What were the advantages and disadvantages of this? Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?
- Do you have any recommendations for other investigative reporters looking to become a figure in the final product of their reporting?

So much lands on the cutting room floor – I believe in the live taping another storyline Ireland was mentioned in the live taping – how did you go about prioritizing?

Need for transparency?

So we talked about the inclusion of the newsgathering process and storytelling techniques but did you do anything else to increase transparency?

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from documentaries?

If you didn't include moments of newsgathering / reporting how would it impact the audience's perception of your findings?

Any advice for other investigative reporters publishing via podcast?

Would you have done anything differently?

Anything else?

**LAST SEEN - TRANSCRIPT:**

Speaker 1: As far as the knowledge of the, how to cram a new one, basically was...

Well, [inaudible 00:00:08] was a newspaper story into the technology of radio, or hour long episodes. She's the creator. I was there because quote, "I knew the story best of anyone around," and to make sure... To introduce as many people as I could to the team, what she was telling Jack and I. You know, to involve myself in some of the interviews but not all, and then sort of guide the narrative, or the storyline as to what we were looking for for this series, yeah, for this podcast to tell, what story to tell. I had some grand ideas that mattered, and other grand ideas that didn't matter. But I was not quote, "In control," unquote of what was actually decided. I think Kelly really was a producer, hands on those, making the decisions.

Speaker 1: And she's terrific, she's very creative and she's a good interviewer, and knows this craft, which is... Not podcasts, she has podcasts. But knowing how to condense a story into a podcast.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. I would love to talk to her too.

Speaker 1: Voice is not as important to me in my trying to get to the bottom of things, which is I think what my book was about, is getting to the bottom of this case. But it didn't matter if I had a voice or not, as long as I had a person whom I trusted and I could depend on in telling me what had happened to advance the story. So it's a really different

form of storytelling, that podcast presented for me. But it worked well, you know, between Kelly and I, I could... When I'd introduce her [inaudible 00:02:41] guys [inaudible 00:02:43] some of the [inaudible 00:02:45] very heavy Boston accents, or ethnic accents. You know, she leaned into them, [inaudible 00:02:52]-

Speaker 2: Interesting.

Speaker 1: ... places she loved. And we fall in on the... Fortunately, the story had to follow the voices, we [inaudible 00:03:05] convey the issue. But to convey the angle, we had to think our way around it, because it's all about voice.

Speaker 2: Right. That was one of the-

Speaker 1: Okay, so if you want [inaudible 00:03:21].

Speaker 2: Sorry, go ahead.

Speaker 1: No no, I'm fine. I've blathered on, so you go ahead.

Speaker 2: I was going to say I wanted to follow up on that. How much of the...

Obviously you've been doing this reporting for years. How much re-reporting did you guys have to do for this?

Speaker 1: Re-reporting very little, from what I would see that we were reporting. The difficulty for our particular mission was, everyone had made up their mind long ago among the cast of characters. There was very little new that we... As far as new voices. On a couple of episodes, on one, the McNevin episode, which Kelly was fascinated by, I was not as interested in that. So she did that on her own. But the Philadelphia angles, the Bobbies, the actual how the crime took place, that sort of... That narrative, that storyline was pretty well-known from previous reporting done by me or others, other you know, journalists, newspaper reporters who had covered the story over the years.

Speaker 2: Gotcha. With so many theories, how did you guys approach structuring something, where like, obviously in a newspaper story you can go back and re-read something, or in a book you can go back and re-read where it's a little bit harder to do in radio, it needs to be a little bit more linear. How did you guys approach the structure of this?

Speaker 1: Yeah. We sat down often, maybe at least once a month, and talked about story structure. Mechanically, Kelly kept a whiteboard, and we sort of followed along how the voices were filling what we thought the storyline for that episode would be. So very early on we came up with a structure of, "Okay, this will be one episode, this cast of characters will be another episode." You know, the main point that I wish we had time for, two main points I wished we had time for, was one on the IRA, you know, the Irish bad guy angle, and next... And another [inaudible 00:06:18], the life and the times of Scott and the museum. I may lose you for a second here.

Speaker 2: Okay.

Speaker 1: And so... Did you get me here?

Speaker 2: Yeah, yep.

Speaker 1: Okay. Great, well you've got something. But it was probably month to month, and then I'm going out to do this and I'm going out to go to [inaudible 00:06:43], "Can you help get this guy, or get these people?" Or, "They say this, and you had said that. How does this fit into your idea of things?" And we didn't have that much entanglement or conflict in what each episode would be, except for those two. We made reference to the IRA, but I just felt not enough. I thought that was a good angle for us. One hazard here was not to get too deep into solving the crime, that... Because this is

such a terrific mystery, anyone who gets involved in it and starts reporting on it wants to solve the crime themselves. Better men than those who have gone... Those who have gone before him, the old persons' worked on this and haven't solved the crime, haven't even broken the surfaces as to who did it and where the odd work is.

Speaker 1: And what I just kept on urging, "Let's not go too deep to try and solve the crime, let's just tell the story of what we know about the crime and the cast of characters who are suspected of involvement in the crime. But let's not kind of half do, because it's just so much... It's so hard to inch this case along because of all the work that has already been done on it."

Speaker 2: So then could you talk me through the Florida dig, since that seemed to be the... I guess how did it come about? I know it was the lead that y'all had been working on, but I guess how... If you were looking to tell the story, how does that piece fit in?

Speaker 1: Good. Well, I had... Was another reporter involved, the year before, let me say in 16, 2016, before we got [inaudible 00:09:17] on any podcast, I had gotten the tip from a guy whom I had long been chasing, this fellow Louisey, and then he surfaced and was willing to tell his story, and I worked with a off [inaudible 00:09:40]. But it was only his connection with two of the well-known suspects in the case that the story, like all of the story was about. I never went down there to look at the lot that he was... That I was convinced that the principal had mentioned to him, could have been the lot that he, the principal, Gentile... Excuse me, no, Gorenje had buried any of the [inaudible 00:10:22], in that lot. We just wanted to tell the story for [inaudible 00:10:28], and when I got done with that story Brian McGrory, whose [inaudible 00:10:35]...

Speaker 1: I don't know what the hell I was... The book was out, I was doing something else. He says, "When you get time, I'd like you to go down there and continue that on this angle." And just at that time we got approached by WBUR to forces involved, and WBUR was doing the podcast. So I said, "Yeah." I said, "You know, maybe this could be an episode." So I went down there and did my customary reporting. The lot, which once had the residence on it, which the principal had some connection to back in the early days of early 90s, it was now an empty lot in a middle-class neighborhood by a lake in Florida. So you know, I walked around it and talked to a few people, and came up with that there is a technological process to determine if something is buried underneath the surface, which I had never heard of.

Speaker 1: But it's very common down there, because sinkholes are such a common occurrence down there, that people have to make sure before they put a... Do any digging, formal digging on a property, they know that this property is not subject to a sinkhole. But we did that process, and... On another visit, and we got the report back, and this was a very upstanding, well-known, well-established geological company, and hey said that they had noted, they showed me where on the report, how to proceed, where they were seeing some... What did they call it? Some oddity beneath the surface, that there was something there six feet under. Which was interesting to me, because where that... There had been two or three feet of new soil put on the top of that, where they were seeing something. So to have thought that my bad guy could have dug three feet down and buried something, well that made possible, plausible... That was a plausible scenario.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: So we got the report back, and we, as a group, the team and the lawyers sort of had a telephone conversation, and someone said, "Well you know, we ought to be careful before we..." Because we were going to do it ourselves, we were going break ground ourselves, because I felt that if we give this to the feds, they're going to take it away and do what they usually do, which is tell no-one, including the person that gives them the tip. [crosstalk 00:14:02]-

Speaker 2: Which they essentially did.

Speaker 1: ... that's how they do it, and no surprise. You can gnash your teeth over it, but that's what they do. So we were concerned that we wouldn't have anybody who, if we got what I call the Eureka, if we found something, we didn't have anybody with us who knew how to take care of treasures, like masterpiece paintings. So anything that had... And we we didn't want to do anything that would bring criticism on what we saw was an honorable pursuit of a tip. So it was decided, well we ought to bring it to the museum. Their lead investigator, Anthony Amore, had a very close relationship with the FBI. I have never had any luck with... I've not had much luck with Anthony, and I've had no luck with the FBI. So Kelly, who had built a good relationship with Anthony, brought it to him, and the rest was history.

Speaker 1: They took the report, thought it presented a credible tip, and decided to quote, "Go take [inaudible 00:15:24]." But they cut us out, they wouldn't even tell us what day they were digging. So somehow Kelly or Jack had heard, "Well it's not going to be this week or next week, it might be the week after." So I went down there on a Sunday, and they came I think on Tuesday. They rolled their excavation equipment up. And I had got the okay of a landowner, which was a basic reporting, tell them, "There's

this wild possibility that there may be masterpieces buried beneath the surface of the ground on the acreage you own here. Would you be willing to allow us to dig?" And he got very excited when he heard that there was a \$10 million reward for returning the artwork. And all I kept saying is, "We don't care about the reward, all we care about is the story, that's all we care about."

Speaker 1: And you know, there's been some criticism that we went with that as our final episode, and on a somber reconstruction of where the investigation was. To me, that was a solid tip that showed the enterprise, and the independence of reporters working on a story, that the authorities have kept very close to themselves, and yet haven't had a eureka on their own. So why not open it up? This goes to my more universal thing, which is, open it up, open everything up. Let the public in, you know? There is a better way of solving this crime now, and that is with a public... You know, a social media campaign.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 1: And let's let everything, you know, except for sources and stuff. Let's let all the investigative file be known, and urge the public to help in this enterprise. These paintings belong to the public, the museum is a public charity.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 1: And this loss is not just suffered by the trustees or the museum, or Mrs Gardiner's estate. She put them on the wall for us, the public, and I keep on hammering at that, much to... It doesn't get anywhere, but to me that's the way to solve this crime, is allowing the public in and then urging the public to go to their contacts, and to... Because someone knows something and hasn't given it up.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 1: And if you heard my blathering, my assertions at Nathaniel Hall, I think that was my last episode.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: My urging the public to get more involved here. That was my big thing, and it made it into that final episode.

Speaker 2: That's actually really interesting, because that's one of the things that I thought was so interesting about the last episode too, even when you guys were doing the dig, the level of transparency you included, that... In my opinion, it not only helped with the story, but it also allowed people to come along with you guys as you reported and continued to report. I guess, how intentional was that level of transparency, and I guess what does that add in the final product of the podcast?

Speaker 1: I'm sorry, could you say that again? Because I think this is, it involves an issue that is very important. Could you ask the question again?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I was-

Speaker 1: When you say [inaudible 00:19:52] we wanted to get transparency, because we wanted to bring the reader along, or the listener along to the pursuit and the frustration of the pursuit. And this is whether it's FBI or newspapers, independent, by the people like ourselves, this case is such a frustrating, futile effort. But the importance of the recovery is so great, there's these two major themes of futility, yet because of the beauty and because of the importance of the works involved, you've got to keep trying.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 1: I thought that was an important component to convey with the podcast, and I think the transparency of our involvement, which I thought was fine, you know?

Some people say, "Well, you're coming off like Feraldo opening up the [inaudible 00:21:26] chase, and that's decades ago. I did not think it was that, because I thought if we explained to the reader, the listener, how we got here, the listener would say, "It's worth the effort of embarrassing yourselves, or let's do it." But we do, we hadn't gotten it, but we thought, "Well, if we conveyed maybe through me, but through all of us a effort of trying to find, going to this extent on that, we would bring the listener in." And I guess it did work with you, you did. Through that transparency, we were able to convey the futility but the importance of this enterprise, this pursuit.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative). When looking back upon the creation of this, I think I've said this before, you did so much reporting before this, I'm not sure if you're doing reporting after this. Is there anything that you wish would have been included, or if you had the chance to do it over, is there anything that you wish... Or any avenues besides the-

Speaker 1: Yeah, so there are some people I wish had tapped the light, and stepped into... In my book, there's a last chapter, or near the last chapter, I think it's called, let's see, Another Angle, or Another Theory, in which I connect the dots with some really good reporting on a known bad guy and how he was approached by an associate to get the known bad guy out of jail, to pull off a crime like this, to get paintings or get artwork in hand that would force the authorities to release the bad guy from jail. I thought the reporting in it was as well a very credible account. Because it's in my book, and because I had brought it to the FBI and I had brought it to the museum before my book was published, it was very new, I thought we'd broken the surface. It wasn't like new reporting that the podcast would be doing, it was already in my book.

Speaker 1: But to have conveyed that with voice, and my sources were not willing to go. They were willing to be with the museum, but they were not willing to do a podcast, and so I regretted that. But I was able to tell the story, the podcast put together, which I thought was good. I don't know how many people looked at it, but we had a website.

Speaker 2: Yeah, Your Reporter's Notebook, right?

Speaker 1: [crosstalk 00:24:35] instructed. And I added stuff on that website that I could not get into the podcast. I did something on that theory, I [inaudible 00:24:47] on that theory about five years ago, from the website.

Speaker 2: Sorry, one of the last things I sort of wanted to ask, it's a very technical question, but when you are approaching these sources that you have already worked with before and are now asking them to do an audio recording, which is a bit more... I mean yeah, it's a bit of a bigger ask. It's certainly not video, but it's a bit of a bigger ask. How did you go about requesting that?

Speaker 1: Hey listen, these people talked to me for the book, all whispers. There's no assertion, there's no voice in there. There's hush, hush, hush, you know? I mean, it's how newspaper reporters... Part of how they do their work, you know?

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 1: And you test their account, try to confirm it to other people, because they don't want to be on the record. But if you're going to play in this game, you're going to have to use that tactic of allowing people to be on background, and therefore not named. So it was tough to go back to them and say, "Listen, you did great for the book, but I'd like you to speak up." And I would say, probably a third of them would, two thirds

would... I mean, and we're talking about 10 people, so... The lawyers all would, but not their clients.

Speaker 2: That makes sense. If another investigative team was looking to put together a podcast sort of like this where they've done reporting already and then they're looking to sort of retell the story, do you have any advice for a team like that?

Speaker 1: Yeah, that's a good question. What did I [inaudible 00:26:45]. This is kind of technical, but divide the responsibilities. Early on, Kelly, Jack and I struggled as to what my role would be. Would I be a main storyteller, or would I be where my voice was all over it, or would I be more of a consultant? I think as it turned out, I became more of a consultant. That was fine with me, it didn't matter, as long as the story was told. And, we got great voices, and I think we did both. Except for like the two points I made, the IRA and the story of the museum itself and Mrs Gardiner. But this was hard, this was hard, basic going with a new form, a new media, going back and telling the story with people who were not accustomed to speaking publicly into a microphone. And that's what we were doing. If we were doing it for people who were involved in the stuff...

Speaker 1: If we were not doing it with people who were involved with the story, if we were doing it 100 years from now and doing it with people who have studied it, academics, newspaper people, or authors, the story, it would have been so much easier to tell the story that way, because you can, with my voice, aggrandize or promote the story and the essence of the story, which to me is both the mystery and the brilliance of the artwork. I mean, if we were telling a story of the theft of money, it would nowhere near be as gripping as a story about Rembrandts and Vermeers. I mean, this is the masterpieces, this is the artwork of the ages. So that brings the listener, that brings the

public in, that has them leaning forward. It doesn't matter, the voice of who's telling the story, you've got them by the brilliance of the art, or the majesty of the art.

Speaker 1: So if we were telling the story 100 years from now, it would have been so much easier, but we were. We were telling the story from the level of the scene of the crime, and at the scene of the crime, a lot of people don't want to talk. So the first thing, if you're doing it from the scene of the crime, if you're going to try to convey the spontaneity of the crime and get people who knew about it, and saw it, and may have participated and/or investigated it, that's going to be much more difficult, and understand what everyone's role is, that the person who has been there and been working hard already, the reporter was with this. Give that person the responsibility of bringing these sources in to talk. And I think the division of labors is a very important element in the success of such an enterprise, if you are doing reporting of an event that happened in recent memory.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Sorry, I was just writing that all down. This has been super helpful. I really appreciate you talking to me. Was there anything else that you think I should know, that I didn't touch on already?

Speaker 1: That's a good question, for you to ask that. If I remember some brilliant idea here, I will call you back, but it's fun chatting. Let me know when you come up with something.

Speaker 2: Okay.

Speaker 1: And it's great to be of assistance.

## BUNDYVILLE - QUESTIONS

Podcast --- Bundyville

From: Longreads and OPB

Reporters: Peter Frick-Wright. 818-331-8226.

First – do you mind if I record our conversation? Second – preferred titles?

*Questions - What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency, evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process into investigative podcasts?*

*Why are you using these techniques to highlight the newsgathering process?*

There has been quite a bit of reporting on the Bundys, what was the motivation behind this podcast. What did you hope to add to the conversation?

Why did you choose to create a podcast? Did that shift your reporting?

The podcast was a mixed interviews and archive audio with in-person reporting. How did balance?

Bundyville was an interesting mix of traditional narration mixed with interviews – and then there were these in person reporting scenes – that allow the audience to essentially tag along on reporting. What purpose did that serve for this podcast?

- Y'all were very transparent that you were sneaking around. Why include something like that.
- Any advice for other reporters hoping to get similar tape?

You created vibrant scenes by taking the audience along while reporting the story – why did you decide to include these moments?

- In the moment observation was used heavily to recreate these scenes. What advantages/disadvantages does that vs. observation in the tracking have on the storyline?

How transparent would you say the newsgathering/reporting process was for the audience? Was that something that y'all actively considered?

- How important is it for you to show the reporting/newsgathering process?
- What aspects of the newsgathering process did you tape?

There are quite a few characters and events throughout the podcast. How did you help the audience track the details?

- Chronological explanation
- Sign posting
- Recalls

Can you walk me through how y'all approached the story-arch?

- Quite a lot of information – how did you go about first figuring out the structure?
- Difference between season 1 and two

On that note, Leah and ryan were very much present in the storyline. We tagged along with y'all during reporting, heard observations and heard narration/tracking. How did you approach this? Why did you do this?

- What were the advantages and disadvantages of this? Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?
- Do you have any recommendations for other investigative reporters looking to become a figure in the final product of their reporting?

Other narrative techniques?

So much lands on the cutting room floor – I believe in the live taping another storyline Ireland was mentioned in the live taping – how did you go about prioritizing?

Need for transparency?

So we talked about the inclusion of the newsgathering process and storytelling techniques but did you do anything else to increase transparency?

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from documentaries?

If you didn't include moments of newsgathering / reporting how would it impact the audience's perception of your findings?

Any advice for other investigative reporters publishing via podcast?

Would you have done anything differently?

Anything else?

#### **BUNDYVILLE - TRANSCRIPT**

Speaker 1: I'm not sure how much I've explained about the research that I've been doing, I did an analysis of all these podcasts and now I was reaching out to y'all to find out the intentions behind some of the decisions made. So, I guess, I looked at both season one and season two, so I was wondering, at least for season one, which seemed like the catalyst behind it all, what was the motivation behind creating this podcast? There was a bit of reporting already on Bundy's, what did you and the team hope that the podcast added to the conversation?

Speaker 2: So, why did we do it as a podcast, kind of?

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. So, I mean, the genesis of this whole thing, I mean, the whole thing came from Leah Sotille, but I don't know exactly how she got connected with OPB, the Oregon Public Broadcasting, which is our NPR affiliate here. But she did, and I mean, I think part of the reason was OPB had just really covered it. They are arguably kind of the leading actually doing reporting organization in Oregon right now, just since our local papers have been kind of gutted. So when the standoffs at Malheur actually happened, they were there every day for a long time, beyond the actual confrontation, they kept going back down there. So we had all of this tape, and then we had interviews with LeVoy Finicum, interviews with the local sheriff, and then I can't remember who exactly it was, but they had even had a couple of representatives in to be interviewed, like in the studios. So, it was like, "Hey, we've got all this stuff, we've got this reporter that has been covering this for years now since the Nevada trials are happening." They didn't have any producers that were free to work on it, so the news director there came to me and was like, "Can you kind of work on putting this together as a narrative podcast?" So it was kind of like, "Let's look at what we have and fit it to fit our assets." In a way.

Speaker 1: Got you. So from that point, how much on the ground reporting happened after you guys evaluated what tape you had and what story you wanted to tell from that?

Speaker 2: That'd be a good question for Leah. I mean, she's been doing on the ground reporting for a while, I know there were ... I mean, so let's see, in season one they did a trip to Nevada, Leah and Ryan, so that was another week or so of gathering tape. And then, Leah's one of these people that as you're working on third and fourth drafts of episodes, she's still conducting interviews every day, she'll get calls from people and record them. So it was ongoing throughout the production process, even when we felt like

we had the story nailed down she was still talking to people and still getting more kind of just background info. Alternate views of things, and even suggesting alternate storylines and we had to be like, "Leah, no, stop, we know what we're doing here, we can't redo the last three episodes of the series to fit this one good interview you just had."

Speaker 1: Oh wow, that's a pretty live edit, then.

Speaker 2: What was that?

Speaker 1: I said that's a pretty live edit then, that's really interesting that you-

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1: I guess going off of that, looking at what you guys had, how did you guys approach the story's structure? Although I know the structure seemed a little bit different between the two seasons, yeah, how did you guys look at the story arc between all the episodes?

Speaker 2: Oh man, for season one or is this for both, or just sort of generally?

Speaker 1: I guess if you had some general insights, but then if you wanted to talk about each season individually that would also be awesome. Sorry, I know that they're a bit different, so.

Speaker 2: Well they're different and also season one was so long ago, trying to remember the process and stuff is tough. But, yeah, I mean, so generally when we're thinking about a seven-episode series, when we first started, the idea was to do something ... Or what I thought we were doing when I signed up was to do something that kind of looked more in-depth at basically the territory covered in season one, episode one. Which is just the standoffs, the Bundy's everything that was covered by the press at the time, and then, the season from there kind of followed the standard narrative arc, but kind of in a

hidden way. I don't know, when I say narrative arc, just so we have the vocabulary, what do you think of when you think of that?

Speaker 1: I mean, I usually think of how I go about scripting episodes where you'd think narrative arc as sort of the rising action, like what's going on in each episode, and the season has a narrative arc, but also each episode does, and even within scenes, that's sort of what I consider, is that what you are also considering? Or do you have a different ...

Speaker 2: Yeah I mean, so I talk about it as kind of like every complication has to have a resolution, and the overall complication of the series is one thing, and then, sort of like chapters in a book, each episode kind of has its own complication and its own resolution. And ideally those things fit within each other, so in a broad a way the arc of episode one is sort of like the Bundy's show up and take over a wildlife refuge, why did they do this, what's going on? And that's kind of the complication because no one knows why, or no one knows who these people are or what they stand for, what the implications of this are. Are they cowboys? Are they religious? These are all open questions when we started when the occupation happened, and so that is kind of the broad complication. And then each episode is sort of a matter of trying to understand a facet of that overall thing. So we have an episode about their religious history, we have an episode about the kind of politics and the land-use politics of the West.

Speaker 2: So just if you say, "Okay, the Bundy's, what's the deal?" And then the deal is multifaceted and interesting because it's been evolving for decades, and so then you just that, "Okay the relationship with the federal government, let's look at that and sort of find a complication and resolution within that." And then taking each one of those facets

and finding a way to both ask and answer a question within an episode, and move onto the next question by the end of the episode is kind of the narrative structure that we were working with for the series.

Speaker 1: And in order to sort of help the audience track that, I mean, it seemed like you guys did a little bit of signposting, was there any other ... I mean, I know this is very in the weeds, but is there any other techniques that you guys utilized to help the audience track where they were?

Speaker 2: Yeah, there's actually a whole musical vocabulary in the series. So, riffs and notes of things that happen, like certain characters have certain sounds associated with them, and it's subtle, we'd probably be doing our job wrong if anybody noticed.

Speaker 1: Yeah, usually they're these little subconscious things, the sound design usually is pretty subconscious.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. So we did that as much as we could, what else? I mean, signposting, and just kind of making Leah and Ryan sort of characters in the story, so that we could follow them and have kind of some lighter moments where they're listening to music in the Jeep, or just being a little less heavy than trying to track Cliven Bundy or Ryan Bundy, or something like that.

Speaker 1: Actually that's really interesting because that was one of the things I wanted to talk to you about, the inclusion of the reporters as characters. It seems like, not that this is isolated to just investigative podcasts, but it seems like we've been seeing that a little bit more in investigative journalistic podcasts. And that makes sense they were able to be used as characters to help track. Was there any other motivations or advantages that you saw to the inclusion of Leah and Ryan as characters?

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, I mean, and I think the fact that we used them and the fact that a lot of investigative podcasts sort of use the investigators as characters is just a matter of access, and it's a little bit built into the form of investigative podcasts. So if you're doing an investigative podcast, you have a question you don't know the answer to, and so you probably have some limitation of access and information. So the ideal form of a story generally, and we're talking about long-form storytelling, when it's in magazines or podcasts or whatever, the ideal form, I think, does not have any first person in it. Ideally, you're so far into your character's head, you have such good material, your interviews have been so good, you ask such penetrating questions that you can write, almost from their perspective, and tell a full and complete story. That's the ideal version of the form, rarely does that happen, I mean, well not super rarely, but rarely an investigative, rarely in a really, really interesting story do you know everything, truly.

Speaker 2: If you do know everything, you're probably doing a celebrity profile, or your story's just not that nuanced. So when writers switch to first-person, my idea is it's generally because they don't have access to something, they need a filler right there, or it helps you give a narrative in the sort of complication resolution form to otherwise disparate information. So, season two of Bundyville, we have Glenn Jones who blows up his house, but we don't know why, we have no access to him, he's dead, and we have no access to the rest of it. So getting access to that information is both what we would like to do to tell the story, and also an interesting process and interesting processes are narratives.

Speaker 1: That's a good point. By using them as characters and creating these scenes where essentially the audience can follow along with the reporting process, I guess how

intentional was the including of the news gathers/reporting process? Was it seen more as audio B-roll or did you guys have intentions of like, "We need to provide transparency."?

Speaker 2: I mean, we told Leah to record herself going through the files when she got them because we were just, "You never know, if there's something good in there we want you to sort of just talk about it on tape, and if it's not good, then we just don't have to use this tape, there's nothing lost." I come at these things from more of a dramatic side, like most of what I do is adding narrative tension, figuring out drama. So, I think about those moments of the stories from a story structure perspective, as far as transparency, I didn't think about it, I don't know if Ryan and Leah did, I don't think so. But it's an interesting question, it's truly something I've not thought about, like did we need to be transparent about how we got the information? Yeah, I mean, I think it was an interesting process, the fact that they just sent us all that information and you could read things on the back of the piece of paper, that's just not something that happens every day. So I think that's more of the reason why we included it.

Speaker 1: Cool. Yeah, that was a really dramatic scene, when she was describing it, at least I was, I was like, "Where is this going?" It really did do its job of hooking you in and escalating that tension, it was interesting. You mentioned sort of what landed on the cutting room floor, going back, if you had time to re-report or get more time on the story, was there any other scenes that you would have thought would have made the series stronger, or scenes you wish you would have gotten on tape?

Speaker 2: I mean, I wish that we could have interviewed Josh Cluff, that's the big one. But he made it pretty clear that that was just never going to happen.

Speaker 1: Was he the guy who she contacted on Facebook a few times?

Speaker 2: Yeah, the guy whose house was blown up, and he made one response on Facebook, and then blocked Leah.

Speaker 1: Okay, sounds good. I just wanted to make sure, yeah.

Speaker 2: No, I realize I'm doing quick references to people in the series.

Speaker 1: No, it's all good.

Speaker 2: Yeah that's the big one, in the first series it was the interview with Cliven that was a big get, it was kind of like the big scoop or the best asset that we had journalistically. Yeah, but nothing else comes to mind.

Speaker 1: From a production standpoint, if another team of investigative journalists were looking to go out and do sort the on the ground scenes with their reporters, do you have any advice for them as to how best to capture that tape, but also how best to handle that tape once it's in the production room?

Speaker 2: What do you mean by, "That tape."? Like the-

Speaker 1: I guess how to build-

Speaker 2: Do you mean the active tape?

Speaker 1: Yeah, how best to utilize those scenes, because most of these investigative podcasts, they're not all these live scenes, obviously, it cuts in and out between narration and the live scenes, and use of taped interviews and whatnot. I guess how best to balance that once you have it?

Speaker 2: Oh, I don't know. I mean, if you listen to something like [inaudible 00:19:19], which is 90% active tape, or off the cuff conversations, that one is so compelling because it's all happening there, you're hearing these things, you're with them in the process, you've just got scenes, after scene, after scene of active tape. And it's

beautiful, it's an excellent, excellent podcast, and then you have I don't know, something like I'm trying to think of a good example of ... Like probably 90% of the rest of audio right now is not that way, it's some active tape, some studio interviews. I think the point of active tape is to give the listener a scene in the piece. So hearing when you have a scene and when you don't, or having ideas about how to create a scene, I mean, I think in terms of almost screenplays sometimes, in audio. Where you have your opener, then you have to have your first complicating action, and all of these things as much as possible, you should be able to sort of visualize, your story will be stronger the more you can visualize what's happening. So if you are gathering active tape, I mean, that's what it's for. So I don't know, I wish there was some way ... I think people don't do enough narrating in the field.

Speaker 2: It's so awkward, it feels so weird to do it that people don't do it, but then because it's awkward, it's awkward for the listener a little bit too, but it's also sort of real, and I just think it just works so well so much of the time, and it's a little bit underutilized overall.

Speaker 1: Yeah, there was the really interesting sort of color narration scene, I think it was in season two where they were tagging along to sort of that church community, up in northern Washington, where they were sort of narrating, as they were going along she was sort of saying, "I didn't want my notebook out, oh there's people, he's getting out of the car, walking over." And then it went into the narration of killing him with kindness. But I don't think that was obviously word for word of how that happened, it was about ... Sorry, my recap wasn't entirely word for word accurate, but essentially that was the gist,

and I was going to say that color narration seemed to work really well there. That's interesting that color ... Yeah, sorry go ahead.

Speaker 2: I think it helps to have two people, I think if I can remember it, Ryan was the one narrating at that point right?

Speaker 1: You might be right.

Speaker 2: I mean, Leah was telling the story of what happened and we were kind of jumping back to the tape, but most of the stuff that is someone just describing what they're seeing, I think Ryan did that part of it. I can't remember the scene you're talking about super clearly.

Speaker 1: I was going to say it's in my notes, I wasn't remembering it super clearly either. But that's interesting, that's a good piece of advice. If you have someone, like a producer out there in the field with you while doing the narration, that's a little bit more natural too, so you don't feel so awkward talking into the mic, which is a very technical recommendation. But good to know, if anyone else is planning on doing the same thing.

Let's see-

Speaker 2: Yeah, so I went to Salt, the audio documentary thing in Maine, and one of our first exercises was we had to go do a two-minute story and we couldn't track anything back at the studio, we had to do all of it at the time.

Speaker 1: Oh, interesting.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. So it's a super challenging thing, and almost nobody's story really worked very well, but just realizing that's a thing and remember like, "Oh, I'm here, I need to sort of think about my story as I'm going so that I know what to say." So yeah, it's just useful.

Speaker 1: So, I guess, I know that you work on some other podcasts as well, I'm a fan of the Outside Podcast, but I was wondering how doing an investigative podcast differs from this other audio production, even the features that Oregon Public Broadcasting does, was this different? Wow sorry, that wasn't a sentence, when you approach the investigative podcast, was there anything that you had to do specifically differently because of the outcome of the format?

Speaker 2: Yes, I mean, I think when you're doing something like we do on Outside, where it's kind of like a story with stakes, but it's entirely personal, what's a better way to say it? When we do the story on Outside it's very often that person's story and they have complete ownership of it, and it happened to them, they're telling it to us. We are then producing it, and telling it, and helping them tell it, and writing some stuff to make it more clear and convey it as best we can. But the ownership of the story doesn't really change, and I don't mean as, in a legal or official way, I just mean if you wanted to go back and say, "We really need you to think about how this affected you." Or, "Get some reflection or something like that, can you think about that and get back to us, we'll do another interview." That kind of thing, just helping them tell their story versus an investigative podcast or an investigation, there's a different weight to it in that you are probably creating that official story for everyone. Again, if your podcast is good, if your story is good, the narrative that you come to, the reflections that you choose, the meaning that you make out of this is going to become kind of the narrative for this event.

Speaker 2: So there's a little bit more just rigor that goes into thinking about it, and making something that stands up to scrutiny a little bit more. And on the outside we might say something or help somebody to say something just because it's interesting,

whereas you can't do that in an investigative podcast, or we might sort of funnel somebody's story towards an aspect of it that's interesting, whereas, in an investigation, you're funneling just towards truth and understanding.

Speaker 1: That's a really interesting point.

Speaker 2: Yeah, your loyalties are a little bit different.

Speaker 1: That's true, I mean, yeah you are operating sort of based off of journalism ethics, as well. No, that's actually a really interesting point, I was just writing that all down.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1: I suppose going off of that, a little bit more of a general question, and I promised I would keep this to half an hour, so this is probably one of my last questions.

But, I suppose on that note, is there any other advice that you'd have to a team that is potentially jumping into investigative podcast for the first time, perhaps coming from print, or perhaps coming from the more entertainment side of the podcast world, is there any advice that you'd have for them?

Speaker 2: For producing for audio kind of thing?

Speaker 1: Producing for an investigative audio podcast.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. It'd be a lot easier if you had something you're struggling with that I could think about, but just overall, I mean, I think one thing that helped us on Bundyville is everyone did everything and gave feedback on everything. But we also had lanes that were fairly well defined, so I was mostly thinking about kind of the dramatic structure, and helping on line edits and stuff to play that up, to create tension, to get things kind of moving and make them memorable. My business partner Robbie Carver

did the music, but was also working on the structure stuff that I was working on and I was also working on the music in that I would give him feedback and give him ideas and be like, "No, it has to sound more churchy here." And then Leah was focused on uncovering as much as she could and just getting dots of information to the rest of us. But she's also thinking about structure and tension and all that stuff, and then Ryan, he was doing a lot of the writing and kind of doing a first edit on the drafts. So just, everyone had a role, and it was all very team-oriented.

Speaker 2: So just defining those roles, and having a very explicit invitation to step outside of them, and just whoever's sort of like fresh ears listening to something, you think about whoever's freshest, whoever's thought about the music the least should give the next round of feedback on the music. Or whoever knows the least about the information gathering process should be going through it and asking about what do we have here? What else do we know? What don't we know? Kind of play stand-in for the listener just so that the details don't get lost, or the things you need to know come at the right times.

Speaker 1: How long did it take y'all to sort of do the production work of this podcast?

Speaker 2: Season one was fairly fast, it was three months I think. Season two was longer, I think it was something like six months. But we started earlier, we had more time, I can't remember what our artificial deadlines were, but we all just had life stuff going on that we needed to kind of workaround.

Speaker 1: That makes sense.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1: Sorry, I know I keep saying one last question, was there, for the structure-

Speaker 2: Yeah, don't worry about it, it's a Friday afternoon.

Speaker 1: Yeah, I still want to be respectful of time though.

Speaker 2: Sure, sure.

Speaker 1: For the structure of season two, how did you guys figure out the through-line between all the events? Were you guys collecting information on the different, I guess you can call them terrorist attacks, and then figuring out a through-line between them? Or did you already sort of know the through-line, so you figured out the structure from there?

Speaker 2: I mean, we didn't know that we were coming back to Panaca and the explosion and everything, I think we had the first three episodes figured out at the beginning, and then during the reporting process, let's see, they went up to Marble, the religious community, and then they came back and they were like, "Okay, we got two more interviews that really felt substantial, here's what we can do." And then yeah, it was kind of a process of moving stuff around and waiting until it clicked, and then just talking through ideas and looking for the connections. Because I think season two is more of seven different stories that all connect, but I don't know when you say that there's a through-line, I'm not sure that I can articulate that in one sentence what that through line is. It's the ripple effects from Malheur and the death of LeVoy Finicum, ripples are not lines, I think they're diffuse and difficult to pin down.

Speaker 1: Right, which is why I was actually-

Speaker 2: You're sort of just making connecting between those episodes, go ahead?

Speaker 1: Yeah, no, I was going to say that's why I was pretty curious as to how you guys went about sort of connecting the dots between them, because with the season one, there was a bit of a through-line that you could follow even just chronologically between what was happening with the Bundy's and the effects of ... But with the second one, you're right, it wasn't necessarily direct through-line, it was sort of connecting the dots, so that's interesting.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, it was harder, I mean, season two was much harder structurally, and even near the end, five episodes in, not five complete episodes, but five drafts, we were kind of just like, "Is this any good? How does this connect? What are we doing here?" And then you just kind of keep polishing, and keep thinking through stuff, and we reversed the order of a couple things, I'm just trying to think of some whiteboard sessions we had. It was very much evolving as we were writing. I mean, on season two, we spent more days kind of all in the same room on laptops going through scripts and talking about how they fit together than on the first season.

Speaker 1: That makes sense. Let's see, I think I've asked you everything that I wanted to, was there anything that I've missed that we should talk about/that is this glaring in the production process that I just skipped over?

Speaker 2: Nothing comes to mind. I'm really curious, you said you did an analysis of various investigative podcasts?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative), I did, that's going to be part of the research, just because I knew there was no way that I could talk to every single producer and reporter, so I wanted to sort of take a look at the episodes and pinpoint if they used certain techniques, or they used certain structure. So it's going to be a little bit of a brief recap in

the ... Wow, sorry, I am just struggling for words this afternoon, in the research, to sort of, if someone was going to look at the research and say, "Hey, I'm interested in producing an investigative podcast, what has worked for these other investigative podcasts in the past?" So.

Speaker 2: I see, I see, you actually have it broken down by data points and number of times-

Speaker 1: No, not that technical.

Speaker 2: Oh, okay.

Speaker 1: I should have gone that technical, but I simply did not have the time to do that big of a breakdown.

Speaker 2: Yeah, no, I was going to say, that sounds very whole teams of people do stuff like that, one person-

Speaker 1: I would be very interested to see that level of breakdown though, I feel like that would be fascinating.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I have a friend that codes movies for instances of like when a person of color appears on screen, or how many lines women say in a movie. I'd love to get a similar breakdown of investigative processes in podcasts because I think it would be pretty revealing.

Speaker 1: I feel like you're right, and just going through the research to start on this project, there's not a lot out there in analysis or academia, in podcasting in general or in the niche of investigative podcast. So, there should be some analysis.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, well I think the form is a little bit too new for academics to-

Speaker 1: Oh yeah, academia's usually eight-year behind, so that puts us at maybe Serial right now.

Speaker 2: What's that? Say that again?

Speaker 1: I was going to say, academia's usually like 10 to eight years behind, so that puts us at maybe Serial being released maybe a few years after that.

Speaker 2: They're just getting to the early seasons of Radiolab if that's the case.

Speaker 1: Which is crazy.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1: Because I feel like This American Life and Serial kick off such an interesting sort of format, but anyhoo.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, I graduated from Salt three months before Serial season one was released, so it was just like from this indie art thing like, "I love audio, and I want to make beautiful stories in peoples own words." And then just like, boom, household word, everybody wants a podcast, you have more work than you can handle. Yeah, so it's been a weird time to be in this industry.

Speaker 1: I guess, do you have any viewpoints on the person going in to try and make an investigative podcast sort of on their own, the man in the microphone, "I'm going to go out and make an investigative podcast." But yet aren't, not that everyone needs to be trained in journalism to go ahead and do that, but I guess, being in the field and producing things with a team, do you have any insight those people?

Speaker 2: Are you saying the My Favorite Murder type stuff and the people that are telling stories of journalism without doing the journalism, or are you talking about people that are really trying to do journalism?

Speaker 1: No, no, no, the former, the people that are telling stories about journalism without doing it.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, I mean, in some ways that stuff has been around forever, and yeah you're just sort of piggybacking off of other people's actual work. It's why the internet took down newspapers because you can repackage ... Journalism is time-consuming, it's difficult, it's by nature kind of, not controversial, but what's the word I'm looking for? Not controversial, not combative, but oppositional. Like you're trying to do something that someone doesn't want you to do, and so that's going to be slower and more difficult than sort of taking someone at their word. And so if someone has already done that work, and you can repackage it for even a fraction of the kind of audience, it's a better economic strategy.

Speaker 1: That is true, I'll give them that.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. But I mean, there's trade-offs too because, in one sense, it magnifies and amplifies the message, and the story gets in front of so many more, I've had people, like what's the London Tabloid? The Daily Mail will sometimes like if I have a really kind of weird story, they'll re-write it basically, with all my quotes, and just put it out there for their huge readership. And it's interesting because I feel like my reaction to that is always like, if I really think the story I told is valuable, I generally don't have a problem with it. You're doing some kind of good in society, but if I really will get it and I'm just like, "Man, they're just taking my work and making money off of it, and I'm not getting anything from it." That's probably a sign that I was more interested in being the teller of the story than the story getting told, so it's kind of a weird litmus test of what you're working on.

Speaker 1: That's a really interesting point, yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean, also they're kind of parasites in terms of audio.

Speaker 1: Also true.

Speaker 2: The conversational podcast, in general, is kind of ruining the form. Again, just for economic reasons, you can produce a round table discussion or interview a celebrity every day basically. If you can book a guest, you can put out a podcast that day, versus Bundyville is six months and we're like, "Man, we really rushed that process, we really put this one out in a hurry."

Speaker 1: Yeah, yeah, I completely agree, they're like in two different leagues, yet they're all competing on the same stage. But I suppose journalism is competing with entertainment too when it comes to ... It's a weird dichotomy, it's a weird ecosystem, dichotomy's not the right word, but-

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. The other thing that I'd say is just I think if you're going to do an investigation, you really have to nail down your storytelling first, and maybe that just comes from my just kind of focus and my career. But if you do an investigation, and you have something really interesting, if you tell the story poorly, people almost hold it against you. If you drag it out, you make it too long, I mean, people look at Serial, and Serial is too long as a format, it's 12 episodes or something, and it should have been eight. And it's also kind of a masterclass in journalism itself, but there are other examples of that where just somebody has a cool story, drags it out, and then your audience just revolts, or it's worse almost to tell a story badly than not to tell it at all, I think.

Speaker 1: That's a good point, sorry I was just writing that down too because that's actually a really good point as well because yeah you do see that. Yeah, I suppose, and no

matter the format it all does come down to story, because you can write up a beautifully crafted investigation at 1000 words, or you can do it at 10,000 and if you can't get your audience to the end of the story, even though if you're reporting was all there, something is lost if you can't get your audience there.

Speaker 2: Right, yeah, yeah. I mean, there's nothing people like less than feeling like the story that they heard was too long, and the only reason they feel like it's too long is if you didn't maintain tension throughout the whole thing.

Speaker 1: Yeah, I suppose that comes down to the little narrative arcs between, even within the scenes of an episode.

Speaker 2: Yeah, exactly.

Speaker 1: And we've come full circle.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. I feel like I've converted you, that makes me feel really good.

Speaker 1: Well, I really appreciate all the time-

## IN THE DARK - QUESTIONS

Podcast --- In the Dark

From: APM Reports

Reporters: Madeline Baran

Speaking with: Natalie Jablonski

First – do you mind if I record our conversation? Second – preferred titles?

*Questions - What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency, evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process into investigative podcasts?*

*Why are you using these techniques to highlight the newsgathering process?*

Why There has been quite a bit of reporting on the Gardner – including your own – what was the motivation behind this podcast. What did you hope to add to the conversation?

Why did you choose to create a podcast? Did that shift your reporting? How much re-reporting happened? How did you approach – like a radio doc?

The podcast was a mix of interviews, archive audio and on the ground reporting with in-person reporting. How did balance?

Narrative structure? How do you determine the balance of the story arch with the investigation arch?

In the Dark is an interesting mix of traditional narration mixed with interviews – and then there were these in person reporting scenes – that allow the audience to essentially tag along on reporting. What purpose did that serve for this podcast?

- Can you take me through finding/processing records that led to the finding on jury imbalance?

- Y'all were very transparent about what y'all were doing - Why include something like that.
- Is this unique to investigative podcasts?
- Any advice for other reporters hoping to get similar tape?

You created vibrant scenes by taking the audience along while reporting the story – why did you decide to include these moments?

- In the moment observation was used heavily to recreate these scenes. What advantages/disadvantages does that vs. observation in the tracking have on the storyline?

How transparent would you say the newsgathering/reporting process was for the audience? Was that something that y'all actively considered?

- How important is it for you to show the reporting/newsgathering process?
- What aspects of the newsgathering process did you tape?

There are quite a few characters and events throughout the podcast. How did you help the audience track the details?

- Chronological explanation
- Sign posting
- Recalls

Scenes recreating / showing how you knew information. Explanation of why you came to a conclusion

- Why include this?

Online resources for transparency...

On that note, Madaline was very much present in the storyline. We tagged along with y'all during reporting, heard observations and heard narration/tracking. How did you approach this? Why did you do this?

- What were the advantages and disadvantages of this? Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- Help between seasons?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?
- Do you have any recommendations for other investigative reporters looking to become a figure in the final product of their reporting?

So much lands on the cutting room floor – I believe in the live taping another storyline Ireland was mentioned in the live taping – how did you go about prioritizing?

Need for transparency?

So we talked about the inclusion of the newsgathering process and storytelling techniques but did you do anything else to increase transparency?

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from documentaries?

If you didn't include moments of newsgathering / reporting how would it impact the audience's perception of your findings?

Especially for season 2 – y'all kind of became the news.

Any advice for other investigative reporters publishing via podcast?

Would you have done anything differently?

Anything else?

## **IN THE DARK - TRANSCRIPT**

Speaker 1: So, I guess starting off pretty generally, the motivation behind the two podcasts, I guess why did you guys decide for it to take form in a podcasts medium?

Speaker 2: Yeah. I mean, I think the podcast is actually a really great format for investigative journalism, because you do have this more expansive amount of time to kind of go on a journey with the reporter in some cases. And we have like more time and space to kind of show the process behind what we do, and like the process of finding stuff out.

Speaker 2: I think that is actually like inherently, there's some drama there and some good story there. And so, I think being able to have sort of more time that a podcast allows is really helpful. Also, just from a storytelling perspective, I think having one season, or one story told over the course of a season of episodes, I think really allows people to kind of get into the story, feel connected to it. They want to know what happens week after week, like they seem to get really invested in the story and the people in the story.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, when you guys go about reporting sort of this narrative investigative podcast, do you approach it from like a radio feature background, or is it more like a documentary? How would you describe the genre, or like the way that you approach reporting, and storytelling for this?

Speaker 2: Yeah. I mean, I think... Let me think about that. I mean, I've done a little bit of both. I think everyone, other people on our team have experience kind of in both worlds. Like more like radio news and also documentary. And so, I guess I feel like there's some crossover from both. More so I think from documentary just because it's more long form, and so it allows you to have like scenes, and like more stuff kind of unfolding in the audio.

Speaker 1: So, you mentioned the scenes, and that's where I think sort of... I mean, obviously investigative podcasts aren't the only ones to do this, but the scenes where you do follow around the reporter as they go about investigating. I guess why include those scenes? What advantage do these scenes have in the podcast?

Speaker 2: Yeah. I think those types of scenes do allow us to show our work, and the process, and the work that goes into some of these findings. Like if we just sort of come

out and tell you we found this document that says X, Y, Z, that can go by fast, and often be a little dry.

Speaker 2: Whereas if we kind of bring you into the world of looking for this stuff, I think it helps to bring people into the story and to understand kind of what the work that goes into some of this investigative reporting, that is really time consuming. And can be like, I think the sort of following along the reporter helps to sort of bring that to life.

Speaker 2: Because you know, scanning documents on its own is like not necessarily inherently interesting. But when you talk about like all the different places we had to go to find the documents and like all the weird situations we got it to find these documents, that kind of thing. It sort of helps like bring some drama and story into that aspect of it.

Speaker 1: When going about, during the reporting process, before you start to like actually produce the episodes, how much of that news gathering did you guys tape?

Speaker 2: You mean how much did we record along the way, or?

Speaker 1: Yeah, so like-

Speaker 2: What do you mean?

Speaker 1: I mean, the scenes where like you hear, you know, going up to the door, but I didn't know if you like recorded every time that they were like approaching sources. I was just curious as to like how you guys determined when to record?

Speaker 2: Yeah, we recorded a ton of stuff. We record basically everything. So yeah, we had just a massive amount of tape, of stuff that we recorded.

Speaker 1: So then-

Speaker 2: I mean like there, occasionally exceptions to that where like, Parker Yesko when she was scanning documents at different courthouses, she wasn't able to record her

process of scanning. And so that's why we have her sort of telling the story of that, rather than like being in the courthouse with the scanner. But in general, we record basically everything.

Speaker 1: Gotcha. So then with this plethora of tape, probably too much tape.

Speaker 2: So much.

Speaker 1: So much tape. How did you guys go about whittling it down and figuring out what scenes you wanted to keep and what needed to land on the cutting room floor?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean it's very tricky. We do a lot of story-boarding and outlining before we start actually putting the episodes together. Because they're kind of like, one of the tricky things about doing this sort of serialized narrative podcast is that, if you change something in episode one, like you decide to like add a scene or like subtract it, it might have like a ripple effect down the line in your structure.

Speaker 2: You know, like that scene has to go somewhere else or it gets cut and now this other thing doesn't make sense, or the whole thing has to change. So there's a lot of moving parts, in terms of the structure.

Speaker 1: So then-

Speaker 2: And-

Speaker 1: Sorry, go ahead.

Speaker 2: Sorry go ahead.

Speaker 1: Oh no, no, go ahead.

Speaker 2: And I mean, in terms of like whittling down the tape, it can be pretty tricky. We try to get a lot of our interviews transcribed, but for some of the, like really

long... Like when we went to the Core-Elite factory, we recorded for hours and hours. We were there over multiple days.

Speaker 2: And so for that I think we had someone on our team listen through everything and basically just start pulling cuts of the best stuff. And then we ended up with still way too much, like it's still a huge amount, but at least it's sort of like the select, the best parts and just kind of keep going, whittling it down from there.

Speaker 1: Just because I'm curious, how long did it take to put together the series?

Speaker 2: You mean kind of production?

Speaker 1: Yeah, production wise.

Speaker 2: Or the whole process?

Speaker 1: I suppose the whole process, but I was especially curious as to like once you guys were like sort of done with reporting, then that to publication.

Speaker 2: Right. I mean we were reporting, I, I think we got the tip in, I want to say February of 2017. And we basically did about a year of reporting and then we more or less shifted to production, although we still had a few reporting threads that were happening. So sort of like the spring of 2018, maybe like March or something.

Speaker 2: And then we had sort of all the components laid out, but we were still working on it. Like we were still finishing up the episodes as they were coming out each week. So sort of like March through, I want to say end of June, early July. Which was pretty, at least for the amount of stuff that we had to whittle down, that was I would say, pretty short. I think we could have used more time because there's just so much, I mean we really had to hustle during production.

Speaker 1: Was there at any instance where... Well I know, with the whole Supreme court case, you guys sort of a little bit became part of the story. But did that, and I know you guys released bonus episodes, but like in the main podcast, did that impact, I guess did that impact your storyline? Did that cause any changes that you had to look at?

Speaker 2: No, I don't think so. I mean that all happened after we released the sort of main series of episodes. And so, where we can highlight the impact of our recording. Like we do want to do that and we do say that in the podcast. You know, our findings are cited and briefs filed with the Supreme Court, like we want listeners to know that. But I don't feel like it really changed how we handled the story.

Speaker 1: Hmm. Gotcha. I'm looking more at sort of the story structure. How do you guys approach, I suppose, I mean it's different for both seasons. But how did you guys approach this story? Not only like the structure of the original, like retelling of what happened both to Jacob and to Curtis. But then how did you guys intertwined that with sort of the story arc of going back and reporting?

Speaker 2: You mean kind of like... Do you mean like the story of the crime itself and kind of like how we reported on it or?

Speaker 1: Yeah. I guess from when you guys went to like storyboard out, and like structure the actual story. I guess, I was wondering how you guys looked at... How you guys had to combine the two stories and when to sort of stop and tell like the story of what happened, originally. And then went to like start going on the investigation, because like it goes back and forth quite a few times.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Yeah, right. I think I know what you mean. Yeah, I mean I think it's just, I'm not sure how to describe how we decide. Just sort of like, there are certain

moments of the story that you just want to sort of tell. And that we don't need to be part of the telling of it, you know.

Speaker 2: Like the story of the actual part of episode one of season two, where we tell the story of the crime of this quadruple murder at Tardy Furniture. Like it's not going to be helped by us being in the story or being like, standing on Front Street or something like that. Like we just want to sort of tell the story. We don't need to be, like we're not in that part of the story.

Speaker 1: That makes sense.

Speaker 2: Like we just want the narrative to be sort of clean, I guess. Whereas other times, it is helpful to have us, you know, the process of reporting be part of that. And I'm not quite sure exactly what, what determines that. I think it just sort of depends on what part of the story it is.

Speaker 1: So you mentioned before that the scenes where we're following the reporting process, it makes for a good story and can like heightened the tensions, create a little bit more drama. I was curious as to how you guys looked at it for, like as a tool of transparency. Was that like something that you guys were intentionally considering that like it could serve to be transparent or is that sort of like a bonus?

Speaker 2: Yeah, no, I think we do, yeah we do want to show our process. I think people, our listeners respond to that well. We want them to know that we've put a ton of work into this finding and like you could trust us because here's tape of us in this factory, digging through documents. Like, yeah, definitely. And when we do document gathering, we also, like, we published a lot of our source documents on our website. Which is, you

know, that's not part of the audio podcast itself, but that's another way that we want people have access to that.

Speaker 1: I was curious as... I guess, I'm curious as to why the audience would respond well to something like that?

Speaker 2: I think it helps people to trust us. I think that people like knowing about the process and that we are thorough, and they like hearing that. And I think, like we kind of talked about already, like there's some storytelling and drama that can be added by showing some of that process. But I think people, like that's sort of our thing, we're really thorough. We go to great lengths to find stuff out, and I think people like knowing that.

Speaker 1: So I wanted to ask about the advantages of having the reporter in the story, as a character. Did it help to have like a known character between the two different seasons, since you were changing topics?

Speaker 2: You mean Madeline as the host?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: Yeah, I think to a certain extent. I mean it doesn't have to be that way. I mean, I think, yeah, there are people who were familiar with Madeline's reporting, even before we put out In The Dark. But I do think, yeah, they come to sort of know her voice and her style and have sort of a feeling of trust, I think, with her as a host.

Speaker 2: And so it just makes sense to have her, I mean, yeah, she's our host. So she definitely would host both seasons. I think if you... I'm trying to think if it would be different, if you had a different host between seasons. I don't know, I think you could do it either way. It just depends on your show, like for us we just have the same host.

Speaker 1: That makes sense. Was there any discussion as to like how big of a role she should be playing in the final product?

Speaker 2: Well we definitely talk a lot about... Like they were talking about, we want to show our process, but we also don't want it to kind of dominate the story. Like we do want to be restraint, with that because the story is not, like fundamentally it's not about us. Like it's a story about, Curtis Flowers and his family and the victim's families, And Tardy Furniture. Like we're not the main characters. So I think, we use it when it's useful to us, but we definitely want to balance it.

Speaker 1: That makes sense. Going through looking at like some of the little storytelling techniques. I mean, some of the things like sound design or like signposting can be pretty subtle. Was there any other like intentional storytelling techniques similar to those things, that you guys employed throughout the two seasons?

Speaker 2: I mean, I think... I'm not quite sure what to call it, but I mean, I think the writing itself is a big part of the storytelling, where... You know, like when we tell the story of the night that Jacob Wetterling was kidnapped, it's very slow and kind of deliberate because we want to sort of tell that story and give it some space.

Speaker 1: Makes sense.

Speaker 2: I'm trying to think, if I can phrase it any better for you. But I'm trying to think, any other storytelling techniques. That's all I got for you right now.

Speaker 1: Okay. No, that's fine.

Speaker 2: I mean, creating scenes, was another storytelling telling technique that we talked about already.

Speaker 1: Right. No, yeah. That makes sense. Especially like you said, pacing can be a huge help when you're trying to create these scenes, create sort of tension but also like help. It seems like audio especially, like figuring out how to tell the story in like a chronological or like whatever pattern that you are using at the time, but like you need to help your audience track exactly what's going on.

Speaker 1: So that makes sense. That like would be a huge factor and that. Looking at, let's see... Do you have any advice for like other investigative reporters who are looking to publish a long form, very in-depth podcast?

Speaker 2: I mean I think... I guess what I would say is, I think it's important to have the reporting drive the story. Like the reporting and the findings, kind of drive the narrative, versus including a bunch of tape or scenes that kind of like don't go anywhere. Like I feel like it all needs to be sort of in service of the reporting and findings.

Speaker 1: And when you sort of... Let's say you have laid out, sort of an episode and you put in scenes and it isn't necessarily going, sort of what you said isn't necessarily going at the pace or where you'd like it to go. Do you have any advice on like how to then sort of restructure or I guess what would you do if you're faced with something like that?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean, right. It can be tricky if something's not working. I think we're getting feedback on it, like we have just a wonderful editor who is just so great. Catherine Winter, she gives us a lot of extremely feedback. Like I really think the process of playing it for other people, before it's finished, is really helpful. Because sometimes you can even hear it yourself, if you like read through your script in front of someone, you can kind of tell like what's working and what's not sometimes.

Speaker 1: There was- [crosstalk 00:23:08] Oh sorry, go ahead.

Speaker 2: And yeah, just not being afraid to lose stuff.

Speaker 1: There was sort of one other thing that I wanted to ask since you touched on it a little bit, that you guys get to the sort of end of reporting, and you still have a few reporting threads out there. But like then you sit down and sort of create, you know, you go ahead and create the episodes and start story-boarding and whatnot.

Speaker 1: There's been some investigative podcasts that I've been looking at that are like week by week and follow the... Literally produce it and like follow the investigation as it's happening and publish in like I said, at week by week basis. I was wondering if you had any thoughts on like that level of like not being done with the investigation yet, going on and publishing as you're going along.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean for us I think it's important to be basically done with the reporting by the time we start publishing. Because I mean, you don't want to be in a situation where... At least we don't want to be a situation where we're still reporting, we've already published and we find something out that changes our understanding of the story, in a huge way. Or changes our understanding of something we already published, like we don't want to be surprised in the middle of publishing.

Speaker 2: So for us we definitely want to get as much, like basically everything done [inaudible 00:24:54] before we start releasing anything. Because like the way I think of it in some ways, it's kind of like, I want to know how the story is going to end, before we put out the first episode. Like we need to know where it ends up.

Speaker 1: That makes sense, that makes a lot of sense. I know we're right up approaching the 30 minutes and I promise to keep it to 30 minutes. Was there anything

that I hadn't touched on that you thought was like really paramount in producing the podcast that we should talk about?

Speaker 2: Oh, I don't think so.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Yeah, good question.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Well I guess, any other last advice for other investigative reporters then?

Speaker 2: Let me think. I guess, I just think these kinds of investigations and putting them into like a podcast, it's a ton of work. And so, I think it's important to choose a question that you really want to find out the answer to, like that you feel is important and that you truly want to know the answer to. Because it's a lot of work.

Speaker 1: How do you go about screening those, I mean I know it's a bit of pre-reporting, but in order to really figure out if something is there and worth the time?

Speaker 2: Yeah. I mean, yeah we definitely do a lot of pre reporting on different story topics, before we choose. And I think yeah, just thinking about what's important, what you could potentially find out. You know, thinking about the ways that if you found out something, like could that kill your story? Like can, you kind of figure out that sooner, if that makes sense?

Speaker 1: That makes sense. You don't want to be like six months in and be like, "Oh this killed our story."

Speaker 2: Right, right. Like figure out the kind of those things early on. But yeah, I think just finding a story or a topic that like really interests you. And if you bounce the

idea off your editors, or a couple people, like you want them to be engaged or really curious about the answer.

Speaker 1: That makes sense. That is good advice...

## **WHITE LIES - QUESTIONS**

Podcast --- White Lies

From: APM Reports

Reporters: Chip -

First – do you mind if I record our conversation? Second – preferred titles?

*Questions - What storytelling techniques are journalists using to provide more transparency, evidence of their reporting and the newsgathering process into investigative podcasts?*

*Why are you using these techniques to highlight the newsgathering process?*

Why There has been quite a bit of reporting on the rev.'s death - what was the motivation behind this podcast. What did you hope to add to the conversation?

Why did you choose to create a podcast? Did that shift your reporting? How much reporting happened? How did you approach – like a radio doc?

The podcast was a mix of interviews, archive audio and on the ground reporting with in-person reporting. How did balance?

Narrative structure? How do you determine the balance of the story arch with the investigation arch?

Do you think this combo is new?

Combined your journey with the original – panel – Jeraldo Rivera / lurid – borrowing from potboiler – cliff hanger? Sound design – register of show

Why did you hold off telling us about finding

White Lies is an interesting mix of traditional narration mixed with interviews – and then there were these in person reporting scenes – that allow the audience to essentially tag along on reporting. What purpose did that serve for this podcast?

- Can you take me through finding/processing records that led to the finding on jury imbalance?
  - o Y'all were very transparent about what y'all were doing - Why include something like that.
  - o Is this unique to investigative podcasts?
- Any advice for other reporters hoping to get similar tape?

You created vibrant scenes by taking the audience along while reporting the story – why did you decide to include these moments?

- In the moment observation was used heavily to recreate these scenes. What advantages/disadvantages does that vs. observation in the tracking have on the storyline?

How transparent would you say the newsgathering/reporting process was for the audience? Was that something that y'all actively considered?

- How important is it for you to show the reporting/newsgathering process?
- What aspects of the newsgathering process did you tape?

There are quite a few characters and events throughout the podcast. How did you help the audience track the details?

- Chronological explanation
- Sign posting
- Recalls

Scenes recreating / showing how you knew information. Explanation of why you came to a conclusion

- Why include this?

Online resources for transparency...

On that note, y'all was very much present in the storyline. We tagged along with y'all during reporting, heard observations and heard narration/tracking. How did you approach this? Why did you do this?

- What were the advantages and disadvantages of this? Did it help with the structure or explanation?
- Help between seasons?
- What editorial discussion went into making that decision?
- Do you have any recommendations for other investigative reporters looking to become a figure in the final product of their reporting?

So much lands on the cutting room floor – I believe in the live taping another storyline Ireland was mentioned in the live taping – how did you go about prioritizing?

Need for transparency?

So we talked about the inclusion of the newsgathering process and storytelling techniques but did you do anything else to increase transparency?

How does the inclusion of newsgathering / reporting differ from documentaries?

If you didn't include moments of newsgathering / reporting how would it impact the audience's perception of your findings?

Any advice for other investigative reporters publishing via podcast?

Would you have done anything differently?

Anything else?

### **WHITE LIES - TRANSCRIPT**

Speaker 1: 00:00 I wanted to start a little bit broad and just ask about, um, I mean obviously there was reporting on, um, the reverend's death before, you know, the civil rights, um, has, has been covered, I guess, what was the motivation behind this podcast and what did you guys hope to really add to the conversation? Why did you choose the medium? I mean, I know that you guys were looking to set the record straight, but I guess why, why did you want to do this in podcast form?

Speaker 2: 00:31 Yeah, that's a good question. So we, uh, so we ended up as journals in the university of Alabama and we had been looking, it's, I live at Birmingham, a group of Birmingham and you know, 1962 63 was the Heath was the little heart of the Birmingham campaign, some rights movement. And so 2012, 2013, Birmingham, it just went through this big 50th anniversary push or like they were commemorating all these different events from great. And then summer was preparing and you know, to have a 14 to, um, for, for a Selma campaign cause the diversity stuff. And so as that was happening, um, and you know, we're talking about just the passage of the voting rights act and stories that have to do with that in some way. And we talked to Jerry Mitchell who's in the show who's a famous civil rights cold case boarder in Mississippi.

Speaker 2: 01:32 And we assessed that over the years order circles in Southern circles. So, um, talked to him about cases having to do some of the voting rights campaign. And he immediately said, uh, you know, you guys should look into the read three checks, um, you know, is a big deal. Uh, and the, the things specifically Jerry as he, as he says in the show, really thinks like a prosecutor. Like he thinks about, you know, could I, could I turn this story? Could my reporting needs to some months future be to some, some, some form of justice instead of eight. Um, he was like, the thing that's exciting about the rape case is that there's still a living suspect. So at the time to Congo a lot, and they're still living witness, one of the men, Clark Olsen, who was with revenge rifles. So I've just started, especially here. And so you've got this people, these people who are sort of proximity to it, who are dressing involved in events that night to be good people to talk to.

Speaker 2: 02:31 And also I've got an unredacted that I'm not going to have time to ever look into this. So here you take it instead of really when we first started out we weren't sure that we knew. So we knew that there were always rumors of four or five then, uh, we knew that that was part of it. We didn't honestly think that we were going to be able to find the fourth person. Um, and we were really interested in using that clericals minutes once read that night. We met him and spent a good deal of time talking with him and we interviewed him, um, built interviews with him and then published an op doc, which is the New York times video as part of their up at part of their opinions section. It's called pop talks. So we made it 10 minutes. I've talked to the New York times 15, but focus on core goals and story.

Speaker 2: 03:30 And just the way that he sort of process that night and the time and his life kind of flooded at that know sort of commit more around the country and Jackson's death. So in the course of doing that, honestly, we just set up the bagels, pretty conventional short doc we made, um, about Clark Olsen. But in the course of doing that, we started running up against what we call in the show. The counter-narrative started, you know, we were, we were interested in being both relevant and like why we're interested in why we didn't know about this case. Um, and, and that's when we got into reporting, it became evident that one of the reasons we didn't know more about this, we were those born well after this, right? So we had been just for such a huge story that time. It was just not something we'd ever heard.

Speaker 2: 04:22 Um, and so, so we ran into this counter narrative pretty early on this idea that like we was actually killed by the civil rights that by his companions so that they can gain more substitutes that cause we ran into that story really early and really often. And that began to feel both like the, the main reason that the story had sort of died about what happened to read over the years. And also just contested history that, but no one was really digging into and forming as you said, like people had written about rain forever and there was, that was one version of what happened to him. And then another version of what happened to is still was alive and well and so on, which is that he was killed by some rights activists. And so got really interested in this two kind of dueling narratives and why some people chose to believe the counter narrative that he had been killed on the way to Birmingham and really felt like the only way to spell that sort of way, that storage to waste the sort of hold it up and fact check.

Speaker 2: 05:27 And, and really like, um, you know, accepted on its terms to sort of fact checking and saying. And so we really struggled with that decision about whether, how much credence to give it. Um, like, you know, we talked about this recently with someone about, you know, it's like the kind of flat earth theory you don't want to give, you don't want to get people peanuts, but at the same time for something that was so kind of viral and Silva, we just felt like we had to hold it up and examine that and I check it at home. That's what he decided to do.

Speaker 1: 06:01 Do you have any advice for like if an investigative or an investigator is like up against another counter narrative but they don't exactly know, it's so like, it seems like, you know, with, uh, the counter narrative that you guys were facing, it was pretty obvious that it was, you know, false. Um, that wasn't the actual account of what happened. But with, if that line is a bit more gray, do you have any advice on how to operate, how to proceed from there?

Speaker 2: 06:29 I mean, I really, that's the strange thing about this one is that it is weird. There's some weird details from our mind or something like it's just murky, you know, this is, this is like how seventies as far as operating like that, it's just gray enough. It's just working up to where this was for something else to take bold and for kind of a worldview to insert itself. And then the world view sort of casts about for a way to justify these events and maintain the worldview. And so I think, um, I think the thing that, I mean honestly like the same, we kept sorts of saying to ourselves like, we just have to like go back to basics. Like, you know, we need to get every possible thing we can to fact check because you know, the predisposition among a certain group of people and it wasn't, it wasn't even necessarily people knew had a vested stake in the story.

Speaker 2: 07:25 It's just people, it's like the wealth of the way it just sort of gossip words and stories are hands down that this thing continues to spread. So, I mean, in terms of advice, I would just say like sort of back to basics, like getting fact check every single thing you can. Um, and then also spend time and this is something that we really struggle with in terms of reporting and doing interviews and something that is I think worthy of some critiques and some of show is how much you let people who are espousing what seems like the counter narratives, whether it is, you know, it's sort of a story about something that happened or, or a worldview, um, letting them talk, you know, and like letting them tell you not purchasing, like let them say what it is they think happened so that you can understand why they think the way they think.

Speaker 2: 08:19 Which I think the challenge that that part sort of challenge our way of generally operating in the state, which is sort of, you know, to really not give anybody the space to say ridiculous things. But as a journalist we just felt like we are here to listen. We're here to try to understand why this thing has continued to spread. And in some ways because pesticides, I mean they didn't work over the years, all sorts of like crazy other standard story about what happened to read that. So, um, yeah, in terms of advice, I think just find every little detail. I mean, so we had, we didn't show, we actually, here's some of this week we went down to the Alabama, um, the state police office. Basically there's one of our producers had tracked down a lawyer there who said kind of, it's kind of a crap shoot, but basically asked what they had any of the records related to the investigation and the lawyer actually went to check and he said, we do have stuff.

Speaker 2: 09:22 Some of it is like Xerox copies of old books and they're hard to read. But there it is. There are several pages from the report that might be an interesting

and we didn't want to think much would come of it. But basically we were able to get through looking at those records, we were able to get, um, this guy, John South, he was critical to the defense and that she's 65. We were able to get his statement, they gave to see investigators that night, this happened where he doesn't mention that he didn't see a flat tire. So we found this like really critical piece of evidence just from kind of like chasing down every lead, the um, uh, rippling of saying, Oh my God, it's terrible. And the LBJ biographer, Oh my God, uh, anyway, we're going to forget that. But, um, but uh, uh, I feel like the journalism gods strike me down.

Speaker 2: 10:16 But anyway, he wrote it. He has this book out and he's written some pieces. What kind of the process of his life sort of spinning as ATAR, you know, pretty much his entire professional life dedicated to this one pursuit of, you know, writing his biography, smokey Jay and, and he talks at length about, and he's written at length about just the, how the paper trail can unravel soba. I mean, can open up so much. It can just give you a whole lot of questions. So I think so I think we, like you said, we went into this thinking returners absurd. Like it's ridiculous. How could anybody believe it? But we just realized like, we can't, uncle can't afford to think that thinking that way, it's not going to help us. Um, set the record straight. It's not gonna help us get to the truth and it's not going to help us sort of think that it doesn't, thinking that way.

Speaker 2: 11:05 It doesn't allow you to think about the things, the things you can do to, um, to try to get closer to the teachers. And I think like, you know, so, so taking everyone that's a word and trying to find every page we can sort of, so you had better questions to ask, um, you know, up this covered except for us, I'm sorry, just one more thing, but for us the longest, somewhere to pick up the counter there, we weren't thinking

about, we're thinking more about the medical, the medical testimony. Like, okay, well doctors, you know, now know that that would have to have a service plastic like as a girl even. Um, and they just didn't have the language word for time and you know, he really needed the address and neurosurgeon period, like right away. And without wondering stray a little bit for Slidell.

Speaker 2: 11:52 We're really on that. But it wasn't, that's a statement of belief, you know, that's not, uh, we can't, that doesn't in any way, um, address the sort of underlying conspiracy theory that he was actually, that he sort of has some further injuries done to him on the way to Birmingham. And so we really, we finally kind of realized this, like we had to, had to be, and the time the question got to this IPO tire, flat tire, if it happened or didn't happen, you could sort of like how much, how much of the delay was dudes just tire today anyway, just kind of thinking about the way to tackle the cameras head on, let us to serve a different set of questions that I has had. We just sort of let our assumptions about it. Got it. So I guess as a piece of advice, like, you know, try not to have assumptions about something that feels inherently true to you.

Speaker 1: 12:46 That makes sense. One of the things that you touched on a little bit that I definitely wanted to ask you. You're reporting the reporting slash news gathering process was rather transparent. Um, I was wondering how intentional that was and what purpose that served.

Speaker 2: 13:04 Yes. Um, it was very intentional, uh, and, and the purpose of things. Um, I mean, I think there's a, there's, there's the, the really simple answer to it, which is like, we love that stuff. Like if listeners and viewers and readers, you know, I mean, I just mentioned the LBJ tiger print off of us, but something that, again,

Speaker 1: 13:32 is it Robert Tai?

Speaker 2: 13:38 Sure. Um, yeah, so like , Cara, John [inaudible], Susan Orley, like these nonfiction writers just trade in the stuff, you know, um, the beginning of the [inaudible] and when she talks about how she has a way inker sort of long form stories, we'll read, um, subscribe to a bunch of small town newspapers and read the like tiny little news items. Um, you know, as a way of like finding interesting other stories to pursue. Um, and then Kara talking about the process of like, uh, how, you know, he went down to some LBJ and uptown and started talking to people and got one file. This one piece of paper that had [inaudible] some, you know, something related to some donation and I'll be Jake, I forgot that opened up this whole other line of inquiry form. I mean those sorts of way, the ways in which, um, the reporting process, um, shows kind of the thrust of the story.

Speaker 2: 14:42 Um, for us, really interesting narratives. I tend to think of the sports especially well on audio, especially when what you're looking for is, um, you know, in places like secret basements and airplane hangars, people's garages are stuck full of stuff. Like anything kind of that you can convey a visual. We spent a lot of time thinking about, you know, the kind of radio tourism that radio, audio is a very visual medium and I think that the searching for stuff and the, and the transparency of the reporting process allows you to really get into the visuals twice where you're trying to do. I think it's different as you're, you know, if you're, if you're the reporting processes, like just making phone calls from your desk and um, or like searching through the elaborate Congress, sorry. Yeah. Something where you're not, it's not a journey. Um, but I think, and I think a little bit goes a long way.

Speaker 2: 15:40 Like we had a lot or of that that we just cut out of it. Just so like gratuitous, you know, especially in the service of something like the Tepper tapes, which we don't end up getting and you just feel, you know, he can leave a listenership like before, like why didn't we just, we'll some sort an hour. You looking at somebody you don't find. Yeah, yeah. It's really intentional. And we really wanted to like kind of show the work in a way cause we felt like one, it's just pleasurable. Um, a certain amount of it can be pleasurable to here. And then I think the other is that it really helped build the world that we were, um, you know, that we were, that we were trying to build like, so Selma, you know, as we say in the show, like is all this stuff the places scrubbed it's collective memory of this episode. And you could see that when you go look for records and you can't find them anywhere, you can find, you know, when the, um, the like, uh, the court logs are missing first questions. Thank you. Uh, and very little else feels like that, that's intentional and it feels like it was an effort to willfully forget something. And so that's a, that's a sort of seen or we're trying to build the show. And so showing that reporting felt like it helps build that for mustard.

Speaker 1: 17:03 Hmm. Do you, do you think that this like, um, I mean you mentioned the long form, uh, like nonfiction writers have been doing this. Do you think, um, do you think it's a new technique bringing the, this like open, this open invitation for the audience to come along on the reporting process? Do you think that this is sort of a new technique to investigative reporting or do you think it just fits with the, the fits with the medium? Well, um, I've been trying to, trying to get a grasp on I guess how prevalent this is.

Speaker 2: 17:37 Yeah, yeah. I mean, so, you know, we were, we were, um, uh, we were, we were thick in the writing process. Wins to have been the dark came out and they do them so well. We've talked to them about that. That I want to target, you're going to talk to anybody.

Speaker 1: 17:56 I actually just talked to them this afternoon.

Speaker 2: 17:59 Yeah. Yeah. I mean there's, so that we actually, we spoke on a panel and Parker, yes. Go on the summer about this very thing like the, the, the sort of the dig for records and for our cause and I think that they're dead something that um, there is something that lends itself really well to the medium because you have the immediacy of being able to hear it and to sort of spill just the same way we still out when we read, you know, novel and we fill out kind of a scene in her head. There's something about doing that with audio where you're, where you are, you are imagining what the space looks like with help from, for kind of narration, the paint from the scene. So I think it lends itself really well to the media. I think it's also like sill, which any of us have a background is very difficult to do this and an interesting way.

Speaker 2: 18:51 So often it's like really boring or it's really kind of, you know, the kind of like we're down to the kid, you know, we're down in alpha pose safe, try the fall, try it again. So the Geraldo Rivera type stuff, or it's just really boring like footage following somebody walking through a hallway or something. So it's like when you see the visuals of it, it can be really kind of one extreme boring or lurid. Um, but when you hear it, it just, there's something captivating. I think about, um, I'm not hearing this as the medium, but I do think that investigative reporters and narrative nonfiction writers of, of narrow numbers shouldn't have been doing this for a long, long time as I think, you

know, we, we, we would turn to those people a lot when we're thinking about technique and thinking about different sort of Shondra tricks. I mean, and this is also, this is like potboiler, you know, this is private detective fiction, you know, um, this is, this is kind of the like for like, and then we, you know, we did this and you know, kind of the kind of, um, it is a, we thought often about like Chaunra tricks that we could avail ourselves. So I feel like that's one of them.

Speaker 1: 20:07 You talked about techniques. Was there, um, certain techniques that you ended up employing quite a bit? Um,

Speaker 2: 20:19 um, well I mean, yeah, for sure. The, the like, uh, thing that everyone has stolen from Syria, which is the like next time on [inaudible] which finger, um, which you know, is, it can be, it's, it's a great, um, it's not a restriction. It's a great thing to sort of take advantage of because it just forces you to kind of think about the victim at the end of each other caring for that. Um, um, so that you do, so you're giving a listener a kind of like, even if it's something that is not fundamental to the ultimate outcome of the story or you know, in our case we tease like the Tepper day we could their main page, so it's the trial that would help us, you know, dah, dah, dah, dah. And then you guys sort of sit three and you hear here the tapes are in tombs, her Memorial, and there's no way you're going to go.

Speaker 2: 21:20 And so it's been this big sort of red herring, the sort of shaggy dog story. But if you set it up such a way and then you pull people along in a dynamic way, then maybe we won't buy it. Maybe we won't care as you could probably almost ensure like, what the hell, why did you do this? But, um, but, you know, I think we felt that works to just kind of pulled people along like that. And then I think too, um, you know,

we tried to, we really tried to, um, you use music strategic, we're not overused music, but also used music to set the tone of the show and sort of [inaudible] to pull people in long narratively fit great tools if we can overuse it. But I think also it can be a really effective tool. It's not one that a PR for example, had, you know, the editorial people is not, we're, we're not uncomfortable with it, but we're just not as nice as they were used to, to certain using, um, it's just not part of their DNA.

Speaker 2: 22:19 So, um, but I do think that's sort of the hook. Enos of like the kind of next time in history, um, sort of setting up a central mystery and then pulling readers along with the smaller the streets throughout. It's just a format that's so enticing. Um, both of them make currently things, but also just for listeners what I love. Um, and then I'm trying to think what else. Like, you know, we used of course the waterfall and kind of voices of each episode, which we initially resisted. That's true. It's such a, it's such an efficient, um, way to kind of remind listeners like what's the couple for the kind of where we're headed. Uh, yeah. Trying to think about, think of any, uh, anything else I will all buddy,

Speaker 1: 23:07 do you guys use sign posting all that much or was that something that um, you sort of put aside because we could follow a law? You know, it seemed like the, each episode was pretty encapsulated in a way.

Speaker 2: 23:23 Yeah. Yeah. Um, yeah. I mean, like we talked about this a lot of gum season two and the dark, which is like how, you know, at the beginning of their episodes, I don't, there's like [inaudible] this is a story about this and you know, he was convicted because of the blank blank and the blank. Today we're gonna talk about the blank and it's so effective for that show. You know, the kind of like, today is the gun,

we're going to let the gun today, you know, and the next and the routes. And so that can sort of, that can really for a complex story like that where you're sort of, you know, trying to, um, you know, we're trying to sort of figure out exactly what happened and also break down the case against someone. It's really effective for us. We really felt like, I mean, if I'm totally honest, like this could have been one episode, you know, and so, and we kind of went, we knew that like that.

Speaker 2: 24:16 We knew that. I mean, it's true of every story has to be much easier to get to my story shorter. But we really thought, we worked with a story consultant actually Bart sort of worked on all sorts of shows and it's now the editor of revision history and uh, Michael Lewis' shows ever forgotten. Um, but um, but she came in and worked with us for a couple of weeks, like that kind of precarious moment last fall we were trying to figure out what we were doing and um, and she said something to us, it really stuck with us as we were kind of, we've written, a couple of us said we're trying to figure out like the, the rural structure, which we had gone through many iterations and kind to try to figure out, I guess like the register of the show a little bit like, you know, how much are we going to be in at?

Speaker 2: 25:04 How serious is it going to be? Is there going to be any humor? And she said this great thing, which is that your need to think about what you're doing is making an album like you are. You're making this thing that all of these kind of here, but then each half such work like a song in a way. Like each obsession operates differently than all the others. They don't all need some sort of follow the same pattern and registers sequencing and they can do different things, operate in very different ways as long as they're all sort of strung together with enough of enough of a through line where it feels

like a cohesive, you know, and I thought that was like really that's what I heard that on like sort of bells and off. And that clarifies so much for me about how to think about each of these.

Speaker 2: 25:49 Like they don't all have to be the same. And so we, our editors often want us to sort of sign posts for and remind listeners week cause like you know, before last, last week we heard this and [inaudible] no Hey we're going to go back to that story and we just really resisted it. Didn't feel for our story as elegant, you know, it's just sort of diving in. Um, and so, you know, at a certain 0.2 just for have to truck schools nurse that they're either gonna follow the, you're gonna follow it or not. And signposting is a way to kind of help some people kind of get caught caught up. But we just wanted to avoid that cause itself a little clunky.

Speaker 1: 26:28 That makes sense. Um, one thing you mentioned that I wanted to touch on as well, um, just how much y'all were in the story as characters. Cause like sometimes we see in like, um, like with the vice, um, cha El Chapo 'em podcast, they were like in it as characters, but yet their personalities weren't touched on. But like it seems like you guys wanted to touch on personalities because of that, like access and because of like your positioning within like within the South being like white males. I was wondering how you guys, I was wondering what that conversation looked like and how you guys approached being characters in that story.

Speaker 2: 27:11 Yeah. Um, you know, so first the, so one of the big sort of conversations with NPR initially was things are two white guys. Um, you know, from the South telling and civil rights story about another white guy.

Speaker 1: 27:30 Okay.

Speaker 2: 27:31 Oh, it's just like how absurd can we can this be, but, but the person who kind of really champion the show or the story, uh, was this woman died, your eating as a predator prior. I mean, NPR is American, this family roots in Soma and who this is. Yeah, this is 2017. Trump's just been elected. There's, you know, fill in roof, there's all this sort of white national stuff happening. Um, and, uh, that's, that's, that's still happening, but it's been, is a lot and it's something that's everybody's talking about. And so they're really interested in time, this show that really was, you know, for lack of a better phrase, like sort of different modes of whiteness. Um, and so I think that, I think that we felt like to that end, we needed to put ourselves in it a little bit, um, because the stories that were told and stories of work told us when we were growing up in this, as you say, the fair for subsidies, like the sort of strategy of silence that we grew up with and still kind of very much part of Southern culture, uh, is just had not evidence that it has not worked, you know, um, uh, as a strategy, you know what I mean?

Speaker 2: 28:53 Like, I mean, forget like, it's moral failing. Like this is a strategy and, and um, and so we kind of felt like we, you know, we needed to own up to that, but we're not from Selma. You know, we're not, this isn't like our story. It wasn't like our grandfather, it was one of the, you know, people attach or one of the people in the crime. And so we didn't have this sort of personal skin in the game so much, but we did. But we did feel like we needed to kind of tell us there's a little bit about ourselves so that it would feel, I don't know, it felt like we needed to do it so that people would come, come along a little bit. And then once we got into the writing and once we got into the, I mean, the, the fact of the matter is like, doing something like this, even something that takes place in a

sort of crisis from an issue like this where so much of the action is traumatic and violent working in Australia, this is so fun.

Speaker 2: 29:46 You know, it's just so fun because you get to, you get to do, you get to go and search Shirley's archives. She gets to talk to people. Um, try to find people who don't want to talk to you and poke around and awfully over. I mean, she was like, if you're into that, if you're into journalism, like for me, it's like a peak, you know, of, of doing it, um, over working on a long project like this. And so we also didn't want it to feel, to me as a heavy sore and we didn't feel heavy all the time and it felt like the right way. One way to sort of mitigate that heaviness or at least operate in a different register. Going back to that album idea was to sort of include some of those moments when we are just being ourselves. Of course the reporting.

Speaker 2: 30:36 Um, and the fact that it's like Erin about two guys, there's really no real justification for, we don't ever feeling one of us. It's not like the historian and the other and the terminals, you know, like when we both are very similar and kind of our backgrounds will be do we just felt like that was a way to kind of get across some of that, that levity would get across some of that like pleasure in the work. Um, and it goes back to that kind of showing the process stuff. That's like a lot of that process work was us sort of like really enjoying or you know, and so, so we just, that was, that was part of the decision. And then the stuff about our sort of ancestors was initially the last of, so was initially one of the very first things you heard of the show and it just felt like way too much too soon.

Speaker 2: 31:23 Um, and so we just sort of, then at one point it was like her dental as our [inaudible] when we were in cemetery to man. And then later it was like fourth

episode and then, I mean, it moved all around and we kind of lost it for a long time and whenever you're gonna bring it back and then it just sort of felt right after we had done that with the seven of siblings. It came together pretty quickly toward the end and after, um, and once we kind of sketched it out and felt like a natural place where to go, so we put it there. Um, but yeah, so if left, I'll ever place. Um, yeah. Yeah. And I think the other reason, the other reason is that me, you know, a big part of the big part of the, our own grappling with this morning was about, was about bill Portwood and bill for one's mental state.

Speaker 2: 32:15 And at the same time we were working know the story of, we were working on a story about, um, an African American man who had been on death row in Alabama 20 years, eventually was released, um, essentially exonerated all the sale on that. And there's never, there's never, there's never granted that'd be commemoration or, or apologized or compensates everything. So well we would literally like leaves Montgomery, Alabama, where we've just been interviewing this guy from attorney Barnes, demons, you know, sort of now the sort of famous or, um, you know, human rights activist and lawyer. Um, and then we'd go spend the afternoon with bill Portland and his wife Myna and Wayne would leave for a bit like in the state. I'm like, what are we doing? Like this man is incapacitated. Like, you hear the shit, what do we do? What do we even, why are we even here?

Speaker 2: 33:04 What could we possibly have to get out of this? But then we would be like, what do we like? That's crazy. What are we talking about? Bullshit. Like we're just been listening to the plight of the supplemented man who's been on death row for 20 years. Nobody gains. Here we are extending that to this man who by all accounts was a

brutal, terrible man who yes, changed his life but also should be held or we should, we shouldn't walk away from feeling, um, that we shall hold him responsible for something you did because time has passed. That's not, that's not a legitimate reason to let someone else hook. Um, and his mental state while the complicated things and the inability to [inaudible]. It was also once we corroborated it was not, that was not a vet that should not get them off of that. He is older and beautiful.

Speaker 2: 33:53 Hmm. Um, so anyway, we thought that like, because we were struggling so much of that and you hear that in the marriage and show that having us me figures and showing them when they do too much of it again, but like having us be actual people in the show, uh, that you can kind of, I don't know that you might relate to or that you might, um, you might, there might be some qualities that he's gonna kinda got on us. Um, that those would help with those moments of variation when we're sort of rambling some of the parts of the chefs

Speaker 1: 34:33 in terms of that structure you were talking about. I was curious when I was listening to it, why are you guys delayed telling the audience like that you had been visiting? Um, I think Francis and then also, um, like it telling it, delaying telling the audience that there is, you know, there was a fourth man I was, yeah, I guess, I guess I was just personally curious about that decision. Why not tease it earlier?

Speaker 2: 35:04 Yeah. Yeah. Um, so a couple of days, one and like the first iteration of the show, we, we, um, we in the very first episode, so got to the point where the inoffensive there was a, and then we were going to get find them. That was sort of the propulsion show and we just felt like, um, we felt like an after after we sort of went through iterations that we felt like we needed to name, it'd be more of a, like the first

episode needed to be more of an extended prologue gave because what we realized is like bloody which for us history that we know really well and we know the narratives, the rough bloody Sunday with not, we can realize with our editorial team, you know, and others that we needed to do a little bit more like scene setting about why some of the first place, why Reed went down the nerve, what was happening.

Speaker 2: 35:59 Um, and so we needed that. So kind of operate more as prologue and then, and we felt like when Joanna Melendez so well at the end of the forceps there, which is like, well, you know why Jamie's kicks us, we'll file it with this case. So why is it so hard? You would think that the wakeup gets to be the one that we saw these white cups, but, but, um, but I mean that's what she says, but why is it, why is it a hard to know who comes from radio and sort of felt like that could become our proposal, that sort of, that propels you them to the show. And then in order to kind of get at, because we needed to get at what fueled the acquittal. Um, and it wasn't just sort of all white jury, you know, which is kind of the shorthand for cases like that. It's like, of course I didn't, you know, personally.

Speaker 2: 36:56 Um, so it felt like we needed a really then sort of give you a more granular understanding of how the trial operated and how it gave birth to this counter narrative. That is really the reason that this man was never held accountable or even nobody even looked into it. Cause you've, you have an acquittal that's really essentially no mechanism anymore. There's no justification for looking into the same cause. There's too little people. We're not going to talk and we've got cargo never talk to you. Right. Dodge, he died without ever talking to anybody about that. Um, and so then, then it became this, uh, you know, once we kind of did that, we just felt like, um, the only way

we're going to get the truths and stuff over there and Francis Bowden, the pillbox woman is what kind of whatever, what happens from then on, like starting at the end of episode three going forward really is happening and roughly chronological order.

Speaker 2: 38:03 Um, in terms of our reporting process, like we count fences, we touched Frances, we got sort of suspected that there was a fourth man when we hadn't, hadn't found him yet. She basically confirmed off the record that the yes or wasn't there was another guy involved, but she'll never tell she had done real good for those numbers. So then we just tried to find them ourselves. So like from then on, it's sort of like you've had a two and a half and three episode sorts of prolonged and like, um, sort of setting the scene where you can go, like have that search firm force man be animated. And so I sort of felt like without it, you would just be like, we're merely looking for four grand and we're in, it's the reason it's important is because we're telling you is important person too. You know what I mean? It was a struggle though because it did feel, we didn't want to feel like we're chaining an audience, but at the same time in one, in the finding of, and one of the search for him in the finding of them should be, uh, imbued with as much meaning as possible. You know, it was as much like, like this. We wanted the stakes to be, um, the highest because that's how they felt to us and we needed to sort narratively filled that.

Speaker 1: 39:19 That makes a lot of sense. Um,

Speaker 2: 39:21 did you feel [inaudible]?

Speaker 1: 39:23 No. Well, I don't think, I feel, I felt cheated. I think when you guys like disclosed like, Oh, you know, we've been visiting her for like months and months, every time we come back into town. I was like, what, why didn't you tell me that? But

like it also like building up that tension and like, yeah, like I said, I was just really personally curious about that decision. Um, but I mean, yeah, no, I can completely see why you guys chose to sort of, yeah. If we are discovering it as long as like along with you guys in a way. It does build up the tension and it also, like you said, adds context so we know exactly why it's important. So,

Speaker 2: 40:10 well, it was hard to, to know like how much to tell about how much you can sell with them. You want it to be open about it but not so it's like lots of, you know, like wax, you know, which suck. Like there was just too much. Yeah, yeah, yeah, totally. That's, that's uh, and, and, uh, the kind of on the record, the fact that like, we interviewed him and we couldn't confirm it and middle statement that we couldn't really rely, you know, as much as, I mean we would never want to do it anyway. Been further complicated. So yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1: 40:49 Yeah. I did think that the like discussion that you guys had with like sort of, well I don't know if it was a discussion with the audience, but like that like disclosure of like we do realize that he is in this mental state that I thought that was really fun, a really fascinating like piece of tracking. Um, but

Speaker 2: 41:10 yeah, we really spend a lot of time on that. Just trying to try and to do it in a way that didn't, she'll try to, to, not luring but like she try to try to like try to do it and I'll sort of write it in a way that saves or who and also are internal struggles or struggles together, um, thinking for all this stuff. But I'll not in a way that let us off the hook or like let anybody else, but to be honest about them, but also then to say like, but that's bullshit. Um, so yeah.

Speaker 1: 41:47 I'm sorry. I know we were going like super long. I promise. Like this is like my second to last question. So when, when you guys, I guess how after such a long investigation, how did you guys know when to wrap it up and to start really story-boarding and like actually go into production?

Speaker 2: 42:08 Yeah, well, so I mean we didn't, we have editors 50 saying like, you haven't done,

Speaker 1: 42:15 Oh well that's,

Speaker 2: 42:17 well we'll say that we thought we were going to tell him was most for our pouring and may of 2018 and we began writing, we began that summer. We went through and we really wanted to get one done first. We just felt like that, which was, I mean, just for obvious reasons. Please. You can get the first episode and you kind of set you on your path to the others. We had, we've gone through a bunch of different options, really the structure and what we're working on. I've said one and subsequently working on two and three comes at the same time. Well first of all, we went through 19 versions for episode one and episode one really wasn't locked until like January. Um, but we ended up going on and moving forward. We kind of knew this, we knew the broad strokes of the line and we knew that it needed some, an answer revision here, there.

Speaker 2: 43:08 But what did what that did over the course of that? So we're working on one and moving on to two and three is it revealed where we were lacking voices and where are we needed to kind of beef up some purporting. Um, and so we basically did a whole new round of reporting in the fall of last year, which coincided with our meeting, the cook family, sort of relatives of Elmer cook dissonance cooks just like in the show you here. And we met or some of them. So we met Katie cook, it's great men

daughter, the only men's grandfather's grandson. And then eventually met his son. So that process happened unfolded over the course of last fall and winter. And so that coincided with a couple of things. One, I'm sort of going back to trying to find more voices from that time who knew something about this. So this got proudly caps and stuff for an old guy who's like the whole damn town.

Speaker 2: 44:03 It's like that was kind of a late sign. Um, so the reporting we did, I would say a six assumption of the Cooke family. The reporting we did after, you know, after September of 2015 was, um, sort of filling in holes and some of which we ended up not using it all. Like we did our last interview in March of this year with somebody that we've been waiting to talk to sort of this like, uh, really to this figure and Salva. And we felt like if it were got out that we'd already interviewed her, that it would close off some avenues that we needed to. Good. Um, and so we waited til the end to talk to her credible interview, like really wonderful like sneaker and Tucker about Silva, about race and about America and the legacy of slavery, all these things. But it just felt like she was too far removed.

Speaker 2: 44:57 The story and abusing and same, same thing. We interviewed this [inaudible] who works for the SCLC starting in [inaudible] 60 white guy, um, who was there off of the summer campaign. Uh, and she's a really wonderful talker about all of that time and about the time and American Western day, also incredible talker. And we tried to work him into the last steps to um, try to work both of those people in the lesson and just they felt too far removed from the core action. So we them, but there were other people that sort of, we did, we talked to the lawyer. Anyway, I'm rambling, but basically we're kind of, I thought we would, we're done in may with reporting and then the writing

would be aware where we have holes. And so we're not trying to fill this all from the pressure's coming on souls. Condoms kind of found some other things as well. So

Speaker 1: 45:55 interesting. Um, last question. Uh, I suppose, do you have any, I suppose, did it, was there anything that you would do differently or slash do you have any advice for, um, people that are gonna try and go down this Avenue in the future? I should say investigative reporter.

Speaker 2: 46:15 Yeah. Yes. Um, so the best, so the thing that will [inaudible] so better. I mean we did this before and we'll just try and do it even better and partly it's cause it, we started this in 2014 and then put it down and kind of worked on something else for a year and a half and back to it. Um, we are both Andy and I both like in the past I've been on the process for a long time keeping sort of like the journal of our reporting. So we have Google docs and it's basically like dated anytime we read anything, even if it's like an article or whatever it is, anytime we read anything or talked to anybody or went to the report, [inaudible], Sama, anything like that, we would log it in the sense, um, as really, really helpful, especially when you work on something five years because you forget when you use, you forget what somebody told you.

Speaker 2: 47:08 You forget like when, I mean, so there's a detail on the show, like, uh, when we got the Francis vote and to confirm, to tell us the truth like that she'd seen these, these guys when she finally one of the records and then also confirmed, Oh, port was, um, in our reporting, it didn't hurt us that this case. But then when we were writing the thing and thinking about it narratively, structurally, we went back to check and we wouldn't have been able to sort of do that. So we've not kept really good enough stuff from certain things happened. And Phil pull with that 11 days after that. Um, we didn't

know about it until a little bit later than he's died. Um, cause he didn't have very much time and just hadn't talked to him in awhile. So, so, um, so we didn't know that at the tone and piece that together we went back cause we kept these sort of like journal of are they taking, um, in our reporting, um, we're able to sort of see that it was only 11 days, which felt in the moment constantly together like materials to get to the store.

Speaker 2: 48:11 So, so, um, so I recommend that you, that everybody that like for everything, um, and like any time you're renting and saying habitation and sort of take notes into, it's like a dump file, everything related to the project despair and then what's great to other people searching and you can, it's like a great source for yourself. Uh, you know, once you're like in the buyer of a project and you can't remember how you found, so there's the question of how you found something out about us thinking their story becomes so important when you're trying to do these, especially something related, investigative in nature. Like being able to track back to figure it out, how you learn something first for so many. So many questions we have with like lawyers and PR with our editors, with ourselves, you have between the wizard writing like about how we found something else that you forgot.

Speaker 2: 49:06 It's just you forget there's so much just forget or where you found a thing, you know, like did this come from that or from that I mean, uh, all that, all that has the potential to would be important for your, for your story. And so being able to have a, leaving yourself some trail, see and sort of find it later is really important. And then we use Google sheets, like spreadsheets for our characters. So we have like a name column, but like a contact column number, a column that lists like all of our correspondence with the person or our efforts to correspond with a person. Um, like any kind of note about

like who knows them or who introduced us to that person. So it's like a central repository of characters and sources so that we can again remember like how we came to a person and how long we've been trying to get them complements for how long we had to talk. So I guess like I said just consent to like record keeping. Like really as best you can keep really good records about your process.

Speaker 1: 50:10 Yeah that's really good advice. I wish I had done that for the last investigation cause we had full reporters working on it. It was a smaller one. It still like took us a couple of months and like fact checking was a nightmare.

Speaker 2: 50:25 Nightmare. Right. Cause you where you read a

Speaker 1: 50:27 thing totally

Speaker 2: 50:30 same way I would do, and this is related to that, but both for the characters sheet as a Google doc is we have a, you know like sort of fuller structure in Google docs. It's roughly like for first for the studio audio, which was self explanatory. Like all the assaults go there organized by characters who are seeds. And then we have, we search, which is sort of a catchall for just anything, any reporting, any article we read, anything like DOJ files, FBI file, anything. There's an unresearched folder and then you can get a link to it and then you say link to it from the doc. So if you're saying like I read this article in there about [inaudible] Salva in it, you have this great lawn and blah blah blah blah blah, you can link into the file so that when you're looking through it, you know, it's definitely immediate sort of like source click on that.

Speaker 2: 51:19 Like I have this thing I remember that's, you know, and the same with our character. She's like, once we interviewed somebody, we had put a link to it in the sheets and from one place to kind of very quickly [inaudible] to find that. And often

like we did for our interviews, you know, we would have maybe three audio files broken up and see linked to the specific plan from time to time. There were something interesting from it. So, yeah, that's just really, really helpful and all sorts of ways that you couldn't even imagine. And so now having kind of been through that, I think will be even more kind of regimented about how we, how we, um, how we know sort of note taking stuff and stuff

Speaker 1: 52:01 that is so smart. I'm going to have to employ that because just why not.

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