SPECIAL ISSUE

Globe Magazine

THE BOSTON GLOBE
SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

SPOTLIGHT: 50 YEARS OF GROUNDBREAKING INVESTIGATIONS

SPOTLIGHT

50 YEARS OF GROUNDBREAKING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

A LOOK BACK AT 15 SPOTLIGHT TEAM PROJECTS THAT CHANGED BOSTON AND BEYOND. PLUS, *GLOBE* JOURNALISTS SHARE THE STORIES BEHIND THE STORIES.

BY MIKE DAMIANO, JOSEPH P. KAHN, DASIA MOORE, AND ANNALISA QUINN

WHY SPOTLIGHT MATTERS

BY BRIAN MCGRORY
EDITOR, *THE BOSTON GLOBE*

Boston Globe Spotlight Team

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to dislike Tim Leland. He's as well read as anyone on the planet, intellectually curious, a soft-spoken and gentle soul who bikes around downtown Boston in the early morning hours when much of the region is barely awake.

He's also the guy who launched the *Globe*'s Spotlight Team, and, for that, he deserves this city's gratitude.

It was legendary *Globe* editor Tom Winship who, in 1969, dispatched Tim overseas, where he'd get a firsthand view of the investigative unit at *The Sunday Times* in London. Journalists weren't exactly jetting off to Europe all that often back then. Investigative reporting in the United States was not what it has become. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein had yet to reveal the depths of Watergate. Organizations like ProPublica, entirely devoted to investigative journalism, didn't exist. Newspapers did important accountability work, but most were still built to cover things, rather than uncover them.

Winship launched the Spotlight Team shortly after Tim returned stateside — with Tim as its first editor. The next year, in 1971, the team wrote a series of stories exposing widespread public corruption in Somerville that earned the *Globe* a coveted Pulitzer Prize. It would be easy to say the rest is history, but it's really the present that matters most.

This issue marks the 50th anniversary of the Spotlight Team's founding, and yes, we understand that it's actually the 51st, but nobody wanted to note the occasion in the throes of a pandemic, plus Spotlight always runs on its own timetable anyway. You try getting an investigative reporter to hurry up.

Those 51 years have been marked by some of the most important work in all of journalism: stories that have held some of the most powerful people and institutions in this region and the world to account — governors, mayors, world-class hospitals, the FBI, and of course, the Catholic Church.

People have been indicted, convicted, and imprisoned based on Spotlight reporting. National health care policies have been changed. One of Boston's most enduring secrets — that crime lord Whitey Bulger was a protected federal informant — was revealed in a Spotlight report. Countless children were spared from sexual assault, and those who had suffered its brutality were given a public voice, in Spotlight's reporting on pedophilic priests.

It is rarely glamorous work. But the people who have done it have made a habit of turning doorstep interviews, dusty records, and complex data sets into essential journalism. It's not just the misdeeds of the people and institutions that the team has exposed. It's all the people who have stayed on the right side of wrong out of fear of getting a message that simply says, "Steve Kurkjian of Spotlight called."

Steve, by the way, was the third editor of the team, a winner of three Pulitzer Prizes in three different decades. He could get a concrete wall to tell secrets with his affable, aw-shucks kind of way.

There are others, of course. The late Gerry O'Neill, a longtime Spotlight editor, had the demeanor of a state trooper and the literary touch of a poet. Walter Robinson, the editor who drove the Spotlight work that exposed the horrific misdeeds of the Catholic Church, is the most relentlessly resourceful journalist to have ever worked at the *Globe*. Tom Farragher was a gentlemanly Spotlight editor, full of laughs — until he had the goods — and always kept an eye trained on helping those who needed it most. As Spotlight leader, Scott Allen brought huge ambition and sweep in the subjects that he sought and the journalism that he led. Meanwhile, Mark Morrow, the *Globe*'s senior deputy managing editor, has provided wise and skilled editorial direction to Spotlight editors for more than two decades.

Patty Wen is the Spotlight editor now and by any measure she lands among the best — a modern-day journalist who has made Spotlight as relevant as it's ever been. We've more than doubled the size of the team in the past few years as it's taken on seismic issues, such as racism in Boston. Spotlight has veered off our normal platform to create an award-winning podcast and print series on the late Patriots player Aaron Hernandez that further exposed the dangers of the NFL. Most recently, the team's investigations have been central to the *Globe*'s coverage of the pandemic.

Now more than ever, to make these stories what they are takes a small army: deeply skilled and committed reporters, data journalists, creative graphic artists and designers, photographers and videographers, editors, producers, developers, and so many more. It's not unusual for 20 or more staffers to pour themselves into these efforts, every one of them vital to the cause. An assignment to Spotlight is among the most coveted roles in the business.

The *Globe*'s plan is to increase our investigative firepower even further. Our readership, the most sophisticated and committed of any major metropolitan news organization in the nation, demands it.

Our organization's accountability work, including last year's Pulitzer-winning series focusing on the nation's failure to regulate bad drivers and truckers who should have been taken off the roads long ago, is devoured by our subscribers and others. You know the impact of the Catholic Church investigation, but another example: The 2017 series on race relations in Boston spawned a region-wide discussion, which still continues today.

This we've learned over 51 years: When you give talented journalists the time and resources they need, there's literally no limit to what they will uncover. And in doing that, we achieve one of our most important goals, which is to make our namesake region a better, fairer, and safer place to live. That work will endure for the next half century and beyond.

THE TOP 15 SPOTLIGHT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALL TIME

1971

"SPOTLIGHT ON SOMERVILLE"

TIMOTHY LELAND (EDITOR), GERARD O'NEILL, STEPHEN A. KURKJIAN, AND ANN DESANTIS (RESEARCHER)


Ex-Convict Builder Awarded $777,756 in No-Bid Contracts

(Copyright 1971, The Globe Newspaper Co.)

A contractor who spent two years in prison for defrauding Somerville on contract work in the 1950's was paid more than three quarters of a million dollars by the city for no-bid work in the 1960's.

For Luigi Analetto — convicted on seven charges of stealing from Somerville in 1950 and conspiracy to defraud the Commonwealth in 1960 — the past decade was a boom time for business with his city government.

A three-month investigation by the Globe Spotlight team into municipal affairs in Somerville revealed that:

• Analetto, doing business as the "Otis Construction Co.," was paid a total of $777,756.44 by the city of Somerville for no-bid work done between 1960 and 1970.

• This was more than any other fa- contractor received during that pe- counting a lump-sum contract for of the other

CONTRACTOR LUIGI ANALETTO

ments and conducted more than 120 interviews.

12 the number of allied choppers downed since South Vietnamese troops drove into Laos five days ago.

Ten of the helicopters were American, with 10 US soldiers killed, two missing and six wounded. Two South Vietnamese helicopters were shot down and the 15 persons aboard, including four newsmen, were reported missing and presumed dead.

Of the eight American helicopters shot down since the Laotian campaign opened Monday, five crashed inside Laos and three were hit in South Vietnam north of the Khe Sanh combat base that served as a staging area for the Laotian drive, officers said.

Pilots spoke of extremely heavy and accurate antiaircraft fire from North Vietnamese gunners battling to protect their Ho Chi Minh supply trail that snakes through Laos into South Vietnam and Cambodia.

NURSIN child

So

Somerville in the 1960s bore little resemblance to its current gentrified self. Populated largely by working-class immigrant families, the city faced heavy debt, soaring taxes, crumbling infrastructure, and a streak of alleged corruption that ran through multiple mayoral administrations. As tax rates rose throughout the state, Spotlight reporters wondered how all that money was being spent.

In Somerville's case, the answer was not well at all, as Spotlight discovered during a three-month investigation. The problem was a law that exempted any city project under $1,000 from being put out to bid. This created a loophole that contractors with City Hall connections could exploit by splitting a big contract into many smaller ones, each under $1,000.

That loophole was adding up to expensive headaches for taxpayers. One ex-con in the building business was awarded more than $777,000 in no-bid contracts; another business run by a former Department of Public Works commissioner racked up nearly $500,000 in projects.

In its six-part series, published in February 1971, Spotlight exposed politically connected contractors reaping millions in no-bid projects; hidden business relationships between public officials and private companies; moldering records stored in basement shoeboxes; office holders brazenly flouting conflict-of-interest laws; and other systemic abuses.

Pressed to explain one such shady deal, ex-mayor James Brennan said, "I don't climb up on every roof every time somebody fixes a roof, and I don't go into a room every time it's painted." Maybe, but he did go to trial on conspiracy charges.

When another public official was grilled about insurance contracts written by a company that he was associated with, he denied any ownership link — whereupon Spotlight published the articles of organization bearing his signature.

PRESSED TO EXPLAIN ONE SUCH SHADY DEAL, EX-MAYOR JAMES BRENNAN SAID, "I DON'T CLIMB UP ON EVERY ROOF EVERY TIME SOMEBODY FIXES A ROOF."

The fallout began immediately. Reform-minded Mayor Lester Ralph demanded all public documents related to no-bid work be impounded, then convened a special Town Meeting at which he fired his city auditor. (Angry residents showed up wearing "Spotlight" campaign-style buttons.) By August, 19 people and four companies had been indicted on 119 counts of conspiracy and theft. The group included the auditor, two former DPW commissioners, and three ex-mayors.

Somerville would soon undergo major changes, driven by developments like the Red Line extension to Davis Square. Most indicted officials would eventually be acquitted. Still, in acknowledging the legal obstacles to securing conspiracy convictions, Superior Court Judge Francis Lappin noted that "not guilty" did not mean there wasn't a problem. "It appears that someone broke the law over there," he said.

The series, which won a Pulitzer Prize, ushered in a change within the *Globe*, too, where there had been some doubts that the Spotlight team was necessary. "It showed this model would work," says founding Spotlight editor Timothy Leland. "Our earlier investigations were pretty good but not of that caliber. This one was something special."

Current Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone, who is stepping down after 18 years in office, remembers the series as a civic "wake-up call," saying it showed that higher ethical standards were urgently needed. Spotlight, Curtatone says, "didn't just shed light on what was wrong, it motivated Mayor Ralph to focus on what needed to be done," including professionalizing city offices and bringing more transparency to the awarding of contracts. "It emphasized the need for objective journalism to hold public officials accountable," he says.

– *Joseph P. Kahn*

1978

"THE DANGER OF RADIATION AT THE PORTSMOUTH SHIPYARD"

GERARD O'NEILL (EDITOR), STEPHEN A. KURKJIAN (ASSISTANT EDITOR), ALEXANDER B. HAWES JR., RICHARD KINDLEBERGER, WILLIAM DOHERTY, HERBERT BLACK, AND JOAN VENNOCHI (RESEARCHER)

By the late 1970s, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in New Hampshire was one of nine sites servicing the nation's nuclear submarine force. It employed 20,000 workers — welders, machinists, pipe fitters, and others — and, as the Spotlight team would discover, their illness and death rates ran at nearly twice the national average.

It started when Dr. Thomas Najarian of Boston's Veterans Administration Hospital was treating a worker suffering from a rare leukemia. Najarian suspected that the cancer, and other cases he'd heard of, were due to exposure to high radiation and other carcinogens. When shipyard officials maintained that Portsmouth's radiation levels were within acceptably low ranges, Najarian approached the *Globe* for help.

Spotlight reporters requested data from Navy and shipyard brass and workers' unions, only to be rebuffed. With Najarian's assistance, however, they began looking at public death records. Reporters examined some 100,000 in all, and interviewed nearly 600 next of kin. One retired shipyard worker and five co-workers had been sprayed with radioactive water when a hose burst — four of the six had died of cancer, yet the shipyard denied responsibility.

Before publishing the story in February 1978, the team submitted 10 specific questions to Portsmouth officials; all went unanswered. But to undermine the Spotlight project, the yard commander slipped copies of the initial findings to a dozen New England members of Congress. Questions soon began flying at hearings on Capitol Hill. Admiral Hyman Rickover, head of the nation's nuclear submarine force, did recommend further study, but also criticized the *Globe* for not turning over the names of the deceased workers cited, cast doubt on Najarian's medical credentials, and questioned whether Portsmouth had a serious problem.

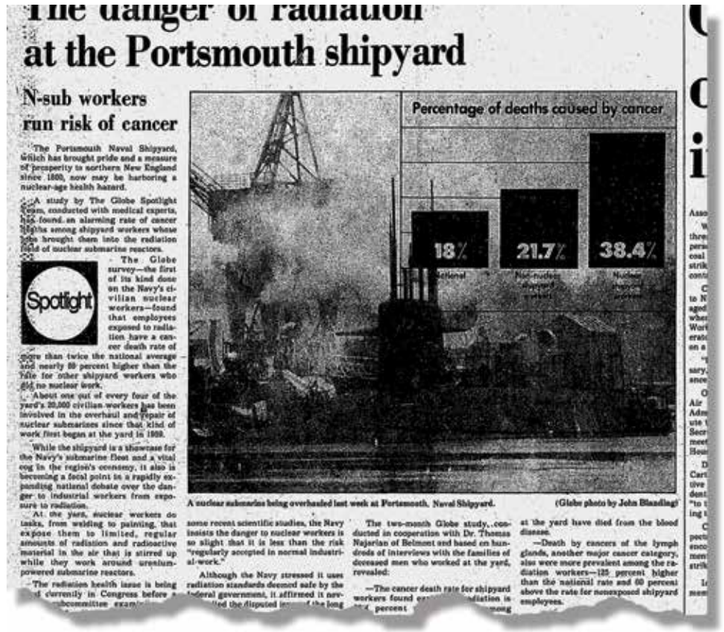
As it turned out, the Navy had been conducting its own preliminary investigation — compiled the previous year and detailed in a December 1978 Spotlight follow-up — and had already found "serious" radiation control deficiencies at the shipyard. Most exposure accidents resulted from radioactive water coming into contact with workers' skin, the report said. There was also evidence of contaminated material discharged into the harbor, "uneven" medical supervision, inadequate training, and safeguard failures.

The *Globe* series and House hearings also caught the attention of an anti-nuclear group founded by consumer advocate Ralph Nader, which called Rickover's testimony "a grave disservice" to the nation's defense agencies and asked the House committee to look into whether there had been a coverup. A year later, federal health investigators and civilian experts visited Portsmouth to further assess its cancer risks. In 2005, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health issued a study, finding that the risk of contracting leukemia increased with repeated exposure to radiation and other carcinogenic materials at the shipyard.

"The *Globe* did a lot of work on this and did it really well," says Najarian, now retired from medical practice, noting that the series led to an overhaul of the shipyard's command structure. More importantly, it helped change public perceptions about the risks of working with radioactive materials.

Decades later, Portsmouth remains one of the country's four naval shipyards that service nuclear submarines, and has earned several workplace safety and environmental impact awards.

– Joseph P. Kahn



The danger of radiation at the Portsmouth shipyard

N-sub workers run risk of cancer

The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which has brought pride and a measure of prosperity to northern New England since 1800, now may be harboring a nuclear-age health hazard.

A study by The Globe Spotlight Team, conducted with medical experts, has found an alarming rate of cancer deaths among shipyard workers whose jobs brought them into the radiation field of nuclear submarine reactors.

Spotlight

The Globe survey—the first of its kind done on the Navy's civilian nuclear workers—found that employees exposed to radiation have a cancer death rate of more than twice the national average and nearly 80 percent higher than the rate for other shipyard workers who did no nuclear work.

About one out of every four of the yard's 20,000 civilian workers has been involved in the overhaul and repair of nuclear submarines since that kind of work first began at the yard in 1959.

While the shipyard is a showcase for the Navy's submarine fleet and a vital cog in the region's economy, it also is becoming a focal point in a rapidly expanding national debate over the danger to industrial workers from exposure to radiation.

At the yard, nuclear workers do tasks, from welding to painting, that expose them to limited, regular amounts of radiation and radioactive material in the air that is stirred up while they work around uranium-powered submarine reactors.

The radiation health issue is being [illegible] currently in Congress before [illegible] subcommittee examines some recent scientific studies, the Navy insists the danger to nuclear workers is so slight that it is less than the risk "regularly accepted in normal industrial work."

Although the Navy stressed it uses radiation standards deemed safe by the federal government, it affirmed it nev[illegible] the disputed [illegible] the long [illegible] percent [illegible] among [illegible] at the yard have died from the blood disease.

The two-month Globe study, conducted in cooperation with Dr. Thomas Najarian of Belmont and based on hundreds of interviews with the families of deceased men who worked at the yard, revealed:

—The cancer death rate for shipyard workers found exposed to radiation is [illegible] percent [illegible] above the rate for nonexposed shipyard employees.

—Death by cancers of the lymph glands, another major cancer category, also were more prevalent among the radiation workers—125 percent higher than the national rate and 60 percent above the rate for nonexposed shipyard employees.

Percentage of deaths caused by cancer

18% National

21.7% Non-nuclear

38.4% Nuclear

A nuclear submarine being overhauled last week at Portsmouth, Naval Shipyard. (Globe photo by John Blanding)

1979

"WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE T?"

STEPHEN A. KURKJIAN (EDITOR), ALEXANDER B. HAWES JR., NILS BRUZELIUS, ROBERT PORTERFIELD, AND JOAN VENNOCHI (RESEARCHER)

Are the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's current problems untenable? Unsolvable? Financially unsustainable? Frustrated MBTA riders might answer "yes" to all of the above. Hard as it is to believe now, the situation looked even bleaker in the late 1970s, prompting Spotlight to launch a three-month investigation into a public transit system that managed to somehow have both the highest cost per mile and the worst service record of any in the country.

Journalists reporting the nine-part series, which began running in December 1979, examined thousands of public and internal documents that revealed antiquated equipment, patronage in hiring, weak management coupled with low worker productivity, and outright theft. Together, it was making Boston look like a hub of incompetence, not excellence.

The series focused on the T's powerful unions and their connections to then-Governor Ed King's administration. King had installed political cronies to replace the management team of former governor Michael Dukakis, his predecessor, while personally intervening in disciplinary matters. Meanwhile, King's campaign had pocketed generous contributions from unions.

Spotlight revealed a number of other problems: T workers being physically threatened for reporting inefficiencies and trying to correct them; runaway overtime costs; an MBTA repair shop colorfully described as a "haven for goldbrickers"; stolen equipment, tools, and cash (1,600 quarters from fare machines were found in one employee's truck); and a badly mismanaged pension fund that was costing taxpayers millions. The series would win a Pulitzer Prize for local specialized investigative reporting.

In analyzing Boston's troubled T, Spotlight showed how the Toronto Transit Commission ran a more efficient, less costly system — one with high employee morale, low vandalism rates, and minimal political interference. "We don't run into the jurisdictional crap they do in Boston," one Canadian transit leader said at the time.

King then doubled down on some problematic behavior — seizing control of the T and threatening fare hikes and cuts in service — but was not in a position to do that for much longer. "The *Globe* series had a real impact on public opinion — and on me," says Dukakis, who reclaimed the office from King after the 1982 primary and election. "Once I decided to run again, it was not only helpful — I campaigned on that issue — but I knew I'd have to deliver if elected. And we did." Over his next eight years in office, he completed and opened stations for the extension of the Red Line from Harvard Square to Alewife.

Journalists like those on the Spotlight Team are "critically important," Dukakis says. "You're the ones who have to hold them accountable if the folks inside the system are not doing it."

– Joseph P. Kahn

MBTA hiring record risks losses of $2b

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, under chairman Robert L. Foster, has dramatically decreased the number of blacks and other racial minorities hired for management and clerical jobs, a decrease that could jeopardize $2 billion in federal grants, including funds to extend the Red Line and relocate the Orange Line.

Since Foster took over as MBTA chairman last Jan. 29, only five of the 101 professional-clerical positions, ranging from director of operations to secretaries, have been filled by blacks or other racial minorities. In 1978, under Foster's predecessor, Robert R. Kiley, minorities were hired to fill 57 of the 142 similar positions.

In addition to its poor minority-hiring record, the MBTA, under Foster, has failed to meet federal standards requiring each department within the system to award a certain percentage of consultant and service contracts to minority-controlled businesses. Latest records available show that four of five departments involved have not met the percentages required under the affirmative action plan.

In an interview, Foster said he was unaware how many blacks he had hired while chairman. He said that his policy for hiring minorities had not changed from Kiley's, but was unable to explain the decrease in minority hiring. "Obviously those numbers show there have been some change, but there's been no change in policy," Foster said.

While minority hiring has been on the decline at the MBTA, political patronage has been a top priority. At least 17 persons hired by Foster — mostly for management and professional jobs — either have direct ties to the election of Edward J. King as governor or to King supporters.

In his interview, Foster said a person's political ties are not a major factor in deciding whether he is hired. However, according to an aide, during the summer Foster was receiving so much pressure from the governor's office to place campaign workers on the MBTA payroll he grumbled, "They must think I'm running an employment agency down here."

MBTA jobs have historically been the most sought-after of state positions, because the salaries and related benefits are the highest of any state agency, and, for most positions little technical expertise is required.

"... there's been some change, but there has been no change in policy."

ROBERT L. FOSTER

Last September, the federal Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA), which monitors the MBTA's compliance with affirmative action guidelines, warned Foster that federal funding on capital and operating grants, which includes funding for major construction projects, would be withheld if Foster's performance on the hiring of minorities and minority contractors did not improve.

The MBTA was given until Nov. 15 to correct an UMTA list of deficiencies that covered four pages. In November, MBTA officials sought and received an extension until Feb. 1 to correct the deficiencies the UMTA had found.

Continued federal funding of such projects as the Red Line extensions to Braintree in the south, and Arlington Heights in the west, the relocation of the Orange Line tracks to Forest Hills, and numerous renovations of bus garages and bus stations could hinge on satisfying UMTA requirements.

In December 1977, the MBTA Board of Directors agreed to an affirmative action plan that called for 10 percent of all MBTA jobs to be filled by minorities, and another 10 percent by women, by January 1980.

Because of strides made by the Kiley administration, the MBTA as of August 1979 had met its agency-wide goals for

MINORITY, Page 2

"It's

Cl fa

By Peter Ward Special to The C

OTTAWA, C Joe Clark's go 129-133, in Parli of his austerity can expect a ge months.

Moments afte with reporters t tion campaign, b against him.

Clark's first b by Finance Mini have hit Canadi cent-per-gallon promised increa within four year

It also would taxes and it war rises, coupled wi Opposition Libe said the budget an economic tail

The vote wa and New Democ the defeat, whi worst political c ades.

Ins

SPOTLIGHT REVEALED A NUMBER OF OTHER PROBLEMS: 1,600 QUARTERS FROM FARE MACHINES WERE FOUND IN ONE EMPLOYEE'S TRUCK.

5 DECADES OF IMPACT

A Selected Spotlight Timeline

September 27, 1970 *Boston Globe* editor in chief Thomas Winship announces the creation of a "Spotlight Team" to "provide in-depth reporting on the big stories of the day." For its first investigation, editor Timothy Leland and reporters Gerard O'Neill and Stephen A. Kurkjian reveal corruption at a West End parking lot.

May 1, 1972 The Spotlight Team wins its first Pulitzer Prize for a series of exposés on corruption in Somerville, including no-bid contracting for an array of government services.

March 26, 1974 Spotlight, now led by O'Neill as editor, launches an ambitious investigation into ineffective, profit-making trade schools. Team members go undercover as students to see how schools take advantage of military veterans and minority youth.

March 9, 1976 "City's Property Tax: System Without Justice" reveals the arbitrary way property taxes are set in Boston, showing similar buildings taxed at wildly different levels. In response, the IRS announces a crackdown on some inequities, and Boston embarks on a revaluation of all properties.

1985

"POLICE FLOCK TO QUICK, EASY MA PROGRAM"

STEPHEN A. KURKJIAN (EDITOR), DANIEL GOLDEN, AND M.E. MALONE

It was Christmas Eve 1984 when reporter Daniel Golden's phone rang. The caller said he was the chief financial officer of a mid-sized Massachusetts city and faced a budget disaster.

Under a 1970 state law known as the Quinn Bill, which created the Police Pay Initiative Program (now Police Career Incentive Pay Program), police officers could boost their salaries by up to 30 percent by obtaining an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree in criminal justice. The caller said half of his city's officers had earned degrees from Anna Maria College. It was severely straining his payroll, and no one was making sure the education was worthwhile.

More reporting revealed that the issue went far beyond one municipality and one small liberal arts college in Paxton. By the time the five-part series began appearing in 1985, Massachusetts taxpayers were spending $12 million a year – $75 million total to that point — on increased salaries, tuition payments, and other costs for a program with no oversight or uniform academic standards. Its pay incentives were the nation's most generous, too, with nearly 120 towns participating. Yet, if the system was being gamed, how could that be documented?

Legally, reporters could not attend classes posing as police officers. But Golden could visit a class posing as a security guard with higher career aspirations. (Such undercover reporting in the public interest was relatively common at the time.)

The class, run by Northeastern University, was taught in Brockton by a local police officer. Golden told the instructor he "wasn't a very good student" and worried the course might be too difficult. The conversation, as Golden recalls it, went

MASSACHUSETTS TAXPAYERS HAD SPENT $75 MILLION AT THAT POINT ON INCREASED SALARIES, TUITION PAYMENTS, AND OTHER COSTS FOR A PROGRAM WITH NO OVERSIGHT.

something like this:

Instructor: *Don't worry. The final test is 20 questions, multiple choice.*

Golden: *I'm not really good with multiple choice, either.*

Instructor: *No problem. I'll give you 18 of the answers tonight.*

For certification, a course required at least 10 enrolled students. Golden counted four in the room. Later, he glanced at the attendance sheet: It listed nearly 20 names, all marked "present."

Spotlight reporters uncovered many such dubious practices during their three-month investigation. They examined three institutions closely: Northeastern, whose law enforcement program was unrelated to its School of Criminology and Criminal Justice; New Hampshire College in Hooksett (where the criminal justice program had no full-time faculty trained in the discipline); and Anna Maria, which had awarded 549 of the 849 master's degrees under the police pay program.

Some of the impact was immediate — then-Governor Michael Dukakis ordered a review of the program, and Northeastern suspended four instructors — but other improvements took years. In 2003, the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, an independent, nonpartisan research organization, questioned the worth of these so-called cop shops, pointing out in a report that "no standards existed for curriculum, instructor certification, attendance, or course requirements" beyond what each school set for itself. Later that year, the Commonwealth approved new standards: no more academic credit for "life experiences," for example, and teaching faculty would now need more relevant academic credentials.

The Spotlight series "brought a compelling case for change and reform [when] there was no appetite for public officials to make changes on their own," says Elaine Beattie, a senior strategic adviser who joined the Boston Municipal Research Bureau in 1985. "It put the issues out there, and that's an important part of making public policy." – *Joseph P. Kahn*

SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 1985

$12m a year for loosely run program to educate police

First in a series

It was an idea with noble intentions, born out of the demonstrations of the 1960s that pitted police against civil rights activists, college students and Vietnam protesters. Police needed to become more sensitive to the communities they were asked to control, and the best way was college education.

SPOTLIGHT

In 1970, Massachusetts adopted the nation's highest pay [illegible]

officers to obtain college degrees. The program, which now costs more than $12 million a year, has turned into a quick and easy way for officers to secure salary increases of up to $13,000.

By looking the other way, educational and law enforcement authorities have allowed colleges and police alike to profit from a program that has forsaken its goals of exposing officers to sound college-level instruction and diverse student bodies.

No one has monitored the program to ensure that the estimated $75 million expended by the state and [illegible]

munities in the last 15 years, has produced more capable or insightful police. In state government, the sole employee working full time on the multimillion-dollar program performs only bookkeeping tasks, collecting transcripts and reimbursement requests.

Known as the "Quinn bill" after its sponsor, former attorney general Robert H. Quinn, the Police Pay Incentive Program has become a sweetener that demands little academic sweat, making police the envy of all other public employees. "We have police captains in th[illegible]

Manager Robert W. Healy. "They don't like it when I say, 'When I'm reincarnated, I want to come back as a captain.'"

During the past three months, the Globe Spotlight Team has examined the criminal justice programs with the highest police enrollments through interviews, review of records and unannounced visits to classes.

By its sheer scale, the pay incentive program has spawned a police education industry at Massachusetts colleges. While many programs in other states disappeared with the loss in 1980 of federal funding for officers' tuition, an ever-increasing number of public and private institutions in this state offer majors in criminal justice. Typically, these programs try to attract the greatest number of police officers at the lowest cost in fa[illegible]ity, library collections and other re[illegible]

It found that most police officers were enrolled in classes with few or no civilians; some colleges granted heavy credit for police academy training or experience on the job; many courses were given at satellite campuses without libraries, and instructors often were police themselves.

a state education official, criminal justice is a "money cow."

1988 + 1998

"THE BULGER MYSTIQUE" AND "WHITEY AND THE FBI: CROSSING THE LINE"

1988: GERARD M. O'NEILL (EDITOR), DICK LEHR, KEVIN CULLEN, CHRISTINE CHINLUND, AND MARY ELIZABETH KNOX (RESEARCHER)

1998: GERARD M. O'NEILL (EDITOR), DICK LEHR, MITCHELL ZUCKOFF, AND SHELLEY MURPHY

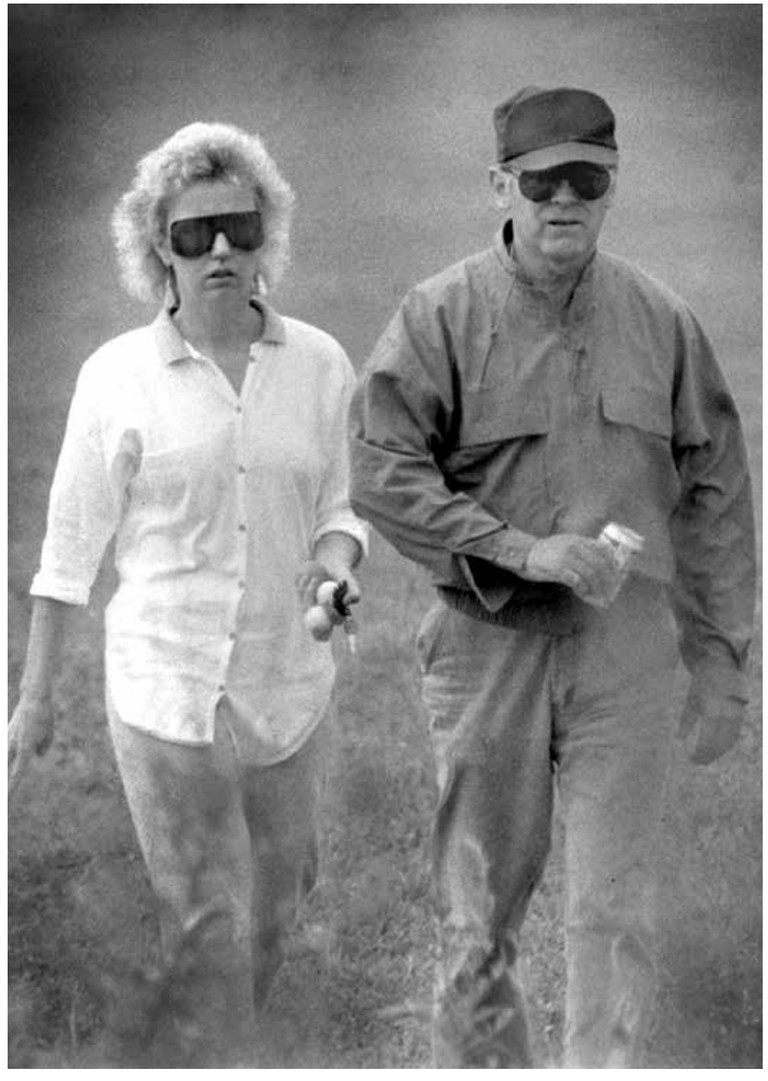
When reporter Dick Lehr first heard the rumor that Whitey Bulger — gangster, son of Southie, despiser of snitches and rats — was an FBI informant, he had one thought: Sour grapes.

Local police figured Bulger must have federal protection. They had been trying to catch him for years, but Bulger always seemed to know where the bugs were planted, or when a rival gang was going to make a move. Lehr and his Spotlight colleagues just figured he was smart.

But the FBI wasn't just protecting Bulger. Whitey's FBI handler, John Connolly, and Connolly's boss, the head of the Boston organized crime squad, John Morris, were actually aiding him: accepting bribes and giving him the names of people planning to testify against him. Bulger later ordered that some of those people be murdered. In the late 1980s, however, Lehr and the other Spotlight reporters didn't yet know any of that. They knew just that Bulger had an odd ability to stay one step ahead of the law and weasel his way out of tight spots.

They began — cautiously — to dig. If they were wrong, it would be fine. There was a story there anyway on the strange paradox of the Bulger brothers: one a notorious gangster, and the other, Senate President William Bulger, one of the most powerful politicians in Massachusetts.

A breakthrough came when Gerard O'Neill, Spotlight's editor at the time, had lunch with Morris, who, to O'Neill's shock, confirmed the



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN TLUMACKI / GLOBE STAFF/FILE

Whitey Bulger and Catherine Greig walking behind a skating rink on Gallivan Boulevard in Dorchester in 1988.

March 20, 1977 Spotlight reporters and photographers spend three months trailing public officials suspected of barely showing up for work. The investigation results in tighter controls on attendance and several people losing their jobs, including the mayor of Cambridge.

February 19, 1978 Spotlight produces a major study on the radioactive result of the Cold War, focusing on the high incidence of cancer deaths among workers at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

June 10, 1979 Kurkjian debuts as Spotlight editor, leading an investigation into the lobbying clout of nursing homes. He will win a total of three Pulitzers as a team member.

April 14, 1980 The team wins its second Pulitzer Prize for a series on the MBTA, which had drastically scaled back minority hiring and contracting while becoming the most expensive transit system in the country, mile for mile.

March 24, 1985 Spotlight reporters go undercover as students to reveal sham education programs that police officers were using to boost their pay. The series leads to reevaluation of these so-called Quinn Bill courses.

THE BULGER MYSTIQUE: Whitey a

So where was Whitey? The question has become law enforcement's lament as it tries to get evidence against him. Last month, the elusive Bulger was photographed as he took a walk in an MDC park near Neponset Circle.

■ SPOTLIGHT
Continued from Page 1

The image has served him well. He has confounded everyone. The Mafia has a love-hate thing with him. "They're with us," Ilario M.A. Zannino, the tough Mafia lieutenant, once said about Bulger and his associates, only to bluster another time about how he would like to blow them all away with machine guns.

And the Federal Bureau of Investigation has for years had a special relationship with Bulger that has divided law enforcement, bitterly and

It was like a scene from a mob movie, and the sudden burst of anger stunned the state troopers who were watching secretly from across the street. The troopers were left with an indelible impression similar to one a South Boston man had when he first saw Bulger's violent side 40 years ago. "I saw him get into a fight, and he just beat the piss out of the guy. Oh, he was vicious. And he wasn't that big. The other guy was bigger. But he was tough, and everyone whispered, 'That's Whitey Bulger.'"

But the garage near Boston Garden was only a pit stop for a man whose business makes perpetual motion a lifestyle. For a while, he shifted his meetings to the back room of a smokeshop near City Hall. He would make the rounds himself, ducking

Colony and Dorchester streets in South B
go down to the phone at West Broadwa
chester Avenue. Then into a variety stor
way, followed by a quick swing into a
while, the favorite spot was the bank of
outside the Howard Johnson's off the So
pressway.

From there, they would head off to m
inside a row house on a narrow South
street or in the parking lots of the facto
Port Channel. They cruised around in
that were changed frequently to guard
veillance. For weekends, Whitey has kep
or Jaguar – the kind of luxury car he
prized, going back to the projects when
had the wheels few others could afford
that sported the big fins and shiny ch
era.

The phones, the rotating cars and
meetings were all calculated moves. So
"He's compulsive. The agents would do
and there was a lot of ash, he would h
his fireplace. He would rip things int
shreds, almost like he had a shredder
ment."

They were days in the early 1980s th
ed at a private club in Roxbury co
Flemmi. And they were days that pertu
tured Bulger's legendary temper – a r
that first surfaced in his teen-age fightin
became part of underworld folklore by
when a wiseguy once warned a secretly
shark victim that he would rather tan
cobra" than cross Whitey Bulger.

At 3:05 p.m. on Sept. 25, 1980, acc
state police report, a trooper who w
Bulger and Flemmi witnessed Whitey's
riffraff in his hometown: Bulger sudde
from his car and grabbed a wino, wh
slumped on a Silver Street stoop. W
standing by, Bulger beat the man abo
kicked him, then, in a final flourish, too
hat and threw it down the street. Bulger
the car laughing and drove away. Whe
clothes trooper approached the wino
pushed him away. "I don't know nothin
said. "And leave me alone."

Few have a clue about the size of Bu
Boston cadre, but no one doubts his
can't tell you that anybody I've work
any idea what kind of muscle he has
everybody's scared to death of
federal prosecutor.

arrangement. "It was a real 'Oh my God' moment," Lehr recalls (O'Neill died in 2019). "We're gonna have to rearrange our understanding of Boston. The ground had shifted." After getting confirmation from a second source, the *Globe* prepared to publish.

In the lead-up to publication, FBI agent Tom Daly called Kevin Cullen, one of the reporters working on the piece, to try to warn him off the story, implying that Whitey Bulger might retaliate. "He said, 'He would think nothing of clipping you,'" Cullen recalls. Cullen, who lived in Southie, didn't believe that Bulger would kill a reporter, but the call "was chilling because I realized how deeply the FBI was invested in this." Nonetheless, the *Globe* moved him briefly into a hotel. And that wasn't the only concern: Would the piece motivate the Italian Mafia to kill Bulger? "No one wanted blood on our hands, even Whitey Bulger's blood," Lehr says.

WOULD THE PIECE MOTIVATE THE ITALIAN MAFIA TO KILL BULGER? "NO ONE WANTED BLOOD ON OUR HANDS, EVEN WHITEY BULGER'S BLOOD," LEHR SAYS.

In the end, the story the paper ran in 1988 was muted. The word "informant" didn't appear. It referred instead to a "special relationship" between Bulger and the FBI. The story was not on the front page with a blaring headline, but folded into a larger series about the Bulger brothers. Maybe it was too muted — the reporters had thought official investigations and prosecutions might follow. "We had the naive expectation that something would come of it," Lehr says. "The role of journalism in a democracy is to expose wrongdoing. And then it's someone else's job."

"No one really believed at first that *Globe* report," explains Brian T. Kelly, the former federal prosecutor who eventually tried Bulger. "It was too incredible to believe that the premier criminal in Boston was, in fact, working with the FBI."

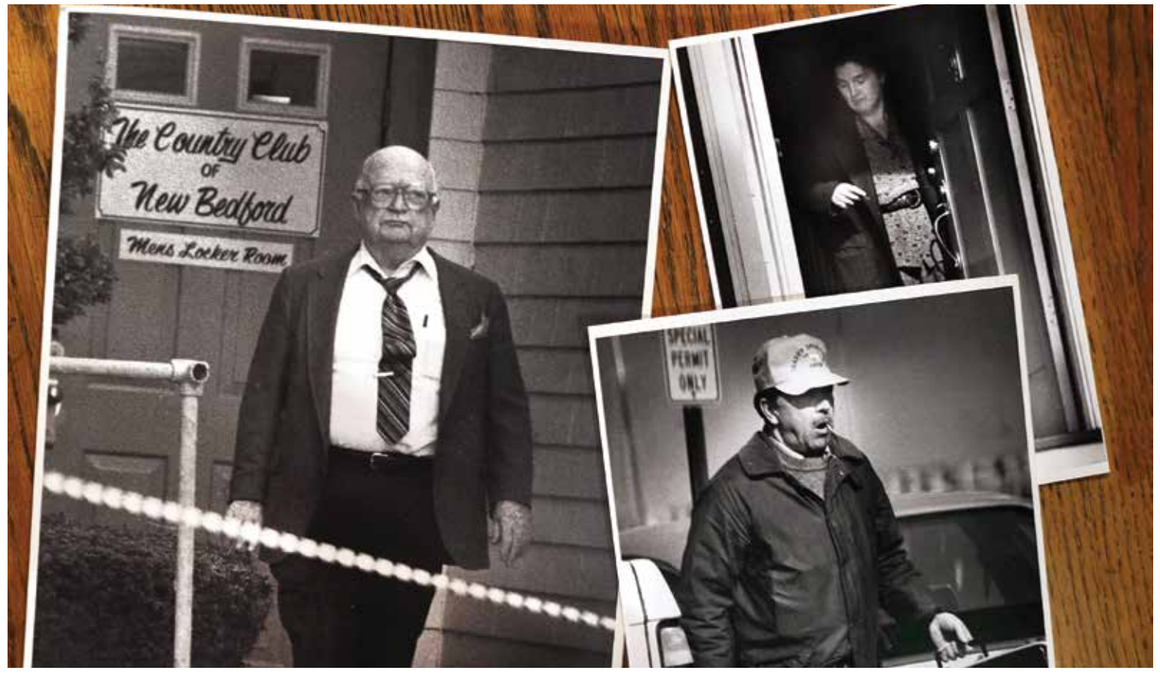
It wasn't until 10 years later that the full extent of the corruption was revealed. By then, Bulger was on the run — tipped off to a looming indictment by Connolly — but his associate Stephen Flemmi, who was indicted for racketeering, defended himself by saying he had been an informant for the FBI. So, in 10 months of extraordinary federal hearings before Judge Mark L. Wolf, the FBI was forced to describe in detail its deal with Bulger and Flemmi.

The *Globe* covered the hearings and their aftermath in vivid detail, and managed to publish long interviews with Connolly, who refused to testify in court, citing Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination (he was eventually convicted on racketeering and second-degree murder charges). Shelley Murphy, a Spotlight reporter who covered the hearings and interviewed Connolly extensively, witnessed the deep reputational damage the Boston FBI suffered. "New FBI agents who came into the Boston office talked about how it was a real black eye," she says. "They had to work hard to try to rebuild trust within the community."

Bulger was finally captured in 2011, and in 2018 he was murdered by fellow inmates in West Virginia. He still maintains an outsize presence in the mythology of Boston. A book that Lehr and O'Neill wrote, *Black Mass*, was made into a movie starring Johnny Depp as Bulger, and Bulger partly inspired Jack Nicholson's crime boss character in *The Departed*.

In the end, Bulger was, in certain ways, not the real target of Spotlight's investigative work. "Whitey Bulger, to me, was never the main character of this story," Lehr says. "It was the FBI. That's the public agency. That's the institution that was corrupted."

– Annalisa Quinn



Photos from the 1990 series show Massachusetts judges outside of their courtrooms during times they were supposed to have been at work.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

1990

"HALF-DAY JUSTICE"

GERARD O'NEILL (EDITOR), DICK LEHR, JOHN ALOYSIUS FARRELL, PATRICIA WEN, AND ARDYS J. KOZBIAL (RESEARCHER)

They went golfing. They went drinking. They went shopping. Or, they just went home. When they should have been working, a host of judges in Massachusetts in 1990 were routinely sneaking out early, as cases backed up and victims and the accused alike awaited justice. "The unspoken motto of the court system might well be: Get it done in the morning or put it off to another day," wrote John Aloysius Farrell in the first of the five-part series.

Over a seven-month investigation, the Spotlight Team trailed 53 judges, finding a startling pattern of truancy: They caught 27 of them leaving in the early afternoon. Judges might hear cases in the mornings, but despite their reputations for burning the midnight oil, their courtrooms were often silent by 2 p.m.

This investigation, more than most, involved a level of spy craft: Journalists used walkie-talkies to communicate, and tailed subjects as they left courthouses. Some of the story's photos were taken with a camera hidden inside a book with the pages cut out. *Globe* photographer John Tlumacki spent days crouched in the back of a van, angling his camera through curtains to capture judges unobtrusively. "We sometimes spent a week on one judge trying to photograph them and get their timeline," he recalls.

The series, when it was published, was dramatically visual: In photographs taken in the middle of the day, several judges were seen smoking cigars; another was leaving a country club, where he'd had a beer in front of him, his tie loosened. One photo showed a court officer asleep in an empty courtroom in the middle of the afternoon.

Patricia Wen, the current editor of Spotlight, was one of the reporters on the series. "As it turns out, now my husband is a superior court judge," she says. "He tells me that if he ever has to leave work early, he is always wondering, *Is there a Spotlight camera out there?*"

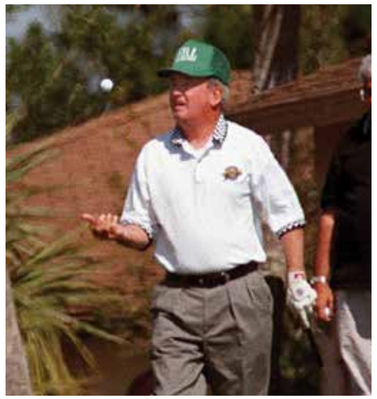
– Annalisa Quinn

September 18, 1988 Spotlight publishes a deep exploration of Massachusetts Senate President William Bulger, his crime boss brother, Whitey, and their vice-like grip on power in their respective worlds. The series includes the explosive revelation that the murderous gangster had a "special" relationship with the Boston FBI office that protected him.

September 23, 1990 "Half-Day Justice" features pictures by photographer John Tlumacki of state judges who were obviously not at work during the workday, leading to case delays and dismissals, particularly for the politically connected. Some judges went home, some played golf, all made a bad impression.

May 23, 1993 "Beacon Hill's Money Game" reveals the potentially corrupting influence of lobbying on Massachusetts politics, showcasing photos by Tlumacki capturing Senate President William Bulger and House Speaker Charlie Flaherty on exotic beach junkets at corporate expense.

February 10, 1996 Spotlight exposes Boston Police detectives who shake down drug dealers for money and drugs, resulting in prison sentences for two veteran officers. The duo's role investigating the 1993 murder of a fellow detective eventually leads to a new trial for defendant Sean K. Ellis, whose fight against his wrongful conviction is the subject of a Netflix documentary series, *Trial 4*.



Photographs from the 1996 series caught people on disability pensions working (and playing) hard.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

1996

"CRUISING ON A BROKEN DOWN SYSTEM"

GERARD O'NEILL (EDITOR), DICK LEHR, MITCHELL ZUCKOFF, AND CINDY RODRÍGUEZ (RESEARCHER)

In 1981 and 1982, Spotlight published exposés on Massachusetts' dysfunctional disability pension system. According to the reports, some injured workers who deserved to be paid were ending up on welfare, while others gamed the system and kept cashing checks. The state Legislature passed a sweeping reform bill in 1982 that created an oversight agency to clean up the mess. The problems, it seemed, would be solved.

But more than a decade later, Spotlight editor Gerard O'Neill received a tip: The disability pension system, a source said, had run amok all over again. O'Neill assigned reporters Mitchell Zuckoff and Dick Lehr to figure out what was going on.

The resulting project, which would become a Pulitzer Prize finalist, was fueled by a combination of old-school, shoe leather reporting and modern (at the time) computing technology.

Through an aggressive campaign of public records requests, Lehr, Zuckoff, researcher Cindy Rodríguez, and *Globe* outside counsel Jonathan Albano compiled a vast trove of state records of supposedly disabled public workers. Then they recruited a technician from the *Globe*'s IT department to build a database to organize the information.

The database yielded a strange insight. Hundreds of "disabled" workers — the team identified 305 such workers and believed there may have been thousands more — had been cleared by doctors to return to work, yet they remained on disability, collecting tax-free benefits year after year. In the prior decade alone, the liability to taxpayers had run up to $33 million.

THEY HAD BEEN CLEARED BY DOCTORS TO RETURN TO WORK, YET REMAINED ON DISABILITY. IN THE PRIOR DECADE ALONE, THE LIABILITY TO TAXPAYERS HAD RUN UP TO $33 MILLION.

And that's where the shoe leather came in. Zuckoff and *Globe* photographer John Tlumacki flew to Florida — where a surprising number of the healthy disabled workers seemed to reside. Tlumacki captured photos of these supposedly incapacitated men swinging drivers on the golf course and leaping into boats to go fishing. Tlumacki and Zuckoff also observed some of them reporting to new jobs, which should have made them ineligible for their Massachusetts disability pensions. (The pensions were meant only for public workers so injured on the job that they could no longer earn a living.)

Next, the team checked in on the government agencies tasked with eliminating such abuse. It soon became clear that the state's Public Employee Retirement Administration — the oversight agency created by the 1982 legislation — was a "paper tiger without even much paper," as Lehr says today. It did not keep anything close to comprehensive records of pensioners, had little control over the dozens of local retirement boards that managed individual cases, and hardly ever enforced a thing.

The series' impact was felt even before it was finished. Governor William Weld assigned his secretary of administration and finance, future governor Charlie Baker, to clean up the mess. "Weld Wants Pension Abuse Prosecuted," read a banner headline in the *Globe* on the day the project's third installment was published. "The administration moved fast," Zuckoff says.

And the Legislature soon followed. Within months, it had passed a new reform law designed to patch up the system once and for all. At the bill-signing ceremony, Weld offered Zuckoff the ceremonial pen. But with his editor in mind, the reporter turned it down out of deference to journalistic propriety. "Gerry would have killed me," he says.

– Mike Damiano

2002

"ABUSE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH"

WALTER V. ROBINSON (EDITOR), MICHAEL REZENDES, SACHA PFEIFFER, MATTHEW CARROLL, STEPHEN A. KURKJIAN, THOMAS FARRAGHER, MICHAEL PAULSON, AND KEVIN CULLEN

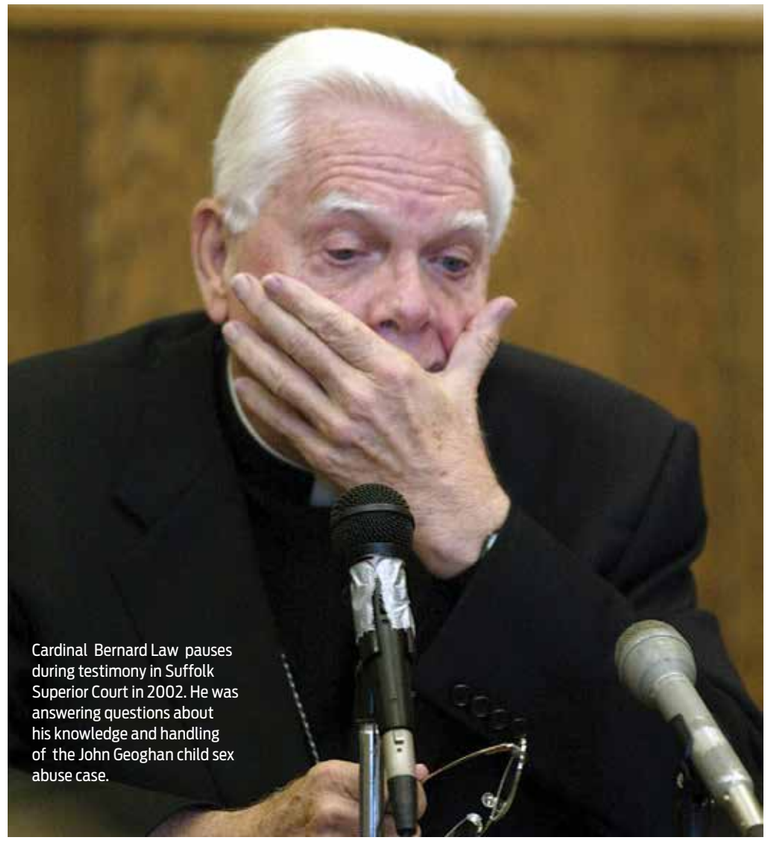
On his first day on the job in July 2001, *Globe* editor Martin Baron stopped by the desk of Eileen McNamara, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist. A week earlier, McNamara had published a column about the Boston Archdiocese's silence on three priests accused of sexually abusing children. One line, in particular, had irked Baron. McNamara had wondered whether an accused priest's superiors had known about his crimes. Court documents were sealed. "The public," she concluded, "has no way of knowing."

McNamara recalls Baron standing over her desk: "Why don't we find out," he said.

Spotlight's investigation of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church did not begin with a tip or newly obtained document, as so many investigations do. Instead, it started when a new *Globe* editor spurred his newsroom to action. After telling the *Globe*'s senior leaders he intended to pursue the story, Baron asked Spotlight editor Walter V. Robinson to make sexual abuse by priests his team's next project.

Robinson, a three-decade newsroom veteran, was taken aback. "Editors never told the Spotlight Team what to do," Robinson says. "The Spotlight Team told the editor what it was going to do." But it was clear that this wasn't a debate. Robinson returned to Spotlight's office and instructed his team — Michael Rezendes, Sacha Pfeiffer, and Matthew Carroll — to get to work.

The story wasn't new to them. The *Globe* had been covering the abuse cases for a decade, and other outlets had been on the story for even longer. "I always remind people we didn't reveal the existence of priest sex abuse," Rezendes says. Rather, Spotlight set out to do what it does best: reveal the systemic problem behind the individual stories. "What we did that was new," Rezendes continues, "was show the scale of the issue and the coverup."



Cardinal Bernard Law pauses during testimony in Suffolk Superior Court in 2002. He was answering questions about his knowledge and handling of the John Geoghan child sex abuse case.

CARDINAL LAW PHOTOGRAPH FROM AP/GEORGE MARTELL/POOL PHOTO

GEOGHAN'S CRIMES WERE SPELLED OUT, IN SICKENING DETAIL, UNDER A FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE: "CHURCH ALLOWED ABUSE BY PRIEST FOR YEARS"

The team's first guide was Phil Saviano, a survivor of clergy sexual abuse himself who founded an advocacy group for other survivors. That August, Saviano visited Spotlight's office and delivered what he calls "a graduate-level seminar in clergy abuse." During the next month, reporters carried out some of the project's most grueling work: speaking with victims. Pfeiffer remembers middle-aged men sobbing at their kitchen tables. Rezendes met with victims and their families at the office of Boston lawyer Mitchell Garabedian. "Everyone was crying and sometimes screaming," Rezendes recalls. "It was horrific."

But this was a Spotlight project. Wrenching

April 7, 1997 The team is a Pulitzer finalist for "Cruising on a Broken Down System," which identifies 305 able-bodied people who had retired on permanent disability, allowing them to improperly collect tax-free pensions that were costing taxpayers millions.

July 19, 1998 With "Whitey and the FBI: Crossing the Line," the team reveals the fuller contours of the murder and mayhem resulting from the FBI's corrupt ties to Whitey Bulger, the worst informant scandal in FBI history.

May 30, 2000 O'Neill and Spotlight reporter Dick Lehr publish *Black Mass: Whitey Bulger, the FBI, and a Devil's Deal*, building off years of reporting and new information, to tell the full history of the corrupt informant relationship between the crime boss and the FBI. The book is made into a 2015 movie.

April 29, 2001 Walter V. Robinson is named permanent Spotlight editor, a position he fills until 2006 (he's now a *Globe* editor at large). He first leads an investigation into shoddy construction and corner cutting on expensive homes. It marks an expanded direction for the team, focusing on misconduct by private companies rather than government and gangsters.

individual stories were not enough. Reporters needed to know how widespread the rot was — and how far up it reached. One valuable source was researcher Richard Sipe, a former priest himself, whose work suggested that 7 percent to 10 percent of Boston-area priests might be sexual predators. Those figures stunned the reporters. Moreover, Sipe told them, the church often quietly shuffled predator priests from one parish to another, to sidestep accusers. That tip inspired the team to comb through years of the archdiocese's annual directories. Carroll created a database to search for hidden reassignments.

Larger questions still loomed, however. Who was shuffling these priests around? Who else knew about it? For Rezendes, the key to unlocking those mysteries was Garabedian, who suggested looking through documents filed in a lawsuit against the Rev. John Geoghan, a notorious serial pedophile. Buried in this cache was a smoking gun: a 1984 letter from Bishop John D'Arcy to Bernard Law, who would become cardinal the next year. D'Arcy criticized Geoghan's latest reassignment and cited the priest's "history of homosexual involvement with young boys."

Holy shit, they knew, Rezendes thought when he read those words. *They knew, and they let it happen.*

A man protesting against Cardinal Bernard Law faces a group of pro-Law protesters on the steps of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston in April 2002.

ON THE MORNING OF THE SEPTEMBER 11 terrorist attacks, work on the church investigation was put on hold for six weeks. By the turn of the new year, however, the first installments were ready for publication. On January 6, 2002, Geoghan's crimes were spelled out, in sickening detail, under a front-page headline: "Church allowed abuse by priest for years." Anticipating protests outside the building — Catholics made up a significant portion of *Globe* readership, and the paper and church had long had a fraught relationship over issues such as abortion — Baron had ordered up extra security.

None was needed, as it turned out. Yet, clashes between the *Globe* and church authorities hardly ended there. For months, *Globe* outside counsel Jonathan Albano had been fighting, at Baron's direction, to unseal confidential records related to the Geoghan case. Once made public through a ruling by Superior Court Judge Constance Sweeney, victims' lawyers, including Garabedian and Roderick MacLeish Jr., were free to share other lawsuit-related documents with Spotlight reporters. The internal church records showed coverups extending well beyond the Geoghan case. "That's what made the difference here," Baron says. "We were able to show in incredible detail, with incredible documentation, how the church engaged in a coverup."

A January 31 *Globe* report written by Robinson (not based on internal church records) revealed that the archdiocese had paid settlements to the victims of at least 70 priests.

Baron and Robinson soon expanded the team. Former Spotlight editor and reporter Stephen A. Kurkjian joined to examine the church's finances. Thomas Farragher reported on violence and drug abuse by priests. Kevin Cullen and Michael Paulson documented the church's rapidly eroding standing in Boston. By the end of 2002, the Spotlight Team and other *Globe* reporters had published some 600 stories about the unfolding scandal.

In the history of American journalism, few investigations have made a bigger impact. "The Spotlight project opened the floodgates on clergy sexual abuse, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally," Garabedian says today. Other media outlets in the United States and abroad scrambled to cover cases in their own backyards. Countless parishioners criticized the church in the harshest terms — or abandoned it altogether. Prosecutors pursued criminal cases against once-shielded abusers. Fueling the widespread outrage was a new feature available to journalists: the ability to use the Internet to link supporting documents to stories and distribute them to a global audience.

BARON AND ROBINSON SOON EXPANDED THE TEAM. BY THE END OF 2002, THE SPOTLIGHT TEAM AND *GLOBE* REPORTERS HAD PUBLISHED SOME 600 STORIES ABOUT THE UNFOLDING SCANDAL.

The investigation won the Pulitzer Gold Medal in Public Service, journalism's highest honor. The judges praised the team "for its courageous, comprehensive coverage of sexual abuse by priests, an effort that pierced secrecy, stirred local, national and international reaction and produced changes in the Roman Catholic Church."

"Spotlight's impact was so far-reaching, it's hard to measure in concrete terms," Saviano says. In his view, it also "led to a reckoning with the Boy Scouts, at Penn State, even the #MeToo movement as it gathered steam." Without Spotlight's reporting, he believes, Pope Francis would never have convened the 2019 Vatican summit on clergy abuse, during which the pontiff urged bishops to "listen to the cry of the children who ask for justice."

Meanwhile, thousands of victims — men and women, young and old — have felt empowered to come forward with stories they once felt too traumatized to share. "The dam broke" with that first Spotlight report, Garabedian says. Twenty years later, he is still taking their calls.

– Joseph P. Kahn and Mike Damiano

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL DWYER/AP

2006

"DEBTORS' HELL"

WALTER V. ROBINSON (EDITOR), BETH HEALY, MICHAEL REZENDES, FRANCIE LATOUR, AND HEATHER ALLEN (INTERN)

Walter V. Robinson was sitting on a bench at small claims court in April 2005 when Peter Damon, a veteran who had lost both arms in Iraq, stepped up to a court clerk. When Damon tried to give his name, the clerk barked, "There's no time for that," and ordered him to sit down. Robinson, though, took note, and an hour later showed up at Damon's home and knocked on the door. He wanted to hear his story.

Damon would become a key subject in Spotlight's investigation into the national debt collections industry and the Massachusetts court system. The two seemed to have joined forces to steamroll small-time debtors like Damon, who had been summoned from his hospital bed at the Walter Reed medical center over a $980 debt that a collections agency couldn't even prove he owed.

On that morning, the Spotlight Team was still in the early phases of its work, hunting for sources and trying to understand the scale of the issue. But what Robinson and his reporters had already found was shocking. In Massachusetts, a handful of shady debt collectors had come to dominate the market for unpaid liabilities that retailers and credit card companies had sold to them for pennies on the dollar. In many cases, late fees, penalties, and astronomical interest rates had pushed debts on people's $500-limit cards to $2,000 or even $3,000.

Employing county deputy sheriffs — and, in Boston, constables, many of whom had criminal records — the debt collectors seized cars in the middle of the night, shook down debtors for cash payments, and often provided the court with outdated addresses so that debtors would not receive crucial legal notices. Even more egregious, the state's small claims courts served as a de facto arm of the debt collectors' operations, by letting the collectors' lawyers manage hearings themselves and sometimes threatening debtors with imprisonment if they didn't pay up.

MICHELE MCDONALD/BOSTON GLOBE STAFF

The battle by Joanne M. Johnson of Leominster, who lives on a disability check, to get her car back took an emotional toll.

No mercy for consumers

Firms' tactics are one mark of system that penalizes those who owe

Spotlight

First of four parts.

This story was reported by Spot-

It was just before 6 a.m. on a Saturday in the fall of 2002, when Marie-Colette Dimanche woke to a loud rapping at the door of her Mattapan duplex. With her night robe on and her two daughters still sleeping, she rushed down the stairs and peered out the window.

Outside, a tow truck blocked her [illegible] Chevy Blazer.

Commonwealth and believed the debt had been paid by a social services agency. "I just said, 'You guys must be insane,'" she recalled.

She had reason to be stunned: The debt was at least five years old. And she'd never gotten notice of the lawsuit against her: When Commonwealth, a local debt collector, went after Dimanche, the address it supplied the court was one where she hadn't lived for more than a decade. [illegible] she didn't have the

Financial Corp. of West Roxbury. Run by two brothers, one of whom was disbarred this year for his business practices, Norfolk and Commonwealth have become two of the state's most litigious and aggressive collectors, a Globe Spotlight Team investigation of the debt industry has found.

In America's debt-saturated culture, Chad E. and Daniel W. Goldste[illegible] are among the clear winne[illegible]

Cocaine most pre raising c

By Suzanne

Since Boston p nual drug testing ccers have failed the them flunked a s were fired, newly tics show.

Acting Police Albert Goslin sai 20 of the officers tive left the depa own, which he sai could not handle low-tip checks.

Of the 75 offi positive for cocai juana, two for ecst heroin, according obtained by the public records req cers had more th their system).

Gove $31m

By Michael

Governor Mitt toed $31 million f

IN MANY CASES, LATE FEES, PENALTIES, AND ASTRONOMICAL INTEREST RATES HAD PUSHED DEBTS ON PEOPLE'S $500-LIMIT CARDS TO $2,000 OR EVEN $3,000.

To answer those questions, the team spent mind-numbing weeks in front of computer terminals in Massachusetts courthouses counting every small claims debt case by hand. "The only way you could do it was one by one," Michael Rezendes says. The task yielded shocking insights, like this one: From 2000 to 2005, the debt collectors had filed one collections lawsuit for every 11 Massachusetts residents, the Spotlight Team estimated.

The four-part series, published in the summer of 2006, caused a scandal in the Massachusetts legal world and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. The state's top judges said they had no idea of the abuses taking place in the courts they theoretically oversaw. The district court system's chief justice called the *Globe*'s revelations "horrific" and established a commission to recommend reforms. Not long after, the state implemented licensing standards for debt collectors.

"This was a classic Spotlight story," Robinson says, "of a victimized population being mistreated and the government being complicit."

– Mike Damiano

April 7, 2003 The team wins its third Pulitzer, this one for exposing long-hidden sexual abuse by Catholic priests. The stories, which lead to global reforms, win the Pulitzer's public service award, the top honor.

April 16, 2007 The team is a Pulitzer finalist for "Debtors' Hell," which investigates hundreds of thousands of lawsuits against the working poor, elderly, and others who were in arrears on credit card bills. The series prompts reform in the Massachusetts small claims court system.

November 16, 2008 "A healthcare system badly out of balance" uncovers a secret agreement between Partners HealthCare, the state's biggest hospital system, and its largest insurer that increased the cost of health care. The series leads to state and federal antitrust investigations and limits on Partners' ability to expand.

May 23, 2010 An investigation finds rampant patronage hiring in the Massachusetts probation department, leading to immediate changes from the state's top court.

2010

"PATRONAGE IN THE PROBATION DEPARTMENT"

THOMAS FARRAGHER (EDITOR), ANDREA ESTES, SCOTT ALLEN, AND MARCELLA BOMBARDIERI

Everyone already knows that the Massachusetts Probation Service is rife with corruption. That was reporter Andrea Estes' first thought when, in 2009, Spotlight editor Thomas Farragher approached her about investigating hiring practices at the department. For years, stories around Beacon Hill had pointed toward a "pay to play" system of hiring and promotions at the public agency, led at the time by John J. "Jack" O'Brien. Still, she got to work and was soon amazed by the scale of wrongdoing that she and her colleagues uncovered.

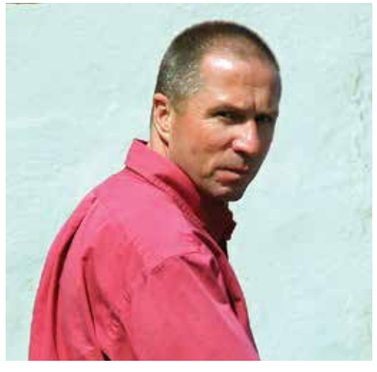
It seemed like an unlikely starting place for a groundbreaking Spotlight series, but that is exactly what the project became. "As soon as the story ran," Estes recalls, "all hell broke loose."

The 2010 series introduced readers to a corrupt, ineffective agency where at least 250 employees were friends, relatives, or donors to state politicians and court officials. Many had secured jobs over vastly more qualified candidates. Several had received raises and promotions even after being accused of misconduct and sloppy work.

The first Spotlight story was published on May 23. On May 24, O'Brien —12 years into his reign as commissioner — was suspended, and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court launched an administrative inquiry into probation department practices.

Spotlight followed as O'Brien and two other department officials — Elizabeth Tavares and William Burke III — faced charges related to running a fraudulent hiring scheme, to which they pleaded not guilty. (All three were convicted on some charges in 2014, but those convictions were overturned on appeal in 2016.)

Other public officials avoided court involvement but could not escape the long shadow the scandal cast. Longtime Massachusetts House Speaker Robert DeLeo was called by prosecutors an "unindicted co-conspirator" in the case.



John J. "Jack" O'Brien (top) was suspended as probation department commissioner after the Spotlight report. Representative Thomas Petrolati (above) resigned from a leadership position.

Representative Thomas Petrolati, whose wife was among the dozens of people connected to him hired by the department, resigned from a leadership position. (Both DeLeo and Petrolati denied accusations of wrongdoing and remained in office until last year.)

How did patronage hiring go from an open secret to a judicial priority? Farragher and his team started digging — and didn't stop. The team pored over records from 84 district and superior courts and the political campaign donation history for every department employee. Tasked with assessing how its ankle monitoring system performed compared with other states, Estes contacted all 49 other probation programs.

Spotlight uncovered patronage on a scale rumors could not have predicted, with ambitious workers rising in the ranks soon before or after donating to unchallenged incumbents' campaigns, and the department's State House-approved budget ballooning, even during a budget crisis.

After the initial story, calls began pouring in from other employees who had stayed silent out of fear or complacency. When all was done, there were almost too many allegations to recount. The theft of millions of dollars of probation fines from a poorly supervised office. Veteran employees without political connections passed over. The hiring of multiple members of the same families into the department.

The players in the patronage system faced few permanent legal consequences. But journalism can offer a form of accountability that is distinct from criminal justice. "I don't know that they ever paid the price that they should have, but the record is still there," says reporter Marcella Bombardieri, now a senior fellow at the think tank Center for American Progress. "It wasn't a shocking discovery, but it was so powerful to actually document it."

The Spotlight report sent a message, and change followed. The complaints about the department that reporters had been so accustomed to hearing slowed to a trickle. Some probation programs that were mismanaged during the O'Brien years are now considered innovative models for the country.

"Accountability can be achieved in a lot of different ways," says Scott Allen, now *Globe* assistant managing editor for projects. To Allen, the report's lasting impact is captured in the relief many probation employees felt for the first time in years. "They felt like it was Liberation Day," he says. "They felt like merit suddenly had a chance again, that the idea of fairness had a chance again."

– Dasia Moore

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

2014

"SHADOW CAMPUS"

THOMAS FARRAGHER (EDITOR), JENN ABELSON, CASEY ROSS, JONATHAN SALTZMAN, AND TODD WALLACK

In 2013, when Boston University senior Binland Lee died in a fire in her off-campus home, many saw an isolated tragedy. But as Spotlight editor Thomas Farragher and his team soon discovered, Lee's death was part of a broader pattern, where young people like her were systematically subjected to unsafe housing in America's college town.

Throughout Boston, students routinely packed into crumbling apartments despite zoning regulations that limited the number of full-time undergraduates living in one apartment to four. Landlords raked in cash at the expense of both young tenants and their priced-out neighbors. Meanwhile, colleges abdicated their responsibilities, housing less than half of their full-time undergraduate populations.

Spotlight found that the city department tasked with keeping tenants safe, the Inspectional Services Department, was conducting a fraction of the inspections needed and lacked a system to track landlords and properties with repeat offenses. Some regulations went virtually unenforced: The city could not provide reporters with proof of even one overcrowding citation.

The *Globe* came up with a name for the dire, dangerous world that these structural problems had created: a shadow campus. "The point of ignition for that project was the fatal fire," Farragher recalls. The first story in the 2014 series took readers room by room through the fire that cost Lee her life and injured several of the 12 others there that night in a building riddled with code violations.

The team also surveyed 266 students and interviewed dozens whose housing had threatened their health and safety. Reporters analyzed records showing higher rates of complaints and violations in neighborhoods like Allston with large student populations. They enlisted the help of student correspondents and a registered sanitarian to document violations firsthand. The result was an investigation that was as emotionally compelling as it was hard-hitting. "Shadow Campus" was a finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Public Service.

Boston University senior Binland Lee (top) died in a 2013 fire in an Allston building (above) that was riddled with code violations.

FIRE PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK MOORE

Before Lee's death and Spotlight's report, substandard housing had seemed "an accepted rite of passage," as reporter Jenn Abelson puts it. "It was really eye-opening to a lot of people to have something that felt like an open secret just laid out . . . in such detail that it was hard to ignore anymore."

Action following the report was swift. Less than two weeks after publication, Inspectional Services commissioner Bryan Glascock was moved to a different city agency. (Then-Mayor Marty Walsh denied that the change was related to Spotlight's findings.) The transformation of that department would continue for years. "In the wake of the tragic fire, our Department immediately began to reassess our business practices," current commissioner Sean Lydon explains in a statement provided to the *Globe Magazine*. Today, the Inspectional Services Department tracks repeat violations, and provides an online tool that lets renters look up a building's record of violations and complaints.

Walsh began working with several colleges to increase the number of dorm beds by the year 2030 (the city is about halfway toward meeting its goal). And the Boston City Council passed an ordinance requiring schools to submit an annual, anonymized list detailing off-campus students' addresses and units to make it easier to track overcrowding.

Former city councilor Josh Zakim, who helped propose the ordinance, says that neighborhood groups had long been advocating for improvements. But in 2014, a new element helped move the issue forward: public attention. "It's really powerful to have those examples, and for people to see that there's a need," says Zakim, now executive director of Housing Forward-MA.

It was a need that students had long recognized, and "Shadow Campus" centered their voices. Josh Goldenberg, whom the Spotlight Team interviewed, remembers how rare it was to feel heard as a student. In 2012, the year before Lee died in her attic bedroom, Goldenberg had jumped from an attic window to escape a fire. He suffered a weeks-long coma and life-altering injuries. But even as he recovered, he and his housemates faced a lawsuit for damage done to a neighbor's house in the fire. Goldenberg saw the suit as "putting the blame on us, on the students, these young renters who savvy landlords can easily take advantage of."

Goldenberg came to see what had happened to him as the fault of a failed system. Soon, other people did, too, thanks in large part to Spotlight's investigation. "It got the word out about a real issue that was harming kids," Goldenberg says. "And that's good reporting."

– Dasia Moore

April 20, 2015 The Spotlight Team is a Pulitzer finalist for "Shadow Campus," its look at dangerous college housing. Team editor Thomas Farragher will later become a *Globe* columnist.

October 25, 2015 Scott Allen becomes editor of the Spotlight Team, expanded to six reporters, debuting with an investigation into surgeons who operate on two patients at once without telling them. The larger team can now carry out two major investigations at once.

February 28, 2016 The film *Spotlight*, about the *Globe*'s investigation into sexual abuse by Catholic priests, wins the Academy Award for Best Picture of 2015. The writing team of Josh Singer and director Tom McCarthy win the Oscar for best original screenplay.

April 10, 2017 The Spotlight Team is a Pulitzer finalist for its look at the failure of the mental health care system to protect mentally ill people and their families from violence. It finds that nearly half of fatal police shootings in Massachusetts involve people who were suffering mental illness or were clearly in emotional crises.

2015

"CLASH IN THE NAME OF CARE"

Dr. Dennis Burke raised the alarm about one surgeon overseeing operations in multiple rooms simultaneously.

SCOTT ALLEN (EDITOR), JENN ABELSON, JONATHAN SALTZMAN, AND LIZ KOWALCZYK

In summer 2014, Spotlight reporter Jonathan Saltzman took a call from a lawyer with a tip about one of Boston's most revered institutions. Michael Mone, a medical malpractice attorney, charged that Massachusetts General Hospital was allowing its star surgeons to "double-book" surgeries — that is, one surgeon was overseeing two operations simultaneously, shifting between patients in separate rooms who were undergoing high-stakes procedures. What's more, patients often didn't know that their surgeon's attention would be divided. Mone told Saltzman that he represented a whistle-blower, MGH surgeon Dr. Dennis Burke, who had gone to war with the hospital's management to abolish the practice. But up to that point Burke had failed.

Burke would soon become, as then-Spotlight editor Scott Allen recalls, "the greatest whistleblower I've ever worked with." His decision to go public, which put his livelihood at risk, would spark one of the most impactful — and bitterly contested — Spotlight investigations of the past decade. His core contention was that MGH was betraying its own ideals, and placing patients in harm's way, for profit.

MGH management saw things another way, and soon began pressuring the *Globe* to abandon or soften Spotlight's investigation. Double-booked surgery was safe, MGH president Peter Slavin said. The hospital said it benefited patients by letting talented surgeons serve more people.

Slavin and his subordinates — including representatives of a crisis management firm the hospital hired to combat Spotlight's reporting — argued that it was impossible to blame any bad surgical outcome on double-booking. Indeed, although the reporters discovered cases where patients left a double-booked surgery with horrendous problems — one man lost the use of his limbs — it was impossible to show definitively that the double booking itself was the cause. No one could prove that a scalpel had slipped because of distraction.

What the Spotlight team could show — thanks to a trove of internal e-mails and other MGH documents it obtained — was that Burke was hardly a lone voice. Nurses and other concerned doctors had been raising the alarm for years, in sometimes desperate terms. "Do you really think it is reasonable to do these two [overlapping] cases by the same primary surgeon?" one anesthesiologist had written to his superiors in 2010. "Is this how we are planning the future?"

HIS DECISION TO GO PUBLIC WOULD SPARK ONE OF THE MOST IMPACTFUL — AND BITTERLY CONTESTED — SPOTLIGHT INVESTIGATIONS OF THE PAST DECADE.

The Spotlight Team's report in 2015 prompted reforms locally and nationally, as well as a reckoning within the surgical profession. The Massachusetts medical board wrote new regulations requiring surgeons to disclose double-booking to patients. And the American College of Surgeons issued new guidance that, ultimately, helped curtail the practice.

MGH had already fired Burke, a move that would ultimately backfire. Burke soon secured a new position at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton, which had prohibited double-booked surgery even before the Spotlight report. Then Burke sued MGH, arguing that his firing had constituted retribution (MGH said he was fired for leaking confidential patient information). In a settlement that followed, MGH paid Burke $13 million and established a new patient safety lecture series in his name.

—Mike Damiano

BURKE PHOTOGRAPH BY DINA RUDICK/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

In 2009, Lee F. Chiero was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the 2007 killing of his mother.

CHIERO PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN TLUMACK/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

2016

"THE DESPERATE AND THE DEAD"

SCOTT ALLEN (EDITOR), MARIA CRAMER, SCOTT HELMAN, MICHAEL REZENDES, JENNA RUSSELL, TODD WALLACK, ERIC BOSCO, AND ANICA BUTLER

Spotlight editor Scott Allen looked down through a window at the *Globe*'s Dorchester office and saw protesters. There were dozens, maybe more than a hundred. And they were mad, not at corruption or some other outrage revealed by the Spotlight Team, but at Allen and the reporters themselves. "I had never seen anything like it," he says.

A few weeks earlier, on June 26, 2016, the Spotlight Team had published the first in a series of reports about how the mental health care system in Massachusetts was failing those who needed it most. The article had been bracing and, critics said, inflammatory. It ran under the project's headline, "The Desperate and the Dead," and led with the excruciating account of Lee F. Chiero, a man suffering from mental illness who had killed his mother.

The article, and the project itself, was born of the team seeing a troubling trend. In the 2010s, Massachusetts experienced a spate of killings in which mental health seemed to be a factor. Sometimes the killer suffered from severe mental illness. In other cases, the victim, often killed by police officers, was in a psychiatric crisis. Spotlight reporter Michael Rezendes compiled a database of examples. Then the team embarked on a mission to answer one of the most basic of journalistic questions: *Why?*

Why, in a state that prided itself on its world-class health care, were so many cases of severe mental illness ending in tragedy?

What the team found, during more than a year of reporting, was that Massachusetts' mental health care system had more or less vanished. Decades earlier, the state had been dotted with in-patient psychiatric hospitals. But these asylums had often been brutal, inhumane places, and the state had shut them down. The result: people desperately in need of help with nowhere to turn.

The seven-part series documented the consequences of this history of neglect: relatives forced to work as untrained caregivers, police officers stepping in where social workers were needed, prisons filling the void left by the shuttered hospitals. The series also explored the kinds of modern, evidence-based mental health programs that Massachusetts could have, but had thus far failed to implement.

The team intended for the series to serve as a call to action, a way to jolt distracted policy makers to focus on a problem they had ignored for too long. But that's not how some mental health advocates saw it. "The headline is incredibly dramatic and fear-driven," says Sera Davidow, who helped organize the protest at the *Globe*. Fear, Davidow says, can lead policy makers to force mandatory treatment on people with severe mental illnesses. Fear of mental illness can also cause police officers and ordinary citizens to jump to violence, Davidow says: "These attitudes kill us."

WHY, IN A STATE THAT PRIDED ITSELF ON ITS WORLD-CLASS HEALTH CARE, WERE SO MANY CASES OF SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS ENDING IN TRAGEDY?

Some members of the Spotlight Team took the protest hard. "It was difficult to have people who are respected saying you're doing damage," says Spotlight reporter Jenna Russell.

But there were forceful voices supporting the team's coverage, as well. Some families rebuked activists who opposed mandatory outpatient treatment programs. One man, whose step-daughter relied on a New York state program to stay on her medication and off the street, said of the activists, "I feel those people are trying to kill her."

Allen, on the day of the protest, went outside to speak with the activists. He heard them out, but also stood behind what the team had found in their reporting, which was later named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. "If you want to talk about hard things," Allen says, "you have to say the hard things."

—Mike Damiano

May 5, 2017 Patricia Wen, a three-time Pulitzer finalist, is appointed to head the team. She is the first woman and person of color to become Spotlight editor. In announcing her promotion, *Globe* editor Brian McGrory calls her "an unabashed champion of underdogs."

April 16, 2018 The team is a Pulitzer finalist for the fifth time, this time for its deep examination of racism in Boston: "Boston. Racism. Image. Reality." The series continues with a major, ongoing discussion about Boston's racial climate.

October 13, 2018 The team debuts its first podcast, *Gladiator,* about the murderous life and untimely death of former New England Patriots star Aaron Hernandez.

August 22, 2019 O'Neill, the longest serving editor of the Spotlight Team, dies after a lengthy illness. A founding team member who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1972, O'Neill led Spotlight for more than 25 years.

In a 2017 photo from the series, fans watch a Red Sox-Yankees game at Fenway Park.

FENWAY PHOTOGRAPH BY KEITH BEDFORD/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

2017

"BOSTON. RACISM. IMAGE. REALITY."

PATRICIA WEN (EDITOR), AKILAH JOHNSON, TODD WALLACK, NICOLE DUNGCA, LIZ KOWALCZYK, ANDREW RYAN, AND ADRIAN WALKER

"I always say it's the only Spotlight project that ever began as a joke on *Saturday Night Live,*" says *Globe* columnist and associate editor Adrian Walker, one of six authors on the series.

It was 2017, and *SNL*'s Michael Che was riffing about the upcoming Super Bowl between the Atlanta Falcons and the New England Patriots. "I just want to relax, turn my brain off," Che said, "and watch the Blackest city in America beat the most racist city I've ever been to."

In 2017, the Spotlight Team decided to address a set of enormous questions related to the city's decades-long history of brutal racist incidents: Does Boston still deserve its reputation as a place racist and unwelcoming to Black people? If so, why — and how can the situation be improved?

The series, which ran in seven parts and became a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize, focuses on racism related to institutions that Boston is most famous for, including hospitals, sports teams, and universities. The team wanted to know whether "Black people feel like they belong in these spaces that Boston is so proud of and constantly celebrating itself for," says then-Spotlight reporter Nicole Dungca.

The series relied heavily on data: Reporters counted faces of color at legendary Boston sites, including Fenway, to show just how white those spaces are. The *Globe* also commissioned a survey that showed of eight major US cities, Black people felt Boston was the least welcoming to people of color. Then there was the lack of progress. In 1983, when the *Globe* reported a major series on race, an estimated 4.5 percent of Black workers in the region were public officials or business managers. By 2015, the number was only 4.6 percent.

The *Globe* also ran an experiment in housing discrimination, reaching out to the owners of Craigslist listings, using either Black- or white-sounding names. "Overall, landlords ignored nearly 45 percent of e-mails from prospective tenants with black-sounding names, like Darnell Washington or Keisha Jackson, versus 36 percent of e-mails from people with white-sounding names, like Brendan Weber or Meredith McCarthy," the series reported.

But perhaps the most jarring figure came from a 2015 report called "The Color of Wealth in Boston," by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and other researchers. According to the report, the median net worth of white families in Greater Boston was $247,500. The median for nonimmigrant Black families was $8. The *Globe* had to run a follow-up story clarifying that the number eight was not a typo.

> WHEN "YOU SEE HOW FEW BLACK PEOPLE ARE AT THESE MAJOR UNIVERSITIES," DUNGCA SAYS, "HOW FEW BLACK PEOPLE ARE GOING TO THESE RED SOX GAMES, IT'S KIND OF IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE."

The emphasis on figures was strategic — "because it's one thing to use a bunch of anecdotes and say that that is the reality," Dungca says. "But when you lay the data out, and you see how few Black people are at these major universities, how few Black people get their health care at places like Massachusetts General Hospital, and how few Black people are going to these Red Sox games, it's kind of impossible to ignore."

The team anticipated hate mail from defensive readers, says Patricia Wen, the Spotlight Team editor. But the response was overwhelmingly positive. One of the series's lasting legacies is the Facebook group that grew out of it. "Discussing Race in Boston" has more than 4,700 members and their discussions continue to this day.

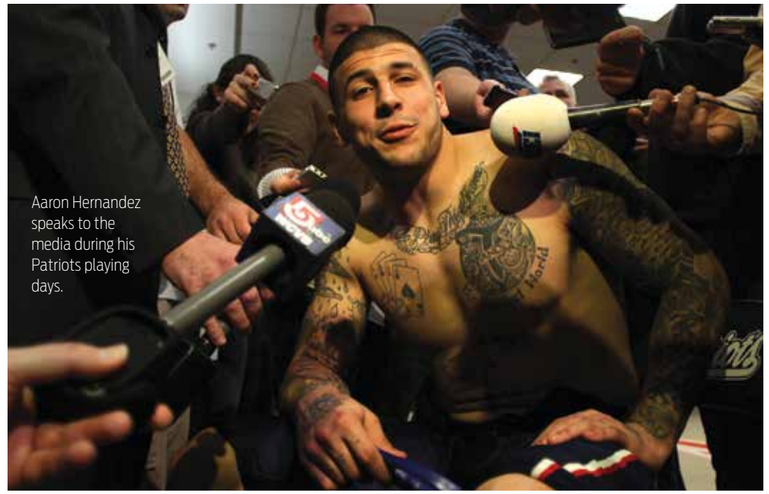
The conversations the series sparked in 2017 were "critically important," says Tanisha Sullivan, president of the NAACP Boston Branch.

But, Sullivan adds, reporting on racism is only effective if it is constant: "The moment you stop doing that type of work, like the Spotlight series, [is] the moment people think that the problem no longer exists."

— Annalisa Quinn

2018

"GLADIATOR: AARON HERNANDEZ AND FOOTBALL INC."



Aaron Hernandez speaks to the media during his Patriots playing days.

HERNANDEZ PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

PATRICIA WEN (EDITOR), ANDREW RYAN, BETH HEALY, SACHA PFEIFFER, BOB HOHLER, AND TODD WALLACK. PODCAST PRODUCER: AMY PEDULLA

When former New England Patriots star and convicted killer Aaron Hernandez hanged himself in prison in April 2017, he left behind a fiancée, young daughter, and many unanswered questions: Had his reckless behavior — heavy drug use, a fascination with guns — been ignored or enabled? Did football-related brain trauma play a role? Spotlight reporters sensed a deeper story, one that shed light on professional football's brutal, win-at-any-cost culture.

In Hernandez's 27 years, Spotlight reporters found troubling warning signs: a childhood scarred by a physically abusive father and sexual molestation; chronic pot smoking; an apparent struggle with his sexual identity; and college and NFL teams that seemingly overlooked his off-field troubles. Anchoring the reporting was material never made public before, including nearly 300 jailhouse phone calls from Hernandez to family and friends that Spotlight reporter Todd Wallack obtained through Massachusetts public records law. Those tapes were "like going inside Aaron's brain," recalls reporter Beth Healy, "a deep dive into his thinking and personality."

For the first time, Spotlight worked with an outside group, a Los Angeles-based podcast production company called Wondery. Their joint-venture podcast, premiering in January 2019 and stretching to eight episodes, shot to No. 1 on Apple's podcast chart and has been downloaded more than 10 million times. "Our challenge was to tell a more universal, human story about what happened to this kid" and not just about the downfall of a famous athlete, says podcast producer Amy Pedulla. FX has secured the rights to the podcast and announced this year that it is developing it into a TV series that will be part of a sports-themed spinoff of the *American Crime Story* series.

Within Patriots Nation, the story felt painfully local, causing fans to wonder what team officials knew (or suspected) about Hernandez's off-field problems. At first, "the Patriots really stonewalled us," says Bob Hohler, an investigative reporter in the *Globe* sports department assigned to the story. However, other sources surfaced, including State Police records connected to Hernandez's murder of his friend Odin Lloyd.

Coach Bill Belichick's statements to law enforcement "were incredibly revealing," Hohler recalls. Hernandez expressed safety concerns for his family, but turned down Belichick's offer to connect him with the Patriots' head of security, according to Spotlight reporting on notes of Belichick's meeting with police. Then Belichick offered to have the Patriots help Hernandez find a new place to live. The apartment Hernandez selected, separate from his main residence, was eventually where he stored guns and ammunition.

> THOSE [JAILHOUSE CALL] TAPES WERE "LIKE GOING INSIDE AARON'S BRAIN," RECALLS REPORTER BETH HEALY, "A DEEP DIVE INTO HIS THINKING."

Then there was the brain trauma: chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). Researchers at Boston University's CTE Center diagnosed Hernandez's condition post-mortem at Stage 3, the worst case anyone had ever seen in a person that young. The series also delved into the NFL's history of violence, settlement payouts to brain-injured college and pro players, and liberal use of painkillers, often supplied by team officials.

While Hernandez's on-field exploits have been largely erased, his story still reverberates within the medical and sports communities. Dr. Samuel Gandy is a professor of neurology and psychiatry at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital and program director with the NFL Neurological Care Program, which seeks to help retired NFL players suffering from brain trauma. In the series, he called it "impossible" not to link Hernandez's CTE to his violent behavior.

"I do think the [*Globe*'s] reporting had a larger effect in reflecting on a prominent athlete living in a sustained spotlight, as Aaron was doing," Gandy says today, "and coming to such violence."

— Joseph P. Kahn

November 7, 2019 Massachusetts General Hospital agrees to pay $13 million to orthopedic surgeon Dr. Dennis Burke to settle a wrongful termination lawsuit. Burke had been fired after providing information to the Spotlight Team for an investigation of surgeons who operate on two patients at once without telling them.

November 19, 2019 "Seeing Red" takes a deep look at Greater Boston's epic traffic and decrepit mass transit system. Despite billions invested in highway projects such as the Big Dig, Boston's roads and rails are often overwhelmed and political inaction is making it worse.

September 26, 2020 The "Last Words" investigation reveals the profound inequities that follow us from cradle to grave. The series becomes even more urgent when, amid reporting, the COVID-19 pandemic claims thousands of lives in this region alone, disproportionately affecting the poor and people of color.

June 11, 2021 *The Boston Globe* "Quick Strike Team," spun off from Spotlight and led by editor Brendan McCarthy, wins an investigative reporting Pulitzer for "Blind Spot," an exposé on how states fail to share information on dangerous drivers. Reported by Evan Allen, Matt Rocheleau, Laura Crimaldi, and Vernal Coleman, the series results in widespread reforms and likely saves lives.

THE STORIES BEHIND THE STORIES

SPOTLIGHT TEAM MEMBERS—AND FILMMAKER TOM MCCARTHY—IN THEIR OWN WORDS.

AS TOLD TO MIKE DAMIANO, JOSEPH P. KAHN, DASIA MOORE, AND ANNALISA QUINN *Interviews have been condensed and edited*

ON THE BIRTH OF THE SPOTLIGHT TEAM

In 1969, Boston Globe *editor Tom Winship sent staffer Timothy Leland to look at best journalistic practices overseas. He returned after spending six months at* The Sunday Times *in London, where he studied its special investigative unit, the Insight team.*

Timothy Leland, founding Spotlight editor: Back then, the concept of a full-time team of reporters with no newsroom connection who might spend months on a single story was unheard of.

Walter V. Robinson, former Spotlight editor: The Insight team, which became famous almost instantly, broke open the thalidomide scandal in Britain. The series had this huge impact.

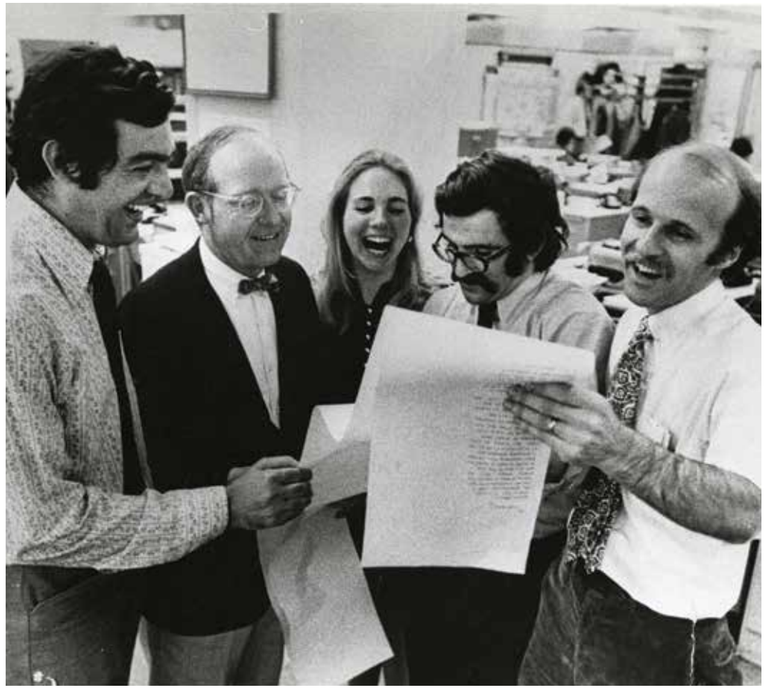
Leland: After I briefed Tom on the big stories Insight had broken, he sent me to D.C. to meet with *Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee, his good friend. Apparently, he'd tried something similar at the *Post*. Not only had it cost a lot of money, he said, it had taken two veteran reporters out of circulation. "Don't do that," Bradlee warned me. "It would be a huge mistake."

Robinson: But Tim came back and he was persistent.

Leland: [I said] here's what our team would need: an office physically separate from the newsroom; our own telephone line, ensuring secrecy; an editor who reports directly to the managing editor; and a name that, like Insight, creates a mystique. "Spotlight" appealed to me because it had a similar aura. After a long silence, Tom said, "Well, OK. The heck with the *Post*. Let's give it a try."

Robinson: So finally Winship said, "All right, we're going to pick a team."

Leland: I walked over to Gerry O'Neill's desk. Gerry was a young, take-no-prisoners reporter, just the kind I wanted. Steve Kurkjian, whom I knew from the State House News Bureau, was next.



PHOTOGRAPHS: PULITZER FROM GLOBE FILE; ROBINSON BY KEITH BEDFORD/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

Gerard O'Neill, Thomas Winship, Ann Desantis, Stephen A. Kurkjian, and Timothy Leland celebrate after learning that the Spotlight Team won a Pulitzer in 1972 for exposing widespread corruption in Somerville.

Later we added Ann Desantis as researcher.

Stephen A. Kurkjian, founding Spotlight reporter and former editor: The corruption, the tribalism — back then, we did not yet have a deep sense of how Boston operated. That first day [as a team], I remember turning to Gerry and saying, "Now what are we going to do?"

What they did was get down to work. After a relatively quick first project, they aimed high for their second outing with a deep look at years of public corruption in the city of Somerville. It brought immediate change — and got noticed.

Leland: I was at my parents' house when the phone rang. "You son of a gun," a booming voice said. "You and your Spotlight Team just won a Pulitzer Prize." It was Tom [Winship], who hadn't even bothered to say hello.

Robinson: Somerville was the second [Pulitzer the *Globe* had won]. And so then the team was off and running.

ON BEING A WOMAN IN A MALE-DOMINATED PROFESSION

I had worked for a Connecticut paper before joining Spotlight as a researcher in 1977. It was not an unusual path for a woman at the time. I wanted to be a staff reporter, not a researcher answering the phone. I would answer the tip line and people would say, "I want to talk to one of the guys!" I'd tell them the "guys" were busy and got them to talk to me. Steve [Kurkjian] and Gerry [O'Neill] taught me everything: tenacity, the need to document and verify, to be tough but fair, that a reporter's first obligation is to the reader. I really owe my journalistic career to the training I got in Spotlight.

— JOAN VENNOCHI,
Globe *op-ed columnist, former Spotlight researcher*

ON GOING UNDERCOVER IN THE 1980S

We were working on a series about money laundering. We looked into tracing drug money going into banks overseas. I traveled to the Bahamas posing as a money launderer and, while reporting in Colombia, wound up in Medellín, at a housing project funded by drug kingpin Pablo Escobar. With only an interpreter along, I began interviewing residents. They loved Escobar and got upset about being questioned by a reporter. I was nervous just walking back to our car, and I began to appreciate the risks that many reporters posted abroad undergo every day. I also interviewed Colombia's justice minister, who had signed Escobar's arrest warrant. The minister, who told me that the cartel was bugging his phone, was later shot five times in an assassination attempt.

— DANIEL GOLDEN,
former Spotlight reporter (now at ProPublica)

ON SPOTLIGHT'S POWER TO REVEAL PROBLEMS THAT ARE TAKEN FOR GRANTED

The job of our team in many ways is not only to expose things that people don't know, but it's also to shine a light on things people think they know and to show them what this really means and how it affects their lives.

— JENN ABELSON,
former Spotlight reporter (now at The Washington Post*)*

ON JOINING SPOTLIGHT AS A MOTHER

Not everyone's interested in investigative reporting, but I certainly was. One of my last beats was the Boston Public Schools. And then I became pregnant with my first child. This is 1989, and it was a time for women in newsrooms where I was worried about being "mommy tracked." Would people think I don't take my career seriously? Around the fifth month [of maternity leave], I got a call from Gerry O'Neill, who was the editor of Spotlight. He said he had been impressed with my coverage of the Boston Public Schools, and was I interested in a potential opening at Spotlight? Here I was worried that I was gonna be mommy tracked and now I'm getting this job that I really wanted. I joined Spotlight in 1990.

— PATRICIA WEN,
current Spotlight editor, former Spotlight reporter

ON EMBARKING ON A NEW SPOTLIGHT INVESTIGATION

There was this feeling that you have to meet a certain bar to have a Spotlight story. Even when you kind of know what you might want to do, there's a scary phase of, like, can you do it? So that at a certain point you have to decide: Are you all in for this or not?

— MARCELLA BOMBARDIERI,
former Spotlight reporter (now at Center for American Progress)

ON MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Our team was the first in the city to exercise the power of the First Amendment with the *Globe*, to use that muscular ability of speaking out to make a difference. Maybe you'd seen it on the editorial page, but never had the paper said *this is wrong* on the front page. Early on, Mayor Kevin White told [*Globe* editor Thomas] Winship that the Spotlight Team's biggest impact would not be the stories it did, but the stories it did not [have to] do, because of the malfeasance it prevented from happening.

— STEPHEN A. KURKJIAN,
founding Spotlight reporter and former editor

ON GETTING SOURCES TO OPEN UP

When I joined Spotlight, Robby and his team were already superstars. It amazed me how he could get people to talk. Robby is very calm and disarming. And though it's usually not a good thing to learn that Walter Robinson (pictured at right) is on the line, people tend to be truthful with him. I'll never forget Robby calling up Paul C. Cabot Jr. and asking why his [charitable] foundation was using funds for personal expenses. Suddenly Cabot is telling Robby that he took $200,000 out to pay for his daughter's wedding. *Wow*, I thought. But that's Robby.

— BETH HEALY,
former Spotlight reporter (now at WBUR)

ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INVESTIGATION

Arthur Austin was the first man I interviewed. He'd been victimized by Paul Shanley, who used to take kids to a Stoneham campsite and molest them there. Arthur and I went to a Chili's, and as we sat there, he started crying and crying. Like so many others, he figured he'd been the only one harboring secrets like these. The anger I felt then — that we all felt — became fuel for our reporting.

— SACHA PFEIFFER,
former Spotlight reporter (now at NPR)

[Previous reporting in other outlets] raised questions, sometimes just saying, "Surely the higher-ups knew." Well, prove it. They weren't able to prove it. It took an investigative team that had the time to dig deep. What's really going on? How often, particularly nowadays, do we get the opportunity to dig behind the scenes and get at the real truth?

— WALTER V. ROBINSON,
former Spotlight editor

Defrocked priest and convicted child molestor John Geoghan in court in 2001. He was killed in prison in 2003.

The morning we published the first Geoghan story, we expected protestors outside the *Globe*. We came into work that morning, and there were no protestors. Nothing but an eerie silence. We were looking at one another, thinking, *Did anyone read our story?* Then our phone started ringing. Again. And again. And again. It was like a dam bursting.

Suddenly, all these victims realized, *Hey, I'm not the only one.* What happened in Boston that week reverberated around the world, with literally tens of thousands of victims coming forward.

— MICHAEL REZENDES, *former Spotlight reporter (now at the Associated Press)*

ON MAKING THE *SPOTLIGHT* FILM

In Boston, [co-writer] Josh [Singer] and I embedded with the Spotlight Team. We were following them around, just hanging out with them, and also vetting every detail again and again. We kind of started working like journalists ourselves.

Our mind-set was, *We're telling a story about facts. We better get our facts right.* As the movie proved, the story was compelling enough when factually accurate. I believed that part of the core of the Spotlight Team was that it brought together these individual talents who, as a whole, became this kind of uber force of investigative reporting. It took that team to bring this story to light.

It makes you think, *What if there was no* Boston Globe*? Who would have told the stories?* Today, we're looking around and seeing newspapers shuttering left, right, and center. What happens when these papers disappear? What other crime and corruption goes unreported? When you think about that, you realize this wasn't just a journalism story; it was a *local* journalism story. Marty [Baron] kept stressing that. Those reporters, they understood the fabric of the community, they understood the challenges, and the price of it all.

As we were finishing the film and screening it for people, I could tell it was starting to work. But you never really know. It became really clear when we got to [the Toronto film festival]. It wasn't just the way the film was received, but the way the journalists of the Spotlight Team were received. We brought them on stage and they were being treated as heroes. We thought, *Oh my God, these guys are like astronauts*.

That's a good feeling. Especially now, when journalism is viewed negatively by too many Americans. Today, the film feels like a love letter to that particular job at a time when we might need it most.

— TOM MCCARTHY, *director and co-writer of the Academy Award-winning film* Spotlight

PHOTOGRAPHS: GEOGHAN BY PATRICIA MCDONNELL; MCCARTHY BY TONY CENICOLA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

ON THE REPUTATION OF SPOTLIGHT

I grew up in Massachusetts reading Steve Kurkjian and Gerry O'Neill. Years later, Gerry became my editor and Steve became my friend. It was a sense of almost unreality in that. These guys were my journalistic heroes. They formed the Spotlight Team and breathed life into it. I think we all owe them a debt of gratitude for what Spotlight is and what it has become — which is this treasured *Globe* franchise that readers depend on, whenever it resurfaces, to tell them something that they must know. And I think most importantly, that it is regarded by our readers — maybe this is a bit immodest — as the unassailable truth. I mean, there's sort of a bulletproof quality to a Spotlight report that of course we take great care in delivering. And I think our readers have trust that if it's in the *Globe*, and certainly if it's Spotlight, it is just so rigorously reported that it's true.

— THOMAS FARRAGHER, Globe *columnist, former Spotlight editor*

ON GETTING AN ICONIC PHOTO

I drove to Castle Island because it was a hot day and I was going to get people enjoying the weather. So I pulled into the parking lot and a car pulls up on my right. I look over — it was Whitey Bulger. There he was, wearing a T-shirt and this Red Sox baseball hat. I knew the *Globe* was doing a Spotlight piece on the mob. I backed up and I just waited for [Bulger and his lieutenant, Kevin Weeks] to walk toward me, and I slipped down in the driver's seat. I just kept shooting away and made that photo. When we used it on the front page, we got a call from the FBI. They said, *We had an agent in the bushes but we didn't get the photo, and we need that photograph.* They subpoenaed it. We had to give it to them.

— JOHN TLUMACKI, Globe *photographer*

ON WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT THE JOB OVER TIME — AND WHAT HASN'T

Our techniques have changed. If you go back and look at some of the early investigations, a lot of them rely on going undercover — like pretending to be a student and enrolling in some police training program. What you see today is that we have access to vastly larger amounts of data, lots more ability to be systematic in the way we look at it. But, even as the methods change, one thing hasn't: We still aim to reveal uncomfortable facts that make people think — and make institutions change.

— SCOTT ALLEN,
Globe *assistant managing editor for projects, former Spotlight editor*

ON THE FUTURE OF SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight has to keep proving itself. You're not going to be good because you've intimidated somebody, because you said, "I'm a Spotlight reporter," and then they're suddenly going to talk to you. It's never gonna work like that. It's going to work because we produce journalism that resonates with our local community, where people feel like *I subscribe to the* Globe *because they give me this kind of depth that I don't have time to do myself.* I have always been impressed how ordinary people, an ordinary readership, really does seem to want the truth. And that there are a lot of people who are willing to take risks to give the truth.

— PATRICIA WEN,
current Spotlight editor, former Spotlight reporter