

The Marshall Project tracks the impact of our journalism on policymakers, advocates and other media.

**SUING IN ST. FRANCOIS** After the publication of [our story](#) on the horrors of the jail in St. Francois, Missouri, county officials have agreed to pay \$1.8 million to the parents of Billy Ames, who died after being strapped in a restraint chair for 24 hours. Several plaintiffs have also filed a federal class action lawsuit which cites our reporting against the county and its sheriff, alleging “unconstitutional, discriminatory, and dangerous conditions while detained pretrial at the St. Francois County Jail.” Local lawyer Vonne Karraker, along with other plaintiffs in the suit, was an important focus of our story.

**BARRED** The North Carolina State Bar has finally suspended the law license of a lawyer who stole hundreds of thousands of dollars from two clients with intellectual disabilities—half-brothers Henry McCollum and Leon Brown. The two men spent three decades in prison before being declared innocent. [Our 2018 story](#) with The New York Times revealed how Patrick Megaro repeatedly pocketed his clients’ money and set them up with predatory loans. The State Bar found the lawyer put his own financial self-interest above those of his former clients, who are legally incompetent to manage their own affairs. Now, Megaro must repay the men \$250,000 before he can ask for his license back. Additionally, a jury in a North Carolina federal civil rights case recently awarded \$75 million to the two brothers for their wrongful convictions.

**MAYORAL EMBRACE** The latest [installment](#) in our series on violence by police dogs exposed shocking disparities in the Baton Rouge Police Department’s use of K-9s. On average, police dogs bit a teenager aged 17 or younger every three weeks. Almost all of the people they bit were Black, and in the vast majority of cases, the victims were unarmed or did not pose a grave threat. Just hours after our story ran, Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Broome directed the police chief to stop using dogs on juvenile suspects “for mere flight,” adding, “I embrace this journalistic work in our process to



Above: Vonne Karraker, a lawyer in Farmington, Mo., has led efforts to stem abuses at the St. Francois County Jail. MICHAEL THOMAS FOR THE MARSHALL PROJECT



continue improving our department.” The series also ran on the front page of the main newspaper in Birmingham, Alabama, where Bull Connor once made the use of police dogs infamous.

**COMPENSATING VICTIMS** The Ohio Senate has passed a new bill expanding the state’s victim compensation funds to those with felony convictions. Advocates pushing for these changes in the Ohio legislature cited [our reporting](#); Louisiana has already amended its law. Our investigation found that these laws disproportionately prevent Black crime victims and their families from receiving compensation from the state — to pay for the funeral of a loved one who is murdered, for example.



**WORDS MATTER** Reporters and editors have long believed that terms such as “inmate,” “felon” and “offender” are clear, succinct and neutral. But a vocal segment of the people who have those labels applied to them argue that they are dehumanizing and reductive. The Language Project, which includes pieces by and about people with personal experience of incarceration, makes public our decision to avoid labels such as “inmate” in favor of person-first language. NPR’s On the Media dedicated a segment to our work, and we partnered with Poynter to create a virtual workshop that was attended by more than 300 people from newsrooms across the country.

**COMMUNITY CARE** In 2018, we [reported](#) with This American Life on the high school students trying to get their GEDs behind bars in a notoriously violent adult jail in New Orleans. “That story tore me apart,” said a man in Elgin, IL who listened to our report while out cycling in his neighborhood. “As I had plenty of thinking time on the bike, I got back home and told my wife that we are going to call the local Boys and Girls Club and set up a scholarship fund so that one kid a year who would otherwise be financially unable to go to college at all, even with the many scholarships the school offers, could do it.”



“The conversation was extremely illuminating and opened my eyes to how dehumanizing the terms we regularly use are.”

“I know the context behind these terms now and will always consider them at work and in my personal life.”

“It reminds me to center language around people because it’s more fair and accurate. It also gave me some good context and examples to use when explaining to people why and how the language we use to write about crime, justice and incarceration is changing.”

“Thank you for this. I am an appellate lawyer, not a journalist, but I came to this because I think it is critical to change the way lawyers and judges use this language as well.”

#### HIGHLY PRIZED

The prestigious **Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting** for our [series](#) on Mississippi’s dangerous and dysfunctional penal systems ([our series](#) on the use of police dogs as weapons also honored as a finalist).

The White House Correspondents’ Association’s **Katharine Graham Award for Courage and Accountability** for our [police dogs series](#).

Four **Online Journalism Awards**, including our second one for “General Excellence in Online Journalism.”

Nine prizes from the **Society for News Design**, including a gold medal for “[Welcome to The Zo](#).”

The **Harry Frank Guggenheim Excellence in Criminal Justice Reporting Award** for our year-long [investigation](#) into Mississippi’s modern-day debtors’ prisons.

Two **Deadline Club Awards** for our documentaries “[Tutwiler](#)” and “[Anatomy of Hate](#).”