



**Historical Context.  
It's Vital Today.**



**Annual Report 2017**

## The Idea

In May of 2013 Retro Report began publishing short-form documentaries that provide meaningful context to today's headlines in a new and exciting way. Five years later, the world of journalism looks very different and our mission as a non-profit organization seems prescient. That mission is to arm the public with a more complete picture of today's most important stories. We correct the record, expose myths and provide historical context to the fast-paced news of our world through investigative journalism and narrative storytelling.

Retro Report is founded on the conviction that an engaging and forward-looking review of high-profile events, and the news coverage surrounding them, is critical to understanding the lessons of history and developing robust civic literacy.

And since the stories we report on continue to evolve, we are committed to providing a permanent, living library where each story is tracked and updated so that viewers can gain new insights as events develop and history unfolds.

Our journalism has struck a chord with many who value a long-term perspective. The support we have received is heartening and we are excited to forge ahead with our work.

---

**“What Retro Report has pulled off is a marriage of two dwindling crafts, history and great reporting. The result in these five years is a truly creative and mesmerizing work that has put the events of the world in perspective.”**

— Dean Baquet, Executive Editor, *The New York Times*

---

## Executive Summary

In 2017, Retro Report met the challenge to bring context to many of the year's most important stories. We added 25 new short documentaries on issues that remain at the forefront of continuing national conversations, including political protests in sports, sexual harassment in the workplace, and U.S. immigration policy. Our growing library of more than 125 digital documentaries covers issues such as civil rights, criminal justice, education, immigration, environment and politics.

During the year, we also broadened the number of editorial partners who share our documentaries with their audiences across digital and broadcast platforms, enabling Retro Report to reach millions of new viewers. Our work is now accessible through partner websites, broadcast networks, social media platforms, podcasts and streaming services. It is distributed to a wide audience through *The New York Times*, *NBC News*, *PBS Frontline*, *PBS American Experience*, *Politico*, *Quartz* and *The New Yorker*.

We remain committed to a multi-faceted approach with different versions of our stories for print, video, audio and social news consumers. The complete library of all of our work can be accessed free of charge on our website and on YouTube.

---

**“We will not surrender digital video to subpar journalism.”** — Retro Report's Executive Producer Kyra Darnton

---



Our work garnered numerous awards and nominations in 2017. We received seven regional Edward R. Murrow Awards for excellence in journalism for multiple stories and for our overall body of work. In addition, Retro Report was nominated for a Mirror Award and for three Webby awards.

Retro Report hired Claire Schultz as our first director of development to begin putting together a formal revenue growth strategy and establish the infrastructure to support our fundraising plans for 2018 and beyond. We are grateful to everyone who has funded us in the past and look forward to expanding the funding we receive from individuals and foundations in the future.

## High-Impact Journalism

We live in an increasingly frenzied world fueled by a rapid news cycle. As a non-profit news organization, Retro Report strives to counter the confusion by presenting the historical context to understand the issues that impact our lives. That perspective better serves the public and is often missing in commercial journalism today. Through fresh, investigative reporting and compelling storytelling, Retro Report offers new insights into events that are all too often reported today but forgotten tomorrow.



We remain committed to ensuring that these in-depth, high-quality, extensively-reported stories are available for free to the public across all platforms.

---

**“In a world as chaotic as the present one, knowing history may be our only hope for charting safe passage to a better future.”** — Retro Report’s Kit Roane

---

## By The Numbers

There have been over 40 million streams of Retro Report’s videos across all digital distribution points since we premiered the series in 2013. While many of the streams each year are from new releases, the numbers continue to grow for stories in our living library. In 2017, on YouTube alone there were an estimated 5 million views of films that debuted in 2013-2016. We see this as compelling evidence that digital consumers are using our reports as context for current events, which is a critical part of our long-term vision.

Because our mission is to help people see news events through a longer and more expansive lens and to spark conversations, we create impact reports for each story to track our success. In addition to viewer data and patterns across platforms, impact reports reveal insights for discussion, unique ways we engaged the public in conversation, press coverage, general community discussion, targeted response in a particular community of interest for a specific topic, and memorable quotes.

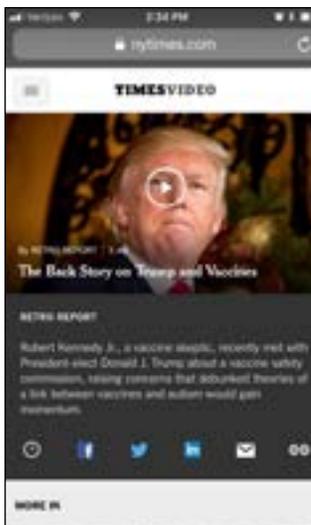
---

**“Retro Report is a wonderful example of the importance of sharing and teaching stories of history that continue to shape our world today. A young man working at the Miami Airport approached me and told me that he had watched the Retro Report piece and had encouraged all his friends and family to watch it. He then thanked me for sharing my story and the stories of my fellow Thalidomide survivors.”** — Giselle Cole, interviewed for RR story on Thalidomide

---

## Delivering Impactful Stories to Serve the Public

2017 saw an increase in “news fatigue.” Inundated by the speed, variety, and questionable veracity of some news sources, Americans were searching for better ways to understand the events unfolding around them. In response, Retro Report crafted stories that answered questions and raised the bar for quality digital video journalism and storytelling. Here are some highlights.



The year began with the release of a pilot story from our Rapid Response Unit. When President Trump spoke with Robert Kennedy Jr. about the possibility of creating a “vaccine safety” commission, we leapt into action and responded with “[The Back Story on Trump and Vaccines](#).”

Then in a partnership with *PBS Frontline*, we produced “[Forever Prison](#)” — a story about the history of Guantanamo Bay, and how it was first used in 1991 to detain thousands of Haitians outside of U.S. law.



In March, “[Lies, Leaks, and Consequences](#)” was distributed by *The New York Times*. As President Trump’s criticisms of the press continued throughout the year, it remained one of our most relevant and important short videos of 2017.

---

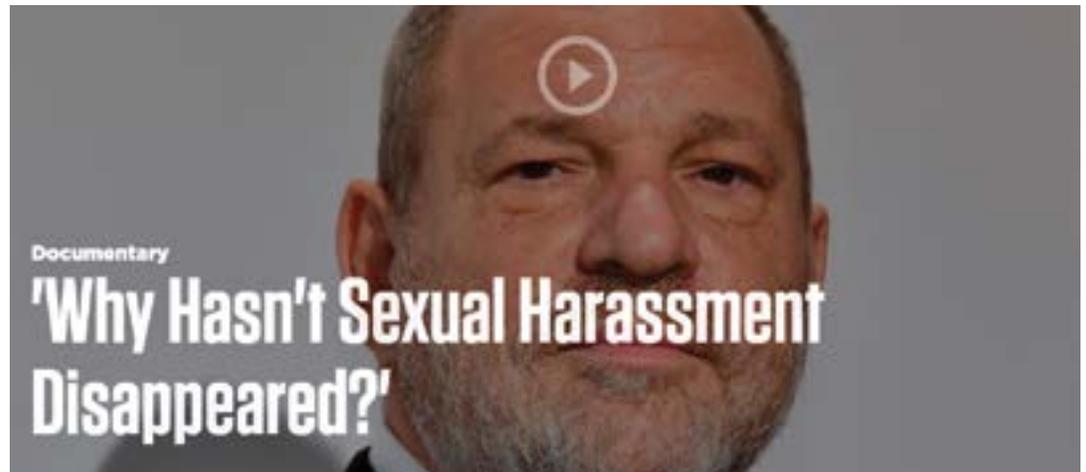
**“We have a collective tendency to swarm all over the hot news story of a given day or week and then forget about it as we move on to whatever new event commands our attention. Retro Report is our corrective.”**

— Clyde Haberman, Contributing Writer, *The New York Times*

---



In October, we helped the public understand the sea change in how sexual harassment was being perceived. We were in the midst of reporting our story about its history, when the allegations against Harvey Weinstein became public. We were able to quickly offer the long view by exploring the issue with Anita Hill, Gretchen Carlson and others. [“Why Hasn’t Sexual Harassment Disappeared?”](#) became part of the national conversation.



---

“This is MUST WATCH history!” — Norah O'Donnell of *CBS This Morning*

---

In the same month, after a year of reporting, we launched [“What Happens Next,”](#) a five-part series with *Quartz*, exploring how technological advances may impact the future. The goal was to provide a thoughtful counterweight to the media coverage of technology, which is often prone to hyperbole. We examined forthcoming technological transformations of core aspects of life—from technologists building a new digital global currency, to workers taking up revolutionary tools, and farmers preparing for a changing climate.



November brought [“Raising Doubts and Evolution...In Science Class,”](#) a report on the troubling debate between creationists and evolutionists and identified a growing mistrust in science. After watching the video and reading the related article by Clyde Haberman, over 1,000 people used *The New York Times* site and its Facebook page, to comment on the topic of religion and the increasing skepticism of science in the classroom. Dozens of scientists, teachers, students and parents participated in the discussion.

In December, “[Myths and Misperceptions about Eating Disorders](#)” examined how public understanding of eating disorders has evolved since the startling death of the singer Karen Carpenter in 1983. Today, 30 million people will suffer from such disorders in their lifetime.

We exposed many long-held misconceptions about eating disorders and reached more than a million viewers on Facebook alone. The audience skewed young and reminded us that we cannot ignore new generations who are facing the same crises that others have faced before them. A fresh look at ongoing stories like this serves this population well.



---

**“Once again, Retro Report hits the bullseye...You render a valuable public service when you focus on the problems of anorexia nervosa, & bulimia nervosa (binge-eating), during the holidays.”**

— A Retro Report viewer

---



Toward the end of 2017, Retro Report aired our investigation into the legacy of political dissent in sports one week after the President lashed out at some N.F.L. football players who “took a knee” during the national anthem and also disinvited the N.B.A. champions from the White House. The resulting report was “[The Black Athlete in America](#),” released in collaboration with *The New Yorker*. The magazine’s award-winning journalist Jelani Cobb wrote a companion article for the documentary to bring added attention to the piece.

---

**“I think by and large people have forgotten what this was about. It has become this issue of whether or not you respect the military, as opposed to whether or not we have a system of accountability for police officers who disproportionately use lethal force against unarmed African-Americans.”**

— Jelani Cobb, Staff Writer, *The New Yorker*

---



Throughout the year, we reported on multiple aspects of immigration policy.

“[Trump’s Immigration Rhetoric Echoes a Bitter Fight in the 90s](#),” looked back at how the issues of Mexican border fences, deportations, and putting “America First” all garnered our attention in the 1990s in California, and how that state evolved on immigration over the last 20 years.



“[Sanctuary Cities](#)” examined the origin of the sanctuary movement in the U.S., showing viewers that today’s churches and cities declaring themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants is just the latest chapter in a long history.

“**Retro Report, which tells the stories behind the news,...dug into the history of sanctuary cities.**”

— Michael Barbaro on The Daily Podcast

## Recognition and Awards

The Radio Television Digital News Association honored us with seven regional Edward R. Murrow Awards for multiple stories as well as for our overall body of work. The winning stories included:



Overall Excellence and Regional Breaking News for “[Nuclear Winter](#).” Carl Sagan and other Cold War scientists once feared that a nuclear war could plunge the world into a deadly ice age. Three decades later, Retro Report explored whether this theory still resonates.

Regional Hard News for “[After Bush v. Gore](#).” Retro Report explored how the dramatic controversy surrounding the 2000 presidential election led to sweeping voting reforms, but it also opened the door to a new set of problems that continue to impact elections today.



Best Regional Documentary for “[On Account of Sex](#).” Even in the #MeToo era, many people don’t know that passage of The Equal Rights Amendment was thwarted, largely through the efforts of one woman - often forgotten...Phyllis Schlafly.

Regional Continuing Coverage for “[Unraveling Zero Tolerance](#).” Over the last 30 years, schools across the country have enacted tough new discipline policies. Retro Report uncovers how some of those schools today say they went too far.



Best Continuing and Investigative Coverage for “[Atomic Vets](#).” The story of the veterans who witnessed secret atomic testing and how they struggled for decades to have their illnesses recognized by the government. This story was a co-production with Reveal/from The Center for Investigative Reporting.



In addition, Retro Report was nominated for other awards, including a Mirror Award, for Best Single Article/Story: “[The Outrage Machine](#).” This piece explored the impact of social media by examining community outrage from the present and the past. In the digital age, where everyday people can suddenly become public enemy number one, how do we strike the balance between keeping free speech alive online and preventing a cyber mob from taking over?

We also received three Webby Award nominations.

## Partnerships

Our partners help us to continue to increase the number of people we reach with our work.

In 2017, we continue to expand our editorial partnerships across digital and broadcast. Our partners include:

### Editorial Partners

---



### Platform Partners

---



We are reaching users of new media platforms such as SnapChat, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and over-the-top streaming with these editorial partnerships as well as through efforts to engage our own Retro Report audience on each platform. We will often tailor individual stories and create versions specifically for these platforms in order to reach new audiences more effectively.

---

## Community Engagement

We are also expanding our efforts to directly engage with communities who benefit from and are interested in our work — including news consumers, journalists, teachers, and students — through our newsletter and also through our social accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. We partner with the WNYC radio program, *The Takeaway*, to produce a radio segment related to every video in order to reach a different audience. We also began to offer more offline discussion and community events.



As part of our focus on media literacy, we curated five of our Retro Reports for the Montclair Film Festival. We then led a discussion called “True or False? Reporting in the Age of ‘Fake News,’” with journalists Jonathan Alter, Joe Klein, Sarah Blustein, Jim Axelrod and our own Clyde Haberman.

In June, we launched a pilot education program for New York City teachers to use Retro Report in the classroom. This program continued in November, when we conducted a hands-on workshop for high school students interested in journalism.

Finally, we held an event in October with Quartz to screen “The Future of Money,” followed by a discussion with Joe Lubin from Ethereum. Retro Report supporters, Quartz fans and cryptocurrency experts talked about the future of money and the current hype and hope around blockchain. The event was covered in the press.



---

## Financial Information

Retro Report, a 501(c)3 tax-exempt, non-profit organization, is committed to ethical and accountable leadership and strives for the highest level of transparency in all that we do.

A copy of our financial statement and independent auditor's report for the year ending December 31, 2017 is available upon request. For information contact: Tom Brown, [tbrown@retroreport.com](mailto:tbrown@retroreport.com).





## Staff

(As of January 1, 2018)

### Masthead

**FOUNDER:**  
Christopher Buck

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:**  
Kyra Darnton

**DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT:**  
Claire Schultz

**VP, BUSINESS OPERATIONS:**  
Tom Brown

### Editorial Staff

**SENIOR PRODUCERS:**  
Laurence B. Chollet  
Karen Sughrue

**ARCHIVAL PRODUCER:**  
Rebecca Losick

**HEAD OF POST PRODUCTION:**  
Margy Pohlmann

**COLUMNIST:**  
Clyde Haberman

**EDITORS:**  
Anne Checler  
Sandrine Isambert

**GRAPHICS, MEDIA MANAGER, IT:**  
Cullen Golden  
Aaron Thomas

**ENGAGEMENT EDITOR:**  
Sianne Garlick

**REPORTERS:**  
Meral Agish  
Noah Madoff  
Sandra McDaniel

**CONTRIBUTING PRODUCERS:**  
Raymond Bonner  
John Dinges  
Joshua Fisher  
Stephen Ives  
Peter Klein  
Geoffrey O'Connor  
Catherine Olian  
Amanda Pollak  
Jill Rosenbaum  
Bret Sigler  
Miriam Weintraub

**PRODUCERS:**  
Bonnie Bertram,  
Barbara Dury  
Erik German  
Scott Michels  
Kit Roane  
Matt Spolar  
Sarah Weiser

**ASSOCIATE PRODUCER:**  
Victor Couto

**FACT CHECKING:**  
Ethan Corey

**SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER:**  
Alex Remnick

## Governance

### Business Staff

**DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:**  
Colleen McCarthy

**PRODUCTION MANAGER:**  
Alexander Mager

**DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE:**  
Randi Hoppe

### Board of Directors

**PRESIDENT:**  
**Christopher Buck**  
Founder of Retro Report

**SECRETARY:**  
**Dana Wolfe**  
Founding Executive Producer  
of Intelligence Squared U.S.

**BOARD MEMBER:**  
**Nicholas Ascheim**  
Senior VP of digital for NBC News  
and MSNBC

**VICE PRESIDENT & TREASURER:**  
**D. Ben Benoit**  
Executive Director of the  
PCLB Foundation

**BOARD MEMBER:**  
**Richard Tofel**  
President of ProPublica

**BOARD MEMBER:**  
**Brewster Kahle**  
Founder of Internet Archive

## Looking Ahead to 2018

As we continue to provide historical context and insights around the critical issues facing our country from immigration and education, to public health and criminal justice, we will build our capacity to respond to breaking news, maintain and update our growing archive of stories, develop an education initiative, and expand our in-depth reporting to new topic areas. We will also experiment with deep-dive projects, where we invest in multiple stories on one critical topic for maximum impact.

We will continue to broaden our distribution by partnering with leading journalism organizations, while building up our own direct audience, and we will increase our community outreach and engagement efforts by expanding the way we think about multi-platforms to maximize our impact and spark well-informed discussion: from films to digital mini-doc series to screenings and educational outreach, we can better engage our audience of news consumers, teachers, professors and students.

With the groundwork for our fundraising efforts now in place, the development department will be ramping up efforts and proactively seeking expanded philanthropic support for our programs and initiatives from individuals and foundations.

## Our Sincerest Thanks

We are grateful to our growing community of friends and supporters. It is because of the generosity of individual donors, families, and foundations that we are able to advance our mission. **Thank you for helping us to continue telling the stories behind the news.**

### Individuals

---

Christopher Buck, <i>Annual Founder's Grant</i>	Sianne Garlick	Bonnie Losick	Daniel Rubey
Sakura Amend	David Grann	Sara Lundberg	Lorenzo Ruzzene
Nicholas Ascheim	Edward Grann	Roger Macdonald	Claire Schultz
Liza Bailey	Gary Grothman	Harold Mason	Christine Spolar
Suzanne & Jan Baker	Andrew Guglielmo	Colleen McCarthy	Stephen & Jody Spolar
D. Ben Benoit	Kelli Guss	Scott Mcleod	Marie-Louise Stares
Elizabeth Bernatowicz	Tom Hall	James Mcquaig	Bente Strong
Carmine Bianco	Randi Hoppe	Julio Mejia	Richard Tofel
Tom Brown	Elyse Kaftan	Tim Mohr	Wendy Traynor
Maria Casanova Hayman	Brewster Kahle	Bradley Neuberg	Miriam Weintraub
Andy Chmar	Pawel Kozlowski	Earl Parr III	Jeff Wilcox
Connie Coker	Kent Lawrence	Lauren Patti	Paul & Susan Wineland
Linda Corey	Arthur Lieber	Jerry Raymond	Dana Wolfe
Liza Darnton	Julie Lieberman	Stefanie Reit	
Sabrina Eastwood	Rebecca Liss	Frederic Rich	
	Casey Littmann	Amy San Roman	

### Foundations and Corporations

---

Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation	Microsoft Corporation	PCW Management
KRUPP Foundation	(Company Matching Gift)	(Company Matching Gift)

---

“We need credible, fact-based journalism to inform our discussions and choices. It doesn't come for free...  
If you care about the truth, you should be donating to Retro Report.” — Quote from a New Retro Report Supporter

---

## How You Can Help

For more information about supporting Retro Report, please contact Claire Schultz, Director of Development: [cschultz@retroreport.com](mailto:cschultz@retroreport.com), or call 646-869-0722.