

CENTRO DE  
PERIODISMO  
INVESTIGATIVO

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

# **2021**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 INTRODUCTION
- 6 LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR
- 8 WHO WE ARE
- 14 WHAT WE DO
- 16 THE MOST IMPORTANT STORIES OF 2021
- 22 COLLABORATIONS, QUOTES AND REPUBLICATIONS
- 24 TRANSPARENCY AND LITIGATION
- 28 DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY
- 32 CPI GOES ON RETREAT
- 34 AUDIENCE AND METRICS
- 36 JOURNALISM TRAINING INSTITUTE
- 40 COMMUNITY
- 44 AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS
- 46 STATISTICS AND DATA





# INTRODUCTION

*A story of impact and innovation in a world of shifting ground and convulsive tension.*

*The radical notion of transparency, accountability and engaged citizens.*

*A newsroom unlike any other, in Puerto Rico, in the United States; and in the Caribbean.*

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**We are CPI.**

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Investigative reporting does not begin in any one place. It does not start with assumptions. It is not subject to preconceived outcomes. It begins with a question, an observation, or perhaps an outlier which forces a reporter to pursue insights and answers. At the core of investigative reporting there is a commitment, a need to find the reasons why things are the way they are. When pointed at injustice or corruption, this insatiable drive for the truth is what powers the impact of investigative reporting in a free society. In fact, societies that aspire to democracy depend on an effective free press to survive, and risk collapse in its absence. As we reflect on our coverage and impact in 2021, we are again reminded of this goal, this purpose inspiring and guiding our work.

Those who know us will not be surprised that our reporting in 2021 stayed grounded in core health, economic, education and environmental stories which addressed issues impacting the everyday life of our communities. These were told through personal stories, grounded in the strongest data, with an unstoppable commitment to holding the powerful accountable. We continue to follow the ongoing

aftermath of Hurricane Maria, refusing to let another socio environmental tragedy descend without understanding the failings of local and federal government agencies in responding during and after this cataclysmic event.

As we continue to invest our time and resources into our core reporting areas, we also dedicate extraordinary resources to our ongoing coverage of the pandemic. This included supporting public health reporting which was essential to understanding the underlying systemic issues impacting our recovery.

Fundamental to our story is empowering the public to access and engage fully in the democratic system, where information is available for everyone, and discourse is fact driven. While the incentives and platforms for misinformation continue to evolve and spread, trusted journalism is becoming scarce for too many when exercising their full rights. At CPI, we remain vigilant in the fight for the Fourth Power. Our community acknowledges this, and backs us, wherever they call home. We hope you will explore our 2021 story and join us as 2022 unfolds.





# LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

When CPI co-founders Omayra Sosa Pascual and Oscar Serrano started this organization in 2007, I remember hearing about the comments of cynics and skeptics saying out loud that this endeavor, with \$0 money, within the nonprofit model, and so inconvenient for all power structures in Puerto Rico, would have no future. The fact is that it was a bold move. All they had was their own human capital and the passion for changing things.

I bow with admiration to them and to all the people that have contributed to CPI's success over the years. As we approach our fifteen anniversary in December 2022, the CPI feels proud that it has carried out the most relevant investigations in Puerto Rico's modern history, such as the transgenic seed companies land grabbing and corporate welfare, the coal ash contamination, the government's bankruptcy process, the revelation on the real number of deaths and recovery process after Hurricane María, the investigation on governor Ricardo Rosselló's chat and corruption schemes, and more recently, our coverage of the pandemic, Laws 20 and 22, public education, and the climate change impacts here and in the Caribbean.

Our ongoing oversight of government officials and agencies has been critical to ensuring accountability.

We have been focused on investigating the problems with the greatest impact on our communities. And we have done it while facing extraordinary challenges.

Litigation to obtain documents and public information is often our only option for the public to gain access to information, and more than 30 victories account for our increasing capacity on that front, thanks to the extraordinary work of our partners at the Access to Information Clinic at the Inter-American University Law School.

Investigative journalism has powerful detractors. Part of its nature, which is to seek social change, commonly threatens power players that benefit from and protect the status quo. Abuse of power, partisan intervention in government affairs and lack of transparency in the use of public funds, are just some of the great challenges that we have as a country and that have defined the editorial agenda of the CPI.

As we started 2021 with the hopes of transitioning from the pandemic fears, limitations and exacerbated inequities, our team fastened their seat belts to fully return to the in person editorial meetings and investigative routines.

False alarm. Very soon we recognized that this was not going to happen for us or for anyone, and that we needed to be cautious again, and move

forward. The uncertainties at a personal, family, work and community level, and at a national and global level, were to remain for a very long time.

By November, CPI team started an interesting journey with The Self Investigation, a non profit journalist's wellness initiative, founded by a data reporter that burned out and other professionals working with stress prevention and reduction for news media people. Our journalists received five group sessions to deal with hyperconnectivity boundaries and to better deal with the remote work dynamics. That experience led to establishing some internal parameters and practices to protect mental health, alleviate stress, identify physical burnout red flags and be more focused during work time. It was a transformative and deep learning experience for all, that allowed us to focus on our well being to be able to do a better job as journalists.

Ending the year with a more hopeful spirit, though still footing on shaky ground, we face 2022 confident that our work will keep reflecting all this legacy of rigor and quality journalism we have inherited and that we will be able to build new opportunities and alliances to uncover stories that would otherwise go unheard.

**Carla Minet,**  
*Executive Director*  
*Center for Investigative Journalism*





# WHO WE ARE



**Carla Minet**  
**Executive Director and Editor**

She has been a journalist for independent publications and has served as a researcher and producer for radio, television and websites like WIPR, Radio Universidad, El Nuevo Día, Primera Hora, Univisión and NotiCel. For six years, she was the executive director of the Prensa Comunitaria. She obtained her bachelor's degree from the School of Public Communication at the University of Puerto Rico, and her master's degree in journalism is a joint degree between the University of Barcelona and Columbia University, in New York. She is a member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and board member of the News Leaders Association (NLA).



**Omayra Sosa Pascual**  
**Co-founder, journalist, and Special Projects Editor**

Award winning investigative journalist and entrepreneur with 27 years of experience currently working as a free agent. She has done work in print, radio, television and digital platforms and was a staffer for El Nuevo Día newspaper for more than a decade. Her work has been published by local and international news outlets. She has co-founded two media projects and founded another two, and is a past President of the Overseas Press Club.



**Oscar J. Serrano**  
**Co-founder and Transparency Program coordinator**

Journalist and attorney with 25 years of experience in print, radio, television and digital media. He has been a reporter, editor in chief, director, and served as president of the Puerto Rico Journalists Association (ASPPRO). Besides editorial skills, his professional trajectory has given him the opportunity to gain meaningful managerial and entrepreneurial experience as member of the founding teams for digital outlets El Nuevo Día Interactivo, Center for Investigative Journalism and NotiCel, as well as Primera

Hora(print) and Red 96(radio). He has taught college courses on Media Law and Ethics and on Freedom of Information, as well as being a lecturer on these topics in Continuing Legal Education programs for lawyers.



**Carlos F. Ramos Hernández, Esq.**  
**Equal Justice Works Fellow at CPI Transparency Program**

He holds a B.A. in International Relations and French Literature from Tufts University in Boston and a Juris Doctor from the University of Puerto Rico School of Law. After being admitted to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico bar, he served as a judicial law clerk to Anabelle Rodríguez, Associate Justice of the Puerto Rico Supreme Court, and Gustavo Gelpí, U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Puerto Rico. He is currently an Equal Justice Works fellow at CPI working as a public interest lawyer on freedom of information and transparency issues.



**Laura Candelas**  
**Editor**

Journalist with four decades of experience. She was the director of The Associated Press in San Juan, Puerto Rico and she also directed Radio Universidad de Puerto Rico and has worked in different newspapers and magazines. She was CPI's Executive Director between 2010 and 2015 and is still a collaborator.



**Vanessa Colón Almenas**  
**Journalist and sub editor of Recovery Project**

Vanessa Colón Almenas helps to lead a team at CPI who investigate Puerto Rico's recovery efforts following the 2017 Hurricane María. With more than 25 years of journalism experience, she has worked as a reporter, a deputy director, and a multimedia editor at Primera Hora, a newspaper. Later, she was the digital deputy director of Puerto Rico's two largest news sites, El Nuevo Día and Primera Hora. Colón Almenas, who was born and raised in Puerto Rico, completed her master's at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York. As an independent journalist, her work has been published by the CPI, City Limits, Latino Rebels, and CNN en Español.



**Luis J. Valentín**  
**Journalist and podcast Producer-Editor**

Studied economics at Pennsylvania State University and law at the University of Puerto Rico. He began his journalism career at Caribbean Business in 2010. He joined CPI in 2018, where he covers Puerto Rico's debt crisis and fiscal management, as well as business and corruption issues. Since 2021, he is also editor of De Cerca, CPI's first podcast to be produced in-house. His work has been awarded by the Puerto Rico Journalists Association (ASPPRO) and the Overseas Press Club, including the Laura Rivera Meléndez Award for Young Journalist (2016), the Teodoro Moscoso Award for Excellence in Business and Finance Journalism (2018 and 2021), and the Malén Rojas Daporta Award for Excellence in Investigative Journalism (2019).



**Damaris Suárez**  
**Journalist**

Journalist with more than 20 years of experience specializing in government, economic and political news. She has worked for leading radio news networks, The Associated Press, the digital newspaper NotiCel and other specialized publications in the Caribbean. Her work has been recognized by the Puerto Rico Journalists Association (ASPPRO), the Overseas Press Club (OPC), the Puerto Rico State Department,

and the University of the Sacred Heart, among others. She recently received the Malén Rojas award for excellence in Investigative Journalism from the OPC. She is part of the team of investigative journalists at the CPI and moderates the radio program "Agenda Propia" on RadioIsla1320 news network. She has served as President of the Puerto Rico Journalists Association (ASPPRO) since 2017.



**Eliván Martínez Mercado**  
**Journalist**

Investigative journalist specializing in energy, environment, agriculture, and tax privileges. He studied foreign languages at the University of Puerto Rico. He earned a master's degree at the UAM / El País School of Journalism, in Madrid. He began his journalism career in 2001 at el Nuevo Herald in Miami and later joined the Sunday magazine of El Nuevo Día. He has worked with the CPI since 2012. He has collaborated with international publications such as The New York Times and the Miami Herald. In 2019, he was chosen as an energy journalism fellow at the University of Texas at Austin. He has participated in workshops of the Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano and the Investigative Reporters and Editors organization. His series and chronicles have earned him awards from the Puerto Rico Journalists Association and the Overseas Press Club.





**José Encarnación**  
Journalist

Born in Fajardo, PR. He graduated from the School of Communication at the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico, where he also completed a Master's of History in the Humanities Department. He has written for Diálogo UPR, Noticel and was a staff member for the Metro newspaper. He has a special interest in sports, education and society stories. Currently, he is a doctoral student at the UPR School of Education, as part of the Curriculum and Teaching program in History and Social Studies. Since 2020, he is a member of the Education division at the Center for Investigative Journalism (CPI) of Puerto Rico. He has been awarded by the Journalists Association of Puerto Rico (Asppro), the Overseas Press Club and the International Sports Press Association (AIPS).



**Víctor L. Rodríguez**  
Journalist

He directed the newspaper Diálogo at the University of Puerto Rico from 2016-2018. Before that, he was an editor and reporter of the economics and business beats at the Metro Puerto Rico newspaper. He holds a Master's Degree in Communication Theory and Research from the University of Puerto Rico. He also obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Information and Journalism and minored

in Foreign Languages with an emphasis on French and Italian.



**Rafael Díaz Torres**  
Journalist

He has been with the CPI since June 2019. His areas of interests are recovery, environmental issues and sports. In 2021, he was recognized for his work in ecological journalism by the Overseas Press Club of Puerto Rico. He also is a professor in the Department of Geography and the Gender Studies Program at the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. He has a Ph.D. in History of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean and a Master's in Media Studies. His doctoral research focused on the coverage and media representation of the Puerto Rico women's national basketball team. He is currently a staff member for Todas, a feminist digital site, and he served as editor of the academic journal Caribbean Studies at the UPR.



**Jeniffer Wiscovitch**  
Journalist

Journalist with more than 15 years of experience, covering health issues. She studied journalism at the University of the Sacred Heart of Puerto Rico. Her journalistic work has been recognized by journalistic organizations, including the Puerto Rico Journalists Association (ASPPRO) and the Overseas Press Club. She is part

of the CPI team of journalists dedicated to working on stories about the recovery of Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. She is a member of the ASPPRO board of directors. She has collaborated with the CPI since October 2017.



**Tatiana Díaz**  
Journalist

Journalist from Aguadilla with a decade of experience. Graduated from the University of Sagrado Corazón, she is now pursuing a MA in Demography at the UPR Medical Sciences Campus. Her work experience began in the civic sector with organizations such as Prensa Comunitaria and Scuba Dogs Society. She worked as an editor for the digital newspaper NotiCel and currently does research on education for the Center for Investigative Journalism.



**Cristina del Mar Quiles**  
Journalist

Journalist from Caguas, Puerto Rico who has worked for the past 13 years in print, radio, multimedia and independently as a reporter, editor, and producer. She has been researching and writing about recovery issues for the Center for Investigative Journalism since 2018. She is also focused on reporting about gender-based violence and is the co-founder of the feminist journalism outlet Todas, todaspr.com. Her investigation on the

island municipality of Vieques and the struggle of its community for access to quality medical services is part of the podcast about Puerto Rico La Brega.



**Joel Cintrón Arbasetti**  
Journalist

Investigative journalist with 15 years of experience, beginning with articles about art, culture and the San Juan independent music scene. Since the last 10 years working with the Centro de Periodismo Investigativo, he has focused on issues of politics, urban developments, gentrification, debt economics, fiscal crisis and the Puerto Rican community in the United States. He is author of the books El Local (2016, Editorial del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña) and Sobre un animal muerto (2020, Antípoda) and founder director and editor of the independent editorial Antípoda. In 2019, he obtained the Visiting Professional Specialist Fellowship in Latin American Studies at Princeton University and the following year received the El Serrucho de Beta-Local. His work has been recognized by the Association of Puerto Rico Journalists (ASPPRO), the Casa de Puerto Rico in Spain, and the International Translation Cabinet of Madrid, among others. In 2014, he won the Overseas Press Club National Investigative Reporting Award for the series "Walmart Uncovered."



**Laura Moscoso**  
Project Manager,  
Youth Media  
Literacy Project

Journalist with a bachelor's degree in creative writing from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus and a master's degree in journalism from the Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid. She is a member of the founding group of the 80grados magazine. She has worked at Prensa Comunitaria, El Nuevo Día, WIPR, CPI, Todas, and collaborates with independent publishing projects. In 2018, her essay, "Morena, monta mi guagua" was published in the book, "Santurce y 8 crónicas de viaje," a project sponsored by the Museum of Contemporary Art of Puerto Rico. She also offers workshops on data journalism and visualization tools for journalists and students of the trade. She is currently the Project Manager for CPI's youth media literacy project in Loíza, called Medioscopio. She lives and works in Santurce, Puerto Rico.



**Angélica Serrano**  
Fact checking  
and web editor

She has been covering stories for the CPI since 2019, and most recently, assisting as web-editor. Angélica interned at El Nuevo Día, New York Daily News, CNBC's investigative unit and Bloomberg's Latin America desk. She earned a M.A. in Business and Economic Reporting from New York University in 2021. She has a B.A. in Journalism from Universidad del Sagrado Corazón.



# OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM



**Rígel Lugo**  
Director of Operations and Growth

After obtaining her bachelor’s degree in Sociology from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, she completed advanced course-work at the Oñati International Institute for Sociology of Law, in the Basque Country, Spain and continued to doctoral studies in the Complutense University of Madrid. Before joining the CPI in 2017, she was Deputy Secretary of Planning and Information Technology at the Department of the Family and worked as professor of Sociology at the University of Puerto Rico. From 2012 to 2020 she was editorial coordinator and board member at Revista 80grados. Recently, Rígel was selected to participate in Poynter Institute’s Media Transformation Challenge leadership program, along with 27 professionals from local and international media such as Associated Press, CNN, ABC News, BBC, NPR, Reuters and The Atlantic.



**Annette Ramírez**  
Development Manager

Marketing executive with over 25 years of experience in the advertising and media industries. Past work includes advertising agencies Martí, Flores, Prieto & Wachtel, J. Walter Thompson and McCann Erickson, and media companies OneLink Communications and Liberty Puerto Rico. Annette joined the CPI team in April 2020 in charge of major, corporate and individual donors. Her responsibilities include planning and executing fundraising campaigns and donor stewardship, among others.



**Sharon Tossas**  
Development Officer

Over 10 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. Her acknowledgment of the importance of the third sector began in 2008 at the Centro Universitario para el Acceso based at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez campus, as program coordinator. For the following years she pursued the role of volunteer program coordinator at Prensa Comunitaria and event manager at Sociedad Americana Contra el Cáncer de Puerto Rico. She has been part of the CPI team since August 2020.



**Norend Feliciano**  
IT, Digital Security and Media Manager

Digital media producer, recording engineer and sound designer with over 15 years of experience in diverse media outlets. Her areas of expertise are livestream production, video, sound mixing and content creation for e-learning platforms. She has a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the School of Public Communication at the University of Puerto Rico. In January 2021 she joined the CPI team as Media Manager. Besides her work in media, she has a career as a professional singer-songwriter.



**Mariana Reyes Angleró**  
Community Outreach and Special Events Coordinator

Journalist and cultural manager. She was the Sunday editor of the New York newspaper Hoy and a journalist for El Nuevo Día. She has published in El Diario La Prensa, La Ventana de Casa de las Américas, Primera Hora, among others. She has worked as a television producer -Cultura Viva- and a radio reporter. He has produced albums, concerts and festivals. She was Editorial Coordinator of 80grados and is the director of Taller Comunidad La Goyco.



**Amandla Colón**  
Programs Officer for CPI’s Journalism Training Institute and Transparency Program

Studied Writing, Literature, and Publishing with a minor in Art History at Emerson College in Boston, MA. Her first experience coordinating events was through the mentorship of Emerson’s former curator in residence and art history professor, Joseph Ketner II, in which she was able to plan a series of art events hosted by visiting German artist Oliver Herring. She is currently working on a master degree at the Hispanic Studies Department at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Her most recent work at CPI includes coordinating the Training Institute’s first Caribbean Hub virtual conference and working with the media literacy pilot project for underprivileged youth in Puerto Rico.



**Ricardo Rodríguez**  
Social Media Manager

Originally from Loiza, he has studies in Political Science and Graphic Arts. He has previously worked on student and grassroots media projects as well as election campaigns and social activism.



**Carols Nieves**  
Administrator

Born in Coamo, Puerto Rico. She has graduate studies in Community Social Psychology from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. For the past 20 years he has worked coordinating educational and community projects in collaboration with government agencies, private and non-profit organizations.



**Amarilis Flores Flores**  
Accounting and Compliance Officer

She has 43 years of experience in different professional fields. Has a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and a Master’s degree in Community Social Psychology, areas that she has managed to link in order to advance alternative projects of community socioeconomic development, human development and citizen participation. She has worked in accounting and auditing in private companies, has been executive director of non-profit entities and served as director of community development in the Municipality of San Juan. In addition, she has served as a consultant to nonprofit organizations in financial management, social program design, organizational policy, and strategic planning.



# WHAT WE DO

## THE JOURNALISM

### NEW EDUCATION INVESTIGATIVE UNIT

In the editorial area we have achieved one of our strategic goals: solidifying the public education coverage with two journalists dedicated to this issue in a broad and transversal way. Our Education beat, an area of investigation much needed in Puerto Rico considering corruption and representing

the largest government budget expenditure, was showcased in a week-long campaign dedicated to our findings about education during 2021's back to school season. The team published 15 investigations in 2020 and 11 investigations plus 3 fact-checks in 2021. The team grew to two full time journalists.

### AGENDA PROPIA RADIO SHOW

Agenda Propia is an oversight, investigation and analysis radio program produced by the CPI in which the island's news, economic and social issues are presented and discussed by the main players of the investigations and CPI journalists hosted by Damaris Suárez.

The hour-long program is broadcast weekly, during which we amplify the most relevant investigations published by the CPI, keep an eye on the government of Puerto Rico, the federal government, and the Fiscal Control Board, and also put a spotlight on issues that are overlooked despite deeply impacting our communities.

In 2021 we continued to report on the COVID-19 pandemic as only we can. We first explored a CPI investigation into the

undercount of deaths early in the pandemic. A scientific study conducted by the US National Center for Biotechnology Information later validated our research.

In addition, we had two special editions of Agenda Propia. One for the fourth anniversary of Hurricane María together with the recovery team, and another at the end of the year with a summary of the 10 most read stories of 2021. We also aired two episodes of the podcast La Brega produced by the CPI on the Agenda Propia slot.

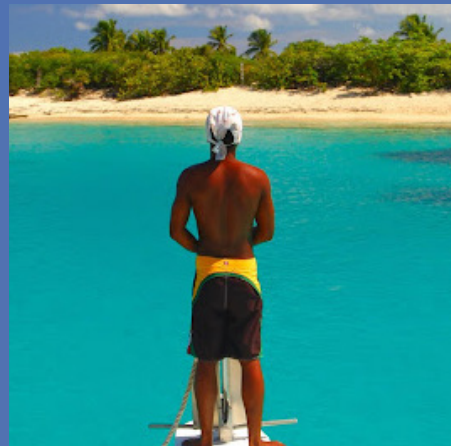




# THE MOST IMPORTANT STORIES OF 2021

This year the pandemic has dominated global headlines. Puerto Rico was no exception, but the health crisis has not been the only thing that has kept us busy at the CPI. From the tax haven enabler Acts 20 and 22 to the Pandora Papers, environmental issues to education, we have investigated throughout 2021 to uncover stories you would not otherwise know. Here we present some of the most read of 2021.

## 1. EFFECTS OF INCENTIVES ARE INVISIBLE



The lack of tangible impact of tax exempt incentives on the Puerto Rican economy makes it difficult to know how they are used and measure their effectiveness. We do not know if the jobs promised will be real as the return on investment of millions of dollars that administrations of both main parties made in the promotional

campaigns of these incentives worldwide. It is not known what the strategy behind the scaffolding of incentives promoted by the government is, and how they are linked, if in any logical way, to the island's economy. A sample of this is the fact that since April of this year the CPI had to request through the court that the Puerto Rico Treasury Department and the Department of Economic Development and Commerce make public detailed information on some of these benefits. We're still in court.

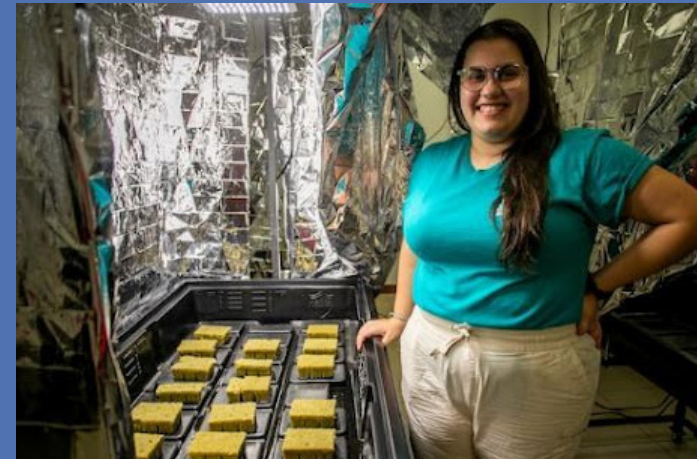
The series made available new data, information, and analysis about Puerto Rico's tax incentives scenario. The stories "Puerto Rico Act 22 Tax Incentive Fails" and "Acts 20 and 22 created a class of intermediaries who manage tax exemptions" were widely read and commented on this year,

including at the legislative level.

On the one hand, the jobs and economic impact anticipated by the creators of Act 22 never materialized. From being an instrument to attract millionaires and foreign investment, the law went on to become a haven for cryptocurrency fans, YouTube personalities, and consultants.

On the other hand, the class of intermediaries who present themselves as experts in Acts 20 and 22 are made up of large and small law firms, accounting firms and management companies, some of which were part of the Department of Economic Development and Commerce's (DDEC, in Spanish) failed "qualified promoters" program.

## 2. MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITY FOUND FOR SARGASSUM IN PUERTO RICO



Adriana Guzman works in the C-Combinator laboratory where they study the potential use of sargassum-derived products.  
Photo by Xavier García | Center for Investigative Journalism

The series "Sargassum: a problem and a solution" by Rafael Díaz Torres provided an update on an issue that affected the tourism and fishing

industry this year. The absence of a public policy to manage sargassum impacts Puerto Rico's coastal communities in different ways, according to their financial status. Neither the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources nor the federal government have strategies to dispose of or see the potential uses of this algae.

The series also included the story of a company based in Cataño, C-Combinator, which generates products with sargassum that are collected on other coasts, mainly in Mexico, which caught the readers' attention.

The 26-employee operation represents the promise of the green economy to manage sargassum and turn it into raw materials for manufacturing. Biostimulant products for plants, rubber for sandals, creams for vegan cosmetics, as well as other materials that can be used for agriculture and mangrove restoration, are some of the sargassum derivatives produced in Cataño.

## 3. FOUR YEARS WITHOUT JUSTICE FOR SUNNOVA'S SOLAR PANEL CUSTOMERS



Edgardo Rodriguez, a Carolina resident, is one of more than 500 customers who requested assistance from OIPC after facing problems with Sunnova's service and equipment.

Photo by Nahira Montcourt | Center for Investigative Journalism

Since January 2018, when journalist Eliván Martínez Mercado published a story about Sunnova, his email inbox began to continuously receive messages from consumers who have problems with the company. We have received dozens of messages from those clients, Eliván explains, the problem that affects hundreds of families who have contracted the solar energy panel service from the Texas-based company.

The Puerto Rico Energy Bureau (PREB) confirmed that Sunnova has to change its business practices because it failed to disclose full information before clients signed the contracts. Nor

did it adequately inform them on how the photovoltaic panels would work when connected to the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority's (PREPA) network, nor did it warn them that they would be useless when the power went out, as happened after Hurricane María.

However, in this follow-up story, the reporter discovers that the company will not have to respond retroactively to the hundreds of customers who complained about service and equipment problems.



## 4. PANDORA PAPERS IN PUERTO RICO



In 2012, under the tenure of Gov. Luis Fortuño, Puerto Rico went all out so that the island would become an international financial center. The government offered tax exemptions of up to 45 years to anyone who set up a bank, insurer, subsidiary, or boutique firm dedicated to exporting financial services. The story is familiar: capital would be injected; it would create thousands of jobs and generate economic development.

Since then, small banks have arrived in Puerto Rico, which by establishing themselves here, can open accounts directly with the Federal Reserve. Almost 10 years later, the balance of this incentive has been a “modest” economic impact, less than 1,000 direct jobs according to the Office of the Commissioner of Financial Institutions (OCIF, in Spanish), attracting the attention of federal and international authorities for cases of money laundering and tax evasion, and a reputation as a tax haven for offshore entities.

These entities, whose owners often remain behind the scenes, can be used to hide assets from tax payments or, in the worst case, money laundering and other illegal transactions.

The Pandora Papers international investigation gave access to documents that show how some of these entities facilitate shady business practices by foreign millionaires. The leak of more than 11.9 million documents from offshore companies obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) include Puerto Rican performer Elmer Figueroa, better known as Chayanne, among the artists that have had these types of businesses.

Owning offshore assets or using paper entities to do business across borders is not illegal in many places. But people often use this system to manage, move and often hide their fortunes, proof that not everyone plays by the same rules when complying with their tax liability.

## 5. THE NEW PROGRESSIVE PARTY’S TOTAL DOMINATION OF THE STATE ELECTIONS COMMISSION CONTROLLED 2020’S ENTIRE ELECTORAL PROCESS



From the moment when the then governor, Wanda Vázquez Garced, signed the new Electoral Code into law, the New Progressive Party immediately and indefinitely secured control of the State Elections Commission, an investigation carried out by the CPI revealed. This had undeniable consequences in the 2019 elections. Tasks such as coordinating the Permanent Voter Registration Boards and keeping the Electoral Registry current were left up in the air after the changes and dismissals, despite being a fundamental part of the preparations for election day.

## 6. GARCÍA PADILLA, ROSSELLÓ’S LOBBYIST AND OFFICIALS WHO OPENED DOORS FOR LUMA

Former Gov. Alejandro García Padilla called lawmakers of his Popular Democratic Party (PPD, in Spanish) asking them to meet with Wayne Stensby, the controversial executive director of LUMA, the company that runs part of Puerto Rico’s electrical system.

Former Gov. Ricardo Rosselló’s star lobbyist in Washington and his friend, Manuel “Manny” Ortiz, also offered his services to the consortium during the transition period to manage the network, several sources confirmed to the CPI.

Rep. Luis Raúl Torres, who is heading investigations into LUMA in the legislature, confirmed that the Economic Development, Planning, Telecommunications, Public-Private Partnerships and Energy Commission would



Former Gov. Alejandro García Padilla called lawmakers of his Popular Democratic Party (PPD, in Spanish) asking them to meet with Wayne Stensby, the controversial executive director of LUMA, the company that runs part of Puerto Rico’s electrical system.

investigate the angle of Ortiz’s relationship with politicians from both parties and the company, after getting a request for an investigation.

## 7. NEW FEDERAL AUDIT CONCLUDES THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PLACED THE LIVES OF PUERTO RICANS AT RISK DURING HURRICANE MARÍA



Rafael Rodríguez Mercado, former Health secretary.

The Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDOH) placed the lives of Puerto Ricans “at risk” by failing to effectively implement a preparedness and response protocol during Hurricane María, a federal government audit concludes.

The investigation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG), published in July 2021, establishes that the PRDOH did not effectively implement a collaborative

agreement to handle emergencies.

A chain of mistakes and omissions by the Department of Health led to it being the only agency of any state or territory to be audited by the federal government. The PRDOH did not carry out specific preparedness and response initiatives for the most vulnerable people, such as children, the elderly, the sick, the disabled, the geographically isolated, and those with a language or cultural barrier, as required by the collaborative agreement.



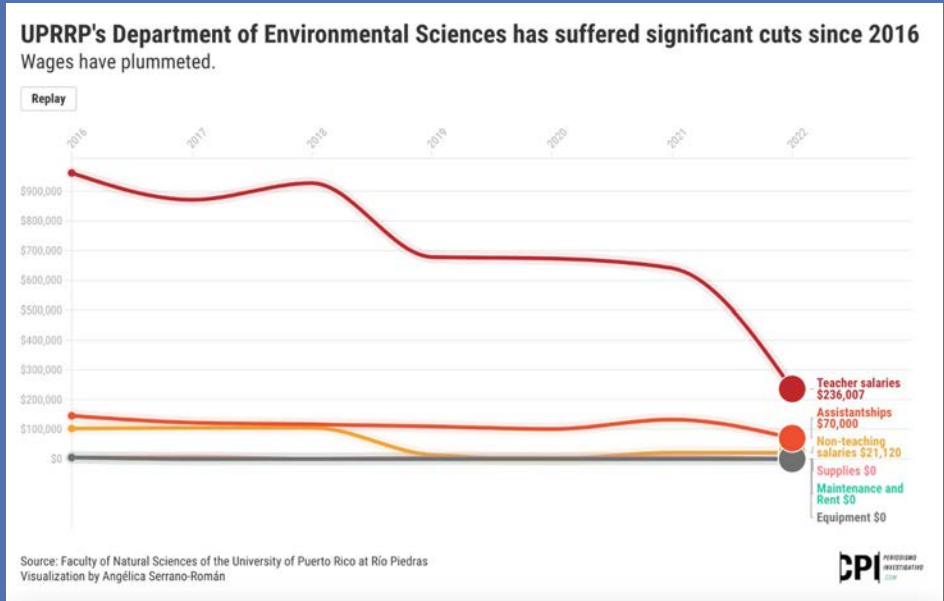
8. THE WELL-CONNECTED HAVE ACCESS TO COVID-19 VACCINE, WHILE MOST VULNERABLE ARE LEFT BEHIND



Health Secretary Carlos Mellado and Gov. Pedro Pierluisi. Photo courtesy of La Fortaleza

An analysis of the Vaccination Registry, that the CPI was able to obtain through the local court for the first months of the inoculation process against COVID-19 in Puerto Rico, shows that this management was marked by chaos and access to the scarce supplies by groups connected to doctors, hospitals, vaccine providers and the government. Among them, relatives, close friends, employees who were not at risk, contractors and more than a hundred people who live outside of Puerto Rico.

9. UPR CAN NO LONGER SUSTAIN THE PRESSURE OF AUSTERITY



The funding cutbacks at the public university, because of the austerity measures imposed by the Fiscal Control Board, is evident in the loss of faculty members, the cancellation of courses and accreditations — as happened with the Medical Sciences Campus’ Neurosurgery Program — and in the quality of teaching, reducing the island’s competitiveness and impacting research and development that is critical to the Gross National Product.

10. DISTRUST IN VACCINES AND UNCOUNTED DEATHS: THIS IS THE PANDEMIC IN THE CARIBBEAN



Economic conditions, cultural practices and political crises are the main barriers that lead to the lack of reliable statistics and prevent knowing the real impact of COVID-19 in several countries of the Caribbean region, according to the Pandemic in Paradise investigation series, in which journalists from Haiti, Guadalupe, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico collaborated.

Among the most critical cases in terms of managing the

pandemic are Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique, where in 2021 the infection rate increased dramatically and the official numbers on deaths associated with COVID-19 must be taken with a grain of salt.

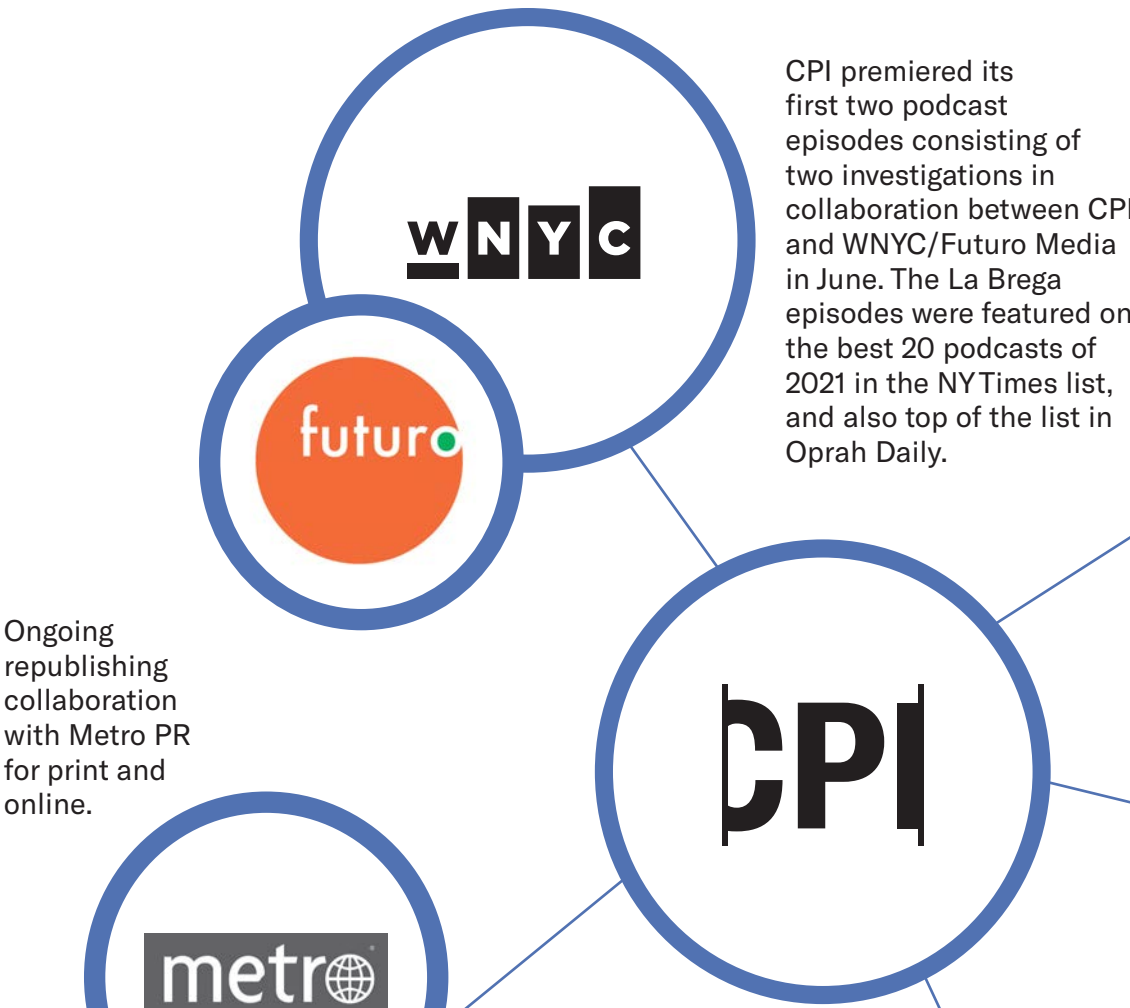
In Puerto Rico, the most recent data pointed to a change in the profile of people who have died from this virus, since in December 2020 it was mostly people over 70 years old, but in August 2021 there was an increase in deaths by the virus among people aged

30 to 59 years.

The first investigation in the regional series captured the attention of our readers. There were also stories about Puerto Rico, Guadeloupe and Haiti. The complete series is also available in English and French.



# COLLABORATIONS, QUOTES AND REPUBLICATIONS



CPI premiered its first two podcast episodes consisting of two investigations in collaboration between CPI and WNYC/Futuro Media in June. The La Brega episodes were featured on the best 20 podcasts of 2021 in the NYTimes list, and also top of the list in Oprah Daily.

Ongoing republishing collaboration with Metro PR for print and online.



In June we co-produced another podcast with local program “En qué quedó”, a popular follow-up stories podcast in Puerto Rico. Since its creation in 2012, a total of 3,311 foreigners received extraordinary tax benefits under Act 22. The promise that their arrival on the Island would be accompanied by capital and economic development was never fulfilled. In this special episode we explored the results that Act 22 has had in Puerto Rico and the role of the government in overseeing its implementation.



## ICIJ - Pandora Papers

Millions of leaked documents and the biggest journalism partnership in history uncovered financial secrets of 35 current and former world leaders, more than 330 politicians and public officials in 91 countries and territories, including Puerto Rico.

This leak was shared with more than 150 media outlets. More than 600 journalists around the world, in 117 countries and territories, reviewed the files.

CPI collaborated along with The Washington Post, The Miami Herald and Univisión; as well as Latin American media outlets Proceso, ABC Color, Connectas, El Espectador, IDL Reporteros, Convoca, Armando.info, El Faro y Centro Latinoamericano de Investigación Periodística (CLIP), among others. Collaborators in Europe included Spain's El País, Le Monde from France, The Guardian from the United Kingdom and Süddeutsche Zeitung from Germany.



## NEW AUDIENCES:

During 2021, more local and regional partners republished, quoted or interviewed our journalists regarding their investigations. For example, the first Caribbean investigative series about COVID-19 in which Diario Libre (Dominican Republic), RCI (Guadeloupe), and AyiboPost (Haiti) participated, was picked-up by outlets in British Virgin Islands and Cayman Islands, among others.



# TRANSPARENCY AND LITIGATION

Our Transparency Program advances our mission of providing access to information and transparency tools in order to equip citizens with the knowledge they need to hold the powerful accountable. The program offers legal advice and workshops on the topics of transparency and access to information to journalists and the general public.

The transparency team works with the support of the Legal Clinic of the Inter-American University School of Law, which provides pro bono litigation when necessary.

CPI joined forces with the Legal Clinic, which obtained a multiyear grant from the Legal Clinic Fund to increase the number of access to information cases they can engage with CPI, as well as tackle additional public interest cases from other independent media outlets and citizens. We have been working collaboratively to identify journalists who are also doing investigative work outside of CPI so that they can get the documents they need to support their investigative research with the Clinic support.

In 2021, CPI participated in round table sessions held by the legislature to evaluate our current access to information, transparency, and open data laws.

In October, Carlos Francisco Ramos, Esq. joined our team as an Equal Justice Works Fellow to do in-house legal research and counseling on strategic litigation cases, community outreach and workshops on access to information. For his first three months, Ramos conducted interviews with the journalists at CPI to learn about their access to information practices to create new information petitions model forms for other journalists and the general public.

Our Executive Director was also invited to speak before the US Civil Liberties Commission about CPI's role in divulging the multiple civil rights violations perpetrated by Puerto Rico and the federal government in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and María.







# CASES IN 2021

In 2021 we filed eight new access to information cases, and gained access to documents through timely letters sent by our team of lawyers. We also filed three FOIA requests. We did several Facebook Lives and radio interviews during the year to update our audience about the cases.

*Our first case* was against the municipality of San Juan to have access to the salaries of the employees of the municipality from 2008 until 2020.

As we have several times in the past, *we had to sue the Health Department on three separate occasions*. The first time, our complaint was filed against the Health Department and the Demographic Registry so that we could have access to the COVID-19 vaccination records. We also had to *sue once again to gain access to the mortality database*, which we have sued over successfully several times before. The third complaint to this agency was over documents detailing emergency preparedness plans for hospitals, dialysis centers, among other government health care providing institutions.

*In 2021, we sued the Department of Education* over the enrollment and budget of all public schools in Puerto Rico.

In collaboration with Syra Ortiz-Blanes, journalist for the Miami Herald, we sued *the*

*Puerto Rico Police Department in 2021* to get all the complaints filed against police officers by their partners or wives involving incidents of violence and abuse.

In 2021, CPI presented a *claim against the Department of the Treasury of Puerto Rico and the Department for Economic Development* for the financial reports of foreign resident investors in Puerto Rico.

We also provided *litigation support to journalist Hermes Ayala Guzmán* who won an *investigative grant* and filed a suit against the Department of Natural Resources and the Permits Management Office over information about the cutting, pruning, and transplanting of trees that has been happening irregularly in the past years.

With the legal support of LatinoJustice and Democracy Forward, *we finally received all the documents requested through FOIA from FEMA* filed in 2018, and also got some important documents from the Treasury Department of the United States regarding the Fiscal

Control Board appointees following a lawsuit started in 2018 with representation from LatinoJustice and Democracy Forward.

We have *pending lawsuits filed against the Fiscal Control Board* and the government related to an exchange of emails between the two entities. The federal case was seen before the First Circuit of Appeals in Boston after CPI filed its appeal and over 30 journalistic and transparency entities filed amicus briefs to support our position. In the regional jurisdiction case, *we are awaiting for the Supreme Court to evaluate the case*.



# DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

2021 was a very busy and successful year in terms of Development, with four fundraising campaigns that were widely supported by our community allowing us to reach our fundraising goals. Virtual events, new subscriber drives and educational campaigns were also key features of our 2021 calendar.

## FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS

We launched the integration of the ATH Móvil bank payment app as a new donation alternative, in order to expand and facilitate the options for donations. This innovative new approach to fundraising is critical with younger and mobile first contributors.

Additionally, we engaged sponsors from the corporate community aligned with our values, either as matching donations during our year-end campaign or as sponsors for our events.

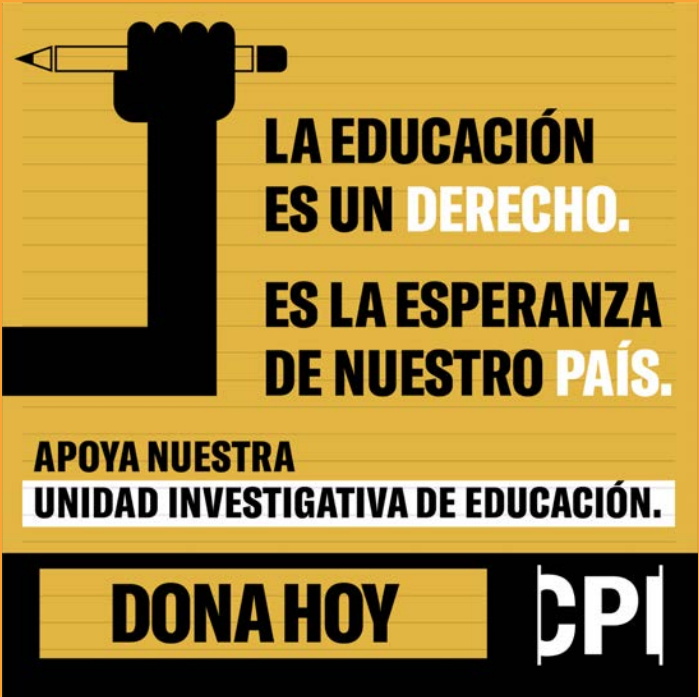
CPI laid the foundation for a Major Gifts program aimed at attracting individual donors of \$2,500 or more per year, both in Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican diaspora.

## CPI’S CULTURAL MARATHON

Held in March, CPI’s Cultural Marathon was a virtual bridge between San Juan and New York and included conversations with artists, athletes, and activists in both cities. The event, which included live music presentations by Miguel Zenón and Sebastián Otero, as well as interventions from The Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural & Educational Center, expanded the conversation about issues that affect Boricuas in San Juan and New York. The Marathon included interviews with musicians, artists, film makers, as well as environmental leaders and arts producers.



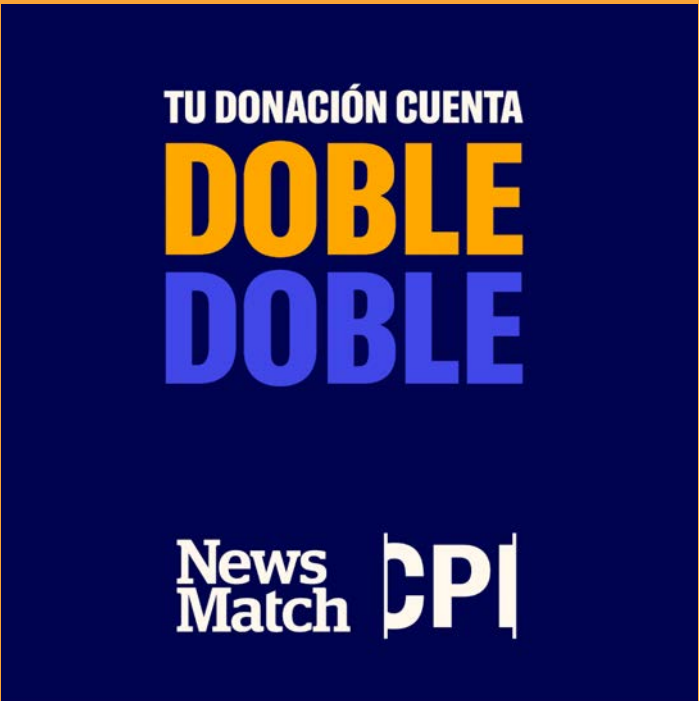
1<sup>ST</sup> TRIMESTER  
Cultural Marathon



3<sup>RD</sup> TRIMESTER  
Education Beat



2<sup>ND</sup> TRIMESTER  
Summer Campaign



4<sup>th</sup> TRIMESTER  
Newsmatch Campaign



# IN 2021 WE RECEIVED GRANTS FROM THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS:

Revenue diversification is at the core to ensure our long term sustainability.



# ADMINISTRATIVE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2021

- Medical insurance coverage for employees
- Mental health services for employees and core contractors
- Hiring of a full-time Administrator
- Ongoing training in financial and administrative topics
- Development of technological security protocols and procedures
- On site and remote protocols and assistance during COVID-19 for staff and contractors



# CPI GOES ON RETREAT

The staff participated in a professional training and teambuilding event as part of the organization’s efforts to contribute to the quality of life of its employees and collaborators.

The three-day event offered the opportunity to connect after a long period of remote work. The 25-person team includes journalists, editors, administrative and development staff. The event included professional and team-building workshops to coach our team to be better prepared to continue developing quality investigative stories and efforts aligned with CPI’s mission.








# AUDIENCE AND METRICS

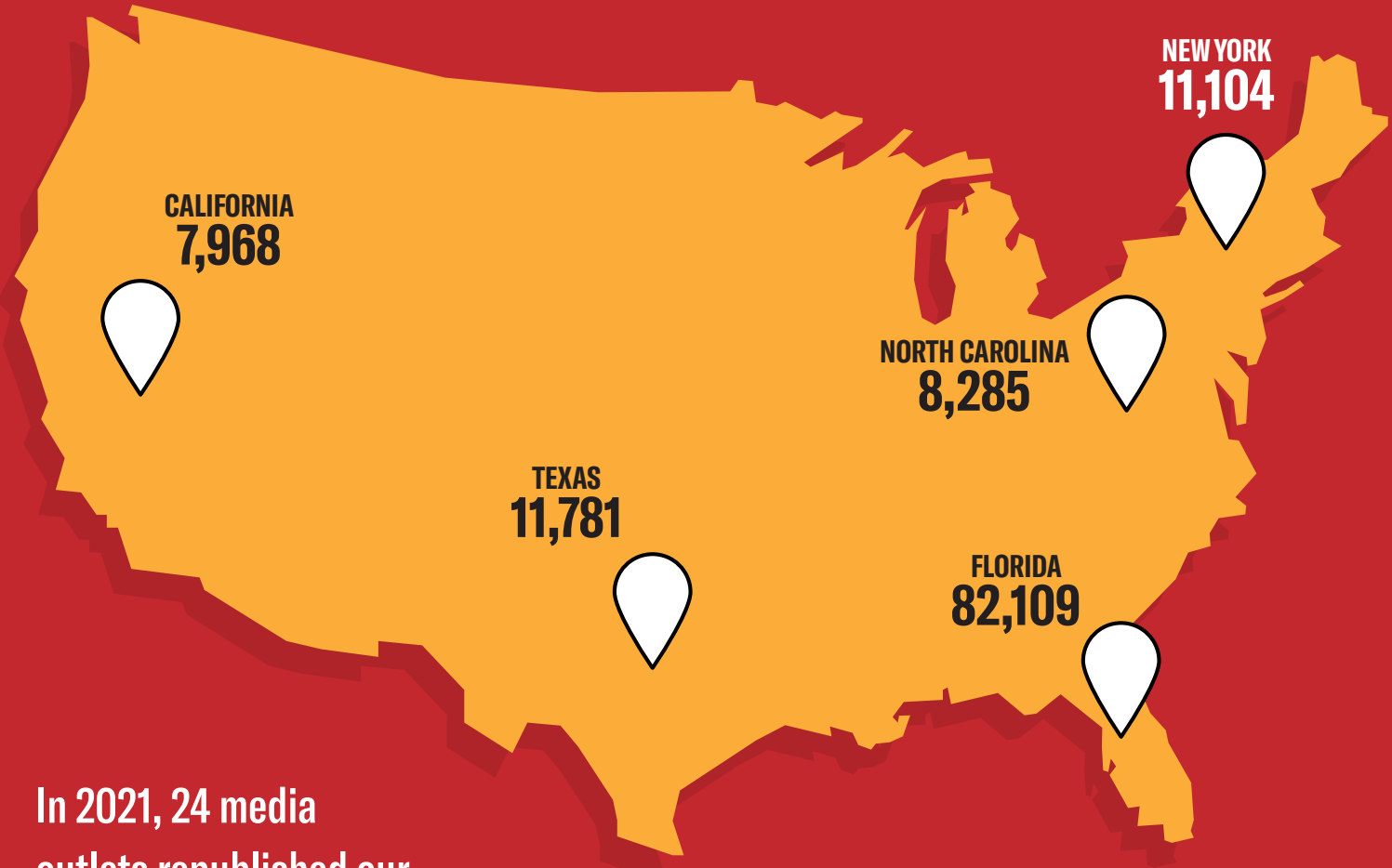
Our audience is our reason for being. At the CPI we are always developing strategies to amplify our reach. During 2021, mailing list subscriber drives helped us surpass our goal of growing our mailing list from 7,500 to 10,000 (a 33% increase), successfully reaching 10,500 subs by the end of the year.

Puerto Rican audience is strong, representing 34.5% of our unique website visitors in 2021.



			
2021	+5%	+24%	+6%

US AUDIENCE  
180,258  
(34.51%)



In 2021, 24 media outlets republished our investigations, multiplying our reach exponentially.

PR AUDIENCE  
300,585  
(57.55%)





# JOURNALISM TRAINING INSTITUTE

Six years ago, the CPI formalized its training institute for Puerto Rican and Caribbean journalists, journalism students, and the general public. The workshops range from training in practical skills such as understanding data and working with databases and spreadsheets, access to public information, fact-checking, among other tools to improve data-driven reporting. Other educational events center around upcoming and relevant topics in journalism, such as health, economy, public education or climate change.

There is an annual donation, \$15 for students and \$20 for professional journalists, which provides them with at least three educational opportunities a year and access to main events.

The membership's main perk is to have the opportunity to submit investigation grant proposals to receive reporting grants and have one on one mentorship with CPI's editors. Not only do we want to give journalists, who otherwise might not have, the opportunity to do investigative work in their current media outlets or academic work, but to expand the possibilities of investigative journalism in Puerto Rico.

Workshops, panels and seminars about access to information or accountability topics also are held for the general community. Also, we have a media literacy training project for underserved communities. Beyond Puerto Rico, the institute has developed a training and mentorship program with a network of investigative journalists in the Caribbean.





5

Fellowships to journalists from the Caribbean to work on collaborative investigative reporting

6

Investigative grants awarded in 2021 to Puerto Rican journalists

5

investigative stories published by members of the IFP and the Caribbean Journalism Hub

5

Educational events for journalists and the general public

OVER 225

in attendance at our different educational events

75

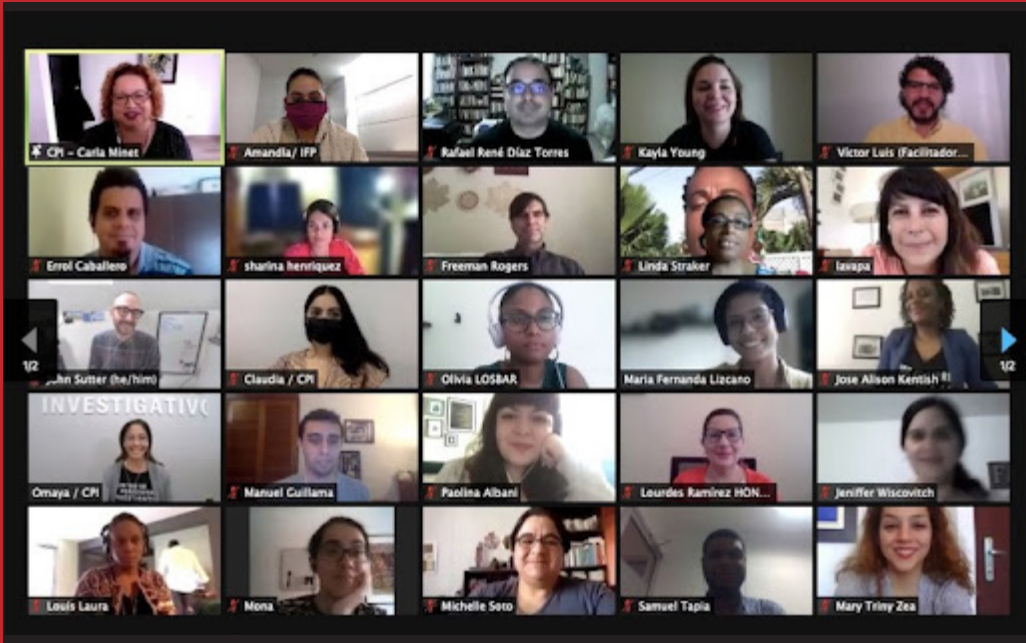
members by the end of 2021

# TRAINING AND CLASSES

In 2021, we began our series of courses with a very popular two part webinar series on how to best produce podcasts with the producers of the La Brega podcast, Alana Casanova-Burgess and Víctor Rodríguez.

Our biggest achievement was holding our First Virtual Caribbean Investigative Journalism Conference. More than 30 journalists from over 20 countries and territories in the Caribbean participated in this event which covered climate change and its intersection with health. These journalists were divided in three groups and mentored on how to conduct collaborative investigations. Out of this event we were able to publish not one, but two different investigative series, with seven stories in total, one on COVID-19 in the Caribbean and the other about the loss of our natural resources due to unregulated development on our islands.

To celebrate Press Week, we held a Master Class with three



renowned journalists, Marisol Seda, Carmen Enid Acevedo, and Aiola Virella, who have investigated corruption and the mishandling of funds in the Department of Education over various decades. For our final events of the year, our Master Conference and the journalism training sessions covered the impact of climate change on migration and environmental justice. Professor of anthropology Jorge Duany, civic leader and lawyer Ruth Santiago, and the first Puertorrican

president of the Sierra Club, Ramón Cruz, were our guest speakers that night. The following day, our journalists heard from Carlos Dada, founder of the Salvadoran news organization El Faro, on how to put a human face on climate change stories. Mary Triny Zea Cornejo, a frequent collaborator of CPI, visited us from Panama to present a case study on her work with the indigenous community of Guna Yala which is being displaced due to the destruction of their



environment. Members of the Caribbean Journalism Hub also participated in these hybrid workshops and also shared their experiences collaborating with CPI on their investigations. None of these events would have been possible without the support of the Fondation Connaissance et Liberté (FOKAL); Open Societies Foundation, London and Latin America; and Para la Naturaleza.



OUR  
NEWSLETTER  
“BOLETÍN  
CPI”

In May 2021 we launched our newsletter “Boletín CPI”. This new product has connected our team with the audience in a more personal and direct way. We are also publishing an English edition of the Boletín CPI, which is a huge step in our commitment to engage more significantly with our readership in the diaspora. Before launching the newsletter, we worked on our first ever survey to receive feedback from our readers to help define what kind of newsletter they wanted from us.







## MEDIOSCOPIO

The CPI initiated a media literacy pilot project aimed at communities and citizens, called Medioscopio. The workshops seek to present a current panorama of the media; present tools that help understand how information is searched for and created; discern between true and false information; and delve into the representation of the various identities in the media ecosystem in Puerto Rico.

During 2021 we completed the production phase including the development of workshop

guides, establishing alliances and recruiting participants.

The pilot project will begin in 2022 with youngsters in Loíza, in alliance with the Museum of Contemporary Art of Puerto Rico and its MAC en el Barrio program for neighborhood, an agreement that will add a training phase for citizen journalists. We worked with issues of identity, race and environment, through the production of content on different platforms. The modules will be taught by journalists from the CPI and

external resources identified by their experience and commitment to community-based work.

We hope that the program allows participants to sharpen the magnifying glass with which they read, listen and see the media. We want them to acquire skills that help them develop different content and represent the voices of their communities, their topics of interest and the problems they face.



## A DISASTER WITHOUT INFORMATION

More than 11,000 interactions in social media, 100 comments, and at least 200 users have shared the live transmission of the presentation of the report: "Información ante el desastre: Gestión de la información para el manejo de riesgos socioambientales en Puerto Rico" ("A Disaster Without Information: The Management of Information Related to Socio Environmental Risks

in Puerto Rico"). The study focuses on the handling of information before and after Hurricane María hit Puerto Rico in 2017 and its effect on people. The investigation focused on health, housing, security and energy, and it found different levels of lack of information or lack of transparency in the way it was handled. In some instances, consequences were fatal when patients were unable to access

the treatment they needed to live. The project, led by social scientists Annette Martínez Orabona, Luis José Torres Asencio, Marinilda Rivera Díaz and Luis A. Avilés, presented its findings in a panel moderated by journalist Mario Roche at the theater of Inter American University's School of Law.



# AWARDS & DISTINCTIONS

2021

**José Encarnación’s** story about young ballplayers: “Selling Dreams to Puerto Rico’s Young Ballplayers” entered the list of 75 best color stories worldwide and the 15 best on the continent by the International Sports Press Association (AIPS).



**Journalist Cristina del Mar Quiles** received a grant from the Domestic Violence Impact Reporting Fund from the Center for Health Journalism to develop a series of articles on families that survive domestic violence.

**Equal Justice Works (EJW)** fellowship awarded to lawyer Carlos F. Ramos Hernández for two years’ work at CPI as a transparency catalyst focused on deploying strategic litigation, legal education brigades, and legislative advocacy to tackle freedom of information structural barriers.

## PUERTO RICO ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS (ASPPRO, IN SPANISH)

**Eliván Martínez Mercado** in the special report category, print, for the investigation Children and adolescents lose their public psychiatric hospital.

**Omayra Sosa Pascual and Jeniffer Wiscovitch** in the multimedia investigation, for: COVID-19: Excess of hundreds of deaths in Puerto Rico has not been investigated by the Government.



**Luis Valentín Ortiz** received an honorable mention in the category of multimedia special report for The Bankruptcy Letters.

## OVERSEAS PRESS CLUB AWARDS

**José Encarnación won the Elliot Castro award** for sports journalism, for his stories about the recruitment of young baseball players and the abuse of horses at the Camarero racetrack.

**Luis Valentín won the Teodoro Moscoso Award** for Business and Finance Journalism, for his investigations on bankruptcy, reverse mortgages, sale of COVID-19 tests and the census.

**Investigative Journalism Award** in the print category went to **Eliván Martínez Mercado** for his series of reports on the transformation of Puerto Rico’s energy system.

**Tatiana Díaz** won the Eneid Route award for investigative journalism, for her incisive coverage of public education.

**Rafael Díaz Torres was recognized with the special award for Ecological Journalism** for his stories about coastal erosion and how experts were ignored about this problem, mitigation plans, environmental justice for the Martín Peña Channel and its dredging challenges.



**Honorable mentions** were awarded to **Omayra Sosa Pascual** and **Jeniffer Wiscovitch** for their multimedia investigative report COVID-19: Excess of hundreds of deaths in Puerto Rico has not been investigated by the Government.

**José Encarnación** had two honorable mentions: in the human interest category, written press, with Carlitos, my kindergarten teacher, and in the interview category for a story about the neglect of students in the island of Vieques.





Year	Percentage
2020	~45%
2021	~55%
2022	~65%

**40%**  
**24%**

Entity	Percentage
Current government	65%
Opposition	35%

**121%**

**29%**

**63%**

Response	Percentage
Yes	65%
No	35%

# 50%

# 18%

Response	Percentage
Yes	65%
No	35%

# 80%



# CPI

[periodismoinvestigativo.com](http://periodismoinvestigativo.com)