



# **Investigative Reporting 101**

**By**

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# First Amendment Rights?

We live at a time where ‘powerful people’ are doing everything in their ‘power’ to shut down investigative reporters. Some journalists have been fired — some imprisoned or even murdered. I’d like to introduce you to some of them today and what they’ve gone through while trying to ‘uncover’ what powerful people didn’t want people to ‘know.’

You may or may not agree with the findings of some of these journalists, but my point is to demonstrate what investigative journalists may face as they do their jobs. I’ll share examples from three investigative journalists in the United States and two from other countries in this article.

## Catherine Herridge

I want to begin with Catherine Herridge. She was a senior investigative correspondent for CBS News until she was fired in February. Many journalists have expressed concern about her firing for a couple of reasons —

The acclaimed CBS reporter who was investigating the Hunter Biden laptop scandal before she was fired last week had her personal files seized by the network in an “unprecedented” move, sources told The Post on Thursday.

Catherine Herridge — who is the middle of a First Amendment case being closely watched by journalists nationwide — was among 20 CBS News staffers let go as part of a larger purge of hundreds of employees at parent company Paramount Global.

Her firing had stunned co-workers, but the network’s decision to hold on to her personal materials, along with her work laptop where she may have other

confidential info, has left many staffers shaken, according to insiders. New York Post

The House Judiciary Committee launched a probe into Herridge's firing and CBS' reported seizing of her personal records. CBS is said to have responded that the decision to retain Herridge's confidential files was 'nothing unusual' because the files and other personal documents 'essentially belonged to the network.' However, after pressure from the House Judiciary Committee and the union representing Herridge, CBS returned the files to her.

Herridge is also dealing with another issue concerning a story she covered for Fox News in 2017. She refused to reveal her source for her story, so a federal judge held her in contempt and fined her \$800 a day until she reveals her source. The civil contempt ruling is pending potential appeal. Herridge declined the order saying — “respectfully I am invoking my First Amendment rights in declining to answer the question.”

Both cases could have serious ramifications for journalists, so reporters are watching the outcomes closely. The potential of a media company and its managers firing a journalist and confiscating ‘personal’ files could have a ‘chilling’ effect on future investigations.

Many journalists are leaving traditional media outlets to conduct their investigations independently for these and other reasons. Here’s one notable example —

## **Bari Weiss**

Bari Weiss was an opinion writer and editor at the New York Times from 2017 to 2020. Prior to that she worked at The Wall Street Journal and Tablet Magazine. Weiss ‘rocked’ the journalistic world in 2020 when she left the Times and wrote an ‘open’ resignation letter —

Twitter is not on the masthead of The New York Times. But Twitter has become its ultimate editor. As the ethics and mores of that platform have become those of the paper, the paper itself has increasingly become a kind of performance space. Stories are chosen and told in a way to satisfy the narrowest of audiences, rather than to allow a curious public to read about the world and then draw their own conclusions. I was always taught that journalists were charged with writing the first rough draft of history. Now, history itself is one more ephemeral thing molded to fit the needs of a predetermined narrative.



My own forays into Wrongthink have made me the subject of constant bullying by colleagues who disagree with my views. They have called me a Nazi and a racist; I have learned to brush off comments about how I'm "writing about the Jews again." Several colleagues perceived to be friendly with me were badgered by coworkers. My work and my character are openly demeaned on company-wide Slack channels where masthead editors regularly weigh in. There, some coworkers insist I need to be rooted out if this company is to be a truly "inclusive" one, while others post ax emojis next to my name. Still other New York Times employees publicly smear me as a liar and a bigot on Twitter with no fear that harassing me will be met with appropriate action. They never are.

Weiss founded an independent company called 'The Free Press' — “built on the ideals that once were the bedrock of great journalism: honesty, doggedness, and fierce independence. We publish investigative stories and provocative commentary about the world as it actually is— with the quality once expected from the legacy press, but the fearlessness of the new.”

## Andy Ngo

One of the better-known independent investigative journalists who have experienced physical attacks is Andy Ngo. He currently works at The Post Millennial as the 'editor-at-large.' Ngo has also reported for the Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, National Review, New York Post, Fox News, and others. He came to many people's attention for his coverage of Antifa a few years ago. His beating in Portland, Oregon was captured on video. Ngo sued members of Antifa for damages from two separate attacks, but a Portland jury 'concluded there wasn't enough evidence to fault them for the attacks.'

## Elena Milashina

Elena Milashina is an award-winning investigative journalist from Russia. She was savagely beaten in Chechnya last summer, along with attorney Alexander Nemov.

A prominent Russian investigative reporter has received a brain injury and multiple fractures when she and a lawyer accompanying her were brutally beaten by unidentified assailants in the Russian province of Chechnya, her newspaper said Wednesday.

Novaya Gazeta journalist Elena Milashina and lawyer Alexander Nemov were attacked Tuesday soon after they arrived in Chechnya to attend the trial of the mother of two Chechen dissidents. Just outside the airport, their vehicle was blocked by three cars and a dozen unidentified masked attackers, who beat them with clubs and put guns to their heads. Milashina and Nemova were evacuated to Moscow for medical treatment later in the day. Associated Press

Two months after the brutal attack, Milashina planned to return to Grozny to continue reporting on the story.

## Visar Duriqi

Visar Duriqi is an investigative reporter from Kosovo. He was also beaten for doing his job —

Duriqi, a reporter for the news website Insajderi, was returning from a television appearance, where he and other analysts discussed the arrest Wednesday of 12 public employees accused of corruption.

The attackers beat Duriqi, breaking four of his teeth and his nose.

Kosovo's acting Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti described the incident an “attack on free speech” that is “unacceptable,” and urged police to find the perpetrators. [VOA News](#)

## The Point

The point of this article is simply to demonstrate what I wrote about in last week's newsletter. Investigative journalists can be fired, driven to resign from their jobs because of opposition from management and other journalists, severely beaten, imprisoned, and even killed.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) —

- 18 journalists have been killed so far this year
- 78 were killed last year
- So far this year 64 journalists are missing
- 320 journalists were imprisoned last year

Investigative reporting is not for the 'faint of heart.' It takes courage and passion — something we need more of in today's journalism.







1960s Radio News, © Mark McGee