

# Fall 2021 IMPACT REPORT

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## ***Awards and Accolades***

### **Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards**

- Finalist: [Blindspot: Tulsa Burning](#)

### **Ambie Awards**

- Best Interview Podcast, [Death, Sex & Money](#)

### **2021 GANYC Apple Awards**

- Nominee: Outstanding Achievement in NYC Radio Program or Podcast (Audio/Spoken Word), [Mostly Mozart Festival on WQXR](#)

### **National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Awards**

- Finalist: Creative Excellence, [Mostly Mozart Across the Boroughs: All Five Live](#)

### **City & State**

- Goli Sheikholeslami, New York Public Radio (NYPR) President and CEO, was included in *City & State's* [2021 Telecommunications Power 50](#), a list honoring the industry's leading figures in New York.
- For the second year in a row, Goli Sheikholeslami was included in the [Women's Power 100](#) list.

### **EMpower: 2021 Ethnic Minority Role Model List**

- Monique D. Jefferson, Chief Human Resources Officer
- Timothy Wilkins, New York Public Radio Board Chair

### **Bard College: The 2021 John Dewey Award for Distinguished Public Service**

- Nsikan Akpan, Editor, Health and Science Unit

### **Manhattan School of Music: 2021-2022 Roster of Artist Scholars**

- Ed Yim, Senior Vice President and Chief Content Officer, WQXR

### **2022 iHeartRadio Podcast Awards**

- Nominee: Best Overall Host, [Anna Sale \(Death, Sex & Money\)](#)

### **2021 Regional Edward R. Murrow Award**

- Excellence in Innovation: WNYC Radio and YR Media, [18-to-29 Now: Young America Speaks Up](#)

### **46th Annual Gracie Awards**

- Radio – Non-Commercial Local: Gwynne Hogan, [Crisis Coverage](#)

### **2021 Mirror Awards**

- John M. Higgins Award for In-Depth/Enterprise Reporting: *On the Media*, Micah Loewinger, Hampton Stall, Brooke Gladstone, and Katya Rogers, [How Zello Became A Recruitment & Organizing Tool for the Far Right](#)

### **New York Press Club Awards**

- Critical Arts Review: Sara Fishko, Olivia Briley, Wayne Shulmister, and Karen Frillmann, [Two American Dramas](#)
- Entertainment News: Sara Fishko, Olivia Briley, Wayne Shulmister, and Karen Frillmann, [Escape into the Dark](#)
- Political Reporting: Brigid Bergin, Patricia Willens, and William Moss, [Despite Tax Breaks, These City Institutions Shut Doors On Voters](#)

# Newsroom Reporting



## Election Coverage

- WNYC focused on creating tools to help our region understand the stakes and issues of 2021's monumental municipal elections. The newsroom relaunched WNYC's [Politics Brief](#) newsletter and produced a series of accessible explainers—including [a breakdown](#) of the top issues facing voters, as well as job descriptions of the [Mayor](#), [Comptroller](#), [Borough President](#), [Public Advocate](#), and [City Council Members](#).
- On *The United States of Anxiety*, host [Kai Wright sat down with veteran journalist Errol Louis](#) to discuss the life and career of Mayor-Elect Eric Adams, New York City's second Black mayor, within the context of Black politics in the city.
- WNYC Morning Edition host [Michael Hill co-moderated the second New Jersey gubernatorial debate, which WNYC hosted in collaboration with NJ PBS and Rowan University.](#)
- Reporter [Matt Katz](#) published the story of record on a [homophobic and misleading statement by New Jersey Republican gubernatorial candidate Jack Ciattarelli](#), who vowed to roll back school curriculum that centers on LGBTQ+ inclusivity. The story was featured in the influential [Politico Playbook](#) and continues NYPR's excellent coverage of the nation's current culture war around school curriculum.
- On the night of the mayoral election, WNYC broadcast a live call-in special hosted by [Brian Lehrer](#), allowing listeners from across the political spectrum to voice their opinions, questions, and concerns.
- **Across our platforms, WNYC journalists covered the fallout of Governor Cuomo's resignation.** We explored the implications of [Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie's decision to drop the impeachment probe](#), incoming [Governor Kathy Hochul's introductory meetings](#) with NYC officials, and the ways in which Cuomo's departure [might improve the state's COVID response](#).
- WNYC marked the [transition of power from Andrew Cuomo to Kathy Hochul](#), with a special live broadcast of [Governor Hochul's first speech](#) with live analysis and context. Our teams explored the [disappointment of some prison reform advocates](#) and the clemencies Cuomo granted as he left office; [Hochul's selection of State Senator Brian Benjamin as lieutenant governor](#); and produced an explainer on the roles of the [Governor](#) and [Lieutenant Governor](#) to help audiences make sense of the transition.
- *The United States of Anxiety* also discussed the cautionary tale of the [Andrew Cuomo scandal](#), asking, ["why do we equate macho bullying with competent leadership?"](#)

# Newsroom Reporting



## Public Health Coverage

- Gothamist continues to [produce its local and statewide COVID-19 stats tracker](#), which includes information on positivity and vaccination rates, ensuring New Yorkers have the most up-to-date information through the many chapters of the ongoing pandemic.
- [In August, Gothamist created a guide to navigate the city's new vaccination requirements for restaurants, gyms, and performance venues](#). Mayor Bill de Blasio shared the guide on both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- WNYC reported on the rapidly changing policies around vaccination and mask mandates. Reporting highlights included a look into the [psychology of COVID exhaustion](#); new research showing [the coronavirus may have come from germ spills from animals](#); and useful explainers on the news on [COVID booster shot accessibility](#).
- **The WNYC Health and Science team broke important stories about the NYC Department of Education's handling of COVID-19.** Our reporting revealed that [a third of the staff of one city school quarantined](#) after a COVID outbreak, but details were not disclosed to parents. The team also discovered that the city's education department [cleared 4,000 classrooms for in-person instruction that did not meet the ventilation standards set by the CDC](#).
- **Mayor-Elect Eric Adams shared reporter Jaclyn Jeffrey-Willensky's profile of the NY and NJ [Shave and Shots](#) program on [Twitter](#).** The program trains barbers and hairstylists in New York and New Jersey to field questions about vaccine hesitancy.

## Remembering 9/11

- On Saturday, September 11, **Brian Lehrer hosted live special coverage of official memorial ceremonies in New York City**, revisiting the timeline of what happened 20 years ago. **Reporter Beth Fertig—who reported for WNYC from Ground Zero on 9/11, joined to discuss her work that day and in the months that followed.**
- WNYC aired "[Blindspot: The Road to 9/11](#)," a two-hour radio documentary adapted from the nine-part podcast of the same name co-produced by WNYC Studios and HISTORY.
- WNYC presented [9/11 and the Rise of the 21st Century NYPD](#), a sweeping project on how the attacks forever transformed the NYPD and led to unprecedented growth in its ranks and powers. Audio stories aired daily during *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, with expanded digital versions published daily on Gothamist.

# Newsroom Reporting



## *Expanding the WNYC Newsroom*

- During the past few months, the WNYC newsroom has welcomed a new cohort of leading journalists to its ranks, furthering our mission to fill the growing void for local news in the city.
  - **WNYC and PRX were thrilled to announce [Melissa Harris-Perry as permanent Host and Managing Editor of \*The Takeaway\*](#). Harris-Perry has been serving as interim host since July 2021, while also serving as the Maya Angelou Presidential Chair in the Department of Politics and International Affairs, the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Program in Environment and Sustainability at Wake Forest University.**
  - **[Stephanie Clary is the new Deputy Editor for the WNYC-Gothamist newsroom](#)**. In this new role, Clary oversees our news coverage, working with the editors of our nine multiplatform desks. Stephanie has held leadership positions at VICE, CNN, and the NBC News start-up *Breaking News*, overseeing journalists across video, written, and social teams. She also previously worked at *The Seattle Times*, producing breaking news, sports, and entertainment coverage.
  - **[David Giambusso joins us in the newly-created role of Day-Of News Editor](#)**, overseeing daily news coverage as well as all content published on Gothamist. He has been covering New York and New Jersey for 14 years, and spent the last four as POLITICO's New York City editor.
  - **[WNYC's new Albany bureau chief is Jon Campbell](#)**, joining most recently from Gannett's USA Today Network. He has been a Capitol reporter for more than a decade, twice earning the Walter T. Brown Memorial Award, an honor given annually by the Legislative Correspondents Association alumni for outstanding state government coverage.
  - **[Veronica de Souza is the new Director of Digital News & Audience](#)**. Veronica has spent close to a decade working across editorial and tech teams at various media companies. She has built publishing strategies, teams, and workflows for national and global audiences across emerging platforms, and Veronica comes to NYPR from VICE, where she led audience development and social-first content creation. Before that, she was in leadership positions at *The Daily Beast*, Gawker Media, and Digg.

# Newsroom Reporting



## Climate Change

- [The WNYC newsroom was a leader in coverage of Hurricane Ida](#), posting stories on Gothamist late into the night as it became clear that tornadoes and floods had killed more than a dozen people across the region. After Gothamist [reported on the lack of support reaching affected residents in Queens](#), several elected officials, as well as President Biden, [visited the ravaged sites](#). The following morning, [Michael Hill interviewed New York Governor Kathy Hochul, assessing the storm damage](#).
- Host [Brian Lehrer talked to callers](#) about the “new normal” of devastating storms, and the region’s fragile infrastructure amid our changing climate.

## Reckoning with Race, Justice, and Inequality in NYC and Nationwide

- The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York [announced they are investigating the Mount Vernon Police Department for civil rights violations](#)—an investigation launched based on [George Joseph’s](#) year-long series on police corruption and brutality in the county. His reporting was featured in [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#).
- Host [Kai Wright](#) and [Jelani Cobb](#), staff writer for *The New Yorker*, unpacked [Critical Race Theory](#) on *The United States of Anxiety*. Together, they provided historical context and explored the question posed by the founder of Critical Race Theory, Derrick Bell: is racism a permanent fixture of society?
- *The United States of Anxiety* team [explored America’s response to Haitian refugees seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border](#), asking listeners to consider questions like: When refugees arrive in America, how do we respond?
- Gothamist’s [George Joseph](#) and [Akash Mehta](#) of *New York Focus* wrote a powerful piece [explaining how NYC judges have contributed to the swelling detainee population at Rikers Island](#).
- *The Takeaway’s* regular “Deep Dive” segment [focused on the death penalty](#), with guests including the first woman exonerated from federal death row and longtime anti-death penalty activist [Sister Helen Prejean](#).
- [George Joseph, Matt Katz, and Micah Loewinger continued their investigation into public employees with ties to the anti-government militia, Oath Keepers](#). They found several alleged members within law enforcement and the military in New York and New Jersey. In response, the NJ Attorney General’s office began a probe into the matter. In New York City, the work [prompted a citywide investigation](#).
- On the [50th anniversary of the Attica Prison Uprising](#), Gothamist looked back on what set the stage for this historic event. The team examined what has changed in New York State’s prison system, and what remains unaddressed half a century later.

# Arts and Culture




## Supporting Artists and Cultural Organizations

- WQXR spent the year partnering with the brilliant musicians of the [2021 Artist Propulsion Lab \(APL\)](#): [Jordan Bak](#), [Brandon Patrick George](#), [The Junction Trio](#) (Conrad Tao, Stefan Jackiw, and Jay Campbell), [Kelly Hall-Tompkins](#), [Orion Weiss](#), and [Kara Dugan](#). First convened in winter 2020 as a part of the **WQXR STAR Initiative**, our **acclaimed pandemic-response program**, the APL provides early and mid-career artists the opportunity to create and share work with audiences across all our platforms, including The Jerome L. Greene Performance Space. **The class of 2022 will be announced this coming January.**
- [New York in Concert](#) returned for a second season, with **John Schaefer** as host, shedding light on gorgeous musical offerings from around the region. The show spotlighted memorable concerts from venues as varied as Central Park's **Naumburg bandshell**, the **Green-Wood Catacombs** in Brooklyn, and even a [parking garage in Morristown, NJ](#).
- **In October, we were delighted to launch a new season of [Carnegie Hall Live](#)**, hosted by **Jeff Spurgeon** and **John Schaefer**. The first broadcast brought audiences into **Carnegie Hall's Opening Night Gala**—featuring performances by the **Philadelphia Orchestra** and **Yuja Wang**, conducted by **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**. [The New York Times](#) called the evening “a stimulating conversation between classical music’s storied past and the tumultuous present.”
- The beloved **Naumburg Orchestral Concerts** returned to Central Park, with WQXR presenting our live broadcast series. Programs featured [The Knights](#) and **Richard Egarr** conducting the [Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra](#).
- In an exclusive digital event, **Simone Dinnerstein** performed [An American Mosaic](#), a debut work written for her by **Richard Danielpour**. Each movement of the piece commemorates a different group of Americans who have been affected by the pandemic, including first responders, parents, caretakers, and those who have lost their lives to COVID-19.
- **WQXR partnered with Steinway & Sons to broadcast a special live concert, featuring a five-piano concert by [The 5 Browns](#)** (Deondra, Desirae, Gregory, Melody, and Ryan Brown).
- **Lang Lang** joined Jeff Spurgeon in The Greene Space for an [exclusive interview](#) about his new recording of **Bach's Goldberg Variations**. The two discussed Lang Lang's decision to release both a live and studio recording of this iconic work, and the superstar pianist played excerpts from Variations No. 1, 25, and 30.

# Arts and Culture




## Community and Connection

- On December 3, 1936, experimental radio station W2XR changed its call letters to WQXR, becoming America's first commercial classical radio station. This December, our team celebrated the station's 85th birthday.
  - Our 85th Anniversary Concert in The Jerome L. Greene Space marked the occasion with a mix of world premieres and beloved favorites performed by [The Knights](#), [Kara Dugan](#), and [Simone Dinnerstein](#).
  - We were honored that Mayor Bill de Blasio made an official declaration of December 3, 2021 as "WQXR Day"! You can [read the full proclamation on our website](#).
  - Director of the New York Public Radio Archives, **Andy Lanset** shared a special edition of his "[History Notes](#)" newsletter, shedding more light on WQXR's early days with content including vintage WQXR programs and logos, and an [updated timeline](#) reflecting on the station's rich history.
- WQXR commemorated the anniversary of 9/11 with a series of special programs called [Music of Resilience and Reflection](#). "We Shall All Be Changed: Musical Reflections on 9/11" wove together interviews from musicians and composers with musical selections. Works included plaintive classical anchors such as **Brahms'** German Requiem and newer compositions including **John Adams'** Pulitzer Prize-winning composition "On the Transmigration of Souls" and **Robert Moran's** "Trinity Requiem." Adams describes how he captured the deep pain and intimate losses felt by New Yorkers, and musicians from the New York Philharmonic and Brooklyn Youth Chorus recall how healing it was to take part in the performances that consoled so many in the weeks after the Twin Towers fell.
- On August 15, WQXR hosted its Classical Kids Fair for the first time in the Bronx in collaboration with partners the Bronx Arts Ensemble, the Bronx Children's Museum, Bronx House, Bronx Opera, and Bronx Heritage Music Center. Over **150 families** enjoyed live performances, dance workshops, an instrument "petting zoo," and more. The fun-filled, family gathering was covered on [News 12 The Bronx](#).
- Throughout the month of September, WQXR partnered with the New York Philharmonic to showcase music written by nine extraordinary teenagers, all participants in the New York Philharmonic's [Very Young Composers](#) program. These talented middle- and high-schoolers spent the summer writing music inspired by the theme of reconnecting and reuniting. Their compositions can be heard online [here](#).

# Arts and Culture

**WQXR** :||THE  
GREENE  
SPACE

## *New Sounds*

- As the world heard increasingly tragic stories of the US withdrawal, *New Sounds* spotlighted [Music from Afghanistan](#), a program of beautiful and diverse music by a group of largely diasporic Afghan artists. The special featured rubâb music from **Homayun Sakhî and Quraishi**, folk poems of Afghani women, from the Hazara tradition by **Hamid Sakhizada**, and adapted music from the Khorasan region by the duo **Badieh**. Much of the music comes from musicians who have fled the country to Europe or North America.
- Host **John Schaefer** recently published a [conversation with guitarist, composer, and ethnomusicologist Paolo Angeli](#)—during which Angeli played a “prepared guitar,” one of the many instruments he builds himself. Angeli, who is widely regarded for his expertise in Sardinian music, filmed an intimate performance at the northern shore of Sardinia for this remote session of *Soundcheck*.
- [In November, Soundcheck released an episode](#) featuring musician, composer, poet, and stutterer **JJJJJerome Ellis**. In his 2021 album *The Clearing*, Ellis takes speech disfluency and considers how it affects one’s experience of time. If you heard Ellis on [This American Life](#) in 2020, this conversation is a terrific opportunity to hear his latest extraordinary work.

## *The Greene Space*

- After many months, [The Jerome L. Greene Space](#) was thrilled to bring back live performance for the first time in almost two years, operating at full seating capacity for fully vaccinated, masked, and jubilant audiences.
- The Greene Space’s Artist-in-Residence program continued with Puerto Rican composer and performer **Angélica Negrón’s** playful multimedia exploration of belonging, personal history, sound, and story. Her project, [El Living Room](#), was a 4-part offbeat variety show with direction by artist **Macha Colón**.



# Podcasts



## Radiolab

- New York Public Radio's 2021 Gala celebrated *Radiolab's* 20th anniversary. Hosted by actress **Julianna Margulies**, the November 16 Gala featured performances from **Kishi Bashi** and members of the **WQXR Artist Propulsion Lab**. You can watch the [livestream here](#), with the password Gala2021.
- [Radiolab updated its Peabody-award-winning episode "60 Words,"](#) focusing on the 60 words that authorized the United States to go to war in Afghanistan. The team looked at what has changed with those 60 words during the past 20 years.
- *Radiolab* launched [Mixtape](#), a powerful new miniseries, hosted by **Simon Adler**, exploring the importance of a once-powerful technology—the cassette tape. This seemingly mundane object has hypnotized us, toppled regimes, and changed how we say, "I love you."
- **Abdul Latif Nasser**, the subject of *Radiolab's* duPont Award-winning 6-part series *The Other Latif*, was transferred from Guantanamo Bay to his home country of Morocco after nearly 20 years in captivity. *Radiolab* host **Latif Nasser** broke the news on [Twitter](#) and has since been interviewed about his reporting on [All Things Considered](#), *The Takeaway*, and on the [Washington Post podcast Post Reports](#). *The Other Latif* has also been cited by several other news outlets in their reporting of this story, including [The New York Times](#), [ABC News](#), [Forbes](#), and [HuffPost](#).
- *Radiolab* Founder and Co-Host [Jad Abumrad was interviewed by Fresh Air's Terry Gross](#), where the two discussed *Radiolab's* 20-year influence on podcasting and audio storytelling.
- Long before Motown, there was Black Swan Records, the record label founded a century ago during the Harlem Renaissance by **Harry Pace**. A protégé of **W.E.B. DuBois**, Pace launched the career of **Ethel Waters**, partnered with **W.C. Handy**, and was the first person to record "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Then suddenly, he disappeared. [The Vanishing of Harry Pace](#), a *Radiolab* mini-series, explored color lines, hidden identities, and the phenomenal but forgotten man who changed the American music scene.

## Death, Sex & Money (DSM)

- *Death, Sex & Money* host [Anna Sale was nominated for 'Best Overall Host - Female' for the 2022 iHeartRadio Podcast Awards](#). *DSM* was named among *Esquire's* [33 Best Podcasts of 2021](#).
- In partnership with [Radiolab](#), the team collaborated on a series about death and loss. Building on her viral *New York Times* [Modern Love column](#) about the death of her mother, *Radiolab* producer **Rachel Cusick** investigated the life and surprisingly complicated death of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, the scholar credited with developing the famous five stages of grief.
- The show [launched a new three-part series with financial therapist Amanda Clayman](#), following Detroit-area couple Cora and Garrett as they grapple with the emotional fallout of COVID-induced unemployment and financial challenges.
- If you are a fan of HBO's *Succession*, you might enjoy [Anna Sale's recent interview with actor J. Smith-Cameron](#). She's best known for her role as General Counsel Gerri Kellman, but J. has also had a long career as a stage actress in New York.

# Podcasts



## On the Media (OTM)

- **On the Media** helped break down the complicated media sphere by creating a group of timely mini-series:
  - [The Subversion Playbook](#)—By now, we're familiar with voter suppression tactics, from long voting lines to voter ID laws. This episode explores how election subversion takes the anti-democratic playbook to the next level, and the Russian government's efforts to use bureaucracy to stifle elections and the press.
  - [Constitutionally Speaking](#)—"The right to throw a punch ends at the tip of someone's nose." This is an idea that underlies American liberties, but does it still fit in 2021? OTM looked back at our country's radical, and radically inconsistent tradition of free speech.
  - [Blame It On The Booze](#)—Nearly a quarter of American adults have reported drinking more at home to cope with their pandemic blues. Curious to understand why, recent episodes of OTM took a deep dive into the ancient history of alcohol, exploring how Americans normalized drinking alone, and how the media shaped the shifting reputation of red wine.
- **On the Media** correspondent [Micah Loewinger](#) turned to [Kurt Vonnegut's theory of "the shapes of stories" to understand what kinds of narratives sustain our attention](#). Micah spoke with [Soren Wheeler](#), executive editor of *Radiolab*, and [Rachael Piltch-Loeb](#), a preparedness fellow at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, to make sense of how, and why, we lost the plot on Covid.
- **The New York Times** named [La Brega](#) as one of its [10 Best Podcasts of 2021](#).

## The Experiment

- The Experiment was listed in **Apple Podcasts**, "[Best of 2021](#)," and was highlighted as part of **Apple Podcasts promotions for Hispanic Heritage Month**.
- **The Experiment** features diverse and intriguing stories that get to the heart of our nation's contradictions. Recent highlights include:
  - [A Uyghur Teen's Life After Escaping Genocide](#)—This powerful episode profiles one young woman as she starts a new life in Northern Virginia, exploring the trouble she has relating to American teens after witnessing such profound horror in Chinese labor camps. The episode was also [showcased](#) on **The Atlantic's** digital platforms.
  - [How 'Passing' Upends a Problematic Hollywood History](#)—Hollywood has a long history of "passing movies"—in which Black characters pass for white—usually starring white actors. Even as these films have attempted to depict the devastating effect of racism in America, they have trafficked in tired tropes about Blackness. But a new movie by actor-writer-director **Rebecca Hall** takes the problematic conventions of this uniquely American genre and turns them on their head.
  - [What Does It Mean to Give Away Our DNA?](#)—Just as the Navajo researcher **Rene Begay** started to fall in love with the field of genetics, she learned that the Navajo Nation had banned all genetic testing on tribal land. Now she is struggling to figure out what the future of genetics might look like, and whether the Navajo and other Indigenous communities should be a part of it.

# Podcasts



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## *Helga: The Armory Conversations*

- Visionary artist, curator, and performer **Helga Davis** returned with the third season of her acclaimed podcast [Helga: The Armory Conversations](#). In partnership with the **Park Avenue Armory**, Helga draws listeners into her profound and intimate conversations with a diverse slate of cultural luminaries, including **Nick Cave**, **Karen Finley**, and *Radiolab* host and founder **Jad Abumrad**.

## *Aria Code*

- **WQXR** and the **Metropolitan Opera** launched the third season of our hit podcast [Aria Code](#), hosted by MacArthur Fellow and Grammy Award-winning musician **Rhiannon Giddens**. Repeatedly featured in [The New York Times](#) this year, this ambitious 18-episode season continues to set the [standard for classical music podcasts](#), pulling back the curtain on some of the most famous arias in opera history—and was featured among the “[Podcasts Opera Pros Tune To](#).”