

Report the vote 6
Investigative reporting

Thanks for being here, I'm Lisa Loving and this is Report the Vote, workshop #5 Elections Overview. Brought to you by the Pacifica Affiliate Network and WNUC LPFM in Detroit – and Pacifica.

Find this series online at <https://pacificanetwork.org/report-the-vote-news-training/>

SPECIAL NOTE #1: If you are working on elections coverage, I am heading up a new twice-monthly national radio show designed to carry your reporting. Would you like your work to reach a national audience? Email me! I am at lisaloving33@gmail.com. We're starting at the end of this month and running this show through the first week of January! Please and please again, I need your submissions to make this real. How can I work with you?

SPECIAL NOTE #2: Check out the Global Investigative Journalism Network, with this video [defining journalism with their Executive Director David Kaplan](#). IT'S WORTH A LISTEN and he casually drops gorgeous gems of experiential knowledge throughout. Here they are again with a chat: [Investigating Elections: Threat from AI Audio Deepfakes](#).

SPECIAL NOTE #3 I also want to say I have a [case of my journalism books](#) and if you send me an email I'll mail one to you for free. Because you guys are defending democracy! Email me your snail mail at lisaloving33@gmail.com.

Investigative Reporting

You may already know that people do not agree on what investigative reporting is. At its heart, all reporting involves investigation and probing into hidden things right? More or less.

The way I look at it is: information gathering that offers listeners a deeper look into the world around us: especially bureaucracies, processes and events that seem to be beyond our control. It's also important to note at the top: deeper dives usually require more hours and generate more material, so they take more time and effort to spin out to your audience.

What are some good investigative projects about the elections? Here are themes and links to real reports and stories:

- [Voter suppression, here's more.](#)
- [Functionality of voting machines](#), from MIT Elections Lab
- Social Media fraud and misinformation — Cambridge Analytica

- [ProPublica is actually soliciting reader tips to inform their 2024 election coverage](#)
- [Here is a practically endless list of evergreen, probably-universal story ideas, from the UNiversity of Pittsburgh](#)

Investigative reporting—> Following the money

Five principles of investigative reporting: identification, research, verification, analysis, and presentation

HOW TO FIND INFO ON:

- voter turnout + registration statistics ---->elections bureaus: state, county and city [5 things to know about election administration funding: A research-based tip sheet](#)
 - campaign contributions ----> secretary of state offices/regular filings
 - past campaigns ----> search online for features and news articles from past years on your person/social problem/policy issue [How to Investigate Messaging Apps and Social Media for Electoral Disinformation](#)
 - contact info for candidates & donors ----> on campaign filings at city/county/state elections bureaus, often in a scanned pdf you have to open
 - related races & campaigns -----> search online for features and news articles from past years on your person/social problem/policy issue <https://www.opensecrets.org/research-tools>
- > political campaign tactics -----> look online for features and news articles from past years about your person/social problem/policy issue
- > is there a media source in your coverage network that does not exist anymore but used to break investigative stories and breaking news? Look for moribund websites that documented a geographic location

EXERCISE

Find the best example of investigative reporting on elections in your region and study it closely to find out what made it effective; now brainstorm your own project with an eye to what you learned.

[How to Investigate Messaging Apps and Social Media for Electoral Disinformation](#)

[OpenSecrets.org](#)

<https://www.opensecrets.org/research-tools>

[5 things to know about election administration funding: A research-based tip sheet](#)

I want to dedicate this session to my college investigative reporting instructor, [Kyung Won \(K.W.\) Lee](#), he is a beloved journalist who covered the Civil Rights Movement in the South, the Black Power movement in Oakland, Ca, and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, often referred to as the Rodney King riots, known in the Korean American community as [Saigu](#). He emigrated from Korea at the start of the civil war between North and South Korea; in his long career in the US he wrote a lot about African American and Korean relations. [He's still alive at the age of 96.](#)

Every single story he covered was about local communities, and boy did he cover local communities.

Wikipedia: “Lee is best known for writing an investigative series on the conviction of immigrant [Chol Soo Lee](#) for a 1973 [San Francisco Chinatown](#) gangland murder which became the basis of the 1989 film *True Believer*, starring [James Woods](#) and [Robert Downey Jr.](#) His series of 120 articles over five years led to a new trial, eventual acquittal and release of the prisoner from [San Quentin's Death Row](#).^[2]”

Mr. Lee was almost ruthless in his approach to organizing large amounts of material - papers, cassette tapes, photos, reports, lawsuit filings – he told stories of investigations that generated thousands of items. These were the things he hammered home:

- Organize the materials you collect in the course of your reporting; Mr Lee recommended using paper bags on the dining room floor lol.
- “Get drunk over it,” he’d often say – ie find a way to get a completely different take on your material and the narrative you think you see there.

This is the kind of reporting that KW Lee did – and this is how directly it impacted him and the community where he lives near Sacramento.

[K.W. Lee Comes Full Circle at ACC](#) —>February 27, 2024

“When ACC was founded in 1972, K.W. was a 43-year-old investigative reporter for The Sacramento Union. He wrote a series of articles about Leo Goto’s pioneering efforts to build a Japanese community and cultural center in Sacramento. This helped Leo galvanize community support and incorporate the

Japanese Community Center of Sacramento Valley (JCC), which today is ACC Senior Services.”