

General Assignment News Reporter

Winter/Spring 2023

The Mississippi Free Press, a thriving, award-winning nonprofit digital newsroom with [national impact](#) run by the nonprofit Mississippi Journalism and Education Group, is seeking a full-time general assignment news reporter to join our diverse team of reporters and freelance contributors as we continue to grow our mission to cover Mississippi in a deeply contextual, inclusive and solutions-based fashion that challenges the old ways of the state's traditional media environment. The women-founded Mississippi Free Press, named the Institute for Nonprofit News' Startup of the Year in 2021, launched at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and immediately attracted widespread attention nationally and, at times, even internationally for our mission-driven coverage of vital issues and stories.

The general assignment news reporter will work with the news editor to pitch, identify and pursue story assignments. The reporter can work from your Mississippi home when not reporting on-location on a hybrid basis (attending occasional meetings and trainings in the Jackson office at a minimum up to full-time). You will be responsible for producing multiple stories a week, with a mix of short, quick-turnaround breaking news stories as well as medium-length and longer, more in-depth stories.

The reporter must be able to manage a combination of quick turn-around breaking news stories and longer-term investigative and solutions projects. The reporter will collaborate with the creative director on selecting photography, art and multimedia for stories and with the digital editor on posting stories and promoting them across various social media networks, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. In some cases, the reporter will also be expected to shoot and provide photos when covering events on the ground. The reporter will join the team for weekly digital editorial scrums over Zoom to plan assignments for the week and to brainstorm ideas.

The general assignment reporter will identify, conduct interviews for, research, and contextualize news stories on a variety of topics. Examples of topics the reporter may be assigned to cover across Mississippi include: public policy, elections, democracy and government; infrastructure and the environment; health care and access; equitable economic development; immigration and the lives of immigrants; systemic racism, indigenous issues and historic injustices; sex, gender and LGBTQ+ issues; crime, criminal justice and policing; and other topics of interest for Mississippians. We strongly urge those who are members of traditionally marginalized communities or who have related life experiences to apply for this position to help lead our coverage across Mississippi in the most inclusive way possible.

The general assignment news reporter should have good reporting skills, know how to write in AP Style and have at least one-to-three years' experience reporting and writing news stories for substance, readability, accuracy, fairness, sensitivity, storytelling and context. While traditional

"inverted pyramid" style formats can be important for breaking news stories, the Mississippi Free Press seeks reporters who can (or want to learn to) write compelling narratives that tell readers not only the most essential facts of a story, but which communicate why they should care about a story on a human level.

Applicants should be inquisitive and skilled at asking probing questions that go beyond information public officials provide in press releases or through carefully worded statements. The ideal candidate will be passionate about pursuing truth for the public good, reporting on issues that affect marginalized communities and holding the powerful to account. We are eager to hire journalists who care about and have institutional knowledge about Mississippi or who are willing to learn. The reporter cannot live outside Mississippi.

The reporter will be under the direct supervision of Mississippi Free Press Senior Reporter Ashton Pittman and the job will include learning opportunities to grow journalistic skills and we encourage our reporters to hone their craft with classes, webinars, mentorships and peer-training opportunities. We ask all MFP team members to embrace and seek learning experiences daily from each other and from people across Mississippi. Reporters at the Mississippi Free Press who do excellent work will, at times, encounter opportunities to share and discuss their work with other state and national news outlets, including occasional television and radio interviews.

Strong, Cohesive Team of Professionals

This general assignment news reporter will join a strong, cohesive, and mutually supportive and respectful [team of journalism professionals](#) who, in most cases, have worked together for years. Most joined the Mississippi Free Press, which has had no staff turnover—only growth—since our March 2020 launch, after working together at the Jackson Free Press for years to create award-winning and impactful journalism. Co-founders [Kimberly Griffin \(publisher\)](#) and [Donna Ladd \(editor-in-chief\)](#) have worked closely together for 15 years, first at the Jackson Free Press and now at the MFP.

General assignment news reporter finalists will have the opportunity for one-on-one conversations with team members during the interview process about our culture, systems and any other questions. We also invite candidates to visit our [Board of Directors/Advisory Board page](#) to read about the people who support our work, our team and our mission on a daily basis.

If this sounds like a job that fits your skills and experience, please reach out. Since our March 2020 launch, the MFP team's work culture has focused on excellence; journalism that can move needles for all Mississippians while attracting national attention and exposure; and a collaborative, mutually supportive team of professionals who believe in our mission deeply. We have an equitable, respectful, and deeply inclusive work culture that the news reporter can enjoy, help grow and maintain daily, as well as help improve.

We have fun while working hard for our state every day in ways that support each other's life-work balance. The successful candidate for our newsroom will join a current and growing full-time editorial and revenue team of 12 members, as well as an incoming Report for America education reporter, in addition to part-time team members, and freelance writers, artists and photographers.

Primary responsibilities include:

- Daily reporting work with two to four written published stories per week, including short news, quick-turn-around breaking news, in-depth stories and investigative projects
- Working with editors to pitch and identify stories to pursue and make requested changes or additions to stories
- Planning and executing daily reporting work, including researching, conducting interviews, making public records requests and writing
- Managing work on short-term, medium-term and long-term reporting projects
- Holding powerful people and institutions accountable with contextual, fair, fact-based reporting
- Identifying problems and interviewing experts and community leaders about potential solutions

Knowledge/experience required:

- At least 1-3 years experience reporting and writing news copy
- An understanding of basic journalistic ethics and standards
- Familiarity with using social-media platforms to share stories and content to reach and grow our audience

Knowledge/experience (or willingness to learn) desired:

- Familiarity using Google Drive and Google Docs to write stories and collaborate with editors
- Narrative writing techniques
- Knowledge of AP Style
- Using WordPress to post and update stories
- Willingness to speak or appear in public, virtually or on various media formats (TV, radio, podcasts, et al.) to discuss and promote reported work in order to reach a wider audience
- Use of communications and project-management systems like Basecamp, GroupMe, Highrise, Google Drive, Zoom and more to make work more efficient for the full team and to support healthy work-life balance for all
- Basic photography skills for shooting photos at events, whether with a smartphone, a DSLR, mirrorless or other style of camera, along with the ability to shoot video
- Fluency (or competency) in languages spoken by various Mississippi communities, such as Spanish
- Experience working with diverse communities to bring their stories to light

Salary and Benefits:

- The salary range for the general assignment news reporter begins at \$40,000 and will be based on prior experience and skillset. The position also have tremendous growth potential for promotion from within either on the reporter or editor track, which is very common for long-time MFP/JFP team members.
- MFP currently pays 50% of the employee's medical, vision and dental benefits through our group plan; family members can be covered through employee contributions.
- The reporter may work from a home-office base if desired, but inside Mississippi, using our virtual team systems, but will be expected to regular on-the-ground reporting in locations across Mississippi, which requires a reliable vehicle and current driver's license and insurance. The MFP's office is in downtown Jackson and is open on a hybrid basis for those wishing to work onsite. We will host meetings, brainstorm sessions and other activities in the office and virtually. We do plan to have occasional all-hands retreats and other gatherings planned in advance that we'd like everyone to attend.
- This position will receive a total of 24 days of PTO and nine holidays for 33 total paid days off a year. We are closed on seven non-religious holidays and provide two floater days for staff members to use for either religious or non-religious days off due to their personal preference and needs.

Application process:

To apply for this immediate hire, please send a resume and a cover letter describing your experience and what excites you about the possibility of editing and working at the Mississippi Free Press. If you have many of the requested skills and experiences, but not all of them, feel free to apply. Send resume and cover letter to Senior Reporter Ashton Pittman at ashton@mississippifreepress.org. Please also provide links or attachments to examples of any prior work.

You can also email questions before you apply to Editor-in-Chief Donna Ladd at donna@mississippifreepress.org as well as Publisher Kimberly Griffin at kimberly@mississippifreepress.org. Please put "MFP general assignment news reporter" in the subject line.

Read stories about the MFP's coverage approach, team members, mission and shared ethos:

- [The Mississippi Free Press Aims to Be in Nonprofit News 'For the Long Game': Neiman Lab](#)
- [Kimberly Griffin and Donna Ladd Connect Problems with Possibilities: Saturday Evening Post](#)
- [My MFP Role Helps Me Pass Torch to Other Badass Black Mississippians: Mississippi Free Press](#)
- [INN Names Mississippi Free Press 'Startup of the Year' \(plus press release\): Institute for Nonprofit News](#)
- [MFP Impact, Awards and Media Coverage](#)