Bill Keller, The Marshall Project

Bill Keller is currently employed as the Editor-In-Chief for the Marshall Project. A position that he assumed in early 2014. Keller worked for the New York Times for 30 years before his departure to join the Marshall Project. His positions in at The New York Times ranged from reporting in Washington, D.C, Moscow, Russia and Johannesburg then ascending to multiple roles as an editor, finally becoming an Executive Editor from July 2003 to September 2011.

Following his step down from Executive Editor at the New York Times, Bill returned to a full-time writing position for the remainder of his time with the publication. Keller is a recipient of a Pulitzer Prize. For which he won in March of 1989 for his reporting on the collapse of the Soviet Union. Currently in his position as Editor-in-Chief, Keller is still an active creator of content. The Marshall Project mostly focuses on criminal investigation of America’s court and justice systems, shedding light to some of the unknown happenings. Keller is set to retire from The Marshall Project soon, when a replacement Editor-In-Chief is hired.

The Marshall Project is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that pushes the idea that our American justice system is in dire need of reform. Founder Neil Barsky announced its creation on November 15th, 2014, noting two books, “The New Jim Crow” and “Devil in the Grove” as inspiration. The latter being a story about future Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall’s daring work in support of four wrongly accused black men in the 1940’s. The Marshall Project was, in fact, named in honor of Justice Marshall. Barsky cites Marshall’s commitment to criminal justice and diversity as reasons why he was chosen as the namesake of the organization.

The Marshall Project has won multiple awards for its work. The organization has won multiple Edward R. Murrow prizes, including “Excellence in Video” for “We Are Witnesses” and “Overall Excellence”. The organization has also won a Pulitzer Price in the Explanatory Reporting Category for “An Unbelievable Story of Rape”, a story about a woman who was led to believe her rape was made up for 2 years, until her rapist had been found. The website also features multiple focuses, like first person essays from people who work or live in the criminal justice system, a look at Death Row & its victims and “ We Are Witnesses” which is a short video project focusing on the impacts of the criminal justice system on people from multiple walks of life.

The Marshall Project

* [“Bill Keller to retire from The Marshall Project”](https://www.themarshallproject.org/2018/11/01/bill-keller-to-retire-from-the-marshall-project)
  + Keller will retire from his position as Editor-In-Chief and step into a position on the Board of Directors in the new year.
  + Under Keller’s leadership, the organization has worked with over 100 different partners to spread it message across multiple platforms. Winning every major journalism award, employing 36 people with an annual budget of $7.2 million.
* [“The Marshall Project and Diversity”](https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/01/03/the-marshall-project-diversity-and-inclusion)
  + The Marshall Project is actively focusing on creating an actively diverse organization. Over the last year they have hired 5 women, 6 people of color, while also hiring a formerly incarcerated employee and board member.
  + The organization is also seeking out diverse experiences for their employees, through professional training, and attendance at difference conferences like the NAHJ (National Association of Hispanic Journalists) and the AAJA (Asian American Journalists Association) in the future

Bill Keller

* [“A Turbulent Mind”](https://www.themarshallproject.org/2018/09/03/a-turbulent-mind)
  + A story about an attacker, Andrew Goldstein, a New York man who suffers from schizophrenia who went on a rampage in the city attacking multiple people, ending in the death of Kendra Webdale, who Goldstein pushed into a New York Subway.
  + The story focuses on the use of Kendra’s Law, or Assisted Outpatient Treatment, for “those who are mentally ill and have a history of resisting therapy and a record of violent behavior.”
* [“The Tax Payers and Michelle Jones”](https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/09/14/the-taxpayers-and-michelle-jones)
  + A feature story about an incarcerated woman, Michelle Jones who received her bachelor’s degree from Ball State University while in prison and is pursuing a doctoral degree.
  + Keller focuses on the economic cost of Jones’ education compared to her cost as an inmate. Critics of the program that allowed Jones to attend school during her sentence, argue that inmates shouldn’t have free access to the same education that puts free Americans in crippling debt.
  + After doing the calculations, Keller shows exactly how the inmate program was only helping the American public by allowing inmates to return to a healthy, tax-paying lifestyle compared to those who end up back in jail, or homeless on the street.

Questions

1. Looking at the “We Are Witnesses” project, what research and decision making went into choosing what cases to investigate and which ones to let go?
2. The videos are very intimate, often featuring the subject of the video talking about their story with a just black screen behind them, accompanied by photos and videos from the incidences. What was the reason for taking these kinds of liberties during filming?
3. Have there been any topics that were specifically heavy that you had trouble reporting on? In terms of the “We Are Witnesses” or any other project you’ve worked on.
4. Over your last years as the Editor-In-Chief for the Marshall Project, do you feel that you all are striving valiantly towards the goals set forth at the time of inception?
5. With the Marshall Project being a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, what are some of the tactics you all use to consistently stay afloat financially?
6. Do you ever have any trouble personally accepting donations from certain organizations that do you not hold the same values and ideologies that you do?
7. The Marshall Project is very focused on creating a diverse workplace, how do you think that has impacted the stories you all publish and the tone in which they are written?
8. How has your experience at the Marshall Project been supplemented by your stint at the Times? Has there ever been a time where you’ve noticed any problems with transition?
9. With so much coverage on things like the #MeToo movement and the awareness of sexual assault in the media, how has that impacted the workplace environment?
10. How do you believe working with other publications has allowed The Marshall Project to continue to grow?