

## Tampa Bay Times journalism makes a profound impact in our community

*From revealing patterns of child deaths at a venerable local institution to discovering a missing cemetery for black men, women and children, the Times tells stories no other news organization can tell.*

By **Mark Katches**, mkatches@tampabay.com | Published September 12, 2019

*Tampa Bay Times* journalists Paul Guzzo and James Borchuck have brought new meaning to the journalistic creed: Give voice to the voiceless.

You probably have heard that their reporting uncovered the missing Zion Cemetery in Tampa — a segregation-era burial ground where hundreds of black men, women and children were laid to rest. And then the city, incredibly, lost track of them all.

Only now, and only because of Guzzo and Borchuck's work, Zion Cemetery has been found.

Paved over generations ago to make room for warehouses and an apartment complex.

Late last month, at least 126 coffins were identified by a team of archaeologists using ground penetrating radar. And those are mostly just the bodies buried in the courtyard. Under the actual apartments there could be scores more. Residents who live in buildings atop the cemetery land will be relocated. The complex eventually will be demolished.

Guzzo crammed into a conference room at the **Tampa Housing Authority** on Aug. 30 as the team of archaeologists announced the results of their investigation that had been prompted solely by his work. Some in the room gasped. Others buried their heads. One community leader left in tears.

"It was hard to hold it together," Guzzo said. "It wasn't just about a lost cemetery for that room — most there were African Americans. It was more like they were hit in the face with the reminder of what their ancestors dealt with."

Investigative reporters Kathleen McGrory and Neil Bedi gave voice to the voiceless, too. They reported late last year about children deaths at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, where tiny boys and girls were dying at an alarming rate inside the hospital's heart institute.

Before our stories, the families — mostly poor, mostly minorities — suffered in silence.

Some parents had gone to lawyers but were turned away. These parents had lost their young ones, or watched sons and daughters come home horribly damaged after botched surgeries.

Virtually no lawyer would touch these cases. Take on Johns Hopkins? No thanks. These are difficult procedures. Sometimes bad things happen. You can't win, the families were told.

Then McGrory and Bedi began reporting.

Our journalists recognized that these were not isolated cases. They mined data and dug through records to show that the deaths and horrible outcomes at the hospital were part of a tragic, preventable pattern. They documented the flaws and the incompetence in the operating room.



Tampa Bay Times staff writer Paul Guzzo, left, and staff photographer James Borchuck are seen near the edge of a property that has been determined to be the former Zion Cemetery Monday, July 1, 2019 in Tampa. [CHRIS URSO | Times]

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Tampa Bay Times investigative writers Neil Bedi, left, and Kathleen McGrory at their workstations in the Times newsroom on Nov. 26. (Boyzell Hosey | Times)

mourn with you and hope our stories lead to a better future.

I think a lot about these stories and about the value we bring to our community. How we do it and why it matters. Reader support from our subscribers helps make it all possible.

Guzzo and Borchuck toiled for months performing unglamorous computer searches and sifting through old records to find the truth about a forgotten cemetery. McGrory and Bedi devoted a year to their hospital investigation, sorting through millions of rows of data.

McGrory and Bedi saved lives. Guzzo and Borchuck rescued the dead.

When some of the most vulnerable members of our community could not speak for themselves, *Times* journalists spoke for them.

The impact has been swift and profound. Top executives resigned. Johns Hopkins made sweeping changes to the hospital's policies, and last week McGrory and Bedi reported that All Children's faces more than \$800,000 in state fines.

Our reporters connected all the dots.

And, suddenly, the lawyers are interested.

Johns Hopkins has already paid out more than \$40 million in settlements to just a few of the families. That amount will almost assuredly increase.

Journalists like McGrory and Bedi and Guzzo and Borchuck are bound by duty to uncover the truth. We take great pride — but not pleasure — in bringing these reports to our community. We