



# CRIMINAL JUSTICE NEWS COVERAGE IN 2013

## A Year ‘Dominated’ by Terrorism and Cyber Snooping

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- The NRA enjoyed much better news coverage during a year in which it dominated the legislative debate on gun laws.
- Technology needs to be a more intense subject of coverage by the media.
- The news media devoted relatively little effort last year to examining the ups and downs of crime rates in their regions or nationally.

By Ted Gest

Criminal Justice Journalists

The news in crime and justice in 2013 was dominated by terrorism at the Boston Marathon, by United States surveillance programs disclosed by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, and by the legislative and policy aftermath of the gun episodes which had been the focus of coverage in 2012—ranging from the killing of Trayvon Martin in Florida to the mass shootings in an Aurora, Colorado theater and a Newtown, Connecticut school.

The following report reviews the media treatment of these news developments, along with some of the other major issues of 2013.

Our assessment of criminal justice media coverage is based in part on a conference call conducted by **Criminal Justice Journalists** on January 24, 2014 with **James Alan Fox**, a criminologist at Northeastern University; **Mike Cavender**, executive director of the Radio

Television Digital News Association; and **Debora Wenger**, journalism professor at the University of Mississippi and Second Vice President of Criminal Justice Journalists; with contributions from **Matthew Robinson** of Appalachian State University, author of the *Media Criminal Justice blog*.

**Editors Note:** A full transcript of the conversation will be available shortly.

## Boston Marathon

After several years of relative post-9/11 quiet on the domestic terrorism front, the detonation of two bombs at the end of the widely attended Boston Marathon on April 15 produced an explosion of news coverage that culminated four days later with the capture of one of the accused bombers after his brother and collaborator had been killed by police. The bombings killed three people and injured more than 260.

It was a dramatic event that was rated the year's most significant story in the criminal justice field by readers of [The Crime Report](#). Despite a few prominent missteps, the media generally got this one right, largely because the incident turned out to have a relatively straightforward explanation, at least in terms of the basic facts.

As recounted by many news organizations, Tamerlan Tsarnaev and his brother, Dzhokhar, who were half Chechen, immigrated to the U.S. from Russia in 2002. As they were being sought after the bombings, the brothers allegedly killed a Massachusetts Institute of Technology police officer and later took part in a shootout with police in which Tamerlan was killed. Dzhokhar, before being captured on a boat in Watertown, MA., on April 19, wrote, "The U.S. government is killing our innocent civilians"—apparently one motive for the brothers' terrorist act.

With international media swarming around the Boston area, it probably was inevitable that the competition for news would lead to inaccurate reports.

The most notable media gaffe was the incorrect reporting two days after the bombing that a suspect had been taken into custody. As *Politico* recounted it, the Associated Press, citing a law enforcement official, reported on Wednesday afternoon that an arrest was "imminent" and that the suspect would be brought to court. Three minutes after the AP report, CNN's John King reported that "an arrest has been made."

He cited two sources: a local law enforcement official, and another unnamed source who had spoken with his colleague Fran Townsend, a former White House anti-terrorism adviser. Fox News and the *Boston Globe* then made similar reports, all of which turned out to be wrong. *Politico* and other commentators [praised](#) NBC's Pete Williams for not contributing to the false reporting and for "resisting the temptation to speculate on what he did not (know.)"

The error was serious but it was corrected quickly when other media refuted it.

Mark Jurkowitz of the Pew Research Center's Journalism Project told the *Washington Post* that, "There is a self-correcting mechanism in journalism that's quicker than it's ever been." Still, he

added, “To the extent that people are aware of the mistakes, it just reinforces the public’s distrust” of the media.

Another media controversy surrounded the *New York Post* front-page photo on April 18, three days after the bombing, headlined “Bag Men,” a portrayal implying that the two men shown were the bombers. The men sued the newspaper, but the *Post* maintains that its story was accurate because the men actually were being sought by authorities for questioning. They had been standing near bags that could have been connected to the bombs. “Taken in context, the headline in this case was obviously nothing other than a play on words,” the paper said in court.

Nevertheless, asked *Washington Post* media blogger Erik Wemple: “If the *New York Post* wasn’t seeking to make the slightest allegation about [the men’s] status as suspects or perpetrators in the bombings, why did it place them on the cover?”

Part of the reason that media reporting was largely on target was that then-Boston police commissioner Ed Davis had a good relationship with reporters and periodically spoke to them after the bombing. Speaking later to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Davis said, “It’s important to have … people in the media that you can talk to—that you can trust.”

## **U.S. Surveillance**

A series of stories starting last June in the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post* reported on global surveillance activities by the U.S. National Security Agency, including many more operational details than ever had been made public before. They were based on documents obtained by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, 30, who was promptly pursued by journalists as he fled from Hong Kong to Moscow (he remains in Russia on a one-year asylum grant).

Much reporting focused on Snowden’s background, motives and dealings with journalists. The accuracy of what Snowden revealed wasn’t questioned. Rather, news organizations were criticized by federal officials and others for their basic decision to disclose what Snowden offered.

While it was expected that leaders of U.S. intelligence agencies would assail Snowden, it may have been something of a surprise that the media did not always take Snowden’s side. Glenn Greenwald of the *Guardian*, one of the reporters to break the story, was told by NBC “Meet the Press” host David Gregory, alluding to U.S. espionage charges against Snowden, that he had “aided and abetted” Snowden. Gregory asked, “Why shouldn’t you, Mr. Greenwald, be charged with a crime?” (Gregory said later he was not taking sides, just asking a question.)

Greenwald’s view, as [expressed](#) to MSNBC, is that “I as a journalist am grateful when people sacrifice their own interest to come forward and bring transparency to the United States government. That to me is what journalism is about and we need that in the United States. I absolutely do defend what Edward Snowden does and I don’t pretend otherwise.”

[Wrote](#) John Cassidy in *The New Yorker*: “Snowden took classified documents from his employer, which surely broke the law. But his real crime was confirming that the intelligence

agencies, despite their strenuous public denials, have been accumulating vast amounts of personal data from the American public. The puzzle is why so many media commentators continue to toe the official line.”

Jill Abramson, executive editor of the New York Times, [told](#) the BBC she was confident in her judgment that the media were correct in publishing news of Snowden’s disclosures even though U.S. officials warned of dangers to national security: “When the *New York Times* published the Pentagon Papers back in the 1970s, the same claims were made, that publishing did grave harm to national security, and yet a couple of years after we published them, the same officials who said that admitted that actually there had not been any real harm to national security,” she said.

Timothy McNulty, a veteran journalist, [wrote](#) for *The Crime Report* in July that “the job of the media is to throw light on such subjects, especially where the government may be overreaching, violating the Fourth Amendment of the Bill of Rights and threatening civil liberties.”

Other aspects of surveillance had media attention last year. On June 17, the *Washington Post* featured a story, “Photo-ID databases become troves for police,” that said the faces of 120 million people can be searched in photo databases maintained by states to prevent driver’s license fraud but are used by police to identify people sought in investigations. Facial-recognition technology can allow police using a photo of an unknown person to search for a name. The story said civil liberties advocates worry about the prospect of “broadly defined identity sweeps.”

The *Post* is one of the relatively few news media organizations that produce a steady stream of stories on law enforcement’s use of technology. *It should be a more intense subject of coverage by the media generally.*

Among the topics that did get attention from reporters during the year were increased police use of body cameras, the spread of license plate-scanning devices, disputes over the merits of red-light and speed cameras, and the controversial introduction of drones into law-enforcement use.

## Guns – The Latest Chapters

The strong public reaction to the killing of students and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT., in December 2012 prompted equally intense news media coverage over a push for legislation to deal with gun violence. President Barack Obama, who had been mostly silent on gun issues during his first term, vowed to seek congressional action because of this horrendous event. At the same time, several states started action to strengthen their firearms laws.

Major news organizations closely followed the administration’s progress in deciding on a strategy, and the ensuing battle in the Senate, which ended in an April vote that fell short of changing the federal law relating to background checks.

Many stories did not emphasize, and often did not note at all, that the federal legislation being considered probably would have had little impact on a future Newtown episode. That is because

Connecticut shooter Adam Lanza obtained his guns legally from his mother and in any case had no criminal record or history of involuntary mental treatment that would have made him ineligible to purchase guns.

Much of the initial coverage gave the impression that Congressional action was likely. On January 10, for example, the *Washington Post* declared that, “The White House is working with its allies on a well-financed campaign in Washington and around the country to shift public opinion toward stricter gun laws and provide political cover to lawmakers who end up voting for an assault-weapons ban or other restrictions on firearms.” The story only later acknowledged that the plan faces “serious political obstacles on Capitol Hill.”

In fact, the assault-weapons ban, mirroring an earlier federal version that was on the books for a decade, was quickly dropped.

Even far into the campaign for federal legislation, there were stories professing surprise that the White House proposals might not pass. A lead story in the *Washington Post* on April 2 declared that, “Gun-control measures that seemed destined to become law after the school shootings in Newtown . . . are in jeopardy amid a fierce lobbying campaign by firearms advocates.” The article and many others didn’t account for the fact that even if the Senate were to approve a gun measure, it would almost certainly fail in the Republican-dominated House.

Newtown did prompt wide coverage of related issues, such as a decline in publicly funded treatment for mental illness and the challenges of school security.

The strong suspicion that Adam Lanza suffered from some kind of mental illness (no conclusive motive for his decision to kill elementary school students ever surfaced) prompted media attention to the flaws in the background check system for buying firearms. The subject was also widely covered at the time of the [2007 Virginia Tech shootings](#), when Seung-Hui Cho shot 32 people to death and then killed himself. He had undergone mental treatment two years earlier, but had not been involuntarily committed, so would not have been barred from buying firearms.

The *Washington Post* reported Jan. 17 on a fact that had been noted for many years—that scores of mental health records are missing from the national database that is used in firearms purchase checks. The story quoted Mark Glaze of Mayors Against Illegal Guns as saying, “Every mental-health record that isn’t in the system is a ticking time bomb waiting to go off in another community.” That was an exaggeration because most people with mental health problems don’t commit violent acts.

The previous day, the *New York Times* had published a front-page story, “Warning Signs of Violent Acts Often Unclear,” which said the public was “longing for a mental health system that produces warning signals and can somehow stop violence.” The article explained the dilemma that requiring health professionals to strengthen reporting of mentally ill patients who might act violently could have the effect of dissuading them to seek help in the first place.

The *New York Times* returned to the subject late in the year, publishing a lengthy report on Dec. 22 headlined “When Right to Bear Arms Includes the Mentally Ill” that described in detail the

difficulties law enforcement authorities encounter in keeping dangerous people from obtaining and using guns to commit violence. The newspaper found more than 1,000 cases around the U.S. in which firearms were seized in mental health episodes.

Even if firearms can be seized, most mentally ill people can purchase other firearms, and few states have laws as strict as Connecticut's, which allows confiscations from people who pose a risk of "imminent personal injury to self or others."

*The Crime Report* was one of the few news organizations to focus attention on Congress' failure to invest much money in a law enacted after the Virginia Tech mass killings to improve the background check system. In February, the website published a [story](#) on a report by SEARCH, a national organization of officials who run the National Criminal History Improvement (NCHIP) and National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) programs in the states.

SEARCH said that only 20 states have qualified for funding under the federal law because most states have not met one of the statute's requirements: establishing an appeals process for those "adjudicated as a mental defective." Although Congress authorized spending of \$1.25 billion over five years to implement the law, when it has come to actually appropriating money, the expenditures have been minuscule: last year only \$5 million.

The total was increased to \$59 million in the federal appropriations bill for the current year, which passed in January, but it still is a very small amount by federal spending standards.

On school security, much attention was focused on the National Rifle Association's call for armed officers in every school. President Obama agreed at least that the federal government should provide more funds for school resource officers. Most of the initial news coverage did not examine the extent of existing school security, which has been beefed up considerably since the 1999 mass killing at Colorado's Columbine High School.

Although the higher levels of school security likely have deterred some shooting incidents, a number of smaller-scale shootings took place in schools during the year in any case and got wide media attention. For example, in December, a student at Arapahoe High School in Centennial, CO., entered school with the apparent idea of getting revenge against a teacher. He shot a fellow student, who later died, and killed himself.

A few media outlets caused stirs by testing school security. In early January 2014, KSDK, a St. Louis television station, produced a story saying that a reporter was unable to enter four local schools but was able to walk into Kirkwood High School in a large St. Louis suburb, which had no buzzers at the unlocked entrance. Because the reporter's whereabouts in the school were unknown to school officials, they locked down the building when they were unable to locate the reporter by phone, causing considerable anguish to students and teachers. The television station later stood by the reporting but apologized for causing the lockdown.

Also in January, a local TV program in North Dakota, Valley News Live, signed an agreement with officials in school districts not to assign school stories for 90 days to a reporter who had been reported to police for trespassing after she entered elementary schools in three cities in

December without signing in at the front desk in an attempt to report on security shortcomings, reported the Fargo (ND) Forum.

*It is fine for reporters to test security in public places if they do so without causing disruption or exposing themselves to serious criminal charges.*

Few national news outlets did thorough reporting on the background check issue. One that did was the *New York Times*, which published a front-page [article](#) April 17, the same week the Senate was considering its background check legislation showing how determined felons can obtain firearms illegally through a website called Armslist.com. It was not clear, however, how the then-pending legislation might prevent illegal interstate firearms transactions.

The *Times* also focused on the issue of keeping guns away from the defendants in domestic violence protection orders, reporting in a front-page story on March 18 that most states do not require such people to relinquish their firearms. The lengthy article told detailed stories of cases in which men had threatened, shot or killed women who had obtained court orders against them. The *Times* described the National Rifle Association's often successful battle to defeat attempts by state legislators to pass laws keeping guns away from those accused of intimate partner violence.

The *Washington Post* gets good marks for publishing an occasional series titled "Guns in America" that explored widely varying aspects of the subject. For example, on March 13, the *Post* took a close look at Capitol View, a local neighborhood where almost as many people had been killed by gunfire in each of the previous two years as died in Newtown, Ct. in December 2012.

Another story in the series, on March 24, described "a striking racial divide in deaths by firearms," and noted that "a white person is five times as likely to commit suicide with a gun as to be shot with a gun" and that African Americans are stronger supporters of gun controls than are whites.

One important development in gun coverage by major media in 2013 was a seemingly more respectful attitude toward the NRA, which had been the subject of much one-dimensional coverage in the past. Stories about the organization had typically portrayed it as a wealthy, one-issue group that was interested mainly in intimidating political opponents.

On Sunday, April 14, the *New York Times* featured as its main front-page story a profile of NRA chief executive Wayne LaPierre, headlined "The Gun Man, Sticking to His Cause." The piece was a mostly positive assessment of LaPierre, who refused to be interviewed, including praise from the American Civil Liberties Union for creating "the model for other nonprofit organizations, liberal and conservative alike."

Back on January 13, the *Washington Post* had published a thorough look inside the NRA tracing the organization's "no compromise" position on gun legislation back to the 1977 "revolt at Cincinnati," when hard liners took over the group's leadership at a national convention. The *Post* prominently quoted a former federal official who said of the NRA's tactics, "They want to stir

things up, and the more they stir things up, the more members they get and the more money they make. What do they gain by compromising? Nothing.”

Two months later, the *Post* put on its front page a story headlined, “How the NRA helped reshape views of the Second Amendment, detailing how the organization for three decades had “sponsored legal seminars, funded legal research and encouraged law review articles that advocate an individual’s right to possess guns.” Law Prof. Carl Bogus of the Roger Williams University School of Law called it “one of the most successful attempts to change the law and to change a legal paradigm in history.”

Then, on May 4, the *Post* published a long feature starting on the front page about how the NRA under LaPierre had engineered legal changes that “opened the door to the import of military-surplus weapons.”

*All in all, the NRA enjoyed much better news coverage during a year in which it dominated the legislative debate on gun laws.*

The *New York Times* also contributed to understanding about public opinion on guns in an article by Obama pollster Joel Benenson on April 7 on how little the public knows about gun laws. A majority of those questioned in one survey Benenson did favored enforcement of current laws over passing new ones, but about half of those who favored better enforcement erroneously believed that gun purchases at gun shows are subject to a background check.

The Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel* kept after the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for conducting flawed sting operations in Milwaukee and elsewhere under the name of Operation Fearless.

A series in the newspaper titled “Backfire” started with a story saying that undercover agents had run a storefront sting aimed at purchasing drugs and guns from felons to break up their criminal organizations. The *Journal Sentinel* said the effort had “not snared any major dealers or taken down a gang” but instead “resulted in a string of mistakes and failures,” including an ATF machine gun finding its way to the streets and the agency having \$35,000 in merchandise stolen from the store.

The newspaper also reported that ATF had used mentally-disabled people to promote their operations in five cities. Members of Congress, who already critical of ATF because of the Fast & Furious gun-running investigation in the Southwest, called for an explanation of the problems with “Fearless.”

## Other Major Topics of Coverage

### Marijuana Legalization in Colorado and Washington State

The news media paid close attention to plans by Colorado and Washington state to implement the referendum votes of November 2012 to legalize the recreational use of marijuana, which are just taking effect in 2014.

The *Denver Post* gets considerable credit for its detailed look at the varied aspects of the unprecedented state action, focusing much of its coverage on the business implications, including the impact on tax revenues and tourism.

In November, the *Post* appointed its veteran entertainment editor and music critic, Ricardo Baca, the paper's marijuana editor. A memo to staff calls him "the perfect person to lead this charge." Baca said he had "never been a full-on stoner, [but] I've shared concerts and conversations and late-night sessions at the bar, and had Twitter wars with thousands of them."

The newspaper explained its policy for employees: "As with alcohol, you are not allowed to ingest...marijuana in the office or come to the office 'reeking' of marijuana. If you do imbibe marijuana in the course of covering it for your job, we expect you to take necessary steps to ensure you do not drive while impaired or put anyone at risk."

Much of the work by Baca and other *Post* journalists was featured in a new [blog](#) called The Cannabist.

The *Seattle Times* did a creditable job looking at that state's efforts, which trailed Colorado by a few months. In January 2014, the Poynter Institute, a Florida-based journalism think tank, did an online [chat](#) with the *Post*'s Baca and the Bob Young, who covers the beat for the *Seattle Times*. During the chat, , Young said that his paper has "stepped up its coverage of Washington's historic effort to regulate commercial production and sale of marijuana. We've been dedicated to serious, sober reporting on this effort as a political, business and culture story."

### Stop, Question and Frisk in New York City

New York City, by far the nation's most populous city, often is at the center of discussions of crime and justice trends. While the city's crime rate has plunged over the last decade, a key question has been how much of it is due to the aggressive "stop, question, and frisk" policies of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly.

Much media coverage focused on criticism of the tactic by newly elected Mayor Bill de Blasio, and a court decision issued Aug. 12 by U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin declaring it unconstitutional (a ruling suspended by a federal appellate court in an appeal that is being dropped by de Blasio in early 2014.)

The *Times*, *New York Daily News*, *Wall Street Journal* and other major media produced scores of lengthy stories on “stop and frisk,” many of them concentrating on its role in the mayoral election campaign. In one notable story, the *Times* told how “concerted opposition” to stop-and-frisk began in a 2011 meeting of 40 researchers, lawyers, and community activists. The groups coalesced under the name Communities United for Police Reform and “became a regular and loud presence at rallies on the steps of City Hall and outside the federal courthouse.”

Their efforts were backed by \$2.2 million from George Soros’s Open Society Foundations.

In April, then-mayor Bloomberg criticized the *New York Times* over an editorial attacking the city’s stop and frisk policies a few days after Alphonza Bryant, 17, was fatally shot in the Bronx. The *Times* called stop-and-frisk a “loathed” practice. Bloomberg said, “I loathe that 17-year-old minority children can be senselessly murdered in the Bronx and some of the media doesn’t even consider it news.”

He charged that the paper ignores gun violence in minority neighborhoods but would cover it if the victim were wealthy and white. (The *Times* later reported on the case, noting that “the Bloomberg administration singled (it) out in its campaign against gun violence.”)

## **Mass Incarceration**

Activists on both the left and right complained about the continued incarceration of more than 2 million people in U.S. prisons and jails despite the fact that crime has declined steadily in the last two decades. (Of course, some incarceration helps prevent crime by incapacitating the people who would commit it.) There was relatively little media coverage of the subject, largely because policymakers generally were not proposing dramatic steps to deal with it.

Conservative columnist Michael Gerson wrote in the *Washington Post* on June 28 that “mass incarceration is America’s tragic success. It is effective and indiscriminate. It has increased safety, and it has deepened resentment.” He noted that “bipartisan measures to reduce reliance on incarceration have passed in Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, and, of all places, Texas.”

A program dubbed “justice reinvestment” that helps states manage their correctional populations better and avoid unnecessary incarceration got attention in a few states, but was largely uncovered nationally except for niche media such as *The Crime Report*. The program is supported by the federal government and by the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Public Safety Performance Project.

The *New York Times* published a story on February 19 (“Prison and the Poverty Trap”) which explored the impact of mass incarceration on poor neighborhoods where a relatively high percentage of residents had been in and out of the justice system.

The story may have received little attention by criminal justice policymakers because it appeared in the newspaper’s Science section.

## George Zimmerman Acquittal

As noted earlier, the case against George Zimmerman of Florida for killing black teenager Trayvon Martin was one of the major crime news stories of 2012. His acquittal in July 2013 also got plenty of news coverage, but there was relatively little national outcry, in part because the jury verdict came late on a Saturday night.

The view from Matthew Sheffield of the conservative *Newsbusters* blog was that, “The trial quickly became a media spectacle after supporters of Martin's family convinced the left-leaning national press that regional law enforcement authorities had declined to prosecute Zimmerman because Martin was black. Local officials insisted that Zimmerman was unlikely to be convicted of anything based on the evidence they could find. It appears that initial judgment was correct.”

Radley Balko commented in the *Huffington Post* that it's “important to point out that a single incident, or even a few incidents, are not indicative of a trend. Race relations in America aren't perfect, but they are improving. The worst possible legacy for Martin would be if the false claims about racial violence and animosity in America that have been made in light of his death were to become self-fulfilling.”

The *Tampa Bay Times* maintains a [list](#) of about 200 Florida cases it could identify as involving the state's “stand your ground” law, which was widely discussed in connection with the Zimmerman-Martin case. As of December 2013, the newspaper said that in 75 cases, shootings in self-defense have been found justified but 44 defendants invoking the law pleaded guilty or were found guilty.

## Crime Rate Fluctuations

As has been the case in past years, the most frequent kind of news media coverage of overall crime in a city or region consisted of reporting on annual crime data issued by a police department and interviewing the police chief, who often took credit for declines in crime but blamed increases on other factors.

One welcome exception was a lengthy front-page story in the *Washington Post* on March 4, headlined, “As streets get safer, who gets the credit?” The story, based partly on interviews in a formerly crime-ridden street called Hanover Place, a mile north of the U.S. Capitol, explored a long list of theories for crime's decline in the United States in the last two decades.

The factors included not only criminal justice changes such as better policing tactics and higher incarceration totals but also the possibility that higher abortion rates that would include potential criminals and that the removal of lead from gasoline improved the health of youth. As Mother Jones magazine explained it in a [story](#) in early 2013, some research indicates that “even moderately high levels of lead exposure are associated with aggressivity, impulsivity, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and lower IQ. And right there, you've practically defined the profile of a violent young offender.”

On its front page of November 20, the *New York Times* had an important feature story on high-crime areas of North St. Louis, pointing out that even though crime rates had declined overall in the U.S., “when people in crime-ridden communities hear public officials declare that their cities are safer, they snicker.”

The story discussed “hot spot policing,” which it described as homing in on specific streets and corners and on the time of day that criminal activity takes place,” and reported that it would be emphasized by the new St. Louis police chief, Sam Dotson.

*In general, though, the news media appeared to devote relatively little effort last year examining the ups and downs of crime rates in their regions or nationally.*

## Defending the Poor

Several stories marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in March of the Supreme Court’s ruling in the case of *Gideon v. Wainwright*, which declared that indigent defendants had the right to legal representation in criminal cases. The coverage reported that a half-century later, many poor people still were denied their right to an attorney and that many public defenders were overburdened with hundreds of cases at a time. The *Washington Post* carried “Locked up for being poor,” a [commentary](#) on these themes by Karen Houppert, who wrote a book on the subject.

## Ariel Castro

The story of three Cleveland women who were held in captivity for a decade got saturation media coverage in the days after one of them escaped her kidnapper, Ariel Castro, and called police.

The *Washington Post* ran a story titled “How well do you know your neighbors?” on May 12 questioning whether the kidnapping would have been discovered much earlier “if the neighbors had spoken to each other more and shared their worries” about troubling things they had seen over the years, such as a woman crawling naked in the back yard.

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* published extensive coverage of Castro’s crimes and his later suicide in an Ohio prison, but the story largely faded from the national media after a week or so.

## Justice Denied in the Bronx

The *New York Times* published an excellent series in the spring, “Justice Denied,” which detailed “chronic delays that are undermining the criminal courts” in the city’s Bronx borough. The newspaper documented the fact that some felony cases have been delayed for as long as five years, and minor cases drag on, too.

Misdemeanor cases are supposed to be tried within 60 days of arraignment, but the *Times* found a defendant who had waited 600 days. The series' author, William Glaberson, retired from the newspaper as it was published.

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