

# Documented Story Pitching Guide

A Documented story should always center low-income immigrants in its reporting or reveal something about the consequences of the immigration system on our neighbors and communities.

These stories may be place-based, industry-based, or about systems and agencies. Regardless of the framing, the story must tell us something **new** and keep the experience of living as an immigrant in New York as the focus of the story.

Going deep on a commonly discussed issue is usually not enough. We follow all of the issues very closely, so if the story does not reveal new information about whatever you are covering, then it is not for us.

Note, while we primarily publish written stories, we may consider pitches for other formats including photography, video or shortform social media.

## Before submitting a pitch, consider the following:

1. Does your story tell us something new? If so, what?
2. Has the story been done already? If so, see question 1.
3. How impactful is the story for the group of persons or for the individual?
4. What are the broader themes about New York City that your story touches on?
5. If the story is national, is there a way to hone in on the local impact? Given the news lately, several recent policies have the potential to impact local NYC residents.
6. Can you name sources? Because of the nature of Documented's subject area, we are conscientious of providing anonymity, such as using initials, for migrants in fear of their safety. However, Documented does not allow pseudonyms for its sources. Additionally, all spokespersons must be named.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How long does the editing process take?

- Editing timelines vary depending on the complexity and timeliness of the story. We work closely with reporters to refine angles and ensure accuracy. Expect a collaborative process.

## Do you offer a kill fee?

- Yes, we provide a kill fee if a commissioned story does not move forward due to editorial decisions. Kill fees are typically 25% of the commissioned assignment rate.

## Where do I pitch?

- Please submit your story pitches via [this form](#).

## Payment & Rights

- Information on payment rates, deadline date, and rights to content are negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
- Documented typically pays upon publication, unless otherwise noted.

## Types of Stories We Cover

1. **Place-Based Stories:** These focus on specific immigrant communities in New York City, such as Chinatown, Little Guyana or Little Pakistan, or neighborhoods with a high proportion of foreign-born residents, such as Washington Heights or Jackson Heights. These stories may highlight local issues, developments, and unique aspects of these neighborhoods, including annual celebrations or prominent neighborhood figures.
2. **Industry-Based Stories:** We cover the working conditions and challenges faced by immigrant laborers in industries such as delivery work, construction, domestic work, and the cleaning industry. These stories explore systemic exploitation, labor organizing, and the experiences of workers navigating these industries.
3. **Systems and Agencies:** We investigate institutions that impact immigrants, such as ICE, immigration courts, the Department of Buildings, and the Department of Labor. Our reporting examines the policies, practices, and impact of these entities on immigrant communities.
4. **Arts and Culture:** Documented does not publish media reviews, entertainment or celebrity news. However, we are interested in profiles of immigrant artists and artworks with significant cultural or historical relevance to New York. Occasionally, we solicit writing and/or photography for events that are meaningful to the community.
5. **Breaking News:** We may greenlight a story for breaking news, but we hold these stories to a high standard. We always want news about neighborhood life and immigrant communities, but the story must break news of egregious wrongdoing or educate our audience on a new or underreported phenomenon.

## Examples of Strong Documented Stories

- **Arts & Culture:** [Corky Lee Remains on Chinatown's Mind](#) – A story about the enduring legacy of a photographer who chronicled Asian American communities. This story succeeded in that it was about a prominent immigrant photographer with clear ties to the Chinese community in New York.
- **Neighborhood Life:** [How Bail Reform Became a Divisive Issue in NYC's Asian Communities](#) – Much of the conversation around the random violence against Asian New Yorkers did not center their voices. This piece looked at bail reform within the community and its divisive nature.
- **Systems & Agencies:** [The Arrest of a Brooklyn Mosque Volunteer and NYPD Surveillance](#) – A single arrest serves as a lens into NYPD's fraught relationship with the city's Muslim communities. This story from Rebecca Chowdhury was about a specific event: the arrest of a volunteer at a Brooklyn mosque. However, it fits within a wider history of tensions between the NYPD and New York City's Muslim residents over the agency's aggressive surveillance tactics post 9/11.
- **National to Local:** [ICE Took His Son From Their Bronx Home. Now His 19-Year-Old Is In Bukele's Mega-prison In El Salvador](#) – The national story about news about the 238 Venezuelans transported to CECOT was given a local perspective as we reported on one father in the Bronx whose son was part of the 238 deportees.

## *A Note on Covering the Trump Administration:*

At Documented, we see our role as threefold: delivering trusted, fact-based reporting to the communities we serve while countering the misinformation that spreads like wildfire and holding local government officials accountable. Our goal is to mitigate undue fear while being clear-eyed about the realities immigrants face.

## Here are some examples of possible coverage:

- Profiles of individuals facing deportation/detention under reinstated "Zero Tolerance" policies.
- Data-driven stories on changes in asylum application approval rates.
- Analysis of legal battles over the termination of DACA, TPS, CHNV, etc.
- Detailed investigations into how public benefits restrictions affect mixed-status families.
- Coverage of court rulings on key immigration-related cases, including their implications for immigrant communities.
- Development of tools that help immigrants navigate uncertainty, such as guides on managing affairs in case of deportation.

## Examples of Stories We Admire

These are some stories that align with our take on immigrant coverage, although not necessarily with the length or style of writing.

- Fighting for the Immigrants of Little Pakistan ([The New Yorker](#))
- The Financial Ruin of NYC's Taxi Drivers ([The New York Times](#))
- Massage Parlor Workers and the Criminalization of Sex Work ([The New York Times](#))
- Teens Caught Between Gangs and the Law ([The New Yorker](#))
- The Wrongful Conviction of a Chinese American Woman ([The New Yorker](#))