



## Nicole Rodriguez

### **Profile**

Veteran reporter with more than a decade of experience who crystallizes content into compelling copy. Thrives in a fast-paced environment with tight deadlines. Swiftly cultivates sources and relationships within government and the community. Skilled in reporting and writing breaking news, impactful investigative stories and human interest pieces that resonate with readers. Social media maven who uses Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to maximize message and story reach. Excellent command of language, grammar, punctuation and AP style.

### **Experience**

#### **FREELANCE JOURNALIST, MARCH 2020-PRESENT**

Reports on national legal issues for The Legal Examiner and covers Port St. Lucie government, Martin County government, schools, crime and breaking news for Knowhere News.

#### **SENIOR REPORTER, VERO BEACH 32963 MAY 2019-MARCH 2020**

Covered Indian River County and the City of Vero Beach, including both jurisdiction's responses to Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19 for Vero Beach 32963, a weekly publication based on the barrier island. Conducted a two-part investigation into adult arcades, exposing several arcades operating illegal gambling fronts. Broke the story of a local woman who turned in her brother, an ISIS sympathizer, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for making threats to carry out acts of terror locally. Covered his subsequent case in federal court. Unearthed in a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development report to Congress that Indian River County had the highest unsheltered homeless population for a suburban area in the country. Focused most coverage on island news, including tourism, parking problems, beach renourishment projects and actions taken by the state to make deadly and dangerous intersections safer.

#### **GOVERNMENT REPORTER, SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE FEBRUARY 2018-MAY 2019**

Covered the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County, routinely juggling coverage of weekly meetings for both jurisdictions. Unearthed that the Sarasota city manager was using his personal email to conduct city business for six years, potentially breaking state Sunshine Law and resulting in a lawsuit by the ACLU of Florida president. Covered the state's historic recount in Sarasota County of U.S. senator, governor and agriculture commissioner races. Wrote about a local resident and former NFL cheerleader who accused the New Orleans Saints and the NFL of gender discrimination, detailing the dark side of being a woman working in the league. Exposed what child welfare experts say amounts to wrongdoing and a conflict of interest in the first story in a continuing investigation into a local contractor for the Department of Children and Families, which placed a child with an employee instead of contacting family, leading to a bitter custody battle. The story also exposed DCF's murky regulations of its contractors and subcontractors that put children in traumatizing ordeals that drag out in secretive court proceedings.

#### **POLITICAL REPORTER, NEWSWEEK OCTOBER 2017-JANUARY 2018**

Covered the Trump Administration and immigration from New York City. Wrote about wasteful spending by FEMA, reported on security failures by federal immigration authorities and covered President Donald Trump's immigration policies and their effect on the country.



**WATCHDOG REPORTER, TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS/USA TODAY NETWORK JUNE 2014-OCT 2017**

Government watchdog reporter covering Florida's 7th largest city, Port St. Lucie. Conducted an investigation into the city's public records procedures, revealing a large lag time to fulfill even simple requests. The investigation prompted Port St. Lucie to overhaul its records system and fire its city attorney for poor performance and the botched handling of requests. The investigation was recognized and featured in a story by the Columbia Journalism Review. Covered the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting from Fort Pierce, where the shooter, Omar Mateen lived. Appeared on CNN's The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer to share details about an exclusive on Mateen. Uncovered a communication breakdown between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and states regarding design requirements for veterans nursing homes that has jeopardized at least one planned nursing home in Florida alone. Held government officials accountable in analysis pieces for their hasty financial decisions during the Great Recession that put the city in close to \$1 billion in debt. Covered City Council meetings, digging deeper into agenda items to create enterprise and investigative stories, presidential visits to the South Florida, breaking news and wrote stories on property values, roads, growth and development. Shot and produced video to accompany most stories.

**STRINGER, THE WASHINGTON POST MAY 2014-JUNE 2014**

Covered news of the first known American suicide bomber in the Syrian civil war. Moner Mohammad Abu Salha lived in Vero Beach and occasionally worshipped at the same Fort Pierce mosque as the Pulse nightclub shooter.

**STAFF WRITER, YOUR VOICE NEWS & VIEWS OCT 2012-JUNE 2014**

Pitched and reported an average of six stories per week for a weekly newspaper in St. Lucie and Martin counties. Coverage as St. Lucie County's chief reporter included breaking news, local government, crime, politics and general news. Past stories include police officer murder case, the controversial 2012 District 18 congressional race between Allen West and Patrick Murphy, Digital Domain bankruptcy, dengue fever outbreak in Martin County and the Indian River Lagoon environmental crisis. Covered a congressional hearing on the lagoon in Washington, D.C attended by more than 20 members of Congress. Was recognized in November 2013 issue of "Stuart Magazine" as one of the top 10 most influential journalists on the Treasure Coast.

**FREELANCE JOURNALIST, OCT 2009-OCT 2012**

Pitched and reported for Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers, a 100,000-circulation daily in South Florida. Averaged approximately five stories per week, functioning at the capacity of a staff reporter. Broke news of Casey Anthony sighting in St. Lucie County and spearheaded the paper's coverage. Past stories include hundreds of local pieces on a diverse range of news from breaking to features. Also freelanced for The New Times Broward-Palm Beach's calendar section, previewing events ranging from film premieres to music venues.

**ELECTION NIGHT REPORTER, ASSOCIATED PRESS; PRIMARY & GENERAL ELECTIONS, 2010/2012**

One of 5,000 reporters who called in up-to-the-minute federal, state and local race results to Associated Press data centers across the nation.



**STAFF WRITER, NEW TIMES BROWARD-PALM BEACH; FT. LAUDERDALE, FL OCT 2009-DEC 2009**

Averaged 10 stories a week blogging for The New Times Broward-Palm Beach's The Juice. Rapidly wrote a range of stories from general interest to breaking news with a very tight daily deadline. Researched, reported, copy edited and conducted interviews with sources.

**Education**

Florida International University, Miami, FL — B.S. in Communication, Major in Journalism, Cum Laude, 2009

Indian River Community College, Fort Pierce, FL — Associate of Arts in Journalism, Cum Laude, 2006

**Awards**

Member of Treasure Coast Newspapers/TCPalm staff that placed first in the Division B breaking news category by the Florida Society of News Editors in 2018 for Hurricane Irma coverage.