

NEWS MATTERS (2021) **Documentary Synopsis**

Synopsis:

The deadly siege at the US Capitol is rooted in an epidemic of anger and baseless conspiracy theories. There is a direct relationship between the rise of dangerous misinformation and the vanishing of more than 2,000 newspapers across the country. This “cause and effect” has led to a vacuum of trusted news and a crisis of misinformation. [News Matters](#) explores the impact of dangerous misinformation, and how its rise relates to the slow destruction of the America’s newspapers. The film chronicles the dramatic events around the revolt to save The Denver Post and protect journalism in American democracy.

News Matters follows the desperate attempt by Colorado journalists to save the 125-year-old Denver Post from certain death by hedge fund owner, Alden Global Capital. Chuck Plunkett captures national attention when he leads a [revolt](#) against The Denver Post’s hedge fund owners, all while journalists are being called the enemy of the people.

The Denver Post is dying a slow death at the hands of its owners. Alden Global Capital, a New York City-based hedge fund, owns a majority share in the company that operates the Denver Post. Instead of reinvesting profits, [Alden siphons those profits](#), while cutting the staff to the bone. Once, The Post was the watchdog of the Rockies; now important stories aren’t being covered, and the paper is less than half the size it used to be. This “squeeze” is being played out across the country, as Alden puts the pressure on all of its newspapers nationwide. Today, The Post is in its death throes, struggling to operate under a skeleton crew.

Chuck Plunkett, the opinion page editor at The Denver Post, leads a courageous group of journalists to try and save The Denver Post in a hail Mary pass. Plunkett ignites a rebellion after publishing the editorial, [News Matters](#), calling out The Post’s owners as “vulture capitalists.” The editorial urges Alden to sell the newspaper to someone who cares about news. That editorial shined a national spotlight on the crisis of local newspapers, getting coverage on [CNN](#) and on the front page of the [New York Times](#).

Following the public outcry, national attention, and a packed town hall event, reality sets in that Alden Global Capital just doesn't care. There is no response from Alden, and the company continues its cost-cutting mission as if the revolt never happened. Citizens are left with the chilling

reality that the days of trusted newspapers in America are coming to a close.

With no other options, [Plunkett resigns](#) and a small group of journalists follow him out the door. Larry Ryckman and Dana Coffield, both senior editors at The Denver Post, lead a core of some of The Post's top reporters, attempting a new model for sustainable news, The Colorado Sun. None of them have any business experience and they have no idea if their online journalism experiment will work.

News Matters takes a retrospective look at the external forces and business miscalculations by former Denver Post owner, Dean Singleton. The internet, the Great Recession, and lack of industry foresight led Singleton's once expansive newspaper empire to the brink of bankruptcy. **News Matters** uncovers the dangerous trend in hedge fund ownership of thousands of newspapers across the country and how that ownership leads to ["news deserts."](#) Towns, cities and entire regions are now without trusted local news. The film paints a national picture by looking at several other newspapers that have already folded under what's been described as "cigar butt investing."

News Matters includes commentary from national news leaders like Washington Post Editor-in-Chief, Marty Baron. The film also includes perspectives from Chuck Plunkett, Greg Moore, former Editor-in-Chief of The Denver Post, Larry Ryckman and Dana Coffield, the co-founders of the Colorado Sun, and Jennifer Brown, a Denver Post reporter and young mother who is uncertain about her decision to leave The Denver Post and take a chance on The Sun. And **News Matters** includes exclusive, rare perspectives from Dean Singleton, former owner of The Denver Post and more than 80 other newspapers.

Finally, **News Matters** reminds viewers of the critical importance of robust journalism in an open and free democracy. In an ocean of information, news consumers face a difficult task of finding trusted and truthful news. Legitimate news gets lost in a constant flood of social media posts, tweets, pay-for-play and fake news stories. In the absence of trusted local news and a lack of media literacy, the authors of fake news, bias and opinions find fertile ground to lead Americans down a dangerous hole. [The siege on the US Capitol](#) is the most brazen example of how misinformation can taint society.

News Matters presents a cautionary tale and candid reflection of the state of America's Fourth Estate.