“Mzungu, you’re famous now,” the group of boda boda drivers shouted at me laughing and pointing to their radios as I left the station house. Mzungu, a Bantu term for foreigner, became my unofficial name the month [I spent reporting](https://jamesbenedict.github.io/uganda/) on HIV medicine shortages for the ‘Daily Monitor,’ Uganda’s largest independent newspaper. When a district official continued to claim there was no evidence of a shortage, I confronted him with my photos of trash bags outside of a clinic filled with medicine days from expiration.

Without being there, we would have never discovered how reality differed from the official story. The only way to bring about accountability is by doing your due diligence and having the spine to stand by your findings — even if those in power try to spin the facts.

A few years later [reporting with Reuters](http://www.reuters.com/investigates/section/usa-taser/) this lesson was critical for my success tracking down the data needed to calculate how many people's deaths involved a Taser. Working on this first of its kind story, I populated a database on tight deadlines and bulletproofed a story about a litigious company.

[This feels like a hard transition, suggestions?] A journalist should be able to tell a story with whichever medium serves it best, so I’ve worked hard to be well rounded. I am a visual reporter who has received awards for telling stories with [graphics](http://specials.idsnews.com/untreated/), [layout](https://jamesbenedict.github.io/template/example/index.html), [pictures](http://www.idsnews.com/article/2015/03/attempting-perfection-ballerina-juggles-academics-hours-of-ballet-rehearsals) and [words](http://ijec.org/2016/12/07/corporate-cash-helps-fill-indiana-politicians-coffers/). I have extensive professional experience with data visualization, responsive web development, and user interface design. I've worked on multiple data driven enterprise stories that blended traditional reporting skills with Python programming.

Beyond telling stories, I've used programming to address institutional inefficiencies. As the Indiana Daily Student’s digital director, I developed an educational web design template which allowed other designers to focus on designing and not debugging. More than fifteen designers learned to code using this, and it is now integral to the most advanced visual storytelling classes at Indiana University’s Media School. I’ve developed more software to help other teams, like a Python image sorter for the Society for News Design’s annual book, which saved the team a week of busy work.

I’m committed to always write clear documentation and take time to educate others because cooperation produces better work than competition. A tool is only useful if it is actually understood, and there should be intentional efforts to bridge the gap between programmers and others in a newsroom.

Creating clear explanatory journalism also has never been more important than today with the amount of misinformation spreading. The role of a data journalist is to find a compelling story by filtering out the noise, while a graphic designer's role is to make the abstract tangible. I excel at both of these skill sets and would help your team by [drawing a blank here, do I even need this sentence?]

If hired, I would enjoy continuing to report on police use of force, the opioid crisis, or the amount of national money in local elections. I’d also love to help explain the staggering amount of news breaking daily in our capital.

Please accept my application for the Data Reporter position. Thank you in advance for considering me for the job.