

MARK PUENTE

Mark Puente, staff writer at the Tampa Bay Times, is an accountability reporter covering Pinellas County government. He returned to the *Times* in July 2016 after spending two years as an investigative reporter at The Baltimore Sun. While there, he was on a team that was a finalist for the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news coverage of the city's riots. He has been nominated five times for journalism's top prize.

His "Undue Force" series about police brutality in Baltimore led to immediate reforms by the U.S. Department of Justice and won multiple national and local awards. Prior to joining the Times in 2010, Puente spent more than five years at the *Plain Dealer* in Cleveland. He won multiple awards for accountability work that included forcing a 32-year sheriff to resign in 2009 and plead guilty to theft charges.

Puente is not your average journalist. He and his wife had three sons by the age of 19. He spent 14 years as a local and long distance trucker before earning a political science degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His blue-collar background and life experiences have given him an edge over many journalists. He has been a reporter since receiving his B.A. in 2005.