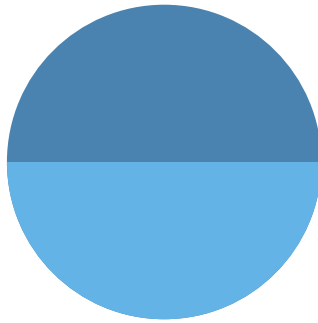


Bonnie Abaunza  
Neal Baer  
Diana Barrett  
Peter Bisanz  
Dustin Lance Black  
Johanna Blakley  
Caty Borum Chattoo  
Don Cheadle  
Wendy Cohen  
Nonny de la Peña  
Leonardo DiCaprio  
Geraldyn Dreyfous  
Kathy Eldon  
Eve Ensler  
Oskar Eustis  
Shirley Jo Finney  
Beadie Finzi  
Terry George  
Holly Gordon  
Sandy Herz  
Reginald Hudlin  
Darnell Hunt  
Shamil Idriss  
Tabitha Jackson  
Miura Kite  
Michelle Kydd Lee  
Anthony Leiserowitz  
David Linde  
Tom McCarthy  
Cara Mertes  
Sean Metzger  
Pat Mitchell  
Shabnam Mogharabi  
Joshua Oppenheimer  
Elise Pearlstein  
Richard Ray Perez  
Gina Prince-Bythewood  
Ana-Christina Ramón  
James Redford  
Liba Wenig Rubenstein  
Edward Schiappa  
Cathy Schulman  
Teri Schwartz  
Ellen Scott  
Jess Search  
Fisher Stevens  
Carole Tomko  
Natalie Tran  
Amy Eldon Turteltaub  
Gus Van Sant  
Rainn Wilson  
Samantha Wright

# The State of SIE

Mapping the landscape of  
social impact entertainment



# Welcome Note

## Teri Schwartz

Dean, UCLA  
School of Theater,  
Film and Television



We stand at a critical intersection in our human history where there is a need for new, diverse voices to be heard — for powerful new stories to be told.

Story has the ability to build bridges of understanding, tolerance, empathy and respect, helping us to make sense of our lives and the world around us. The time has come to use the infinite power of story, as expressed through entertainment and performing arts, to inspire social impact.

We are the Storytelling School. We believe that story can both delight and entertain, and enlighten, engage and inspire change for a better world. This is our vision at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television (UCLA TFT). We are nurturing and developing a new generation of diverse artists, scholars and industry leaders aligned with our ideals and united in the pursuit of new creative work and research that makes a difference in the world.

My own path into social impact entertainment (SIE) has been a long one. In early 2003 when I first became a university dean, I began working on an idea that would put my life philosophy

to the test — a major university research center focused on the power of entertainment and performing arts to inspire social impact. The structure of this new center would be built upon three pillars: research, education and special initiatives, and public engagement, programming and exhibition.

At the time, there wasn't a university model fully focused on this topic that I could draw upon for information as the field was in its infancy. That would change in 2007 when I met visionary philanthropist, Jeff Skoll. Jeff was in the early days of building Participant Media — a great company whose vision to use the power of story to not only entertain but to inspire social impact aligned with mine at the educational level. Jeff has played a crucial role in shaping the ideological foundations of this emerging field. Through Participant Media, he has produced and supported some of the most iconic, award-winning SIE films to date, including Oscar® winners *Spotlight*, *Citizenfour*, and *An Inconvenient Truth*, amongst many other brilliant films. Without question, I was very inspired by what Jeff and his team were endeavoring to accomplish. I forged ahead with the confidence that we were doing something meaningful that would have lasting impact at both the industry and university levels.

In 2009 when I became the Dean of UCLA TFT, I brought the idea for the center with me as part of an overarching vision and set of goals for the School. We were fortunate that it was a vision shared by Jeff who made a transformational leadership gift of \$10 million to name and endow the new Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment at UCLA TFT (Skoll Center SIE) in 2014. We are deeply honored and grateful to have this remarkable center bear Jeff's name and reflect his profound core values and mission to make the world a better place.

*The State of SIE* is the Skoll Center SIE's first major publication: a report that aims to map and explore the emerging field of social impact entertainment. We've gathered opinions and key insights from some of the most compelling voices across this landscape, exploring many of the major themes that have defined the Skoll Center

SIE's work to date: the most effective strategies for driving impact through storytelling; the question of when, within the creative process, impact should first be considered; the key role of research to explore, contextualize and help define the field; and the importance of partnering with the right allies across the entertainment and performing arts industries for new ideas, special projects and initiatives.

SIE is an idea whose time has come. As our world has become more complex and challenging, artists, scholars, educators, and industry leaders are realizing the true value of social impact entertainment — not just in terms of moving and changing people from all walks of life by creating deeper meaning and connections for all of us, but also by a new-found belief in the double bottom line: that you can do well and do good in life.

In my own contribution to this report, found within The Bigger Picture section, I expand on my work in this field and explore strategies and opportunities for educators working in this space.

I hope you find this report very useful and engaging. I am so optimistic about the future of SIE. Its promise and possibilities are limitless. Please consider this an open invitation to join us on this amazing journey — we look forward to welcoming you on board. ■

To explore the digital version of the report (complete with interactive map), find out more about our work and hear about upcoming events head to [www.thestateofsie.com](http://www.thestateofsie.com)





There is also some urgency for greater collaboration by all the stakeholders involved in SIE. Though there are clear leaders in certain fields, like Doc Society with their *Impact Field Guide & Toolkit*, or the #PopJustice series of reports produced by Liz Manne, Unbound Philanthropy and the Nathan Cummings Foundation, there is still work to be done to bring the entire ecosystem closer together. It's our hope that, by covering the various different media forms and disciplines within SIE — as well as its often overlooked business case — we can inspire a greater knowledge exchange within the existing community and bring new people into the fold as well.

In summary, SIE is an emergent space. It's essential to recognize that it is shaped not just by the content creators, but also the funders, nonprofits, and academics that help to support them.

### What is social impact entertainment?

Learning from the development of other fields — where theorists have spent considerable time and effort trying, and failing, to agree on a single definition — it is our hope to show you what SIE is, how it works and how to create it, rather than attempt to simply define it.

To do this, we've referred to existing theories of change, impact frameworks, and the experience of leading practitioners, many of whom have shared their stories and learnings in this report.

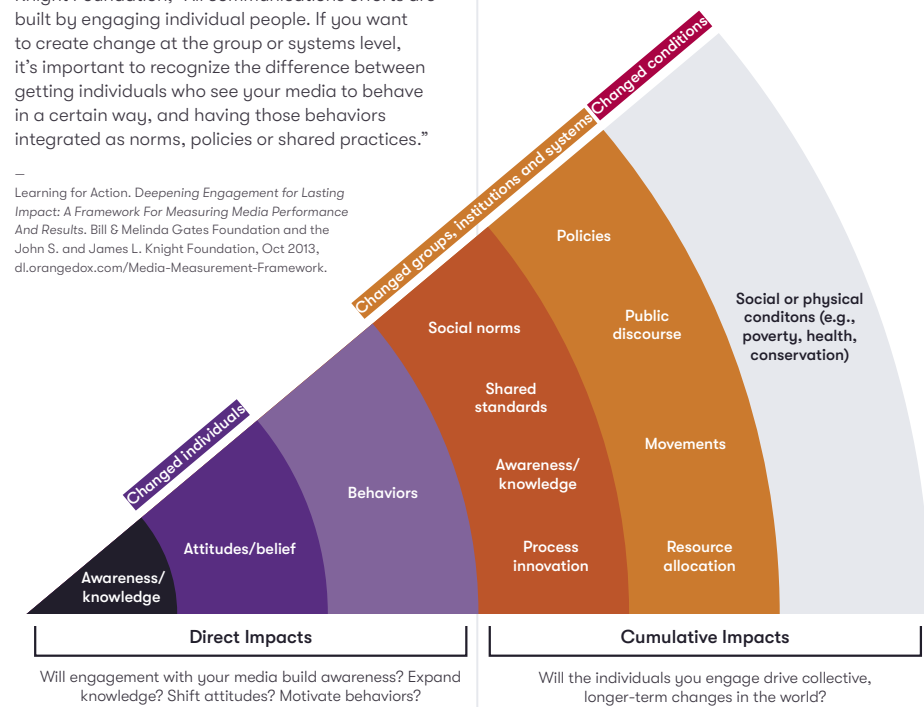
Several common themes emerged during this process. While different models may have a different number of steps, or use different terminology, most of them ultimately describe the following process:



### Creating Impact Through Media

According to *Deepening Engagement for Lasting Impact*, a study commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, "All communications efforts are built by engaging individual people. If you want to create change at the group or systems level, it's important to recognize the difference between getting individuals who see your media to behave in a certain way, and having those behaviors integrated as norms, policies or shared practices."

— Learning for Action. *Deepening Engagement for Lasting Impact: A Framework For Measuring Media Performance And Results*. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Oct 2013. [dl.orangedox.com/Media-Measurement-Framework](http://dl.orangedox.com/Media-Measurement-Framework).



However, the creation of SIE is more than a simple process — it's a creative endeavor that relies on the many facets of communication in order to effect change. While no summary can do justice to the richness and depth of this report's diverse elements, there are Five Key Considerations for SIE that were continually cited by our contributors:

- 1. Focus on the story** — Tell the best story you can or you will never reach your audience. This mantra has been repeated by all of our contributors, from filmmakers Tom McCarthy (p. 20) and Fisher Stevens (p. 50), to Participant Media's David Linde (p. 32) and Elise Pearlstein (p. 66).
- 2. Know your issue** — Fully understand the real world of your story and then determine your intended impact at the start. The importance of this consideration is evidenced by contributors like Joshua Oppenheimer (p. 54) and Neal Baer (p. 88).
- 3. Find the best partners** — Identify and partner with leading organizations and people already working on the

issues you're attempting to address. Building your social impact campaign in conjunction with these experts can maximize your potential impact, as highlighted by Wendy Cohen (p. 182) and Bonnie Abaunza (p. 138).

- 4. Think about distribution differently** — Create a distribution plan that surrounds your work and activates all relevant shareholders, stakeholders and communities of action. Dustin Lance Black and Carole Tomko explain how they did this for their respective projects 8 (p. 110) and *Racing Extinction* (p. 124).
- 5. Evaluate, learn and share** — Assess what you have done and pass on key learnings. Doc Society's *Impact Field Guide & Toolkit* and the Center for Media & Social Impact's *Assessing the Impact of Issues-Focused Documentaries* are just two best-in-class examples of how to do this effectively.

We don't presume to have all of the answers. However, in creating this report we have collated practical theories and

### Participant Media Marketing and Impact "Our process"



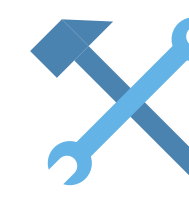
#### Issues

Identify the issue in the film and determine how to frame that issue given the landscape.



#### Objectives

Determine the objectives given: content, issue, landscape, partner willingness and resources.



#### Tactics

Determine ideal and possible field actions given: content, partners, landscape and resources.



#### Outcomes

Review planned and unplanned results.

— Participant Media. "Marketing + Impact: A Foundation for Comprehensive Film Campaigning." 2017, p. 26.

personal creative insights in one place, so that we might help inform how to navigate this ever-changing landscape.

### Examples and case studies

The work of our contributors has also highlighted where SIE has been deployed to particular effect. Similar to the theories of change, each of the processes discussed are unique to the work they support, but key themes did surface. Namely, the importance of identifying issues, objectives and tactics as early as possible — and then sharing this information with all stakeholders throughout the project — in order to build an integrated approach that influences outcomes.



**As the world becomes more fractured and perilous, it's up to content creators to tell the stories that move us forward as a species on our sacred planet.**

— Rainn Wilson (p. 121)

Given the magnitude of today's challenges — climate change, economic inequality, forced migrations and any number of other problems — it's easy for people to get discouraged about their capacity to make a difference in the world. But as the case studies in this report reveal, SIE can play a critical role in catalyzing significant change.

For example, the film *Blood Diamond* was released with a coordinated campaign to enlist audiences as citizen activists and successfully sparked global consumer demand for conflict-free diamonds.

Similarly, Oscar®-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* helped shift global opinions on climate change, one of the most contentious issues of our time, and mobilized a new generation of pioneering environmental activists.

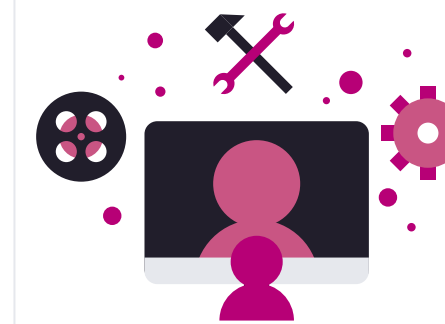
The documentary *Food, Inc.* got hundreds of thousands of people thinking about how they could improve their diet and help protect the planet. And finally, SoulPancake's *Kid President* videos engaged a new generation in the increasingly critical issue of citizenship. These projects are just a few among a growing number of powerful SIE catalysts. ▶

### Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

The most commonly applied theory in the area of entertainment-education is SCT. Most generally, SCT contends that in addition to direct, experiential learning, people learn vicariously by observing models. That is, models, such as those on television, transmit 'knowledge, values, cognitive skills, and new styles of behavior' to viewers.

SCT contends that media messages are particularly likely to influence outcome expectancies and self-efficacy when they feature successful characters with whom the viewer identifies, perceives as similar to himself or herself, and/or finds attractive.

— Mayer-Guse, Emily. "Toward a Theory of Entertainment Persuasion: Explaining the Persuasive Effects of Entertainment-Education Messages." *Communication Theory*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2008, pp. 407-425.





### The business case for social impact entertainment

Study after study has shown that audiences are affected by what they watch. So, if you're a content creator wanting to get your message across, there's no more powerful way to do it than through entertainment. Moreover, the exponential changes in technology mean entertainment is no longer a siloed endeavor. Its influence is everywhere, including business, and therefore what's good for entertainment can be good for business as well.

Contrary to old misconceptions that associating your content with a cause somehow limits your profitability, the changes sweeping across society today — particularly in terms of demographics, distribution models and consumer appetites — actually show the opposite is true: audiences are demanding content that engages with social issues.

What's more, the increasing number of mobile devices and the rise of over-the-top (OTT) are driving more and more content through the Internet. Attention spans are shorter than ever, and audiences don't just have more choices — they have greater expectations.

### Yearly spend on entertainment between generations

Generation X and younger are spending significantly less on entertainment than older generations, most likely because of the proliferation of free content online. It is critical for entertainment companies to find new ways to find and engage these generations.

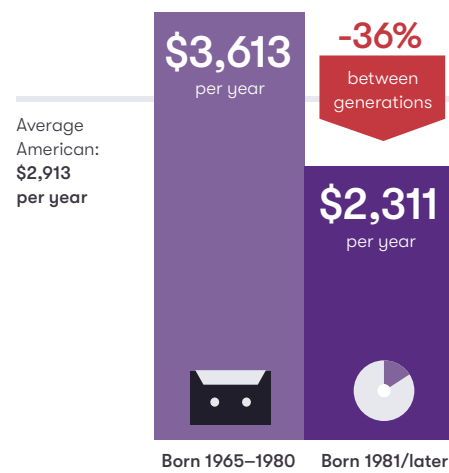
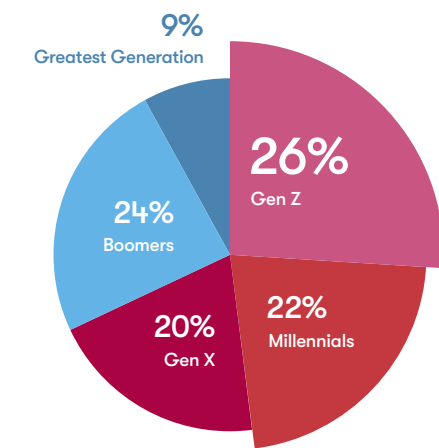


Table 2600. Generation of Reference Person: Annual Expenditure Means, Shares, Standard Errors, and Coefficients of Variation, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2016. Consumer Expenditure Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Aug 2017. [www.bls.gov/ceex/2016/combined/gener.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/ceex/2016/combined/gener.pdf).

### Composition of US TV home audiences

Generation Z accounts for 26% of TV audiences in the US.



The Nielsen Total Audience Report: Q1 2017. THE NIELSEN TOTAL AUDIENCE REPORT, Nielsen, 2017. [nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2017/the-nielsen-total-audience-report-q1-2017.html](http://nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2017/the-nielsen-total-audience-report-q1-2017.html).

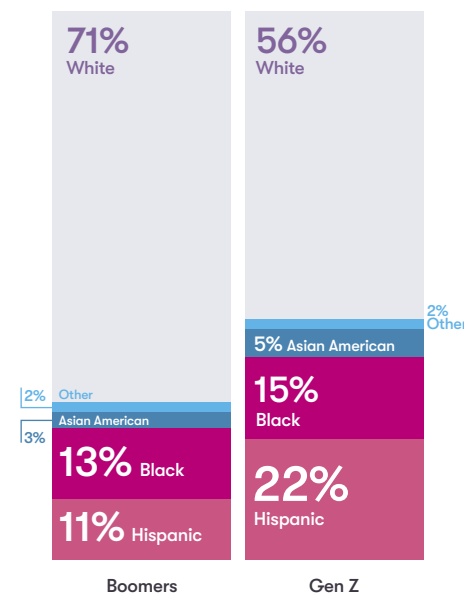
Millennials and Gen Zers are quickly cutting their cords and interacting with content on their cell phones in ways that are radically different than the generations before them. At the same time, these younger audiences are seeking to align their spending with their values. In a 2017 report, Cone Communications found that 94% of Gen Zers believe companies should be addressing social and environmental issues. A further 89% indicated they would rather buy from a company supporting social and environmental issues over one that does not. Like never before, consumers are demanding the companies they engage with make a positive difference in the world, and they are even willing to pay a premium for it.

The corresponding scramble to meet these new demands has thrown the industry into an entirely new era of competition, often blurring or upending the boundaries that once separated entertainment and technology. Because of its flexibility and the fact that it sparks increased audience engagement — both on and offline — SIE is a perfect fit for this new paradigm.

But, despite the critical acclaim of “cause films” during awards season — arguably at least 5 out of the last 10

### US TV home audiences by race and ethnicity

The composition of TV audiences by race and ethnicity is changing, with Generation Z the most diverse.



Oscar® winners for Best Picture were works of SIE — much of Hollywood has been slow to recognize these shifting tides and the rise of this “conscious consumer.” As a result, the industry has lost out on many SIE opportunities.

All of this goes to show that Hollywood no longer needs to be wary of issue-driven content. When properly executed, SIE can provide greater access to highly activated and hard-to-reach audiences. And, when we begin to factor in the other massive demographic shift of our time — that populations are, year by year, increasingly diverse — another key aspect of SIE comes into focus: its ability to connect to previously underserved and underrepresented audiences.

According to the most recent UCLA *Hollywood Diversity Report*, in 2016, diverse audiences bought 54% of the tickets for *Captain America: Civil War*, the highest-grossing film of the year, and the majority of tickets for five of the other top ten highest-grossing films in that same year. More recently, hits such as *Crazy Rich Asians* and *Black Panther* have revealed it's possible, and indeed lucrative, to cater to historically underserved audiences while still holding mass-market appeal.

Diversity sells, and ignoring such stories and audiences is no longer a viable option. Hollywood is leaving money on the table by not delivering content to these demographics — just look at the success of series like *Empire*, *Atlanta*, *Black-ish*, and *Fresh Off the Boat*, or theatrical juggernauts like *Hamilton*.

Despite how progressive the entertainment industry may feel as a whole, in some ways it has fallen behind. Changes in consumption models and shifting demographics mean that it's more important than ever for your content to cut through the clutter in order to connect with audiences. This is where SIE can give you a competitive advantage. On the other side of the equation, it can be a real liability if your consumers don't feel you are doing enough — or worse, that you are doing it wrong.

### How stories change the brain

Stories that are personal and emotionally compelling engage more of the brain, and thus are better remembered, than simply stating a set of facts.

There are two key aspects to an effective story. First, it must capture and hold our attention. The second thing an effective story does is “transport” us into the characters' world.



Zak, Paul J. “How Stories Change the Brain.” Greater Good, 17 Dec. 2013. [greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_stories\\_change\\_brain](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_stories_change_brain).

### Building a core competency

Many consumers today are familiar with the term “greenwashing” — the deceptive marketing some companies undertake to suggest they are environmentally responsible, without actually doing the hard work to make their businesses and our planet more sustainable.

By contrast, other companies are embracing transparency and tackling the challenges of sustainability head-on, earning the business and loyalty of environmentally conscious customers.

One could make a similar argument for what we might term “screenwashing” in our space — the superficial appearance of an ethical commitment to the greater good, without really integrating the ethos of SIE into your content or organization. Ultimately, such entertainment just leaves audiences cynical and hungry for better content, ripe for the picking by more genuine SIE practitioners.

Entertainment leaders who truly invest in developing SIE as a core competency will continue to build more competitive brands that capture audiences' loyalties and, as a result, their dollars. This will create more enduring, less transactional consumer relationships that in turn effect positive change in the world.

Building SIE as a core competency though takes not only a real commitment, but also a new understanding of this space. For years, studios and production companies have financially supported corporate social responsibility (CSR) via third-party initiatives. However, as we have seen recently through many of the statistics referenced above, it can be hugely profitable, not to mention impactful, to reflect CSR values in your core products — i.e. on screen. CSR and SIE can be closely related and often overlap, but under this new model, your efforts can not only enhance the perception of your brand, but also directly profit your organization.

Despite these efforts — and in line with a greater understanding of our world today — our industry has struggled to match ideals with actions, as the #MeToo, #OscarsSoWhite and TIME'S UP movements have revealed. This has become a critical conversation in Hollywood helping to support the much-needed changes around diversity and inclusion as well.

### Generation Z:

Today's audiences are **conscious consumers**, for whom social impact is an important consideration.

**94%**

believe companies should help address social and environmental issues

**89%**

would rather buy from a company supporting social and environmental issues over one that does not, but just 65% pay attention to company's CSR efforts when deciding what to buy

**81%**

believe they can have an impact on social or environmental issues by using social media



“2017 Cone Gen Z CSR Study: How to Speak Z.” Cone Communications, [cone.com/research-blog/2017-genz-csr-study](http://cone.com/research-blog/2017-genz-csr-study).

Exactly how these changes will be implemented, take shape and hopefully blossom is yet to be seen. However, there are those whose work now offers practical steps the industry can take in order to build systemic change. We've spoken to key practitioners in this space, including Dr. Ana-Christina Ramón and Dr. Darnell Hunt — co-authors of the *Hollywood Diversity Report* — and Cathy Schulman, President and CEO of Welle Entertainment, about the ways in which the industry can and should tackle these issues.

Closing the gap between rhetoric and reality will take time, money, creativity and most of all determined leadership. Consistently generating effective SIE on a global scale will be very challenging, yet no less vital to our industry's future as it is to that of our world. ▶

**SIE Key Takeaways**

**SIE comes in many forms.** From digital short form to feature films, television series, plays and virtual reality, the increasing diversity of mediums allows content creators to define their impact first, and then identify the best channels through which to communicate their message. The most impactful SIE is not bound to a particular form — it uses the right tools to raise awareness, to drive engagement and to inspire action.

**If you want to make an impact, start with a great story.** Good intentions alone aren't enough in the entertainment industry, so creators need to trigger people's deepest emotions if they hope to move them into action. Dramas should captivate, comedies should make people cry from laughing, and documentaries should challenge, inspire and inform viewers. Great SIE can sometimes do all of these things.



**When you can make audiences empathize with something they initially felt wasn't relatable, that's the first step toward change.**

— Don Cheadle (p. 25)

**Effective SIE requires building strong partnerships.** It's imperative to collaborate with the key people and organizations working on your issue. These partners are often present long before you arrive and will remain long after you leave. They can therefore offer critical knowledge around which to build your work, plus

access to other engaged shareholders and stakeholders working in the same space. By leveraging partnerships — and any resulting networks — you can achieve a multichannel approach to development and distribution, which is vital to creating impact.

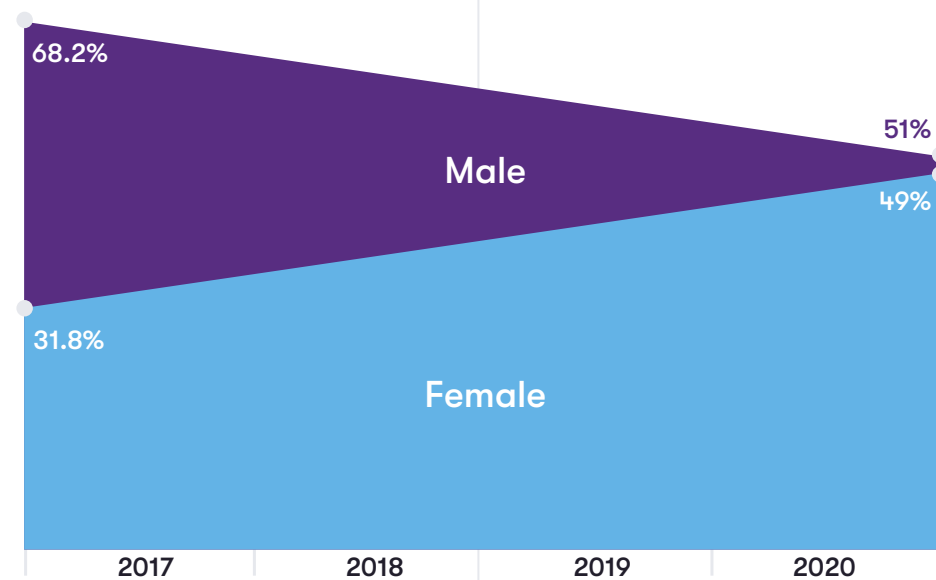
**Outcomes matter.** If we want the field of SIE to grow, we have to learn from our mistakes as well as our achievements. Identifying the right measures of success is essential if you want to understand your impact, replicate it, and increase it in the future. As most businesses discover sooner or later, it's hard to improve what you don't measure.

**Embracing diversity on and off screen is key.** In this highly fractured, ever-changing entertainment landscape, it is no longer just the big three networks clamoring to provide content to the lowest common denominator. It's now more important than ever before to

**Diversity in Hollywood**

According to Dr. Stacy Smith, Founder and Director of the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative at USC, "A typical feature depicts roughly 45 characters. Most of them aren't leads or even secondary roles, but rather tertiary characters speaking one or more words. Gender stereotyping in these small parts (police, doctors, lawyers) may be why we see consistent imbalance onscreen."

According to the USC Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, "if screenwriters simply added five female speaking characters to each film in the top 100 each year, we could reach gender parity in four years."



Smith, Stacy L. "Hey, Hollywood: It's Time to Adopt the NFL's Rooney Rule — for Women (Guest Women)." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 15 Dec. 2014. [hollywoodreporter.com/news/hey-hollywood-time-adopt-nfls-754659](http://hollywoodreporter.com/news/hey-hollywood-time-adopt-nfls-754659).

Smith, S., et al. *Inequality in 1,100 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT & Disability from 2007 to 2017*. USC Annenberg, 2018. [assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inequality-in-1100-popular-films.pdf](https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inequality-in-1100-popular-films.pdf).

**CAA diversity study 2017**

CAA's definition of a "truly diverse" film is a film with a cast that is at least 30% non-white. On average, these films outperform releases that are not "truly diverse" at the box office on opening weekends.

A film with a non-diverse cast:



A film with a "truly diverse" cast:



Anderson, Tre'vell. "New CAA Study Says Diverse Casting Increases Box Office Potential Across All Budgets." *LA Times*, 21 June 2017. [www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/latest-mn-caa-diversity-study-exclusive-20170622-story.html](http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/latest-mn-caa-diversity-study-exclusive-20170622-story.html).

Pieper, Katherine. "Solutions." *USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism*, 15 Nov. 2017. [annenberg.usc.edu/research/aii/research/solutions](http://annenberg.usc.edu/research/aii/research/solutions).

**UCLA's Hollywood Diversity Report 2018**

Films with casts that were from 21% to 30% minority enjoyed the highest median global box office receipts and the highest median return on investment, while films with the most racially and ethnically homogenous casts were the poorest performers.



Hunt, Darnell et al. *Hollywood Diversity Report 2018: Five Years of Progress and Missed Opportunities*. UCLA College of Social Sciences, 2018. [socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2018-2-27-18.pdf](https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2018-2-27-18.pdf).

break through to underserved talent seeking new opportunities and overlooked audiences who are hungry for content that's tailored to them.

**SIE is not a fad — it's the future.** Research reveals that young audiences increasingly prefer companies, products, services and brands that make a positive impact in the world. The idea of a triple bottom line — evaluating your company's performance from a social, environmental and financial perspective — matters in the entertainment industry too, especially at a time when delivery platforms and loyalties are in flux like never before. For companies to sustain their influence among consumers and talent alike, they must take a holistic view of what they create and what they can offer.

**Looking ahead**

I was seven years old when the movie *Star Wars* came out, and I made my parents take me so many times —

16, in total — that they just started dropping me and my older brother off at the theater and having us walk home. Week after week, I just couldn't get enough of Luke, "the hero's journey," and how he managed to save the galaxy.

I became so captivated by movies in general. I felt they offered me the most meaningful opportunity to make a difference in this world. Even if I never had the chance to save an entire galaxy, at least I could help tell stories that made the world a better place. And at its simplest, this remains the central opportunity of SIE.

In an era of unprecedented global challenges, our industry has an urgent responsibility to make a significant, more catalytic impact on the real world. Together, we must all rise to the challenge. May your best work, and our greatest impact, lie ahead. ■

**The Hero's Journey**

The hero's journey — the archetypal story pattern described by mythologist Joseph Campbell.



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# Narrative Film







# Out



# and About

*Milk* grossed \$55 million worldwide and won two Academy Awards®. **Dustin Lance Black** and **Gus Van Sant** discuss the importance of telling such an inspiring story.

## Dustin Lance Black

Academy Award®-winning filmmaker, writer, and social activist



Notable works:  
*Milk*, *8*, *When We Rise*

I'm not a morning person. To get out of bed, I need a great deal of coffee and the knowledge that what I'm doing is making a difference in the world.

It's fairly obvious where this drive comes from. I was raised by a paralyzed single mother and grew up in a Mormon home in Texas, knowing from the age of six that I was gay. People treated my mother poorly because she was different, and I knew that if anybody found out I was gay I'd be treated badly too. I came to realize that this prejudice often stemmed from misconceptions and a lack of understanding about people of diversity.

Being a Southern boy in a religious home was a gift though, because I grew up surrounded by some of the greatest storytellers on the planet: drunk Southerners and devout

## Gus Van Sant

Director, screenwriter, painter, photographer, musician, and author



Notable works:  
*Milk*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *Good Will Hunting*

When I look back at the films I've made, one clear commonality is that I am always in the process of learning something new about my characters.

Whenever I discover something impactful about them, I try to represent that somehow on the screen. I want the things that I am learning to be at the center of the drama; as I find new details that seem important, that becomes what the movie is.

In the case of *Milk*, we were dealing with

Christians. This enabled me, from a very young age, to understand the power of story to change people's hearts and minds.

Today, whenever I write, I do so in an effort to dispel those misconceptions. I try to give people a window into things they never knew about, through stories that move and entertain them. This is the cause that propels my work, because our differences are what make each of us special. If there's one thing my experience has shown me, it's that every single person on this planet is a minority in one way or another. There's a whole world of stories waiting to be told.



**You might be greeted with enthusiasm when pitching SIE stories, but sadly not when you need the greenlight.**

However, most social impact stories don't have enough capes, superpowers or fangs, so they aren't obvious moneymakers. You might be greeted with enthusiasm when pitching them, but sadly not when you need the greenlight. ▶

someone whose life was a watershed moment in lesbian and gay history. Within Harvey Milk's story there exists so many of our own LGBTQ stories. There are echoes of us in all those members of San Francisco's LGBTQ population who took charge of their lives and insisted on equality — people who were a major source of inspiration for me. Harvey asked that gay people living out of the closet run for office themselves, rather than simply waiting for representation by straight politicians. When he did that, he started something that began small and grew bigger and increasingly significant over time.

I think that when you're starting out in this space, it's vital to not overlook your own viewpoint. Catalyzing social change is a broad and intense arena, and it is also an end result, not just a general objective. If there's one part of society that you feel you need to change, then you may have a great job to do — but I would advise that you look deep within yourself and really think about what you want to say. It can be elusive, and you may find that it lies in an unexpected place. ■

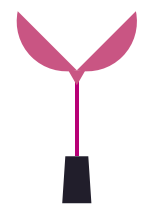


**Milk**  
In 1977, Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, becoming the first openly gay man to be voted into major public office in America — the film charts the last eight years of Milk's life.



**M**  
In 2008, a bill to recognize Harvey Milk Day was vetoed by the Governor of California. In 2009, after the film's release, May 22nd — Milk's birthday — was formally recognized in California as Harvey Milk Day. In August 2009, he was also posthumously honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Barack Obama.

"Harvey Milk." History, A&E Television Networks, LLC, [www.history.com/topics/harvey-milk](http://www.history.com/topics/harvey-milk).



**M**  
In 2009, Black was awarded the Paul Selvin Award from the WGA. The award is "presented to that member whose script best embodies the spirit of the constitutional and civil rights and liberties which are indispensable to the survival of free writers everywhere and to those whose defense Paul Selvin committed his professional life."

"The Paul Selvin Award." The Writers Guild Awards, Writers Guild of America West, [awards.wga.org/wga-awards/previous-paul-selvin](http://awards.wga.org/wga-awards/previous-paul-selvin).



As a result, you have to build a package that is attractive to studio executives in order to “show them the money” — but in this case, the money is usually your cast list. The good news is that actors flock to socially conscious work. These stories have substance and the kinds of characters that many actors dream of playing.



**I’d wanted to tell the story of Harvey Milk since I first heard it as a teenager, because it depicts a successful strategy for how LGBT people can win in politics.**

That’s how I attracted the team I worked with on *Milk*. The whole project is a tale of frustration

reaching a boiling point, one where as a creative I had to act, even though every single person in the business was saying, “Don’t you dare!”

I’d wanted to tell the story of Harvey Milk since I first heard it as a teenager, because it depicts a successful strategy for how LGBT people can win in politics. Warner Bros. had the option on a book about him but had failed to make a movie for decades. I tried to get the job making their version of that book, but they told me they wanted a writer with an Academy Award®.

So I went ahead and decided to do it myself, and went to war with Warner Bros. using a Capital One credit card to finance the feature. Through an amazing set of circumstances, I teamed up with Gus Van Sant and for the lead role we landed Sean Penn, who was the natural fit creatively. After the story of my battle with Warner Bros. leaked in *Variety*, *American Beauty* producers Dan Jinks and Bruce Cohen called to congratulate me, and I managed to convince them to come on board the project.

**Milk box office**

**\$54M+**  
Worldwide gross

**Domestic total gross:**  
\$31,841,299

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$22,745,285

**Limited opening weekend:**  
\$1,453,844

**Wide opening weekend:**  
\$1,481,155

**Widest release:**  
882 theaters

**In release:**  
142 days/20 weeks

“Milk.” Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=milk.htm.

*Milk* went on to gross \$55 million worldwide and was nominated for eight Academy Awards®, winning two. The process of making this project illustrates how you’ve got to have a thick skin in this business to survive people actively trying to talk you out of what you so strongly believe you should be doing.



**Sometimes when you show some guts, you earn respect.**

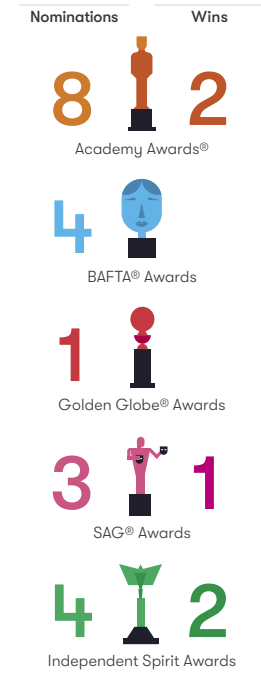
I even lost my agent over it. He (probably wisely) told me it was a bad idea to make an enemy of one of the major studios. In the end he was wrong though, because the next movie I made was with Warner Bros. Sometimes when you show some guts, you earn respect.

This is why I think it’s important for any writer to try to become a writer-producer. No one will love your story as much as you do, no one will feel it in their bones the way you feel it, and no one will be able to fight for it and defend why it should exist as much as you will.

I often ask my screenwriting students, “Why you? Why are you telling this story? Why are you the only person who should be telling this story?” They have to be able to answer these questions because it’s not just about having a personal understanding of the story. They have to be so confident in their idea that they can survive all the “no’s.” If a story lives deep inside of them, there’s a much better chance they will.

The things that make you different are the things that make you special, and as a writer, that makes you marketable. Audiences want to see and learn something new and something different — and that lives inside each and every one of us. ■

**Milk awards**



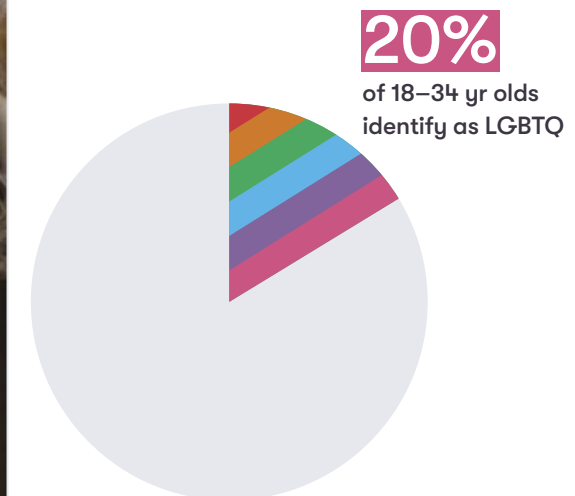
“Milk (2008): Awards.” IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt1013753/awards?ref\_=tt\_awd.

**2018 GLAAD Studio Responsibility Index**

GLAAD’s *Accelerating Acceptance* report shows that 20% of Americans aged 18–34 and 12% aged 35–51 identify as LGBTQ.

If Hollywood wants to remain relevant, they must create stories that are reflective of the world LGBTQ people know.

According to the MPAA’s most recent *THEME* report, in the US and Canada, people aged 18–39 made up 38% of the “frequent moviegoer” audience in 2017 — meaning they went to the cinema once a month or more.



Townsend, Megan et al. 2018 Studio Responsibility Index Report. GLAAD Media Institute, 2018.  
“2017 THEME Report.” Motion Picture Association of America, MPAA, www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MPAA-THEME-Report-2017\_Final.pdf.

**LGBT moviegoers are more likely to watch their favorite movies again and again.**



**22%**  
more likely to see a new theatrical release more than once.

**9%**  
more likely to buy the DVD, Blu-ray, or digital download of a film they saw in theaters.

“Lights, Camera, Action! State of the LGBT Moviegoer.” Nielsen, The Nielsen Company, 13 Jan. 2014, www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2014/lights-camera-action-state-of-the-lgbt-moviegoer.html.



© Focus Features and other respective production studios and distributors



# The Reality of Fiction

Narrative filmmaking offers a powerful way to depict real events. **Tom McCarthy** explains the opportunities and responsibilities of telling true stories.

© Participant Media and other respective production studios and distributors



## Tom McCarthy

Academy Award®-winning writer, director, actor, and producer



Notable works:  
*Spotlight*, *The Visitor*, *The Station Agent*

As a filmmaker, first and foremost, my job is storytelling.

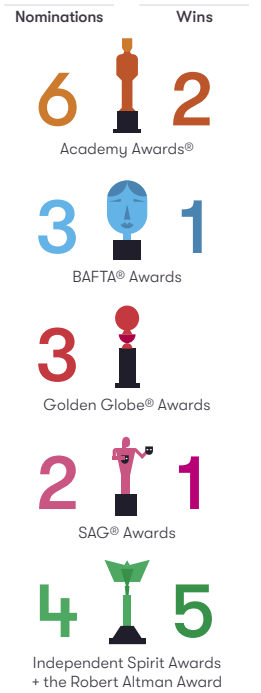
For a film to have an impact, it has to play well as a movie. It has to grab people's interest. Whenever I take on a new topic, my first job is to find a story that will engage people. If they're not engaged, then the film ceases to do its work as a tool for social impact.

With *Spotlight* — a film that explores sexual abuse, institutional abuse, and journalistic practices —

we knew we had a powerful subject with many layers to it. We were also dealing with a story that a lot of people thought they knew, but few did: even *The Boston Globe* reporters who led the investigation had no idea of the scale of events or how many children had suffered at the hands of priests. I realized that, as an Irish Catholic who had lived in Boston, so much of the story was new even to me. So the challenge was to create a film that authentically transported the audience to that time before they were aware of the scope and severity of these crimes, in order to take them on a voyage of discovery.

One of the ways to do this was to ensure that the film was as accurate as possible, so we interviewed *The Globe* reporters about every little detail of the investigation. Sometimes we put it in their words, sometimes our words, but we would always go back to them to make sure we were staying true to the spirit of the story. Those reporters and editors read every draft of the script we gave them. We knew we would be held up to a lot of scrutiny because of the subject matter, so we had to get the facts right. ▶

### Spotlight awards



\*Spotlight (2015): Awards, IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt1895587/awards](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1895587/awards).



### Spotlight reaches the Vatican

In early 2016, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on a Vatican commission meeting on clerical sexual abuse, established by Pope Francis in 2014. Members of the commission attended a private screening of *Spotlight*.

Spotlight's campaign website includes contact information for the National Sexual Assault Hotline, Survivors Network for Those Abused by Priests (SNAP), and the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline, as well as links to free guides and toolkits from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center for survivors, parents of survivors, and the communities and congregations affected by sexual abuse.

\*Spotlight | Survivor Resources | TakePart. TakePart, Participant Media, [www.takepart.com/spotlight/survivor-resources/index.html](http://www.takepart.com/spotlight/survivor-resources/index.html).



When you make a movie, you eventually reach a point where the studio starts thinking about how to promote it. And, ultimately, nothing helps spread the word more than having a good movie! Good movies have a way of pushing themselves out of the box and becoming must-see events. I was fortunate in working with a company like Participant Media, which has a social impact team step in to direct that conversation, allowing me as a director to focus on the story. That can be very powerful. Most studios are not set up to do this, and that's what makes Participant Media so unique. I try to give them the best film possible, then they can work toward finding the right partners and platforms to impact the issues we've highlighted.



**If they're not engaged, then the film ceases to do its work as a tool for social impact.**

*The Visitor*, an earlier film of mine, was entirely fictional but also had real-world concerns.

It is a story about a lonely middle-aged man whose life changes after an encounter with a young immigrant couple in New York. This came about after a few trips I took to the Middle East. I was very affected by the people and way of life there, and it struck me that we were going to war in that part of the world, yet most Americans didn't understand the cultures of the region.



*The Visitor* was used in a social action campaign by Amnesty International, inspiring audiences to learn about the US immigration detention system. Schools, healthcare providers, attorneys, legislators and social workers were all encouraged to use the film as a tool to raise awareness around the issues.

— "The Visitor Discussion Guide." Amnesty International, 2009, [www.amnestyusa.org/files/pdfs/irtoolkit\\_visitor\\_discussion\\_guide\\_10\\_13\\_09\\_itr.pdf](http://www.amnestyusa.org/files/pdfs/irtoolkit_visitor_discussion_guide_10_13_09_itr.pdf).



When I got back to New York, I spent a lot of time in the Arab community, and the film's characters started to take shape. At the time, people weren't really talking about immigration, but that was when I started hearing about detention centers. I got an opportunity to visit one and I knew immediately I had to take on this story.



**Spotlight box office**

**\$98M+**  
Worldwide gross

**Domestic total gross:**  
\$45,055,776

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$53,219,462

**Limited opening weekend:**  
\$295,009

**Wide opening weekend:**  
\$4,408,252

**Widest release:**  
1,227 theaters

**In release:**  
182 days/26 weeks

— "Spotlight." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=spotlight.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=spotlight.htm).

Spotlight, 2015



© Participant Media and other respective production studios and distributors

© Participant Media and other respective production studios and distributors



The Visitor, 2007

These detention centers were warehouses of human beings lost in a legal and cultural purgatory. *The Visitor* was able to shine a light on this and force viewers to confront how they felt about it. I tried to humanize the subject and make the story personal. In conjunction with the release of the film, the American Civil Liberties Union and Participant developed a social impact campaign that focused on the film's themes of illegal detention, treatment of immigrants, and the legal challenges that immigrants face. They also created a website to promote the use of the film for educational purposes and within community

programs. In addition, over one thousand lawyers were recruited and trained using the film and other materials on issues surrounding deportation.

While the experiences of making each of these films were different, the takeaways were similar. It's about connection. It's about empathy. It's about understanding. Unless you can hook people, you're not going to have the impact that we all so often seek. Ultimately, it's about the story; if the story is good, it raises questions and starts a conversation that lives on past the film itself. If we can do that, we've done our job. ■



**The Boston Globe daily readers**

Spotlight's theatrical run was November 2015–May 2016.

Fall 2015

**17,900 readers**



— "Scarborough USA+ 2016 Release 1 (Reissue 09-01-2016)." Nielsen Scarborough, Sept. 2017, Statista, [www.statista.com/statistics/229709/readers-of-the-boston-globe-hr-daily-edition/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/229709/readers-of-the-boston-globe-hr-daily-edition/).

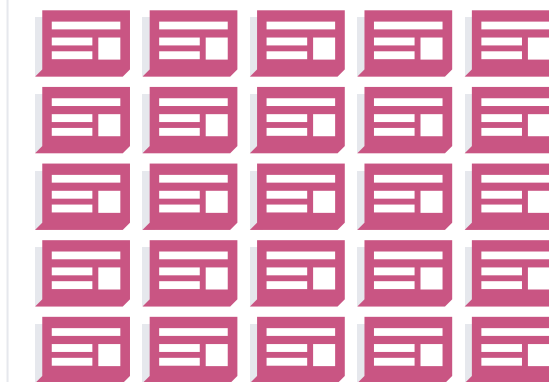


**53%**

of *The Boston Globe's* subscribers were Catholic at the time of the investigation's beginnings in 2001–2002.

Spring 2016

**25,040 readers**



— Larson, Sarah. "'Spotlight' and Its Revelations." *The New Yorker*, Condé Nast, 8 Dec. 2015, [www.newyorker.com/culture/sarah-larson/spotlight-and-its-revelations](http://www.newyorker.com/culture/sarah-larson/spotlight-and-its-revelations).



**The Visitor**

Walter Vale, a lonely college professor, travels to New York City to attend a conference and finds a young immigrant couple living in his apartment. Vale's encounter with the couple forces him to deal with issues of identity, immigration, and cross-cultural communication.



**The Visitor box office**

**\$18M+**  
Worldwide gross

**Domestic total gross:**  
\$9,427,089

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$8,651,086

**Opening weekend:**  
\$86,488

**Widest release:**  
270 theaters

**In release:**  
182 days/26 weeks

— "The Visitor." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=visitor08.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=visitor08.htm).



1000+ lawyers were recruited and trained using *The Visitor* and other materials on issues surrounding deportation.

The filmmakers teamed up with Active Voice to launch a campaign using the film to educate audiences about local policy issues, enlist them to visit nearby detention centers, and get their help on advocacy efforts.

Participant and Active Voice partnered with O'Melveny & Meyers to train attorneys to represent detainees at bond hearings.

— "The Visitor Social Action Campaign: Case Study." Active Voice, 2010, [www.activevoice.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/The-Visitor-Case-Study-low-res.pdf](http://www.activevoice.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/The-Visitor-Case-Study-low-res.pdf).

Narrative Film





© United Artists and other respective production studios and distributors

Hotel Rwanda, 2004

# The Power Within

Terry George and Don Cheadle discuss chronicling the stories of our real-life superheroes — ordinary people who transform society with acts of courage and bravery.

## Don Cheadle

Academy Award®-nominated actor, film producer, director, and writer



Notable works:  
*Hotel Rwanda, Avengers: Infinity War, Ocean's Eleven*

*Hotel Rwanda* marked the beginning of the intersection of my filmmaking and social impact work.

After the success of the film, I was invited to join a congressional delegation to Sudan along with John Prendergast of the Enough Project and Paul Rusesabagina himself. I was quickly pulled into the current of work happening around trying to prevent the atrocities being committed in Darfur. These experiences led to the founding of Not On Our Watch — a humanitarian organization dedicated to raising awareness around international crises.

After *Hotel Rwanda* I was offered a lot of socially conscious roles and was asked to be a spokesperson for different causes. I felt privileged to help “turn the camera” toward issues and the amazing people dedicated to tackling them.

These people are doing the tough work on the ground, and movies can contextualize the problems they’re attempting to solve. They can help audiences understand what an issue is, what it looks like, and in some instances move them to take action.

With *Hotel Rwanda* we always knew we didn’t want to make a “genocide movie.” We wanted to make a movie about people. We wanted to humanize the issue, because when you can make audiences empathize with something that they initially felt isn’t relatable, that’s the first step toward change. After that, you have to follow up with something actionable — something they can do to make a difference — otherwise it’s a missed opportunity.

There’s a lot of emphasis right now on big-budget tentpole superhero movies. They’re a lot of fun. I’m even in some of them (those are especially fun). But smaller films — like *Get Out*, *Sorry to Bother You*, even *The Florida Project* — are demonstrating the increasing value of exploring the intersection between entertainment and social impact. This value is reflected tenfold when large studio films have those same considerations; just look at the success of *Black Panther*. I think studios need to recognize that there’s a big market out there for these kinds of stories. It’s my hope that they start to put some real muscle behind them, not only because the issues need that kind of exposure, but also because the audiences are out there, ready and waiting! ■

## Terry George

Writer and director



Notable works:  
*Hotel Rwanda, In the Name of the Father, The Promise*

Today, a big percentage of audiences go to the cinema to empathize with heroes and, for many kids especially, superheroes.

In my work, I deal in real-life superheroes. My superheroes are ordinary people who transform society in ways that we can all believe in and identify with — people, sometimes very flawed or damaged, who end up doing something extraordinary.

Because of my background, I tend to lean towards political and humanitarian stories. I grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during “The Troubles” in the late 60s and 70s. It was a time of political maelstrom in the world, so my personal experience, my community’s experience, and my worldview set the agenda for my particular interests. This became the basis for the first three films I made with Jim Sheridan: *In the Name of the Father*, *Some Mother’s Son* and *The Boxer*. My background, along with my spell as a freelance journalist in New York, gave me a set of tools that I then applied to making these kinds of stories.

I have always preferred nonfiction or fiction set in real-world events. Those were the films that most appealed to me. Feature films allow you to explore in a different way the inner thoughts of the main characters and the impact of political and humanitarian events upon them. You can distill, crystallize, and present the emotions and actions of the characters in a very intimate way that documentary often does not allow. ►

Hotel Rwanda box office

**\$33M+**  
Worldwide gross

Domestic total gross:  
\$23,530,892

Foreign total gross:  
\$10,351,351

Limited opening weekend:  
\$100,091

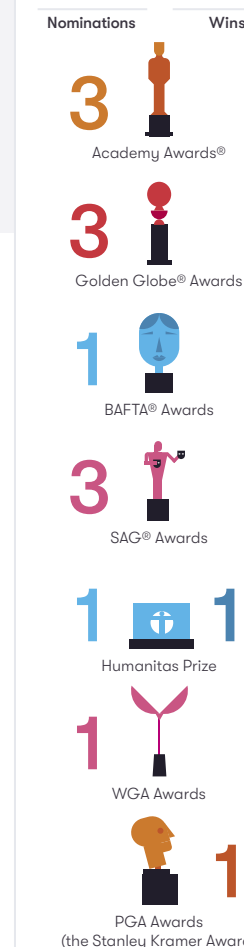
Wide opening weekend:  
\$2,316,416

Widest release:  
824 theaters

In release:  
128 days/18 weeks

“Hotel Rwanda.” Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc. boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=hotel-rwanda.htm.

Hotel Rwanda awards



“Hotel Rwanda (2004): Awards.” IMDb, 2019. www.imdb.com/title/tt0395169/awards?ref\_=tt\_owd.





The *Promise* was produced by Survival Pictures, whose main goal was to donate all proceeds from the theatrical run to nonprofits, including the Elton John AIDS Foundation and other human rights and humanitarian groups. The cast was informed of this plan before signing on for the movie, and Survival financially backed the marketing efforts along with the film's distributor, Open Road.

— Lee, Ashley, and Rebecca Ford. "The Promise: Can Armenian Genocide Drama Bring Charity Success?" *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14 Apr. 2017. [www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/promise-puts-armenian-genocide-onscreen-donates-profits-charity-993244](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/promise-puts-armenian-genocide-onscreen-donates-profits-charity-993244).



That intimacy is vital and one of the most important ways of conveying a story or issue. For example, there's no question that the Holocaust is viewed by many people through the experience of watching *Schindler's List*. The same goes for the Cambodian genocide and *The Killing Fields*. Being able to stimulate the emotions of an audience is such a powerful gift. A feature film takes people beyond an event and allows them to relate to ordinary people



The Promise, 2016



Many times we talked about the film — obviously the process of developing a film like this takes a long time, and with every passing month, I'd say to him, 'Are you sure you still want to do this? Because we could just donate the money to charity — that's what you've always done.' And he said, 'No. We can make the movie and donate to charity. We want to do both.'

— Eric Esraïlian on Kirk Kerkorian

who face extraordinary circumstances and become heroes — whether it's Oskar Schindler or Paul Rusesabagina in *Hotel Rwanda*.

To engage an audience like that is social activism in itself. We didn't expect *Hotel Rwanda* to play at more than a few festivals, given the film's bleak subject matter. Yet it caught the zeitgeist, earning almost \$34 million worldwide and picking up three Academy Award® nominations. It became a motivating factor for the campaign against genocide in Darfur — including the creation of Not On Our Watch, founded by Don Cheadle, George Clooney, and several other stars — and even played a key role in influencing policy at the White House, where it was watched twice by President Bush. Even though the film was set in a small country in the middle of Africa that most people knew nothing about, because it was a universal story it helped educate a great many people on the genocide.

To me, this was not only proof that the medium had the power to effect change, but that the universality of a story is what draws people in. I always look for "nobility" and what I call working-class heroes: the ordinary people with all their flaws who overcome their fears to find humanity and strength. This is the overall

© Survival Pictures and other respective production studios and distributors



The Promise, 2016



#### The Promise

When Michael — a brilliant medical student — meets Ana, their shared Armenian heritage sparks an attraction that explodes into a romantic rivalry between Michael and Ana's boyfriend Chris, a famous American photojournalist dedicated to exposing political truth. As the Ottoman Empire crumbles into war-torn chaos, their conflicting passions must be deferred while they join forces to get their people to safety and survive themselves.

— "The Promise: About." *The Promise*, [www.thepromise.movie/about](http://www.thepromise.movie/about).

theme that triggers me. The next is, how do you make something entertaining, how do you make people pay their hard-earned dollars to sit through a film for a couple of hours and come out with all their emotions stimulated, feeling empathy, anger, inspiration, sorrow, joy?



I meet people around the world who tell me that *Hotel Rwanda* was the first real education they had about Africa.

*The Promise* — a love story with fictional characters set during the real events of the Armenian genocide — was written in the blueprint of David Lean films, weaving a great triangular love story against the huge political events of the time. This film was a totally unique situation where every dollar of the proceeds — not profits — was donated to human rights and humanitarian nonprofit groups. This was

a condition of the film's funding by businessman Kirk Kerkorian and producer Eric Esraïlian, an incredible one that I would like to see replicated again and again.

Unfortunately, the marketplace has now overtaken the philosophy of filmmaking and studios are more devoted to box office numbers than ever before. I wish there were a lot more philanthropy and heart in our business. Social impact entertainment is so important — just look at the extraordinary impact and capacity to educate of the films I've mentioned.

I meet people around the world who tell me that *Hotel Rwanda* was the first real education they had about Africa. The Irish films we made have had a big impact on people's perception of what was taking place in Northern Ireland at the time. The Armenian diaspora around the world can point to *The Promise* and say, "Here's what happened to our people." To have it there as a record is a wonderful thing. So, maybe you're not going to live up to the bravery of Paul Rusesabagina, or Gerry Conlon in *In the Name of the Father*, but I present stories where that is a possibility. And just maybe, these stories will inspire people to try. ■



#### Hotel Rwanda

*Hotel Rwanda* is based on the true story of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager who housed over a thousand Tutsi refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia in Rwanda during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The film explores the themes of political corruption and violence associated with the genocide.



#### Hotel Rwanda and Amnesty

Bonnie Abauza, the Director of Artists for Amnesty, approached MGM/United Artists with a proposal: Amnesty would mobilize its membership to promote *Hotel Rwanda*. In turn, the film would help generate interest and contributions for Amnesty's fight for humanitarian relief and international action in Darfur, Sudan, where an ethnic cleansing campaign had caused tens of thousands of deaths and made more than 1.8 million people refugees.

— Steele-Saccio, Eva. "The Movie Is the Message." *Mother Jones*, Mother Jones and the Foundation for National Progress, 1 Mar. 2005. [www.motherjones.com/media/2005/03/movie-message/](http://www.motherjones.com/media/2005/03/movie-message/).



#### Hotel Rwanda premiere

At the Los Angeles premiere, sponsored by Amnesty, co-hosts Angelina Jolie and Harrison Ford called attention to the conflict in Darfur, reiterating the film's underlying message: "We didn't stop it 10 years ago, we have to stop it now."

**\$25K**

A single photo of the stars at the premiere that ran that week in *People* magazine ended up drawing hundreds of calls and donations. In all, the event brought in over \$25,000 for Amnesty's work in Darfur.

— Steele-Saccio, Eva. "The Movie Is the Message." *Mother Jones*, Mother Jones and the Foundation for National Progress, 1 Mar. 2005. [www.motherjones.com/media/2005/03/movie-message/](http://www.motherjones.com/media/2005/03/movie-message/).



Case Study

# The Day After Tomorrow

Roland Emmerich's blockbuster put climate change on the map, but did it change the beliefs and behaviors of moviegoers? Yes, and at scale, says **Anthony Leiserowitz**.



The Day After Tomorrow, 2004

RATING  
PG-13

DATE  
May 28th 2004

RUNNING TIME  
02:04

SYNOPSIS  
Paleoclimatologist Jack Hall must make a daring trek from Washington, D.C. to New York City, to reach his son, who is trapped in the crosshairs of a sudden international storm which plunges the planet into a new ice age.

STARRING  
Dennis Quaid,  
Jake Gyllenhaal,  
Emmy Rossum

DIRECTED BY  
Roland Emmerich

PRODUCED BY  
Roland Emmerich,  
Mark Gordon

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## Anthony Leiserowitz

Director of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and a Senior Research Scientist at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies



### The study

In 2004, soon after completing one of the first studies of American views on climate change, I started to see trailers for *The Day After Tomorrow* (TDAT). Immediately, I could see that it was going to be a Hollywood blockbuster that millions of Americans would watch, and it was going to describe climate change in a completely new way for the public.

At the time, a large part of the US population thought of climate change as a slow, incremental, linear process that might be a danger in the distant future. Recent climate science suggested this might not be the case; the climate system is highly sensitive and can reorganize abruptly, with consequences as potentially disastrous as the shutdown of the Gulf Stream. Interestingly, this premise was going to be envisioned in TDAT, so I immediately thought that this could be an amazing natural field experiment. I received support to conduct three national surveys: one, a week before the film's release, another three weeks after, and a third four months later to see if there were long-term effects. We wanted to see if the film would have an impact on people's beliefs, attitudes, policy preferences, and behaviors, and whether it would alter their perceptions of the risks of climate change.

We found that the people who saw TDAT were affected by it. Our results found that the film had a significant impact on the climate change beliefs, risk perceptions, policy priorities, behavioral intentions, and — by seemingly casting the

Bush administration in a negative light — even the voting intentions of moviegoers.

### The results

Our study made one thing clear: not only can narrative film have social impact, it can have social impact at scale. Period.

Even after controlling for demographic and political factors, people who saw the film became more convinced that climate change was real, became more worried about it, changed their conceptual model of how climate change actually works, became more supportive of climate policy, and became more willing to say that they at least intended to change their behaviors.

To cite a few results: 83% of moviegoers said they were concerned about global warming compared to 72% of non-watchers; more than 80% of moviegoers responded that global warming is likely to produce more intense weather events over the next 50 years, versus 72% of non-watchers; and perhaps most telling, moviegoers were more likely than non-watchers to believe that global warming could lead to a shutdown of the Gulf Stream current or a new ice age — two underlying premises of TDAT.

### The power of story

Let me underscore this, because I can't say it strongly enough: stories are one of the most powerful forms of communication that humans have invented. TDAT is, first and foremost, a story; stories provide us with an interpretation of reality and they are an incredibly powerful means to communicate ideas in an emotional way. Empathy and narrative transport helps people identify with characters, see through their eyes and share their experiences — and this is what makes stories such an effective tool for helping people to understand issues like climate change. Humans have always used narrative in this way, passing on essential, accumulated knowledge from one generation to the next, to aid with their very survival. ▶



### The Day After Tomorrow in the news

**151**

substantive news stories were generated about TDAT.\*

**39%** addressed the science underlying the movie.

**37%** focused on the politics.

**23%** were entertainment stories.

\*News coverage was analyzed from April 1st–June 30th 2004.

Leiserowitz, Anthony A. "Before and After The Day After Tomorrow: A U.S. Study of Climate Change Risk Perception." *Environment*, vol. 46, no. 9, Nov. 2004, pp. 22-37.

**10x**

the news coverage was generated by TDAT than the 2001 IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report.

—  
"The Long Melt: The Lingering Influence of 'The Day After Tomorrow.'" *Yale Climate Connections*, 5 Nov. 2014, [www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2014/11/the-long-melt-the-lingering-influence-of-the-day-after-tomorrow/](http://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2014/11/the-long-melt-the-lingering-influence-of-the-day-after-tomorrow/).



### The Day After Tomorrow box office

**\$544M+**  
Worldwide gross

Domestic total gross:  
**\$186,740,799**

Widest release:  
**3,444 theaters**

Foreign total gross:  
**\$357,531,603**

In release:  
**161 days/23 weeks**

Opening weekend:  
**\$68,743,584**

—  
"The Day After Tomorrow." *Box Office Mojo*, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=dayaftertomorrow.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=dayaftertomorrow.htm).



Furthermore, empathetic and vicarious experiences are one of the real opportunities of social impact entertainment. We love these experiences so much that we as filmgoers spent \$40.6 billion in 2017 to put ourselves in dark rooms with strangers to watch them unfold! These stories shape our lives, they shape how we think about the world, and they can shape our identities.

### The power of image

Perhaps more important than helping people experience the immediate threat of climate change was that *TDAT* provided people with images to actually imagine how climate change might impact us. For the first time, audiences had powerful, concrete images of the potential impact of climate change on American iconography. We weren't just listening to someone talk about rising sea levels, we saw a tidal wave sweep through Manhattan. We didn't just hear someone discuss extreme weather, we watched tornadoes rip apart LA.

One of the ideas underpinning our study was the cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST), which was largely developed by Seymour Epstein and then furthered by other academics. In simple terms, CEST found that humans have two systems for processing information: the analytic and the experiential. The analytic is slow, deliberate, and rational, while the experiential — which is much older in evolutionary terms — is fast, intuitive, and emotionally driven. For many years Western science regarded the two systems as opposites, but by the time I began to study *TDAT*, we'd started to understand that they're actually interwoven, informing each other.

It's this deep, psychological understanding of the brain that helps to explain why a film like *TDAT*, with its incredibly rich and provocative images, can be such a powerful communication tool.



**When a piece of entertainment speaks to the cultural and social dimensions of an issue it's possible to change social and cultural norms.**

### The teachable moment

Naturally, *TDAT* spurred a lot of viewers to seek out further information. Many organizations tried to leverage the film to advance the cause of tackling climate change, setting up websites to assist moviegoers who might have questions after seeing the film. Audiences *did* have questions, but most websites only launched on the day the film came out.

In a later study on what we called "the teachable moment," we showed that an event planned for a specific release date



© 20th Century Fox and other respective production studios and distributors

The Day After Tomorrow, 2004

(like a movie release) will generate increased information-seeking behavior before the event itself arrives. There is a specific period in the weeks prior to a film's release where this ramp-up of public attention is at its peak, and this teachable moment is a critical time for people or organizations to strike while the iron is hot, before attention is diverted elsewhere. Naturally, it follows that filmmakers and organizations seeking to create maximum impact should have their outreach strategy in place well before

the film's release. For *TDAT* in particular, we found that the teachable moment spanned from 10 days before the release date to 19 days after.

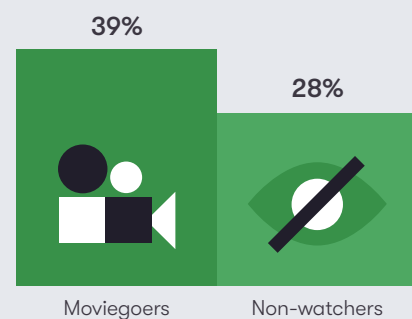
*TDAT* was among the first films of its kind. While one film alone may not be enough to change the opinion of the entire public, it can certainly drive change at scale and help initiate or accelerate a culture shift, one where the momentum is continued by other projects. The audiences for *TDAT* accounted for 10% of the US population, and as we've seen, it had a quantifiable impact on people's perceptions of climate change. However, it's arguable that the film could have had even greater impact if change organizations had launched their websites in advance of the film, making the most of this teachable moment. By extension, this study emphasizes the importance of taking the right approach with social impact campaigns, tailoring your conversation to specific goals where possible, and engaging audiences at the most opportune moments before, during, and after release.

When a piece of entertainment speaks to the cultural and social dimensions of an issue it's possible to change social and cultural norms — the unwritten rules of how people are supposed to behave — and thus effect big shifts in politics, policy, and society at large. That's one of the real powers of popular culture and media: it can engage people in social issues in a way that is often more powerful than all the data, statistics, and scientific reports combined. ■

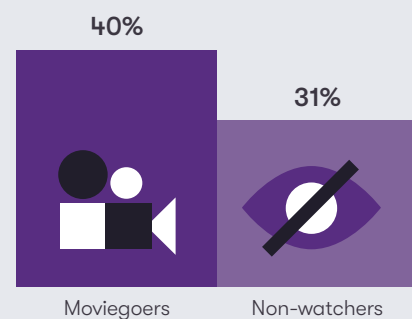


### Moviegoers vs. non-watchers

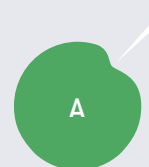
Out of five different, highly simplified models of the climate system (shown below), moviegoers were much more likely than non-watchers to choose model A — the most accurate depiction.



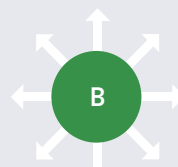
Worried about global warming: "a fair amount" or "a great deal."



### Five models of the climate system



Climate is stable within certain limits. Large change will have abrupt and catastrophic impacts.



Climate is random and unpredictable.



Climate is slow to change. Impacts will be gradual.



Climate shows a delicate balance. Small changes will have catastrophic impacts.



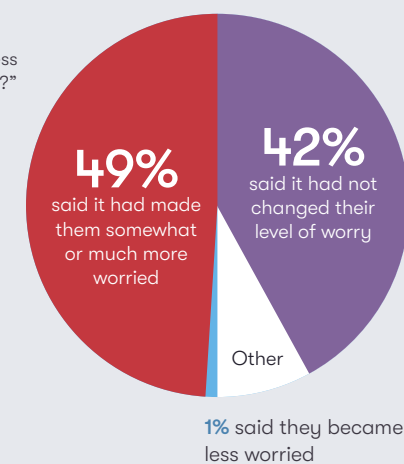
Climate is stable. Global warming will have little to no impact.

— Leiserowitz, Anthony A. "Before and After The Day After Tomorrow: A U.S. Study of Climate Change Risk Perception." *Environment*, vol. 46, no. 9, Nov. 2004, pp. 22-37.



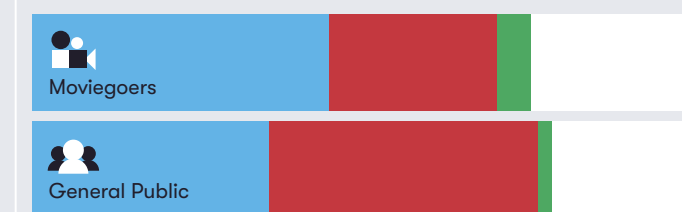
### Moviegoers were asked

"Did *TDAT* make you more, or less worried about global warming?"



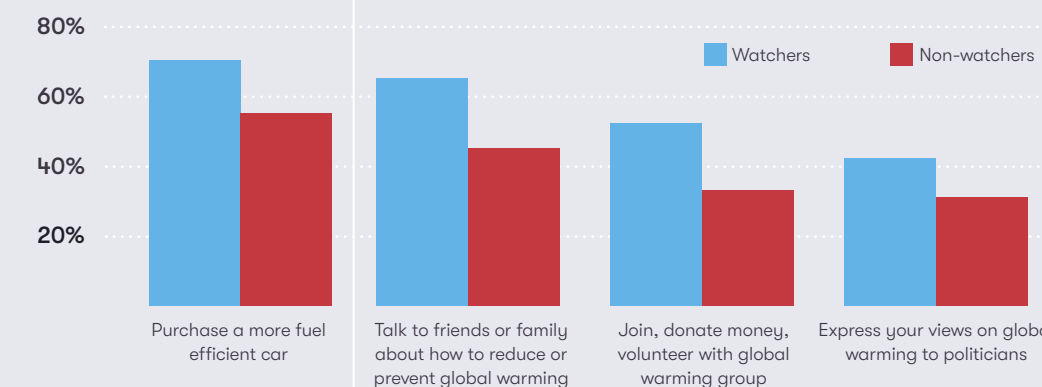
"If the 2004 presidential election were held today, who would you vote for?"

John Kerry (D) Ralph Nader (I)  
George Bush (R) Undecided



— Leiserowitz, Anthony A. "Before and After The Day After Tomorrow: A U.S. Study of Climate Change Risk Perception." *Environment*, vol. 46, no. 9, Nov. 2004, pp. 22-37.

"How likely are you to do the following because of your concerns about global warming?"



— Leiserowitz, Anthony A. "Before and After The Day After Tomorrow: A U.S. Study of Climate Change Risk Perception." *Environment*, vol. 46, no. 9, Nov. 2004, pp. 22-37.

Spotlight on:

# The Teachable Moment



Many environmental leaders and organizations described the release of *The Day After Tomorrow* (TDAT) as a “teachable moment” — an opportunity to use its themes and ideas as a springboard to educate the public about global warming, and perhaps even change policy.

Philip Solomon Hart and Anthony A. Leiserowitz’s paper *Finding the Teachable Moment...* explored how, if at all, the release of TDAT changed the information-seeking behavior of the public regarding “global-warming related websites.”

According to Hart and Leiserowitz, “In preparation for the ‘teachable moment,’ many environmental organizations created these websites based on the premise that TDAT and related media coverage would increase public information-seeking behavior.”

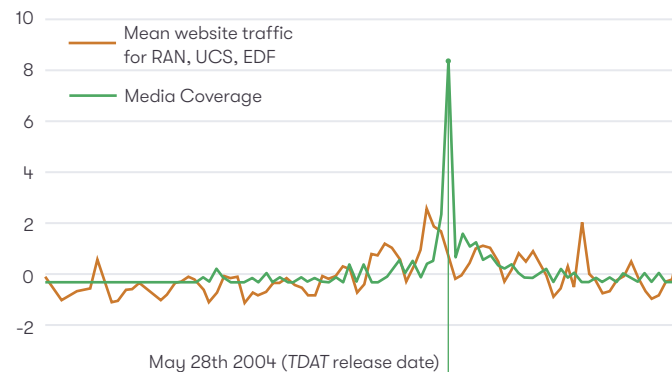
The team collected web-traffic data from six global-warming related websites from April 1st to June 30th 2004. The six were selected to represent a “variety of sources that provide information and/or advocate for specific policies to address climate change.” They included: a Johns Hopkins University website (EcoHealth); a website operated by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS); another operated by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF); a website operated by the Global Exchange, Rainforest Action Network, and the Ruckus Society (RAN); a website operated by National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC); and one operated by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI). ▶

Media coverage data of TDAT was gathered via a LexisNexis search between April 1st and June 30th 2004. The search was “limited to coverage from news sources, and included television, radio, prestige newspapers and major metropolitan newspapers.”

Of the websites studied, three (UCS, EDF, and RAN) were active throughout the duration of the study. The other three (EcoHealth, WHOI and NSIDC) launched on, or nearer to, the actual release date of TDAT (May 28th 2004).

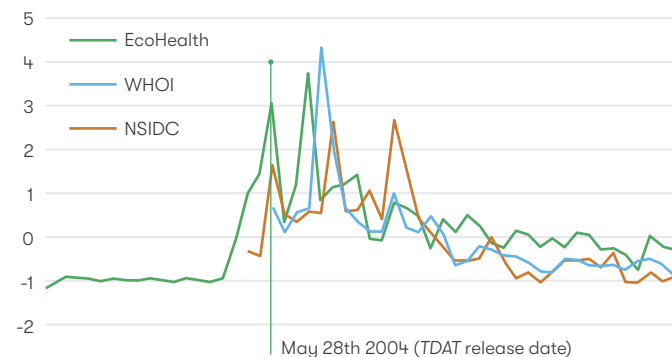
For the first three sites, there was a clear spike in web traffic between May 12th and June 11th (Figure 1), clearly supporting the team’s hypothesis that “web traffic on global warming related websites increased during the release period of *The Day After Tomorrow*.”

Figure 1. Media coverage of TDAT and mean website traffic for RAN, UCS, and EDF



The latter group comprising the three sites that launched closer to the release date of TDAT (EcoHealth, WHOI, NSIDC), showed similar results to the first group (Figure 2). However, the data also suggested that “by waiting until the movie release date to launch their respective *The Day After Tomorrow* websites, WHOI and NSIDC, in particular, missed the first week of heightened global warming related web activity that occurred during the ‘teachable moment’.”

Figure 2. Website traffic of EcoHealth, NSIDC, and WHOI



Hart and Leiserowitz’s study and findings show that, despite being a fictional representation of the dangers of climate change, TDAT created a teachable moment of heightened public concern and increased information-seeking behavior. More specifically, as Leiserowitz and Hart write, “a ‘teachable moment’ of elevated information-seeking activity was found to extend from 10 days before the release date of *The Day After Tomorrow* to 19 days after the movie release date.” ■



# Finding Our Purpose

Through purposeful storytelling, Participant Media wants to change the world. **David Linde** explains how to extend your impact beyond theaters, and why SIE is aligned with society's needs.



© Participant Media and respective production studio and distributors

## David Linde

Chief Executive Officer,  
Participant Media



Notable works:  
*Roma*, *Biutiful*, *Y Tu Mamá También*

Throughout my career, and prior to joining Participant Media in late 2015, I always gravitated toward telling original stories about extraordinary people doing courageous things — from *Roma* to *Brokeback Mountain* to *Arrival*.

So, when I became CEO of Participant, a company that was founded by Jeff Skoll with the belief in the purpose and power of its content to make the world a better place, it couldn't have been a more natural fit.

Since 2004, Participant Media has been producing social impact entertainment that inspires and entertains audiences while highlighting some of the most pressing issues of our time, and most importantly, giving those same audiences the means to take action. Our belief in the capacity of storytelling to spark and contribute to social change — instilled by Jeff — is baked into our DNA. It's what we do and it's what makes us unique, and what draws people to Participant, from our incredible team to the best-in-class impact and industry partners to some of the world's finest filmmakers working today, including Steven Spielberg, Ava DuVernay, Alfonso Cuarón, Tom McCarthy, Steve James, Laura Poitras and Joshua Oppenheimer.

Much of our award-winning content, like *Spotlight*,

*A Fantastic Woman*, *America To Me* and *The Post*, has chronicled the brave struggles of individuals fighting for the truth against tremendous odds. Other films, like *An Inconvenient Truth*, *RBG* and *Contagion*, tell stories that speak to the contemporary zeitgeist. With all of our content, we seek to have an impact that can be extended long after the credits roll. Participant content should wherever possible inspire audiences to want to act, and our social impact team empowers them to do so by providing tools and connecting them to the social impact campaigns, the changemakers, the NGOs, and our other impact partners already working on the relevant causes. To try and ensure this happens, we've adopted a three-part process, steeped in understanding the tremendous value in partnerships, for making social impact entertainment effective.



To even think about engaging audiences around an issue, we need to tell them a story that moves them.

For us, it always starts with the story. To even think about engaging audiences around an issue, we need to tell them a story that moves them. That's why we focus on partnering with great artists who understand these issues and who do see around the corner on the world's most pressing issues.

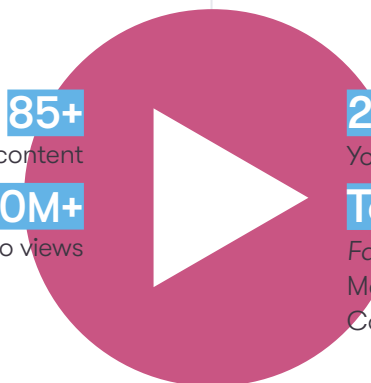
It's also the reason we make so much content: up to six narrative features, five documentaries, three TV series, and over 30 hours of digital short form content every year. Audiences and all our partners need to know that they can rely on Participant as a consistent source for powerful, purposeful content. ▶



### SoulPancake

SoulPancake are creators of smart, uplifting, meaningful, shareable content targeted to the optimistic millennial.

85+ hours of content  
200M+ video views



2.9M+ YouTube subscribers  
Top 10 Fast Company's Most Innovative Video Companies of 2015

"Work." SoulPancake, soulpancake.com/work/.

"SoulPancake." YouTube, www.youtube.com/user/soulpancake/featured.



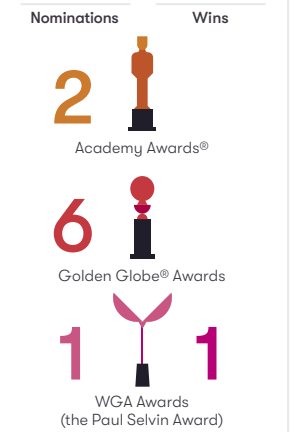
### The Post

*The Post* depicts the true story of Katharine Graham, publisher of *The Washington Post*, and editor Ben Bradlee as they attempt to publish classified documents about the involvement of the US government in the Vietnam War.

"The Post." 20th Century Fox, 2019, www.foxmovies.com/movies/the-post.



### The Post awards



"The Post (2017): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt6294822/awards?ref\_=tt\_awd.



### The Post box office



Domestic total gross: \$81,903,458  
Foreign total gross: \$97,865,999  
Limited opening weekend: \$526,011  
Wide opening weekend: \$19,361,968  
Widest release: 2,851 theaters  
In release: 147 days/21 weeks

"The Post." Box Office Mojo, IMDb, com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=untitledsteven Spielberg.htm.



The second part is all about distribution. No film can contribute to social change if it goes unseen. Thanks to the breadth of our content, and audiences' engagement with it through relationships built over many years, we've been able to cultivate global, ongoing, and preferred distribution partnerships with the major studios, the leading independent distributors, all the major pay television services, and now the streaming services as well. Through connections like these, we can consistently reach the widest possible audience all over the world.

This leads to the third and most essential part of our process: to catalyze the collaboration between audiences and impact partners on an issue. We see all of our content acting as both an accelerant for raising awareness and a connective tissue to their work. The wide range of nonprofits, NGOs, and foundations we work with on our social impact campaigns all value our ability to connect them to a broad network of concerned people all over the world.

That said, the potential impact of a film isn't always obvious — or immediate. Take, for example, Joshua Oppenheimer's 2014 film *The Look of Silence*, which documents the 1965–1966 Indonesian genocide. Three years after its release, a ripple



**The notion that stories can entertain, enthrall, and contribute to social change in a meaningful way is quickly gaining traction in Hollywood and beyond.**

effect created by the film and its impact campaign would lead to the declassification of US State Department files related to the mass killings — a historic achievement and the primary goal of Participant's social impact campaign for the film. Meanwhile, with *Wonder*, released in 2017, the main message of the film — compassion — was considerably more nuanced. Based on *The New York Times* bestseller, *Wonder* tells the story of how August Pullman, a boy born with facial deformities, becomes his school's unlikely hero. We believe a film like this can still help create positive impact because compassion has a universal relevance. If we don't have compassion for each other, how can we even



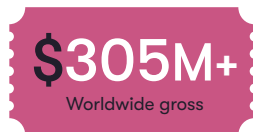
**Wonder**

Based on *The New York Times* bestseller, *Wonder* tells the incredibly inspiring and heartwarming story of August Pullman. Born with facial differences that have prevented him from going to a mainstream school, Auggie becomes the most unlikely of heroes when he enters the local fifth grade. As his family, his new classmates, and the larger community all struggle to discover their compassion and acceptance, Auggie's extraordinary journey will unite them all and prove you can't blend in when you were born to stand out.

— "Wonder." Participant Media, 15 Dec. 2017, [www.participantmedia.com/film/wonder](http://www.participantmedia.com/film/wonder).



**Wonder box office**



**Domestic total gross:**  
\$132,422,809

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$173,514,909

**Opening weekend:**  
\$27,547,866

**Widest release:**  
3,519 theaters

**In release:**  
126 days/18 weeks

— "Wonder." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=wonder.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=wonder.htm).



In early 2018, Larry Fink declared, "BlackRock engages with companies to drive the sustainable, long-term growth that our clients need to meet their goals." Fink notes that public expectations of the private sector have never been greater, due to governments failing to prepare for the future, on issues ranging from retirement and infrastructure to automation and worker retraining. Fink calls this a "new model of shareholder engagement."



**Without a sense of purpose, no company, either public or private, can achieve its full potential. It will ultimately lose the license to operate from key stakeholders. It will succumb to short-term pressures to distribute earnings, and, in the process, sacrifice investments in employee development, innovation, and capital expenditures that are necessary for long-term growth.**

— Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock

— Fink, Laurence D. "Larry Fink's Annual Letter to CEOs: A Sense of Purpose." BlackRock, Inc., 2018, [www.blackrock.com/corporate/investor-relations/larry-fink-ceo-letter](http://www.blackrock.com/corporate/investor-relations/larry-fink-ceo-letter).

attempt to address important global issues like those in *The Look of Silence*? If a story engages us and has the potential to create change, we'll consider it even if it doesn't fit perfectly into a specific category or cause.

*Wonder* made more than \$27 million in its first weekend. For us, the financial success of our titles, as well as the accolades they garner, is proof that there's a real hunger for social impact entertainment. The notion that stories can entertain, enthrall, and contribute to social change in a meaningful way is quickly gaining traction in Hollywood and beyond.

This is what made Jeff's vision for Participant so prescient. His belief that storytelling is a powerful tool for social change is perfectly aligned with the rise of Gen Z, which represents the new "conscious consumer." This demographic already wields \$44 billion in buying power and is predicted to comprise 2.6 billion people by 2020 — or roughly 32.5% of the population. People's expectations of what they should get from the money they spend has clearly changed. The Wall Street investment community is waking up to this fact; and the CEO of BlackRock, Larry Fink, stated in January 2018 in an open letter to global CEOs that without a sense of social purpose, no company can achieve its full

potential. We've also seen a surge of "purposeful" advertising trying to connect products with causes. These shifts are happening because consumers are demanding them across all areas of business, the entertainment industry included. And because our mission is unambiguous — to change the world through storytelling — we have been able to refine and adapt to an industry that is undergoing profound transformation.

The idea that there is real value in supporting films that are able to do good in the world is not a one-off, singular mentality, nor are we alone in this thinking. In recent years, others have moved into this field — a fact that we welcome as it has always been a goal of Jeff's to see the field grow, because well-told stories can change the world. This has always been the heart of Participant Media, and we've never wavered from this focus.

The world is seeing stories and waking up to the incredible work done by impact partners. This means that together we have a real opportunity. And this really means everyone, from individuals and groups of friends, to brands and corporations. By creating powerful content that inspires audiences, we are forging amazing connections to make lasting and sustainable contributions to some of the world's most pressing issues. ■



**A Fantastic Woman**

Waitress and singer Marina and older man Orlando are in love and planning for the future. After Orlando suddenly falls ill and dies, Marina is forced to confront his family and society, and to fight again to show them who she is: complex, strong, forthright, fantastic.

— "A Fantastic Woman." Participant Media, 15 Dec. 2017, [participantmedia.com/film/fantastic-woman](http://participantmedia.com/film/fantastic-woman).



**A Fantastic Woman awards**



— "A Fantastic Woman (2017): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt5639354/awards?ref\\_tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5639354/awards?ref_tt_awd).



**A Fantastic Woman box office**



**Opening weekend:**  
\$64,241

**Widest release:**  
190 theaters

**In release:**  
108 days/15 weeks

— "A Fantastic Woman." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=afantasticwoman.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=afantasticwoman.htm).



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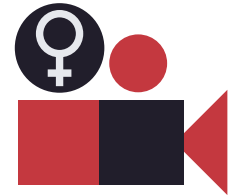
Hidden Figures, 2017

# Shooting for the Moon

It's not enough for companies to just explain their values, writes **Liba Wenig Rubenstein**, they need to demonstrate them in the real world too. A successful future is dependent on practicing what we preach.

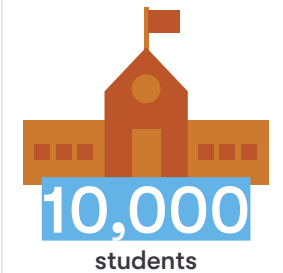
## Liba Wenig Rubenstein

Senior Vice President of Social Impact at 21st Century Fox



### Girls Build LA

FOX and the LA Promise Fund partnered to provide a screening of *Hidden Figures* to 10,000 middle and high school girls from all over Los Angeles County. The female students were invited to the screening as part of the LA Promise Fund's Girls Build LA initiative.



"FOX and LA Promise Fund Screen 'Hidden Figures' for 10,000 Girls in Los Angeles." 21CF Social Impact, 21st Century Fox, 18 Jan. 2017. [impact.21cf.com/what/2017/01/hidden-figures-la-screening-10000-girls/](http://impact.21cf.com/what/2017/01/hidden-figures-la-screening-10000-girls/).

At 21st Century Fox (21CF), social impact grew out of some pretty forward-thinking sustainability promises that we made back in 2007.

Deciding to become carbon neutral was a revolutionary moment for us. It allowed what was then a decentralized collection of businesses to begin to organize around shared values. Eventually, the company's focus on sustainability evolved into a more comprehensive social impact practice, which now includes, but aspires to transcend, a traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) mode. We understand that our focus in this area can be more than a core competency — it can be a competitive advantage. As a result, we've developed our social impact work in a much more holistic fashion across the entire organization and now — whether you work for Star in Mumbai or National Geographic in Washington, D.C. — all 21st Century Fox companies know they are part of a bigger picture.



**We understand that our focus in this area can be more than a core competency — it can be a competitive advantage.**

I've been working in this space for a dozen years, long enough to have both helped drive and respond to the staggering growth of consumer and workforce demand for companies to demonstrate values and purpose. Having some kind of cause is swiftly becoming the lowest common denominator for all brands; the real value lies in standing out through the substance and impact of your work.

As well as handling more traditional elements of CSR and sustainability, my team acts as an internal cause marketing and impact campaign consultancy. That means we partner with companies across 21CF when they produce films, TV shows, and other programming that ►



contains pro-social messaging. In some cases, the program may not have social impact at its core — but contains a character arc, storyline, or even just a passionate lead actor or producer who wants to leverage the platform of the program for good. Last year, for example, when the end of the 11th season of *The X-Files* aired during Women's History Month, we decided to commission a report from the Geena Davis Institute to validate "The Scully Effect" — the impact of Gillian Anderson's character upon a whole generation of young women, inspiring them to begin careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Indeed, it holds up: of the 2,000 viewers surveyed, nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondent women who work in STEM fields said Dana Scully served as their role model, and women who regularly watched *The X-Files* were 50% more likely to work in STEM than less frequent/non-watchers.



**Having some kind of cause is swiftly becoming the lowest common denominator for all brands.**

Most often, we work with films and shows that have social impact very clearly at their core — like the recent films *Battle of the Sexes*

and *Love, Simon* or National Geographic's show, *One Strange Rock*. Where my team brings value in cases like these is in amplifying the pro-social message, increasing access to the story, manifesting the message in contemporary real-world impacts, and channeling the inspiration that audiences will inevitably feel when they see the film into some concrete action.

A prime example of this is our ongoing work supporting *Hidden Figures*, 2016's cinematic retelling of the true story of female African American mathematicians in the Space Race. With this film we knew that the pro-social message was so ingrained in the story that the two couldn't really be separated, and as the film became such a phenomenon we allowed ourselves to pursue multiple opportunities to tie it to impact.

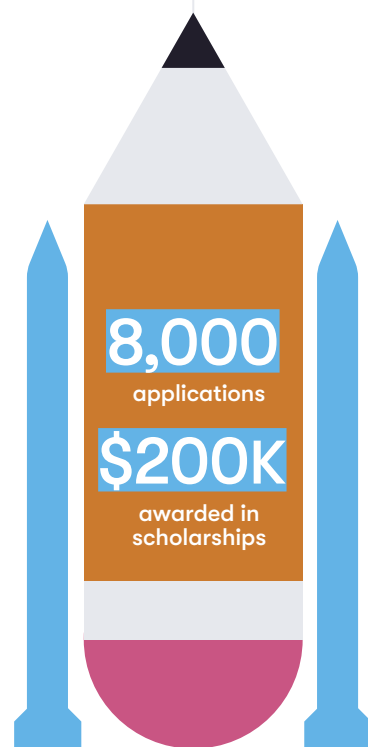
Our first campaign was a partnership with PepsiCo and the New York Academy of Sciences called "The Search for Hidden Figures." This scholarship program awarded \$200,000 in grants to young women working in STEM areas and attracted nearly 8,000 submissions nationwide. Then we facilitated a screening at the White House, where Michelle Obama invited students to a preview event and panel discussion. We also hosted nearly 10,000 young women from schools across Los Angeles at an event organized by the LA Promise Fund as part of its Girls Build LA initiative. Both events helped raise excitement for girls to get involved with STEM. These kinds of ancillary campaigns amplify the film's impact as well as word of mouth to drive viewership.



**"The Search for Hidden Figures"**

21st Century Fox partnered with PepsiCo and the New York Academy of Sciences to create "The Search for Hidden Figures" scholarship program. The scholarship contest hoped to discover emerging female visionaries in STEM. The contest received about 8,000 applications, and awarded over \$200,000 in scholarships to two grand-prize winners. These two winners participated in a training program at the Kennedy Space Center.

— "PepsiCo And 21st Century Fox Announce 'The Search For Hidden Figures' Contest To Discover Emerging Female Visionaries In Science, Technology, Engineering And Math (STEM)." *PepsiCo*, 14 Nov. 2016, [www2.pepsico.com/live/pressrelease/pepsico-and-21st-century-fox-announce-the-search-for-hidden-figures-contest-to-d11142016](http://www2.pepsico.com/live/pressrelease/pepsico-and-21st-century-fox-announce-the-search-for-hidden-figures-contest-to-d11142016).



**#ScullyEffect**

In partnership with 21st Century Fox, the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media conducted a survey of approximately 2,000 viewers of *The X-Files* to determine the character Dana Scully's effect upon the interest of women in STEM careers. According to the Institute's findings, the survey revealed "significant evidence of 'The Scully Effect' when it comes to attitudes toward STEM, working in a STEM field, and viewing Scully as a role model."

— "The Scully Effect: I Want to Believe in STEM." See Jane, Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2018, [seejane.org/research-informs-empowers/the-scully-effect-i-want-to-believe-in-stem/](http://seejane.org/research-informs-empowers/the-scully-effect-i-want-to-believe-in-stem/).



21st Century Fox partnered with AMC Theatres during Black History Month in 2017 to offer free screenings of *Hidden Figures* in 14 cities.

Continuing their partnership into Women's History Month, 21st Century Fox and AMC Theatres invited local organizations and nonprofits to apply for free screenings of *Hidden Figures*, resulting in approximately 3,500 additional people gaining access to the film.

— "Hidden Figures: The Untold Story of Female African American Mathematicians in the 1960s Space Race Continues to Inspire Girls and Women Around the World Today." *21CF Social Impact*, 21st Century Fox, [impact.21cf.com/features/hidden-figures-untold-story-female-african-american-mathematicians/](http://impact.21cf.com/features/hidden-figures-untold-story-female-african-american-mathematicians/).

Some of the best work we did with *Hidden Figures* was unplanned. We were thrilled to discover communities around the country were launching crowdfunding campaigns to take their communities and organizations to see the film in local theaters, so we stepped in and worked out a deal with AMC Theatres to set up free screenings across 14 cities for Black History Month. We then opened up a



**By combining a tight social impact campaign with the right partners and an opportunistic streak, we were able to reach our target audience and beyond.**

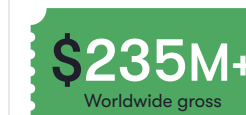
process by which schools, community groups, and nonprofits not served by those 14 events could apply for their own screenings, through which we received over 7,000 applications and ultimately distributed 3,500 tickets to folks who might not have been able to see the film otherwise. When a film's core message is in itself impactful, sometimes the best thing we can do is just expose that film to as many relevant audiences as possible. When done well, this serves to keep the film in the public awareness at the same time.

Another unexpected opportunity around *Hidden Figures* came via the US State Department. First, they reached out to us in response to an unprecedented demand from US embassies and consulates abroad, for which we ultimately arranged over 150 screenings of the film. Building on the success of those events, the State Department created "#HiddenNoMore" — the first exchange program inspired by a narrative feature — to bring 50 women working in STEM fields from 50 countries to visit the US for three weeks. As part of the International Visitor Leadership Program, the participants traveled to cultural and educational institutions, discussing and exploring topics on female leadership, the power of storytelling, and the roles played by science and technology in the entertainment industries. The program has been adopted as a flagship initiative by the State Department, and is part of the very long tail of inspiration we know this film will continue to have for years to come. We look forward to the day when we will have enough data to measure its impact as conclusively as we were able to do for "The Scully Effect."

By combining a tight social impact campaign with the right partners and an opportunistic streak, we were able to magnify the impact of these projects and reach our target audience and beyond. The work we did also enabled the content to have a longer lifespan, thereby magnifying impact, and, potentially, profit. The opportunity to leverage inspired storytelling into concrete positive outcomes like this is one of the reasons we love what we do. ■



**Hidden Figures box office**



**Domestic total gross:**  
\$169,607,287

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$66,349,611

**Limited opening weekend:**  
\$515,499

**Wide opening weekend:**  
\$22,800,057

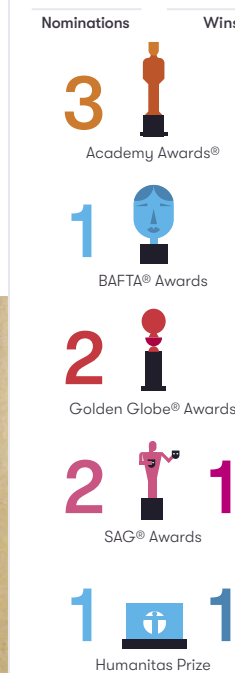
**Widest release:**  
3,416 theaters

**In release:**  
320 days/45 weeks

— "Hidden Figures." *Box Office Mojo*, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=hiddenfigures.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=hiddenfigures.htm).



**Hidden Figures awards**



— "Hidden Figures (2016): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt484340/awards?ref\\_=tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt484340/awards?ref_=tt_awd).

© 20th Century Fox and other respective production studios and distributors



*The X-Files*, 1993–2002



# Stories Worth Fighting For

Director **Gina Prince-Bythewood** opens up about the personal importance of *Love & Basketball*, its lasting impact and how she has managed to push past the “no’s” that all too often greet female filmmakers.



Gina Prince-Bythewood and Sanaa Lathan, 2000

## Gina Prince-Bythewood

Writer and director



Notable works:  
*Love & Basketball, The Secret Life of Bees, Shots Fired*

My journey as a filmmaker has been one of fighting to tell the stories I want to tell.

Those fights sharpen, harden and embolden you. They give you the confidence and courage to go after what you want, despite the track record of who, historically, gets to tell the stories.

I love action and superhero films, for instance, and I’ve fought to be able to tell those stories despite the fact that women — especially women of color — rarely have the opportunity to do so. I’m excited to be making *The Old Guard*, a film based on a graphic novel series by Greg Rucka and Leandro Fernández about two incredibly badass women and their group of mercenary soldiers. It’s great to be able to put these characters out into the world.



**When you have a platform as big as TV or film, it shouldn’t be wasted on just entertaining.**

Up until this point in my career I’ve tended to direct screenplays I’ve written, so the story is always my starting point when I’m considering a film’s impact. When you have a platform as big as TV or film, it shouldn’t be wasted on just entertaining; you can absolutely entertain and have something to say at the same time. The show *Shots Fired*, which my husband and I created, is a great example of that. It looks at the range of perspectives resulting from racialized shootings in a small town, but it’s also a really compelling mystery.

*Love & Basketball* is another example of balancing entertainment with social impact. I wanted to make a love story as iconic as *When Harry Met Sally*, but with a black cast. I wanted people to look at *Love & Basketball* and see a universal love story, but at the same time it was important for ▶

### Love & Basketball

*Love & Basketball* is a true epic, the story of the love between Monica (Sanaa Lathan) and Quincy (Omar Epps). Monica’s family moves in next door to Quincy’s when the two are 11 — both are prodigiously talented basketball players, but Quincy’s prospects are brighter than Monica’s. There’s a professional league for him to dream of playing in, and his father, Zeke (Dennis Haysbert), was himself a pro player. And Monica’s already-slimmer prospects are endangered by her temper.

— Rosenberg, Alyssa. “Why I Love: The smart sensuality of ‘Love and Basketball.’” *The Washington Post*, 25 Apr. 2015, [washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2015/04/24/why-i-love-the-smart-sensuality-of-love-and-basketball.](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2015/04/24/why-i-love-the-smart-sensuality-of-love-and-basketball/)

### Love & Basketball box office

**\$27M+**  
Worldwide gross

Domestic total gross:  
**\$27,459,615**  
Foreign total gross:  
**\$268,503**  
Opening weekend:  
**\$8,139,180**  
Widest release:  
**1,245 theaters**

— “Love & Basketball.” *Box Office Mojo*, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=loveandbasketball.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=loveandbasketball.htm).

### Love & Basketball awards

Nominations	Wins
1	1
	Humanitas Prize
3	1
	Independent Spirit Awards
5	2
	NAACP Image Awards

— “Love & Basketball (2000): Awards.” IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt0199725/awards.](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0199725/awards)



me to make a film with black characters at the center. Back in 2000 that was dangerously rare in Hollywood and in many respects it still is.

It was also important for me to get this film made because so much of it was my personal story. I wanted to see myself represented on screen because for most of my life I felt ignored by the mainstream media. I am still humbled by the lasting impact of the film. I love that men consider the character Monica, an athlete, their romantic ideal. I also love that women and girls can look at her and be proud of their athleticism.

That impact might not have been possible without the help of the Sundance Institute, which was instrumental in getting *Love & Basketball* made. When I first sent the idea out, every studio passed. Two days after I got the final pass, Sundance called and said they wanted to meet me. I was invited to bring the script to their lab. It was an incredible experience. I got to work with amazing mentors like Scott Frank and Paul Attanasio, writers for whom I have the utmost respect. The Institute also put on a live reading of the script which resulted in Spike Lee's company coming aboard as producers, and the finished film screened at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival.



*Love & Basketball*, 2000

© New Line Cinema and other respective production studios and distributors



**Institutions like Sundance are vital because they actively look for disparate, yet equally important voices in our industry. This work is essential because the diversity stats in film are horrifying.**

Institutions like Sundance are vital because they actively look for disparate, yet equally important voices in our industry. This work is essential because the diversity stats in film are horrifying. Only four black female directors, including myself, have worked across the top 1,100 movies between 2007 and 2017. Of the 1,233 directors of those 1,100 films, only eight were women from any underrepresented racial or ethnic group. Though equal numbers of

women and men go to film school, only 4% of the top-grossing US films are directed by women.

When you take a look at some of the most successful films of the past couple of years, however, you can notice a seismic shift. Films like *Black Panther*, *Girls Trip*, *Get Out* and *Crazy Rich Asians* are proving that films focused on people of color have their own audience and can reach mainstream audiences too. It seems clear that moviegoers are bored with the status quo, of looking up at the screen and seeing only white characters. I hope that we continue to not just have more black characters on screen, but to see them appear in a wide range of genres as well.

As a filmmaker, it's important to allow your passion for creating social impact push you past the "no's" you'll encounter. While it's hard to produce work that says something important, or focuses on characters that aren't seen often, it's so important to bring that work to life. The more we do it, the more normal it becomes. In this way, I think art can absolutely change the world. I am completely optimistic about that. You should never have to apologize for using your art to make impact. ■



**Girls Trip box office**



**Domestic total gross:**  
\$115,171,585

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$25,378,951

**Opening weekend:**  
\$31,201,920

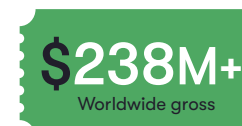
**Widest release:**  
2,648 theaters

**In release:**  
91 days/13 weeks

—  
"Girls Trip." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=girlstrip.htm.



**Crazy Rich Asians box office**



**Domestic total gross:**  
\$174,050,152

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$64,000,000

**Opening weekend:**  
\$26,510,140

**Widest release:**  
3,865 theaters

**In release:**  
145 days/20 weeks\*

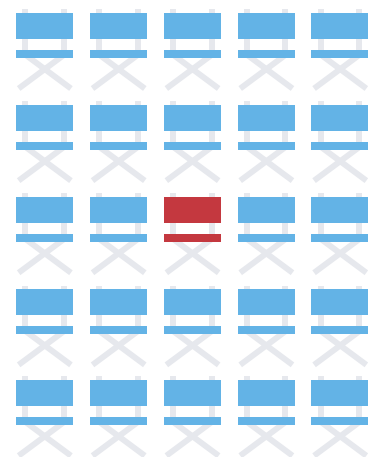
—  
\*Updated as of Jan 6th 2019.  
"Crazy Rich Asians." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=crazyrichasians.htm.



**Unreasonable ratios**

The *Inclusion in the Director's Chair?* study was conducted over the years 2007–2017. Of 1,000 popular films from 2007 to 2016 the results show:

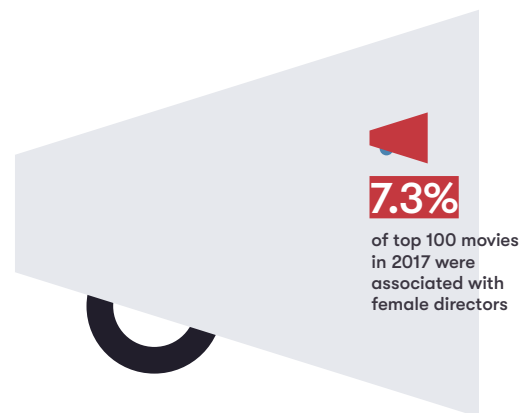
Only 4% of directors were women. This puts the ratio of male to female directors at 24:1.



—  
Smith, Stacy L., et al. *Inclusion in the Director's Chair? Gender, Race, & Age of Film Directors Across 1,000 Films from 2007-2016*. USC Annenberg, 2017. annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/2017/04/06/MDSCL\_Inclusion%20in\_the\_Directors\_Chair.pdf.

Out of a total of 109 film directors who were associated with the top 100 movies of 2017, 101 were male while only eight were female.

None of the female directors had appeared previously in the top 100 films across the 11-year time frame investigated.



**Minority representation in Hollywood vs. US population**

Findings from the *Hollywood Diversity Report 2018*:



—  
Hunt, Darnell et al. *Hollywood Diversity Report 2018: Five Years of Progress and Missed Opportunities*. UCLA College of Social Sciences, 2018. socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2018-2-27-18.pdf.



# From Myth



© Chestnut Ridge Productions and other respective production studios and distributors

Marshall, 2017

Movies have the power to make both dangerous narratives and empowering histories into reality. **Reginald Hudlin** considers the role and responsibility of filmmakers and how, if you want your film to have an impact, balance is key.

# to Reality

## Reginald Hudlin

Producer and director



Notable works:  
*Marshall, Django Unchained, House Party*

The first movie to be shown in the White House was D.W. Griffith's racist epic, *The Birth of a Nation*.

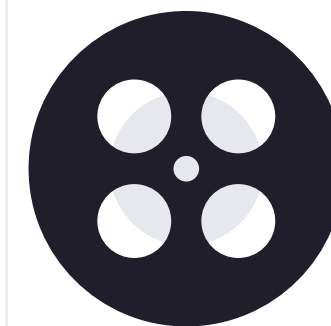
After the screening, President Woodrow Wilson declared that he had been watching "history written in lightning." That film should not be called "history," but the president's response was apt in other ways: it hit upon the new medium's ability to bring myths to life, to make them seem real in the most powerful ways possible.

While our elementary schools take the most exciting stories of our collective past and manage to make them boring, movies do the opposite. They pump the excitement back into these stories. They make people care and remember. The mere act of making a movie elevates a topic that may otherwise be lost to the general public.

### **The Birth of a Nation**

Portraying the Ku Klux Klan as heroic underdogs, silent epic *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is widely considered to be the most controversial film of all time. At once one of US culture's greatest artistic achievements and one of its most abhorrent racist artifacts, it becomes more shocking with every passing year.

"The Birth of a Nation: BFI Film Classics." BFI, shop.bfi.org.uk/birth-of-a-nation-the.html#W\_6p9xP7TXQ.



I want my films to make a difference in the world. As I see it, there is only one way to do that effectively: through an incredibly entertaining film where the social impact is seamlessly woven into the storytelling.

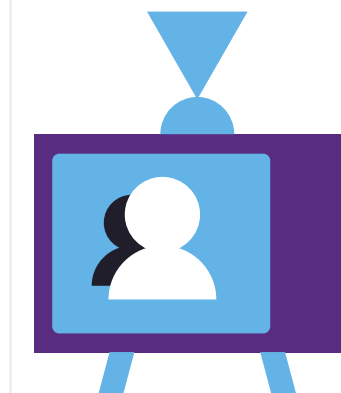
*Marshall* was a tough movie to make because people thought they already knew the story. They'd already seen films about the civil rights movement; they'd seen great courtroom thrillers like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Inherit the Wind*. So with *Marshall*, we had to say things that had never been said before. We had to make a movie that resonated with audiences today.

*Marshall* offered a fresh take on issues that were relevant and complex. It examined the nuances of racism — between the North, which is traditionally perceived as more liberal, and the South. It also contrasted the victimization of black men with that of white women. These are weighty subjects that aren't always the easiest to engage with. Similarly, Thurgood Marshall himself is a towering icon of American history, so we had to try and take him off the pedestal to make him relatable. Marshall was a hero but not a saint; he smoked, drank, loved to joke and wasn't scared of a fight. Seeing his swagger really opened up a lot of kids' eyes. They realized you could be a cool, well-dressed player, and also the smartest guy in the room — any room. ▶

### **2012 Survey on self-esteem after watching TV**

In a 2012 survey of almost 400 black and white boys and girls, researchers found the only demographic that didn't experience lower self-esteem after watching TV was white boys.

Lawson, Kimberly. "Why Seeing Yourself Represented on Screen Is So Important." *Broadly, Vice*, 20 Feb. 2018, broadly.vice.com/en\_us/article/zmq3x/why-diversity-on-screen-is-important-black-panther.



### **Marshall**

Thurgood Marshall faces one of his greatest challenges while working as a lawyer for the NAACP. He travels to conservative Connecticut when wealthy socialite Eleanor Strubing accuses black chauffeur Joseph Spell of sexual assault and attempted murder. Marshall teams up with Sam Friedman, a local Jewish lawyer who's never handled a criminal case. Together, the two men build a defense while contending with racist and anti-Semitic views from those who deem Spell to be guilty.

### **Marshall awards**



"Marshall (2017): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt5301662/awards?ref\_tt\_awd.

### **Marshall box office**



Opening weekend:  
**\$3,000,805**

Widest release:  
**821 theaters**

In release:  
**98 days/14 weeks**

"Marshall." *Box Office Mojo*, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=marshall.htm.



I've always believed the best way to override the myth that diverse films can't generate box office success would be to play to genre, because the genre appeal will override any racial pushback. The success of *Black Panther* confirms that. The film also adopted a rendition of the character that black comic book writers had created — one that made the Black Panther as powerful as, if not more powerful than, his white counterparts. So when the movie embraced the tone of the issues



### How do you strike that balance between the storytelling and the message, between entertainment and social impact?

that writers like Christopher Priest or I wrote, it really delivered to its core audience without alienating everyone else.

How do you strike that balance between the storytelling and the message, between entertainment and social impact? The masters have also wrestled with this question. With *The Bicycle Thief*, Vittorio De Sica delivered a powerful film about poverty that resonated with audiences worldwide. But he was troubled that the lower class, who were the subjects of his film, did not like it as much as the elites. So he made *Miracle in Milan*, a fantasy film about the struggles of a poverty-stricken orphan, to connect with that audience. In the end, it was not through a single film but through his body of work that De Sica managed to reach different people on different wavelengths on issues and topics they cared about.

We can also learn how to strike that balance by acknowledging the political content in popular films like *Star Wars*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and



#### The blaxploitation genre

Emerging out of the civil rights and Black Power movements and aimed at young, city-dwelling African American males, the blaxploitation genre was the first real explosion of American cinema dominated by, for, and about communities of color. With its main years of production taking place between 1972 and 1975, blaxploitation cinema was contradictory, confrontational, and controversial. It both smashed and reinforced stereotypes of blackness, reflected and exaggerated life on the streets and in the ghettos, and, despite its crossover appeal with white audiences, alienated as many viewers, critics and activist groups as it attracted.

— Mitchell, Neil. "10 great blaxploitation movies." *BFI*, 3 Nov. 2016, www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/10-great-blaxploitation-movies.

Black Panther, 2017



© Marvel Studios and other respective production studios and distributors



### Today, you can take a cellphone and shoot a movie that can be shown in theaters or downloaded in homes all over the world.

*Night of the Living Dead*. It can even be instructive to compare films that tackle the same subject, like *Fail Safe* and *Dr. Strangelove*. Both are about nuclear war, but which was better at changing people's views?

Looking ahead, I'm cautiously optimistic for black cinema, though it does seem to go through boom-and-bust cycles. The blaxploitation movement of the 70s gave us films like *Shaft*,

*Superfly* and *Foxy Brown* that still resonate through pop culture today. The movement faded, and the 80s yielded only two black movie stars, but they were superstars: Eddie Murphy and Prince. The 90s brought a new crop of filmmakers — Spike Lee, John Singleton, me and many more. Today there's a wider range of black films making more money than ever before. And in television, the dominant medium of the time, black representation in front of and behind the camera is even more encouraging.

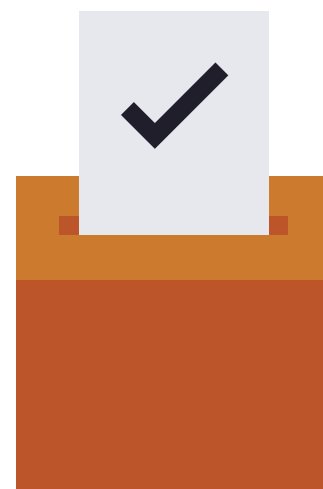
There's another important shift happening right now too, and one that's sometimes overlooked: the ever-increasing access to production and distribution. Today, you can take a cellphone and shoot a movie that can be shown in theaters or downloaded in homes all over the world. These technological breakthroughs mean less gatekeeping and more freedom for the artists. So decide what impact you want to have, find the stories you know and believe in, choose your medium, and go do it! You don't need permission. Fail faster and get better. ■



#### WakandaTheVote campaign

#WakandaTheVote campaign was an initiative that allowed people to set up voter registration events at local theaters or register to vote via text message. The initiative was headed by Kayla Reed, Jessica Byrd, and Rukia Lumumba, who also created the Movement for Black Lives' Electoral Justice Project.

The campaign saw registration events take place in cities like Dallas, Durham, Miami, and Atlanta, and people have signed up to hold more than 100 registration events in at least 50 cities since the initiative launched.

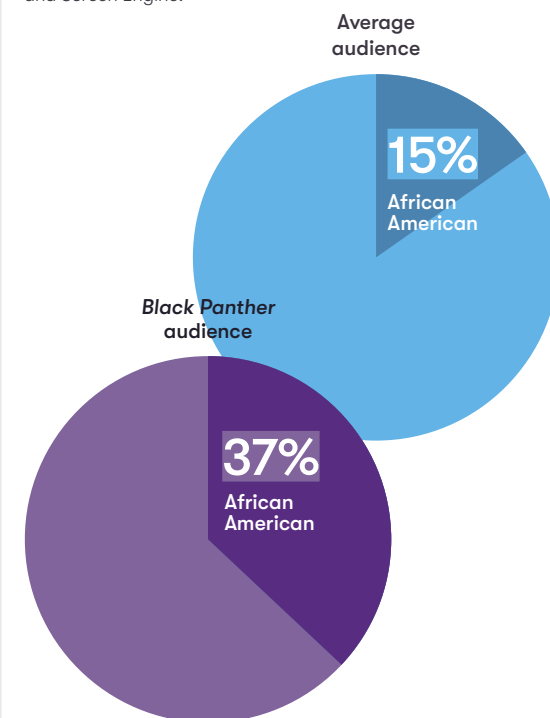


— Lockhart, P.R. "#WakandaTheVote: How activists are using Black Panther screenings to register voters." *Vox*, 21 Feb. 2018, www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/2/21/17033644/black-panther-screenings-voter-registration-wakanda-the-vote.



#### Audience split for Black Panther

In the US, 37% of *Black Panther*'s overall audience was African American, which is well above the norm. The average movie audience is about 15% African American, according to box office tracking companies ComScore and Screen Engine.



— Huddleston Jr., Tom. "An Especially Diverse Audience Lifted 'Black Panther' to Record Box Office Heights." *Fortune*, Time, Inc., 21 Feb. 2018, fortune.com/2018/02/21/black-panther-record-box-office-diverse-audience/.



#### Black Panther

*Black Panther* is the story of T'Challa, king of the advanced African nation Wakanda. When an old enemy reappears, T'Challa is tested — as both king and Black Panther — to save his homeland.



#### Disney donates Black Panther proceeds to STEM organizations

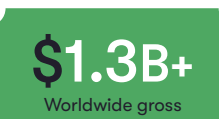


Disney announced it would donate \$1 million of the proceeds from *Black Panther* to STEM programs at the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, in a nod to one of the movie's key themes: how technology can empower young people from marginalized communities.

— Bromwich, Jonah Engel. "Disney to Donate \$1 Million of 'Black Panther' Proceeds to Youth STEM Programs." *The New York Times*, 27 Feb. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/02/27/movies/disney-black-panther-stem.html.



#### Black Panther box office



Domestic total gross: \$700,059,566

Opening weekend: \$202,003,951

#1 at the box office for five weeks after its initial release.

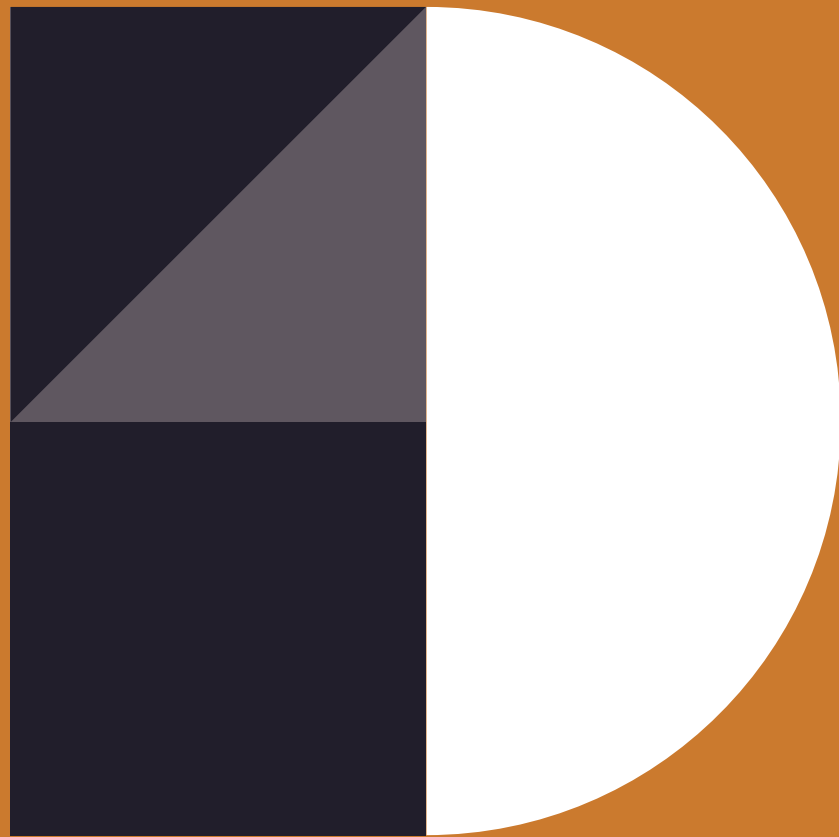
9<sup>TH</sup> highest worldwide gross of all time (by the start of 2019)

It is the only film with a predominantly black cast to surpass the \$1 billion mark.

— "Black Panther." *Box Office Mojo*, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=marvel2017b.htm.



# Documentary Film









# A Wave of Change

The release of *Before the Flood* reached a record 60 million people around the world. **Leonardo DiCaprio** and **Fisher Stevens** reflect on the innovative release strategy that made it happen.

Leonardo DiCaprio and Fisher Stevens at TIFF premiere of *Before the Flood*, 2016



© State Department photo/ Public Domain. Flickr.com/photos/fractaphotos/20469666325/

## Fisher Stevens

Actor, director, and Academy Award®-winning producer



Notable works:  
*Before the Flood*, *The Cove*

A lot of people say that when you're making social impact entertainment, you have to start with the issue you're trying to change.

This is only part of the equation. I believe that first and foremost, in order for your film to have the most impact, it must be a film that people will want to watch. This means making the best film possible and not necessarily beating the audience over the head with the points you are trying to make. Let the characters reveal the change you're trying to drive through their personal discoveries. Let the story unfold and dictate how you will strategize your impact.

One example of this is *The Cove*, which was actually my first social impact documentary. I've always been a big scuba diver, and in 2004 I went on a dive with Netscape founder Jim Clark. We visited a spot he'd been to over 10 years ago and it had completely changed: all of the coral

had died or been bleached and all of the fish were gone. I'd barely heard of global warming or climate change, and I didn't understand the impacts that CO<sub>2</sub> had on the planet until Jim explained that it was a huge issue facing Earth that no one was talking about. A few years later, Jim asked me to help produce a film he was financing. It was supposed to be about coral bleaching, but halfway through filming we encountered the tragic stories of dolphin hunting in Japan and made the very risky decision to shift the focus of the film completely. That movie eventually became *The Cove*, which won numerous awards including Best Documentary Feature at the 2010 Academy Awards®.

Even when you've found your story, making films on complex issues that resonate with people is often a real challenge. There's a line at the beginning of *Before the Flood* that says, "Try to ▶

**Save Japan Dolphins campaign**  
Around 1,600 dolphins were killed in Taiji every year when the Save Japan Dolphins campaign started in 2004. 595 were reportedly killed in the 2016–2017 season.

Recently, Japan zoos and aquariums voted, overwhelmingly, to stop buying live dolphins from Taiji.

— "Dolphin Meat Causing Dangerous Mercury Levels in Japanese Diners." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media Limited, 9 May 2010, www.theguardian.com/world/2010/may/09/dolphin-meat-mercury-levels-japan.



## Leonardo DiCaprio

Academy Award®-winning actor, producer, and activist



Notable works:  
*Blood Diamond*, *Before the Flood*, *The Revenant*

I believe in the power of film to inspire people everywhere to be part of a global solution to climate change.

I always wanted *Before the Flood* to be solutions-oriented. When Fisher and I set out on our visual storytelling journey, we didn't just want to show the effects of climate change on our polar ice caps and low-lying regions, or shine a light on the destructive forces of mining and logging in the rainforests; we also wanted to highlight

what individuals, communities, and grassroots movements are doing to protect their lands and way of life for future generations.

The idea was to promote widespread individual action. We wanted to show that when we understand we share a common planet, and when we set aside our differences to work together, there is hope. That's part of the reason why working on *Before the Flood* was an extremely positive experience for Fisher and me.

I think it's important for documentary filmmakers, especially those just starting out, to keep an open mind so that you are capturing as broad a perspective as possible when it comes to the solutions available to your audience. This is especially true for driving positive social action. You want to make sure that your audience walks away with a clear understanding of the steps they can take in their own lives to be part of the change you are seeking to create. ■

## The Cove

*The Cove* tells the true story of how an elite team of activists, filmmakers and freedivers embarked on a covert mission to enter a hidden cove in Japan, to expose a shocking instance of animal abuse and serious threat to human health.

— "The Cove: Synopsis." *The Cove*, www.thecovemovie.com/the\_cove/synopsis.htm.

## The Cove box office



**Domestic total gross:**  
**\$857,005**

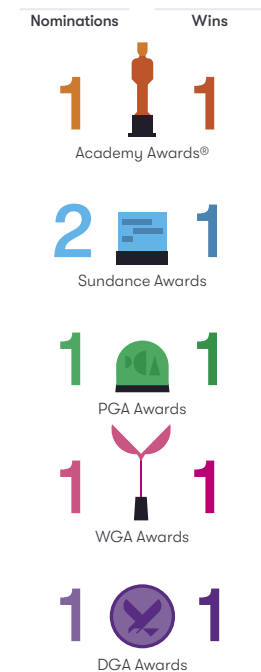
**Foreign total gross:**  
**\$305,417**

**Widest release:**  
**56 theaters**

**In release:**  
**238 days/34 weeks**

— "The Cove." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=cove09.htm.

## The Cove awards



— "The Cove (2009): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt1313104/awards.



have a conversation with anyone about climate change and people just tune out.” It’s so true, and that’s why we acknowledged it up front. Leonardo DiCaprio and I decided there were certain issues we wanted to tackle, and that we’d try to do this in a palatable way for kids who didn’t necessarily know a lot about climate change — because it’s our hope that their generation will be able to solve it.



### Let the characters reveal the change you’re trying to drive.

Having Leo as our main character meant that he became our tour guide for the issue, and he was able to take the audience through the narrative as it unfolded, allowing the audience to learn in tandem with him. That made everything far more compelling. It also made it feel less like the film was preaching — and with films like this you can’t preach or you’ll lose people. As a result, we were very careful and if we ever thought that the material was veering in that direction, we’d cut it.

I also believe that you have to make films like this personal. I tried to draw that aspect out of Leo in *Before the Flood* because that’s what really makes

these films resonate. A good example of this is *An Inconvenient Truth* because Al Gore was going through a period of turmoil and change in his life and was so open about that in the film. It revealed so much about who he is as a person and the audience was able to connect with him and the film because of it.

Once you have the film the way you want it, the next step in creating social impact entertainment is to get it in front of the right audience. With *Before the Flood*, we were in a desperate state because the 2016 election was rapidly approaching. This became a core part of our deal with National Geographic: we said we would basically give them the movie for nothing if they got it in front of as many people as possible before the vote. That was really important to us — the movie had to hit a lot of eyeballs at the right moment in time.

To accomplish this, Courteney Monroe at National Geographic had the idea to give it away free for the first 10 days, hosting the film on YouTube, iTunes, Facebook, and many other platforms and VOD services. The board agreed with her plan and the success of the release far exceeded our expectations. *Before the Flood* was available in 45 languages across 171 countries, eventually reaching an audience of more than 60 million people worldwide. It’s gone on to surpass 1 billion minutes of viewing time across multiple



#### Before the Flood

*Before the Flood* presents the dramatic changes occurring around the world due to climate change, as well as the actions individuals and society can take to prevent the disruption of life on our planet.

— “Before the Flood: About.” *Before the Flood*, [www.beforetheflood.com/about](http://www.beforetheflood.com/about).



### In our minds, there is no more important story to tell, no more important issue facing our planet than that of climate change.

— Courteney Monroe, CEO of National Geographic Global Network

— “National Geographic Channel Announces Unprecedented and Historic Global Release of *Before the Flood*.” *Business Wire*, 24 Oct. 2016, [www.businesswire.com/news/home/20161024006285/en/National-Geographic-Channel-Announces-Unprecedented-Historic-Global](http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20161024006285/en/National-Geographic-Channel-Announces-Unprecedented-Historic-Global).



#### Before the Flood distribution

Coinciding with its global television premiere in 171 countries and 45 languages, the film was released commercial-free on multiple digital and streaming platforms.



**16M**

viewers on the Nat Geo Channel.

**1,500**

private screening events for colleges, religious institutions, and other organizations.

**>7.1M**

views on YouTube.

platforms, making it one of the most-watched documentaries in history and the most-watched Nat Geo film ever. The film was also used to launch Nat Geo’s “Earth Week” and to connect viewers to our social impact campaign. The campaign prompted viewers to take action through the use of tools like Snapchat geofilters for film screenings, hashtags and tracked Facebook mentions. For every use of the social assets, National Geographic and 21st Century Fox donated one dollar to Pristine Seas and the Wildlife Conservation Society, up to a total of \$50,000 for each organization.

While making *Before the Flood*, we realized we had to do something about our carbon footprint. We joined up with Daniel Nadler who designed the CarboTax app, which helps you contribute to reforestation campaigns to offset your carbon footprint through a voluntary carbon tax. That had a really positive effect — it gave us a practical step we could take and was also an action we could communicate to viewers. In the end, this raised over \$1 million to help reforest places that were featured in the movie.

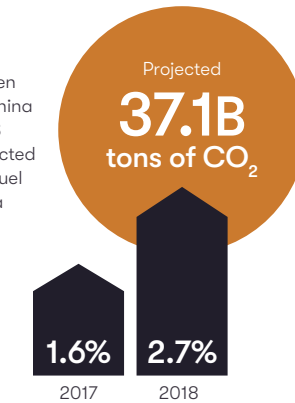
The impact work does not stop once you’ve released the film — in fact, you could say that’s when it really begins. Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined that the Trump administration would have rolled back all of the progress made by President Obama. All of our deepest fears have come true. So this movie is



#### Carbon emissions

In 2017, global emissions grew 1.6%. The rise in 2018 is projected to be 2.7%, driven by growth of emissions in China and India, along with the US and other nations. The expected increase would bring fossil fuel and industrial emissions to a record yearly high.

— “We are in trouble.” Global carbon emissions reached a record high in 2018.” *The Washington Post*, 5 Dec. 2018, [www.washingtonpost.com/energy-environment/2018/12/05/we-are-trouble-global-carbon-emissions-reached-new-record-high/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/energy-environment/2018/12/05/we-are-trouble-global-carbon-emissions-reached-new-record-high/).



now more important than ever. You always need someone to pick up the cause and be dedicated to its impact, and the social impact campaigns you’ve started, long after you’re gone. I’ve found it helpful to have partners involved at every stage possible so I can get back to making the best films I can. Because for me, that’s where impact has to start: with a great movie.

Ultimately, there are a million causes and a million movies — so nothing’s easy. But this is a great time to be making documentaries. There’s so much to fight for and so much to fight against. You’re going to see a lot of amazing creativity come out of this time from documentary filmmakers. ■



#### The CarboTax app

The app designed by Daniel Nadler and Karl Burkhardt allows you to pay a voluntary tax, which offsets your climate footprint and goes toward reforestation.

— “BTF Screening Kit\_CC\_V1\_WOLetter.” National Geographic Channel.

Leonardo DiCaprio in *Before the Flood*, 2016



© National Geographic and other respective production studios and distributors



# Shock of the Familiar



The Look of Silence, 2014

© Fred/Out for Bel and other respective production studios and distributors

By finding humanity in even the darkest moments, **Joshua Oppenheimer** challenges viewers to look beyond the superficial.

## Joshua Oppenheimer

Academy Award®-nominated director



Notable works:  
*The Act of Killing*, *The Look of Silence*

For a film to generate positive social impact, it needs to hold up a mirror to the audience.

That's because the shock in great art and great storytelling is always the shock of the familiar, when you encounter something about yourself in a work.

Often, journalism and news media only provide a snapshot of an issue, but documentary film lends itself to telling deeper stories about people, stories that can touch the core of our being. With *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*, I wanted to tell a deeper story about the Indonesian genocide by exploring the impunity of the perpetrators.

When working on a film, I always start with what troubles me or what I can't look away from. This requires looking within, beyond the superficial. In the case of *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*, it was the boastfulness of the perpetrators that captivated and disturbed me. I felt there was something performative in the way they were showing off about the worst of their crimes.



**When working on a film, I always start with what troubles me or what I can't look away from.**

My crew and I devised ways to explore this impunity by setting up new situations that made this performance visible. In *The Act of Killing* we asked the perpetrators to dramatize their memories of murder and how they felt about participating in a genocide. In this way, we created a new reality as we brought certain aspects of the perpetrators to the surface that had previously been invisible to the rest of society. Similarly, in *The Look of Silence* we created a new reality by helping our protagonist Adi confront his brother's killers.

This kind of work is never easy, so you need to cultivate the right environment on the shoot in order to evoke these new realities. It's about establishing a safe space and being transparent, since your crew and participants will be pushed beyond their comfort zone. You are creating an intervention. This is the task of the artist: to create new pieces of the world that force us as viewers to reflect on and recognize things that we were unable to speak about previously.

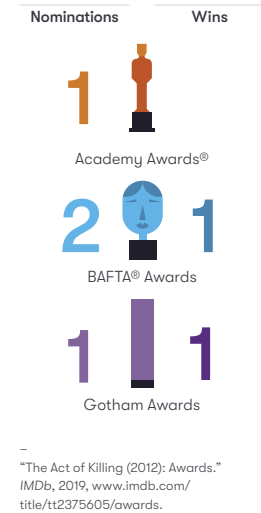
While I knew this work was disruptive, I didn't think that *The Act of Killing* would have an immediate inflammatory impact and explode in the way that it did. It became a touchstone of discussion, leading to a swift transformation in how the Indonesian media was talking about the past. Just three weeks after the first press screenings, the media shifted from talking about the "heroic extermination of the communists" — or more vaguely "the troubles of the 1960s" — to describing the atrocities as a genocide carried out by people who still remained in power.

There was a real hunger for *The Look of Silence* too. It was screened 950 times in 116 cities in 32 of Indonesia's 34 provinces. Numerous public screenings were held in Medan, which is the city where both films were made. Not every organization that screened the film could report on how many people attended, but we know that at least 53,000 people went to screenings held by universities, film clubs, NGOs, religious organizations, and community groups. We made the film available for free online and it has now been streamed or downloaded tens of millions of times in Indonesia alone.

As a result, young people started demanding the truth. Survivors of the genocide organized an international people's tribunal, and Indonesian teachers' unions created an alternative history curriculum so that they wouldn't have to continue to teach the false, official version. Initiatives in visual history, theater, art, and human rights sprang up across the country, many of which are still active today.

Historians demanded that the Indonesian and American governments open up their archives to shed light on the role the US played in the genocide, and we supported them by hosting screenings at the White House. Then, on December 10th 2014, Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) — who screened *The Act of Killing* to Congress earlier that year — introduced a Senate resolution demanding that the US declassify all documents pertaining to America's role in the genocide, and that it apologize for America's part in the slaughter. ▶

### The Act of Killing awards



### The Look of Silence awards





On October 18th 2017, the US government released official documents on the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965–1966. The released documents revealed that US diplomats and their State Department counterparts in Washington, D.C. had full knowledge of the events. They detailed tens of thousands of killings of suspected Communist Party members and ethnic Chinese, as well as trade unionists, teachers, activists, and artists. These killings were committed by the Indonesian military, paramilitary groups, and Muslim militias.



**We made the film available for free online and it has now been streamed or downloaded tens of millions of times in Indonesia alone.**

If you want your film to have a real impact, I think it has to force people to see that the world cannot continue in its present form. Many documentaries simply present us with another worthy cause and fail to challenge

the viewer or make them passionate about an issue. Some people might sign a petition or make a donation, but this is not sufficient and can actually close down the conversation. These kinds of documentaries are a missed opportunity and only serve to reassure or congratulate the viewer that they are a good person for simply caring.

The most comfortable explanation for the stories told in *The Act of Killing* is that these men are monsters, because it is predicated on the assumption that “I, the viewer, am not a monster.” Instead, I tried to present the audience with human beings who were wrestling with guilt. I started to see myself in them, and the film asks viewers to do the same. That’s a profoundly uncomfortable position and one that a significant number of people will reject. But those that are prepared to look in the mirror will ask themselves the important questions: why do we do these things and how can we live with them?

That’s why the end of the film is possibly the darkest happy ending in documentary history. You realize that even a man like Anwar, one of the leaders of the death squads back in the 60s, is fundamentally a human being. If that’s the case, then we ought to be able to find ways of living together that ensure the unthinkable violence committed will never happen again. ■



© Final Cut for Real and other respective production studios and distributors

The Act of Killing, 2012

**The Act of Killing distribution and reach**  
The Act of Killing premiered at the Telluride Film Festival in 2012. It went onto screen at festivals in 57 different countries.



Doc Society. “The Act of Killing.” *The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit*, [impactguide.org/static/library/TheActofKilling.pdf](http://impactguide.org/static/library/TheActofKilling.pdf).

Thompson, Anne, and Maggie Lange. “Documentary ‘The Act of Killing’ Premieres at Telluride, Screens at Toronto.” *IndieWire*, Panske Business Media, 31 Aug. 2012. [www.indiewire.com/2012/08/documentary-the-act-of-killing-premieres-at-telluride-screens-at-toronto-2012127](http://www.indiewire.com/2012/08/documentary-the-act-of-killing-premieres-at-telluride-screens-at-toronto-2012127).

**The Act of Killing Indonesian screenings**  
In a sample period from May–August 2013, over 1,000 DVDs were sent out to 118 cities, in 29 of the 34 Indonesian provinces. The organizations and individuals who received DVDs often held screenings of the film.

There were 45 publicly announced screenings on August 17th 2013 (the anniversary of Indonesian Independence Day 1945) in various cities in Indonesia.



Doc Society. “The Act of Killing.” *The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit*, [impactguide.org/static/library/TheActofKilling.pdf](http://impactguide.org/static/library/TheActofKilling.pdf).

**The Indonesian media investigates**  
After watching *The Act of Killing*, Indonesia’s premier news magazine, *Tempo*, decided it would break its silence on the genocide and gather fresh evidence, sending a team around the country looking to find other perpetrators who would talk about their crimes.

As of February 2013, there were more than 600 new Indonesian press articles re-examining the genocide.

The Tempo investigation team:



The result:



Doc Society. “The Act of Killing.” *The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit*, [impactguide.org/static/library/TheActofKilling.pdf](http://impactguide.org/static/library/TheActofKilling.pdf).

**The Look of Silence distribution and reach**  
Not every organization that screened the film informed the filmmakers how many people attended, but 53,000 people are recorded as having attended screenings held by universities, film clubs, NGOs, religious organizations, and community groups.



“The Look of Silence Press Notes.” *The Look of Silence Press Notes*, Human Rights Watch Film Festival, Human Rights Watch, [ff.hrw.org/sites/default/files/films/press\\_kits/TheLookofSilencePressNotes\\_Final\\_2.pdf](http://ff.hrw.org/sites/default/files/films/press_kits/TheLookofSilencePressNotes_Final_2.pdf).

**If we are to transform Indonesia into the democracy it claims to be, citizens must recognize the terror and repression on which our contemporary history has been built. No film, or any other work of art for that matter, has done this more effectively than *The Act of Killing*.**

– The National Human Rights Commission of Indonesia

“The Act of Killing – Reactions.” *The Act of Killing*, [theactofkilling.com/reactions-3/](http://theactofkilling.com/reactions-3/).





© Jeff Gilbert / Alamy Stock Photo

Jess Search (left) and Beadie Finzi (right) encourage young voters in London, 2015

# A Driving Force

Documentary has the power to get inside a person and do something amazing. **Jess Search** discusses how Doc Society unleashes its power and potential.

## Jess Search

CEO of Doc Society and a Board member of Kickstarter



Doc Society is a nonprofit organization that enables the creation of great documentary films.

We award grants, host convenings and celebrate achievements in the space, providing filmmakers with the support to reach new audiences and make a greater impact with their work. From day one in 2005 we have worked to empower artists to make the best version of their films possible, in order to unleash the power and potential of documentary.

One of the ways we try to do this is by consolidating expertise and knowledge and sharing it with the entire field. One of our most groundbreaking resources is *The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit*, a detailed online publication that amalgamates the wisdom and experience of countless amazing filmmakers, all in one place. It is the largest and most significant publication of its kind.



**Our support for filmmakers is hands-on and reactive to their needs.**

*The Impact Field Guide* takes readers through a five-part methodology designed to help artists who want to make real change with their film. It begins with the messages that arise from the film's narrative, and provides a strategic framework to enable planning and delivery of impact and engagement work with the film, ending with an evaluation of the film's impact. Each stage of this process is conveyed in an easy-to-read, accessible format and is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic. To date, it has had over 50,000 unique users. There are also over 20 in-depth case studies accompanying *The Impact Field Guide*, as well as downloadable materials such as a budget template and a tool called "My Impact Plan," where you can save the output of the ▶

**1** The Impact Field Guide five-part methodology



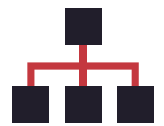
Messaging



Planning



Impact in action



Impact distribution



Evaluation

"The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit: About." *The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit*, Doc Society, 2017, [impactguide.org/about/](http://impactguide.org/about/).



exercises we provide. When we were creating *The Impact Field Guide* we concentrated on looking at the bigger picture, the trends within the field and best practices. We know this information is incredibly valuable to filmmakers, but they are often too busy focusing on their own work to collect it and share it themselves.

Doc Society exists to do collective work on behalf of busy film teams. Filmmakers can accurately report the problems they encounter during the course of their projects, but they're not always in a place to analyze it and propose solutions. That's where an organization like ours can play a vital role, analyzing the landscape and clearing a path to help everyone move forward. When we discover that numerous filmmakers are having similar issues, we try to create systems or tools that give them what they need to overcome these obstacles. This systemic work is, by its nature, iterative. Doc Society doesn't do much long-term planning as our support for filmmakers is hands-on and reactive to their needs.

As an art form, documentary film has a near unrivaled capacity to inspire, educate and change people's understanding of their lives and societies. This is part of the reason why we created Doc Academy — a free, online platform providing schools with access to award-winning documentaries. These films are bolstered by curriculum-linked lesson plans and activities to help teachers communicate real and pressing issues to their students.

Doc Academy is now used in over 25% of secondary schools in Britain, and we're piloting the program in the US and Kenya. Our approach



### You need to understand your film's impact so you can learn how to deepen and replicate it.

is to engage hard-to-reach pupils with real-life content and provide teachers with materials on hard-to-discuss topics that kids are anxious about, all without adding to the teachers' workloads. We've found that it's particularly effective in reaching marginalized students. The films are often about difficult subjects, and these kids make real, meaningful connections with the work because it reflects their own outsider experiences.

These initiatives aside, the process of making a documentary remains a difficult one. There's certainly no right or wrong way to go about it, and no good film is ever made without a huge amount of self-doubt. But for teams that also want to create social impact, having a plan, a committed team and an impact producer embedded in the whole

Citizenfour, 2014



©Participant Media and other respective production studios and distributors

process as early as possible can definitely help. It's important to have clarity on what you're trying to do, but that's different than having a single, set goal; you still need to be flexible. Just as Doc Society is iterative in its methodology, the filmmakers who achieve the most are open and able to adapt quickly too — especially when their films are released into the world and people, communities, and institutions start reacting to them.

We think evaluation of that reaction is incredibly important. You need to understand your film's impact so you can learn how to deepen and replicate it. If you can't tell the story of your film's effect, you'll struggle to learn from it, you'll struggle to build upon it, and you'll struggle to attract the resources and partners that you need for your future projects and for others that come after you. This is why evaluation is a responsibility, not just a nice thing to have.

It's exciting and a privilege to be contributing to a field that's developing so rapidly. Documentary is a broad church — events, podcasts and even live performances can all be part of this space. It's a flexible medium, and we're only just beginning to see how creative it can be.

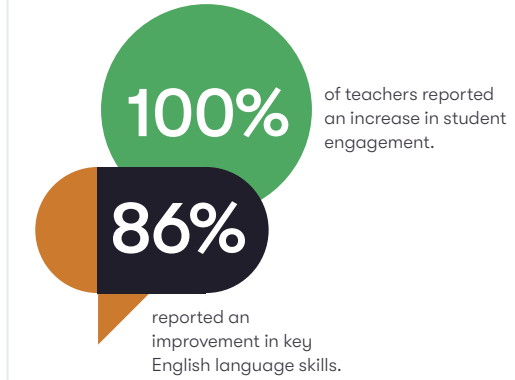
Documentary has the power to get inside a person and do something amazing. We all know films that have really changed us, changed who we are and who we want to be. That's the magic of it. Doc Society works to harness that magic. ■



#### Doc Academy

Doc Academy is the school program of Doc Society, providing free resources for UK secondary school teachers. The online platform offers award-winning documentary films for use in classrooms, and is used in a quarter of all UK secondary schools.

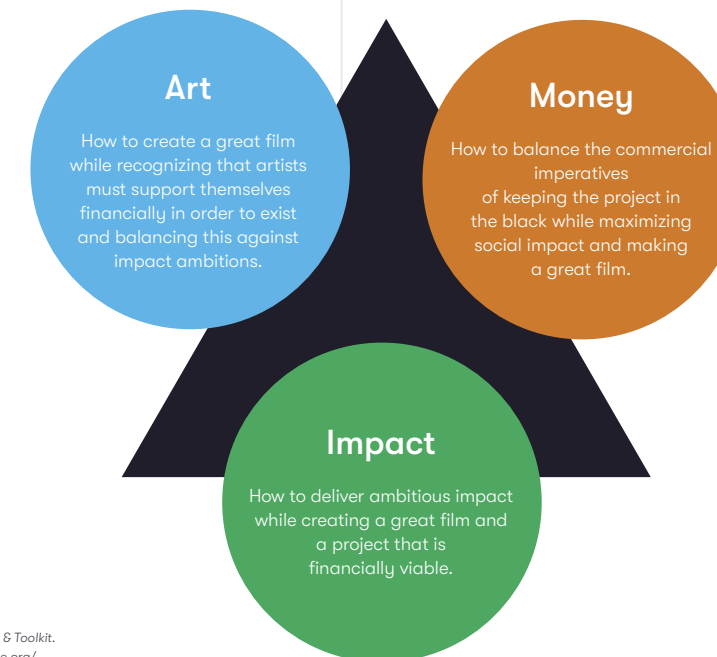
The films provided are bolstered by curriculum-linked lesson plans and activity toolkits to help teach real issues.



— "Doc Academy." Doc Society, docsociety.org/projects/#docacademy.



#### The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit "challenge for filmmakers"



— Doc Society, *The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit*, Doc Society, 2017, p. 36, impactguide.org/.



#### Awards for Doc Society-funded films

**Citizenfour:** Winner, Best Documentary (Feature) at the 2015 Academy Awards®

**Dirty Wars:** Winner, Cinema for Peace Award for Most Valuable Documentary of the Year at the 2014 Cinema for Peace Awards

**The Square:** Winner, Best Feature Award from the International Documentary Association in 2013

**Virunga:** Winner, Peabody Awards 2014

— Petski, Denise. "Citizenfour" Wins Oscar® For Documentary Feature." *Deadline*, Penske Business Media, 22 Feb. 2015, deadline.com/2015/02/citizenfour-wins-oscar-best-documentary-feature-2015-academy-award-winner-1201378635/.

— "Dirty Wars (2013): Awards." *IMDb*, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt2532528/awards?ref\_=tt\_awd.

— McNary, Dave. "The Square" Takes Top Trophy at International Documentary Awards." *Variety*, 6 Dec. 2013, variety.com/2013/film/news/the-square-takes-top-trophy-at-international-documentary-awards-1200927067/.

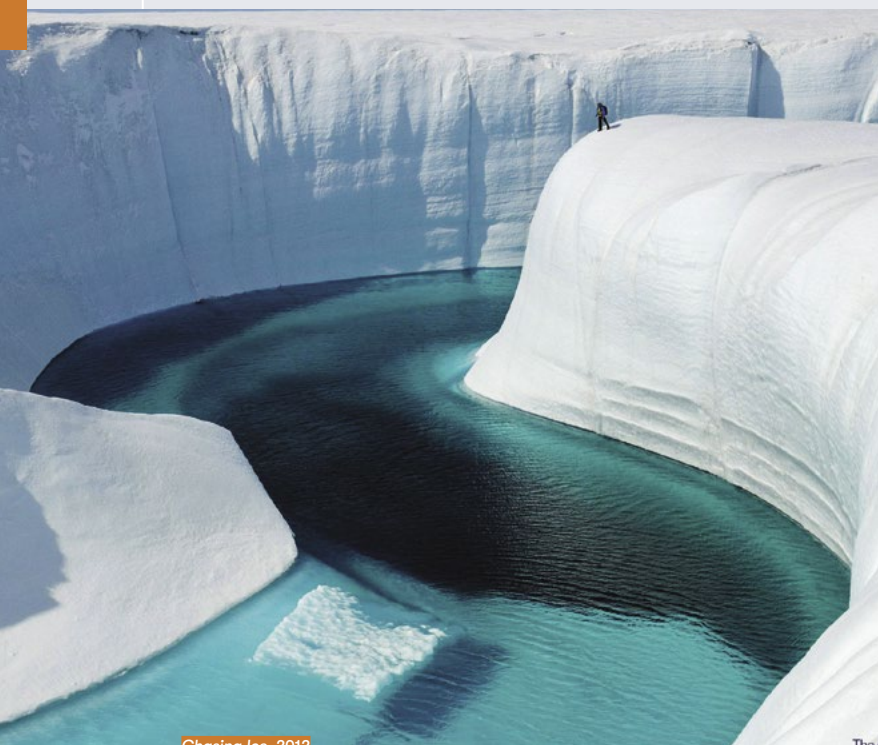
— "Virunga (Netflix)." *Peabody Awards*, www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/virunga.



Case Study

# Chasing Ice Chasing Coral

From changing minds in Ohio to capturing the attention of world leaders at the UN — **Samantha Wright** walks us through the evolution of impact across *Chasing Ice* and *Chasing Coral*.



Chasing Ice, 2012



Chasing Coral, 2017

RATING PG-13  
DATE Nov 16th 2012

RUNNING TIME 01:15

DIRECTED BY Jeff Orlowski

SYNOPSIS Follow *National Geographic* photographer James Balog across the Arctic as he deploys time-lapse cameras designed for one purpose: to capture a multi-year record of the world's changing glaciers.

STARRING James Balog, Svavar Jónatansson, Louie Psihoyos

PRODUCED BY Jerry Aronson, Jeff Orlowski, Paula DuPré Pesmen

RATING PG  
DATE July 14th 2017

RUNNING TIME 01:33

DIRECTED BY Jeff Orlowski

SYNOPSIS Coral reefs around the world are vanishing at an unprecedented rate. A team of divers, photographers, and scientists set out on a thrilling ocean adventure to discover why and to reveal the underwater mystery to the world.

STARRING Richard Vevers, Zackery Rago, Dr. John "Charlie" Veron

PRODUCED BY Jeff Orlowski, Larissa Rhodes

Both images © Everett Collection Inc. / Alamy Stock Photo

## Samantha Wright

Managing Director of Impact at Exposure Labs



### Exposing the issue

The challenge with telling stories around big, complex subjects like climate change is getting beyond the reports, numbers and graphs. You need to make it visually coherent so people can connect the dots and understand the issue. My role at Exposure Labs is to empower people to do that: to be visual, to experiment, and ultimately, to help expose those difficult, entrenched issues. To do this we use an iterative approach, allowing ourselves to make mistakes, to learn, to grow, and to change.

At Exposure Labs we have a simple but ambitious mission: to solve problems through film. We think one of the biggest issues in the US right now is a lack of political will to act on climate change at the speed we need. In response, we make films that highlight specific aspects of the much larger problem — from the melting of the northern ice caps in *Chasing Ice* to the destruction of coral reefs worldwide in *Chasing Coral*. Then, through strategic, local partnerships, we arm audiences with images that help them break down these complex issues. This allows the films to instigate change at a local level. If you try to address a global audience about this type of issue, a lot of the

message can be lost. By focusing on a region, a state, or even just an individual lawmaker, you can get real-world results that can then be scaled up to make a big difference.

### Chasing Ice viewers

*Chasing Ice* has been screened in more than 172 countries and an estimated 15 million viewers tuned into the broadcast of the film via National Geographic, CNN, Vice, Weather Channel, Caught on Camera, and HBO Climate Series for Children.



"Doc Impact Award 2016 – Chasing Ice." Doc Society, docimpactaward.org/films/chasingice.

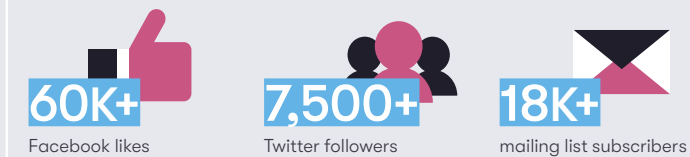
### Chasing Ice, driving change

We learned a lot from *Chasing Ice*. The 2012 documentary initially sought to simply show viewers what was happening in the Arctic Circle, but we were overwhelmed with the response and it became the centerpiece for a much more dynamic campaign.

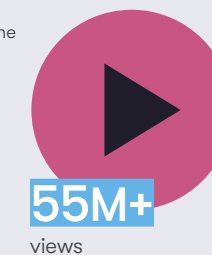
This was when we began to focus on the hyperlocal. We'd been hearing that there were elected officials across the US who believed in man-made climate change, but lacked the political cover to go public with their views. Representative Bob Inglis (R-SC) was unseated in 2010 for just this reason. We knew that if we were going to shift skeptical policymakers we would have to convince their voters. So, we decided to micro-target one district and one congressman: Pat Tiberi, a climate change denier in Ohio. We had this idea that 50 screenings in one place, ▶

### Chasing Ice digital presence

As of 2016, an estimated 1.8 million people had engaged with the film's website.



By the end of 2018, the film's glacier calving video had reached over 55 million views on YouTube.



This event holds the Guinness World Record for the longest as well as the largest glacier calving ever filmed.

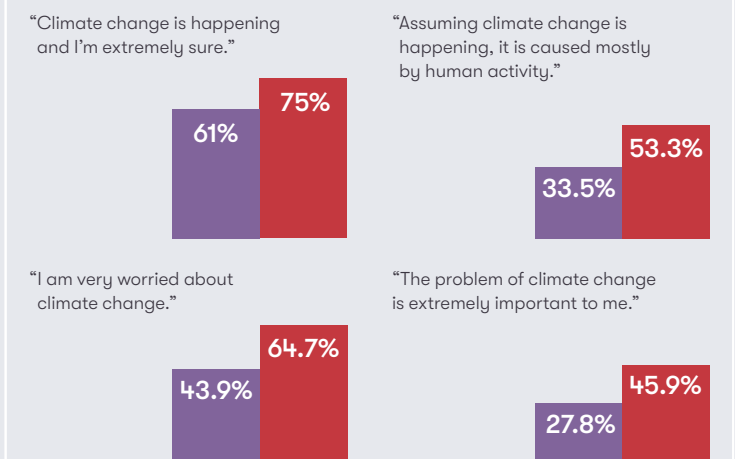
"Doc Impact Award 2016 – Chasing Ice." Doc Society, docimpactaward.org/films/chasingice.

Exposure Labs. "CHASING ICE" captures largest glacier calving ever filmed – OFFICIAL VIDEO." YouTube, 14 Dec. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC3V TgIPoGU.

"Largest glacier calving filmed." Guinness World Records, 2019, www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/383106-largest-glacier-calving-filmed.

### Chasing Ice audience attitude shifts

During early screenings, exit surveys were used to measure the change in attitudes of the skeptical. Results showed a significant shift in their concern around climate change and a desire to adjust their personal behavior, shown by how many viewers agreed with the following statements:



"Doc Impact Award 2016 – Chasing Ice." Doc Society, docimpactaward.org/films/chasingice.



in one community, could go so much further than 50 around the world — and this proved to be right. After six weeks, Congressman Tiberi in Ohio ultimately shifted his position acknowledging that climate change is a man-made problem, and eventually joined the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, working with other representatives to address the risk of climate change.

**Chasing Ice box office**

**\$1.3M+**  
Domestic gross

**Widest release:**  
53 theaters  
**In release:**  
175 days/25 weeks

— "Chasing Ice." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=chasingice.htm.

As we supported *Chasing Ice* in communities around the world, our screenings became more than just basic Q&As. We curated different aspects of the experience — from sending out the invitations, to mediating the discussions, to designing the environments. In key test audiences, we also conducted exit surveys to measure the shifts in mindsets during our events, basing our method on the "Six Americas" framework from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. On average, climate change skeptics

accounted for 37.5% of our audiences; following screenings, these self-identified skeptics left feeling either "cautious" or "concerned" about climate change. One woman even came to a screening with the specific aim of heckling us, and 90 minutes later she was a convert!

**Chasing Coral, building on success**

The approach to engagement for *Chasing Coral* was based on our learnings from *Chasing Ice*. After evaluating the successes of the campaign, and where things could have been done differently, we decided to change it up a little. With *Chasing Ice* our effort was centered around the one experiment we ran in that district in Ohio, so for *Chasing Coral* we focused on a wider area in the Southeast. Again, we were driven by a desire to iterate, to try new things and see what worked. But whereas before we had just one experiment, now the plan was to run a whole series of them across the region, varying our approach from screening to screening.

For our 2018 work for *Chasing Coral*, we ran three local campaigns, each targeting different levers of systems-level change: mobilizing voters, inspiring young people, and shifting policymakers. In Atlanta, Georgia, we mobilized voters in time for the 2018 midterms, using screenings across the city to get to hard-to-reach audiences. In South Carolina, we partnered with the Charleston County School District, using the film as a launchpad for an entire semester of learning that inspired young people to take ownership of our impact on the environment. A separate campaign toured South Carolina across nine state house districts, using screenings

and posters to build support for the state's faltering solar energy plans. By encouraging constituents to post messages on a dedicated website we set up, we were able to hold Republican representatives accountable to support clean energy policy in the legislative session.

**Chasing Coral impact**

In Atlanta, the Mayor's Office of Resilience screened the film in its council chambers and sought community feedback on the city's 100% Clean Energy Plan.



— "Chasing Coral: Year One & Beyond." DocSend, Exposure Labs, docsend.com/view/3rwidwz.

*Chasing Coral* came out in 2017 and we aren't nearly finished with it yet. We've held over 1,500 screenings and the demand hasn't dropped at all, and this is partly because we've been willing to change the formula as we go. This sounds like a lot of work, but the ultimate goal of this approach is to create a set of refined learnings that will help others generate impact of their own. In support of this, Exposure Labs has launched "Unstoppable," a new project that draws from these lessons learned to build an open-source toolkit that will help other campaigners and filmmakers supercharge their climate work.

**Lasting success**

Both films are having an extremely long shelf life. Much of this is down to the homegrown activism that's built around the screenings as a result of that hyperlocal approach we've been taking. With *Chasing Ice*, we wanted to make sure it was fully accessible to all communities wherever it was showing, so the campaign contributed \$100,000 toward ticket giveaways, which were made possible through a private grant. For *Chasing Coral*, we now have many partners who've helped us set up over 1,500 community screenings in more than 100 countries around the world.

The impact of our local strategy has been incredible, and it's been matched with impact at a global level, too. *Chasing Ice* was screened in over 172 countries and earned over \$1.3 million at the box office. More than 15 million viewers have tuned into broadcasts on various networks, as of the end of 2018, the film's famous video of the calving glacier had reached over 55 million views. In 2016 the film even won the prestigious Doc Society Doc Impact Award in recognition of its impact on audiences. Fortunately, *Chasing Coral* is headed in the same direction, with impact donations from 39 countries and 30 awards from 72 festivals.

We've been humbled to show *Chasing Ice* at the White House, while *Chasing Coral* has been screened on Capitol Hill and at the UN Ocean Summit, among many other places. When your films are playing at venues like these, you know you have a chance of making a real difference — and with the power of local champions to back you up, there's nothing that can't be accomplished. ■

**Chasing Ice audience attitude shifts**

At the end of the *Chasing Ice* film campaign tour, the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report was released. Organizing for Action, a nonprofit, had volunteers go to the office of every US Congressperson who denied climate change and present the report. Statements from their offices were also requested. Of the more than 130 Congresspeople who denied climate change, only Congressman Tiberi's team responded:



**A global problem requires a global solution. An effective solution requires that all countries agree to participate together. I would like to see us address climate change in a balanced manner, on as broad a front as possible.**



— "Doc Impact Award 2016 — Chasing Ice." Doc Society, www.docimpactaward.org/films/chasingice.

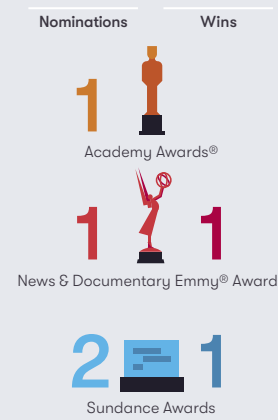
**Chasing Ice digital presence**

In the year that the film premiered (2012), over 20,000 people signed up for the *Chasing Ice* email list, and the film team gathered nearly 15,000 signatures for the first online pledge to commit to personal action combating climate change.



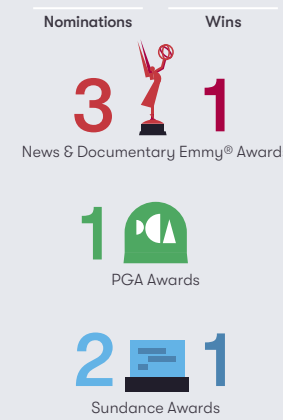
— "Doc Impact Award 2016 — Chasing Ice." Doc Society, www.docimpactaward.org/films/chasingice.

**Chasing Ice awards**



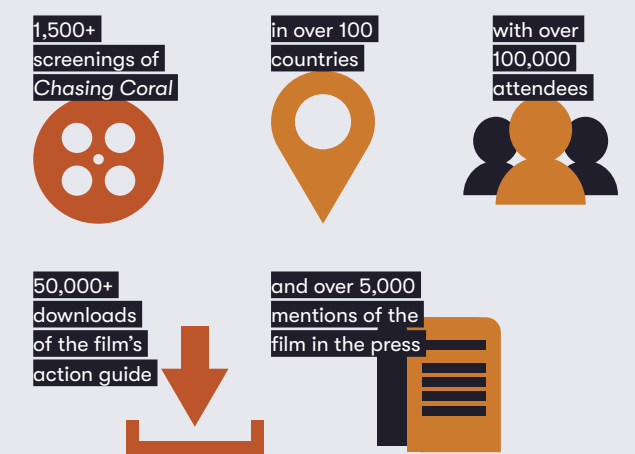
— "Chasing Ice (2012): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt1579361/awards?ref\_=tt\_awd.

**Chasing Coral awards**



— "Chasing Coral (2017): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt6333054/awards.

**Chasing Coral reach**




— "Chasing Coral: Year One & Beyond." DocSend, Exposure Labs, docsend.com/view/3rwidwz.



Spotlight on:

# The Chasing Ice Ohio Tour



The *Chasing Ice* Ohio Tour saw the team at Exposure Labs concentrate their change efforts in one district: Ohio's 12th. The aim was to galvanize the public — through events, screenings, and by striking up local partnerships — and push Congressman Pat Tiberi away from his stance as a listed climate change denier, and toward accepting the reality of the issue.

According to the team orchestrating the campaign, the strategy was to flood the district with “*Chasing Ice* screening events, press and climate education for the public” with the goal being to “support the Congressman through his constituents and provide him with everything he needed to understand and embrace climate change science.” ▶

At the screenings in particular, local residents were afforded a platform to discuss the issues and, if they so wished, reach out to Congressman Tiberi to ask him to reconsider his stance on climate change. The campaign team asked attendees to write any statements, messages or questions to the Congressman to be shared on the web (and eventually on a dedicated website: [www.DearCongressmanTiberi.com](http://www.DearCongressmanTiberi.com)).

The team spent close to three months planning and developing the tour, which included “writing proposals, researching Congressmen and congressional districts, developing educational language, creating a new constituent call to action, building a new website, and designing marketing and media materials.”



## The concerted effort and hyperlocal focus paid off.

After laying this groundwork, they traveled to central Ohio where their plans were put into action. They “booked screening events, built local strategic partnerships throughout the district with over 70 local groups, developed press and media connections, held meetings with the Congressman, and continued to develop the call to action in order to support the Congressman.”

The concerted effort and hyperlocal focus paid off: on April 24th 2014, Congressman Tiberi released a statement acknowledging that climate change was an issue that needed to be tackled. ■

91

screening presentations hosted by the *Chasing Ice* team.

9,440

Ohio residents reached through screening and marketing events.

300+

messages from Ohio residents to Congressman Tiberi.

35+

press articles or event announcements were released about the Ohio Tour between April-May 2014.

70+

partnerships with local venues/organizations.

662

Ohio residents signed up to stay involved with the *Chasing Ice* Ohio Tour.

—  
“Chasing Ice Ohio Tour 2014.” *Dear Congressman Tiberi*, [www.dearcongressmantiberi.com/chasing-ice-ohio-tour-impact-report/](http://www.dearcongressmantiberi.com/chasing-ice-ohio-tour-impact-report/).



# Telling a Good Story

**Elise Pearlstein** elaborates on the importance of using stories to connect with audiences on an emotional level to take them someplace where they wouldn't otherwise go.

## Elise Pearlstein

SVP of Documentary Film and Television at Participant Media



Notable works:  
*Food, Inc.*, *The Price of Free*, *America to Me*

Jeff Skoll founded Participant Media on his belief that a good story, well told, can make a difference and drive people to do good in the world.

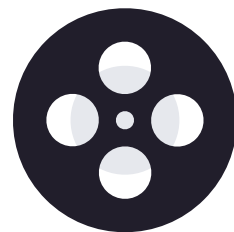
Our approach to documentaries echoes this view and aligns with the organization's overall reason for being: to create entertainment that inspires and compels social change.

There is a misconception that in social impact entertainment the issue must always come first, but when it comes to making documentary films, we always put the story first. Why? Because we look to stories to connect with audiences on an emotional level and take them someplace where they wouldn't or couldn't otherwise go. Entertainment and storytelling are key components of our work, and as such our documentaries strive to offer all the elements that you would expect from a great narrative: characters, drama, conflicts, and stakes.

Typically, the pitches Participant receives are from people with clear visions, strong points of view, and an idea of the impact they want to have. We're benefitting from the opportunity to tell an in-depth story over time. We're not looking



© Participant Media and other respective production studios and distributors



Based on data from 1982 to the present, *An Inconvenient Truth* is the 11th highest-grossing documentary film in the US.

"Documentary Movies at the Box Office." *Box Office Mojo*, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=documentary.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=documentary.htm).

for breaking news or stories that are going to feel outdated in six months. We're looking for projects that are ideally going to hit a zeitgeist 18 months from when they are first pitched to us.



**Audiences do not need or want to be hit over the head with a message.**

Impactful and engaging documentaries often provide a personal entry point that connects with audiences. Audiences do not need or want to be hit over the head with a message, but rather to discover the issues at play through authentic storytelling. So, we look for representatives who will be the best people to tell the story. In *Food, Inc.* Eric Schlosser and Michael Pollan, a pair of investigative journalists, took the lead in steering the audience through the narrative, but every issue we explored within the food industry was also represented by someone who was grappling with that issue themselves.

Carole Morison was a chicken farmer so disillusioned with the way she was forced to treat her animals, she risked her livelihood to expose the truth. Moe Parr was a seed cleaner whose principles brought him into a devastating legal battle with Monsanto: the agrichemical giant sued him for encouraging soybean farmers to save their seed, a traditional practice that contravened Monsanto's patent. By allowing your audience to be with these characters at this crucial time in their journey, the storytelling is much more compelling. There's a sense of immediacy as people connect with the issues you're exploring, and this ultimately means that your documentary can have a greater impact.

A lot of our films feature people who are proactively doing something to combat a very challenging problem, which can prevent the storytelling from becoming demoralizing. Even if it's a David-and-Goliath mismatch where you doubt that the protagonist can actually change anything, the fact that they're trying at all is inspiring. Our most impactful documentaries effectively engage with audiences who will hopefully be inspired to do something about an important issue themselves, and won't be left feeling dejected or wanting to put their heads in the sand. ▶

**An Inconvenient Truth** box office

**\$49M+**  
Worldwide gross

Domestic total gross:  
**\$24,146,161**

Foreign total gross:  
**\$25,610,346**

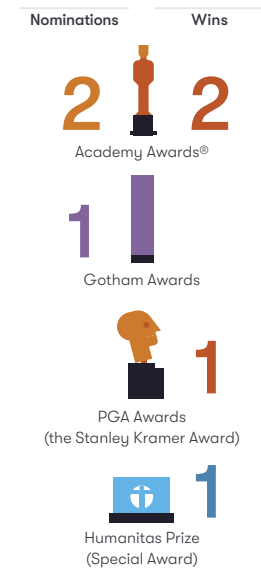
Opening weekend:  
**\$281,330**

Widest release:  
**587 theaters**

In release:  
**163 days/23 weeks**

"An Inconvenient Truth." *Box Office Mojo*, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=inconvenienttruth.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=inconvenienttruth.htm).

**An Inconvenient Truth** awards



"An Inconvenient Truth (2006): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt0497116/awards?ref\\_tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0497116/awards?ref_tt_awd).



Alongside the filmmakers and our colleagues in social impact, we try to ensure that our films offer a range of ways for audiences to engage with the topics they explore.

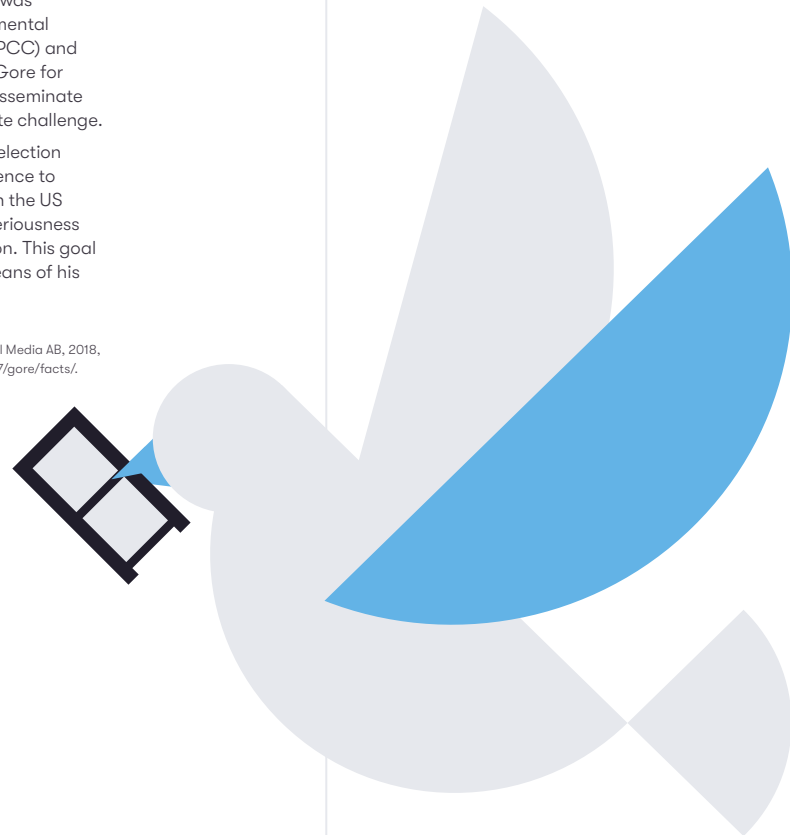


**We believe that opinion change can be a precursor to behavior change further down the line.**

At a base level, we hope they will raise awareness: *Citizenfour* reached over 3 million people worldwide in theaters and won an Academy Award®. The audience couldn't directly do much about the issue of widespread covert surveillance programs and illegal wiretapping, but our impact goal was to start a conversation on a timely, and incredibly important topic. At other times, where possible, we provide our audiences with simple but effective actions they can undertake. *Inconvenient Truth* ends with a list of impactful

**i** The 2007 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and former US Vice President Al Gore for their efforts to obtain and disseminate information about the climate challenge. Having lost the presidential election in 2000, Gore used his influence to increase public awareness in the US and other countries of the seriousness of the environmental situation. This goal he well-nigh achieved by means of his documentary film.

— "Al Gore – Facts." NobelPrize.org, Nobel Media AB, 2018, www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2007/gore/facts/.



things that viewers can do to help address climate change. These ideas range from simple, specific steps like driving less and recycling, all the way up to more involved suggestions such as planting trees, or even running for Congress.

Raising awareness was still a primary goal of *An Inconvenient Truth*, and in this regard it was incredibly successful. A 2008 study from the Pew Research Center suggests that in the months following its release, there was a 9% increase in the number of Americans who believed that human activity was causing climate change. There's also evidence that *An Inconvenient Truth* changed people's behaviors as well as their opinions. Dr. Grant Jakobsen of the University of California, Santa Barbara, found that in the two months after release, zip codes within a 10-mile radius of the film's screenings experienced a 50% relative increase in the purchase of voluntary carbon offsets.

Not everyone is going to change their life or quit their job to fight for an issue, but many will want to engage at some level, especially if it's accessible and easy for them to understand how they can help. Even if the film simply makes them think differently, we believe that opinion



**An Inconvenient Truth**

Filmmaker Davis Guggenheim follows Al Gore on the lecture circuit, as the former presidential candidate campaigns to raise public awareness of the dangers of global warming, and calls for immediate action to curb its destructive effects on the environment.

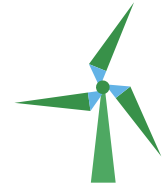
— "An Inconvenient Truth (2006)." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt0497116/.



The credits of *An Inconvenient Truth* included a list of actions, prompting viewers to make a change, including:



If you can, buy a hybrid car.



Switch to renewable sources of energy.



Vote for leaders who pledge to solve this crisis.



Insist that America freeze CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and join international efforts to stop global warming.

— "An Inconvenient Truth (2006)." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt0497116/.

change can be a precursor to behavior change further down the line — and that behavioral change is a form of action in itself. Besides, sometimes just spreading the word about a film is enough: if an issue is at a tipping point, our documentary can help give it the final push.



**Beyond unique ideas, great stories and pure hard work, social impact entertainment demands a delicate balancing act.**

Impact is clearly important to us from day one, but once we greenlight a project, we believe in letting filmmakers work as they see fit. They have the best understanding of the issues, the landscape and the key voices, sensitivities and potential minefields. We usually wait until there is a rough cut of the film before bringing our social impact colleagues back into the process for more detailed conversations about the specific theory

of change; what is actionable out of the film; its potential impacts; possible partnerships; and the execution of a social impact campaign.

There is so much content out there now that filmmakers have to bring something to the table that no one else can. Take *RBG* — an extraordinary documentary about the life and world of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Directors Betsy West and Julie Cohen are wonderful storytellers, but they also put in the hard work to gain Ginsburg's trust and participation. Likewise, many people have approached Nobel Prize-winner Kailash Satyarthi over the years but it was Davis Guggenheim, Derek Doneen and Sarah Anthony, the team who pitched us the idea, that had worked the hardest to gain his trust and win the access needed to tell his story (in *The Price of Free*).

Beyond this trust, beyond unique ideas, great stories and pure hard work, social impact entertainment demands a delicate balancing act. Your film and your social impact campaign are artforms in and of themselves, yet they are also two halves of the same whole. These elements must be equally well-executed and they must work in harmony with each other if you want to have not only a successful film, but also an impactful one. ■



**Citizenfour**

*Citizenfour* is a real-life thriller, giving audiences unprecedented access to filmmaker Laura Poitras and journalist Glenn Greenwald's encounters with Edward Snowden, in Hong Kong, as he hands over classified documents providing evidence of mass indiscriminate and illegal invasions of privacy by the National Security Agency.

— "Citizenfour – About." citizenfour.com, citizenfourfilm.com/about.



**Citizenfour box office**



**Domestic total gross:**  
**\$2,800,870**

**Foreign total gross:**  
**\$202,299**

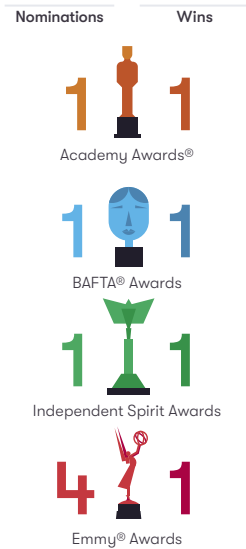
**Opening weekend:**  
**\$126,321**

**Widest release:**  
**105 theaters**

— "Citizenfour." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=citizenfour.htm.



**Citizenfour awards**



— "Citizenfour (2014): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt404364/awards.





# Sparking the Imagination

Vision is a fundamental driver of social change. **Tabitha Jackson** argues that in order to create a different future, we must first be able to see it.

## Tabitha Jackson

Director of the Documentary Film Program at the Sundance Institute



Imagination is key when it comes to social change.

We have to be able to imagine what a different and better world could look like in order for it to be realized. If you can spark people's imaginations with great work, you can guide them in the direction of behavior change. That's why our vision at the Sundance Institute is to advance independent artists to become a global, cultural force.

When he founded Sundance in 1981, Robert Redford was looking for an alternative channel for the independent voice in film. He was trying to enhance freedom of creative expression and get work made that wasn't seen as commercially viable by the studios at that time.

Today, we work to discover, support, protect, and amplify independent artists working in film,

theater, and emerging technologies. I see our role as providing nutrition for the soil where these filmmakers can sprout and develop to become strong on their own. Since 2002, our Documentary Film Program has supported nonfiction filmmakers across the world. Whether it's our residential labs, festivals or year-round artist support, everything we do is about trying to create a catalytic space for imaginative possibility. As of December 2018, we awarded \$1.4 million in targeted Documentary Fund grants to support nonfiction storytellers. 70% of our supported projects were helmed by women, 36% originated outside the US, and 23% were from first-time feature filmmakers.



**I believe impact is almost synonymous with audience and distribution.**

Over the course of Sundance's three-and-a-half decades, culture has shifted. I don't attribute that entirely to us of course, but the Institute has ▶

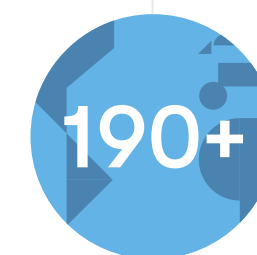
### 2018 Sundance Film Festival submission and selection numbers

Approximately 200 feature length and short films are selected each year. The festival also presents panels, music programming and the New Frontier exhibition of new media work.

For the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, there were:



film submissions



countries



attendees

"Sundance Institute Fact Sheet." Sundance Institute, 2018. [www.sundance.org/pdf/about/sundance-institute-fact-sheet-2018.pdf](http://www.sundance.org/pdf/about/sundance-institute-fact-sheet-2018.pdf).

**I Am Not Your Negro** box office



**Opening weekend:** \$686,378

**Widest release:** 320 theaters

**In release:** 126 days/18 weeks

"I Am Not Your Negro." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=iarnotyournegro.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=iarnotyournegro.htm).

**I Am Not Your Negro** awards



"I Am Not Your Negro (2016): Awards." IMDb, 2019. [www.imdb.com/title/tt5804038/awards?ref=tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5804038/awards?ref=tt_awd).



The Act of Killing, 2012



certainly contributed. By programming certain films at our festival, which is our largest mouthpiece, we've helped spark discussion with projects dealing with gay and transgender rights, climate change and native and indigenous stories, to name just a few.

Because of this, I believe impact is almost synonymous with audience and distribution. If you can get your work in front of the right audience and stimulate people's imaginations, a large majority of the work is done. But distribution in particular can't just be commercially driven — you have to have non-theatrical, educational, and community-based screenings and events if you want to have impact.

However, what often gets lost in conversations about social impact films is the fact that creating meaningful, long-term value change is challenging work. There is no "silver bullet." The role of film needs to be contextualized with other cultural forces.

Personally, I'm trying to understand what the world is on my journey to imagining what it *might* be.

The use of art and metaphor can express deep truths about the human condition, so while one film might not necessarily be able to change the world, it can certainly help make sense of it. That's why at Sundance, we want to sustain artists who describe the world accurately and honestly, in all its complexity. We look to support artists whose work holds power to account and, particularly at this moment in time, helps build a shared discourse. Those artists need to be responsible too; we live in a visual culture and as such, images wield power. This means filmmaking can be a positive force for change, but it also comes with responsibility — not to unthinkingly perpetuate a history of racist imagery, for example.



**I'm trying to understand what the world is on my journey to imagining what it *might* be.**



***I Am Not Your Negro***

Filmmaker Raoul Peck envisions the book James Baldwin never finished, *Remember This House*. The result is a radical, up-to-the-minute examination of race in America, using Baldwin's original words and flood of rich archival material. *I Am Not Your Negro* is a journey into black history that connects the past of the civil rights movement to the present of #BlackLivesMatter.

The role and responsibility of the artist is to be truthful, independent, and to let their individual voice come through. Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro*, one of the documentaries supported by our program, exemplifies the power of a story told with authenticity. The film envisions novelist James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript, *Remember This House*. The book was intended to be a personal account of the lives and assassinations of Baldwin's friends, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The film is something very different but still richly poetic and political.

Peck's film confounded the industry box office predictions which, given the work's African American subject matter and historical, biographical nature, were pessimistic. *I Am Not Your Negro* blew everyone's expectations out of the water because it provides a fierce, unapologetic commentary about the way we live now. The film asked questions and that's what a documentary should do. Rather than provide all the answers, nonfiction film is an invitation to think, feel and participate.

I believe there are transformative films and transactional films. With the latter, you go to the cinema to see something that confirms what you already know. You pay your money, reinforce your liberal sensibilities and go on your way without being troubled by any doubt or question as to where your opinions come from.

Transformative films move us emotionally and make us question ourselves. Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing*, which exposes the mass executions of accused communists in Indonesia, forced me to find my own moral compass because it didn't give me any answers. Now I see the world slightly differently because I was forced to do that imaginative work.

Ultimately, I want to be changed after emerging from seeing a work. That's why I love being questioned. For me, the questions and the possibilities that allow for imaginative intervention will always be more interesting than someone just telling me the answers. ■



**The Sundance Institute**

The Sundance Institute's artist programs provide support at every step of the creative journey for individuals with distinct voices in film, theater, film composing, episodic storytelling, and emerging platforms.

Each program consists of labs, grants, workshops, and ongoing resources for artists to nurture their projects, and sustain their careers.

Each year, the Institute's residential labs support more than 1,000 independent artists working in film, theater, new media, and episodic content (TV/online). Each artist is given critique, mentorship, and support to realize his or her creative vision, in an environment where risk-taking is encouraged. Each lab ranges from four to 24 days.

—  
"Programs Overview." Sundance Institute, 2018, [www.sundance.org/create/overview](http://www.sundance.org/create/overview).  
"Sundance Institute Fact Sheet." Sundance Institute, 2018, [www.sundance.org/pdf/about/sundance-institute-fact-sheet-2018.pdf](http://www.sundance.org/pdf/about/sundance-institute-fact-sheet-2018.pdf).

**11,000+**

artists supported by the Institute's programs.

**10,000+**

submissions sent to the Institute's labs annually.

**14**

public workshops hosted in 2018 — on topics including creative distribution, short filmmaking, documentary film editing, and more.

**28**

residential labs across the US and internationally.

**\$3.1M+**

in grants to independent artists.



© Velvet Film/Entertainment Pictures



*I Am Not Your Negro*, 2016



# Survival Stories

Social impact documentaries can offer hope amidst a landscape of doomsday narratives and despair. According to **James Redford**, they can quite literally save lives.

## James Redford

Serial storyteller, social change filmmaker, Co-Founder of KPJR Films and Chair of The Redford Center



Notable works:  
*Paper Tigers, The Kindness of Strangers*

My interest in social impact filmmaking had a uniquely personal start.

After surviving two liver transplants in the early 90s, I re-emerged with a stark awareness that there were many myths and misconceptions surrounding organ donation that were impeding broader acceptance of life-saving procedures. As a result, I founded the James Redford Institute

for Transplant Awareness to educate, engage, and inspire a wider acceptance of organ donation. It was this mission that inspired me to make *The Kindness of Strangers*, my first HBO documentary, and led to the start of my work on social impact campaigns.

*The Kindness of Strangers* was made on a budget of just \$600,000. We told the story without narration, just following the experiences of people on either side of the process — donors, recipients and their families. Looking back, the project was at the leading edge of a shift in public acceptance of organ donation. The most rewarding aspect of our impact campaign was the family that saw the film shortly before a tragic accident left their son with a fatal brain injury. After seeing *The Kindness of Strangers*, they donated his organs and, as a result, saved seven lives.

That experience encapsulates the mission I've adopted: I want to transform information into inspiration, using my love of film to drive positive change. I spent 20 years writing screenplays for feature films and, thanks to that experience, I also know that to make this change you need to find relatable and inspiring subjects.

This is the strategy we embrace at The Redford Center, a nonprofit co-founded by my father and I in 2005 that supports impact-driven documentaries. We are focused on solutions-based storytelling in the environmental space. The last decade has seen the proliferation of important and powerful documentaries that bring attention to environmental challenges — particularly the challenges of climate change. However, the plethora of doomsday narratives has had an unintended effect: denial and disengagement.



**For us, documentary films are a core component of a much larger vision to produce effective social impact campaigns.**

Frankly, if the overarching message is one of hopelessness and despair, denial seems a reasonable response. So, while the films we make and support deal with environmental problems, we try to offer solutions as well. For example, in *Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution*, I take a very personal journey into the clean energy ▶



### *The Kindness of Strangers*

In 1993, after undergoing two liver transplants in six months at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, James Redford wanted to give back to the transplant community. Together with his best friend from childhood, Maro Chermayeff, he set off to create a touching film that follows people on the transplant waiting list and their families, along with the families of the deceased, whose organs are donated. In showing the human side of this medical miracle, Redford raises awareness about this serious issue.



### *Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution*

Filmmaker Redford embarks on a colorful personal journey into the dawn of the clean energy era as it creates jobs, turns profits, and makes communities stronger and healthier across the US. Reaching beyond a story of technology and innovation, *Happening* explores issues of human resilience, social justice, embracing the future, and finding hope for our survival.



The *Happening* website describes tangible ways to get involved with the sustainability movement, from becoming a solar champion, to offsetting your carbon emissions through the nonprofit Cool Effect, which works via 11 global sustainability projects.

— "Happening – Take Action," *Happening The Movie*, The Redford Center, [happeningthemovie.com/take-action/](http://happeningthemovie.com/take-action/).

*Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution, 2017*

© Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution Trailer, Vimeo, uploaded by The Redford Center, 2017, vimeo.com/204483770



space to see how it's creating jobs, turning profits and affecting communities across the US.

This solutions-based strategy is also echoed in the work of KPJR Films, a production company that I co-founded with producer Karen Pritzker. KPJR's take on this approach is to take challenging social issues and to break them down in a way that people can understand. As with The Redford Center, we see documentary film as a tool for positive change. For us, documentary films are a core component of a much larger vision to produce effective social impact campaigns for use by those working at the frontlines of social action. We enjoy supporting those who have boots on the ground, working hard to better our lives.

When developing our projects, both The Redford Center and KPJR Films seek guidance and input from the communities whose outreach efforts could benefit from high-quality media tools. While we often partner with HBO, we also focus on community screenings that trigger dialogue and open doors to action at the local and occasionally national level.



Resilience, 2016

© Resilience Trailer - KPJR Films, Vimeo, uploaded by KPJR Films LLC, 2016, vimeo.com/137262528

For example, KPJR's campaigns for *Paper Tigers* and *Resilience* — films conceived to address the health risks of adverse childhood experiences — have become textbook examples of the power of stories to drive community engagement. We consulted the global pediatric and public health communities early and often as we planned the films. We wanted to make sure we produced films that met the needs of those already working so hard in the space who could use them to drive better practices and policy. It's important to invest in long-term relationships with a sincere, open heart. Too many NGOs get used for access to stories and characters and are then promptly forgotten, which can not only burn bridges but also prevent progress.

Three years after the start of our social impact campaigns for both films, we are a part of a great community that supports and helps each other. The results speak for themselves: there have been 40,000 screenings of *Resilience* and *Paper Tigers* worldwide, resulting in changes in policy in a number of US states as well as Scotland. All of this without a traditional broadcast deal, and all of it by word of mouth and direct, grassroots marketing.



**I see impact docs as an emergent genre that will expand over the next decade.**

For some documentary filmmakers, not being central to the entertainment industry might feel problematic, but if your goal is to truly make a difference, this shouldn't be an issue. With the advent of new and flexible platforms for distribution, I see impact docs as an emergent genre that will expand over the next decade. Some films will have crossover entertainment value, but most will become the third leg on the stool of socio-environmental impact and education. In this increasingly audio-visual world we live in, social impact entertainment will continue to spread and grow. There is the demand, there is the market — and that's good for those of us that believe that the right story can move mountains. ■



**Paper Tigers**

*Paper Tigers* follows a year in the life of an alternative high school that has radically changed its approach to disciplining its students. The school has developed a promising model for how to break the cycles of poverty, violence, and disease that affect families.



**Resilience**

*Resilience: The Biology of Stress & The Science of Hope* chronicles the birth of a new movement among pediatricians, therapists, educators, and communities, who are using cutting-edge brain science to disrupt cycles of violence, addiction, and disease.



**The Redford Center**

The Redford Center is a 501(c)(3) organization co-founded by Robert Redford and his son and board chair James Redford. Drawing on the family's multi-generational expertise in filmmaking and activism, the nonprofit produces, funds, and fiscally sponsors impact-driven documentaries that showcase stories of individuals taking action to protect the planet.

It collaborates with diverse groups of change-making organizations to develop community engagement campaigns that spark conversation and lead to action.

Redford Center Grants also provide early-stage funding to independent media makers telling hopeful stories that drive awareness, education, and tangible action on a variety of environmental topics.

— "About Us," *The Redford Center*, 2018, [redfordcenter.org/about-us](http://redfordcenter.org/about-us).



**Redford Center grants**

In 2018, The Redford Center launched a second cycle of Redford Center Grants supported by the New York Community Trust. The program welcomed applications from filmmakers working on feature-length documentary films focused on environmental issues and solutions in the US.

Each filmmaking team chosen received the following support:



A \$20,000 development grant to create a short proof-of-concept film in a six-month timeframe that can be used to support the fundraising, outreach, and production of their feature film.



A travel and lodging grant to attend a Story Development Summit at the Sundance Mountain Resort.



A GoPro Camera and Tech Kit, along with expert support for their filmmaking.



Fast-track consideration to be fiscally sponsored by The Redford Center for a production grant in year two to support the feature film.

— "Redford Center Grants," *The Redford Center*, 2018, [redfordcenter.org/for-filmmakers/grants-program](http://redfordcenter.org/for-filmmakers/grants-program).



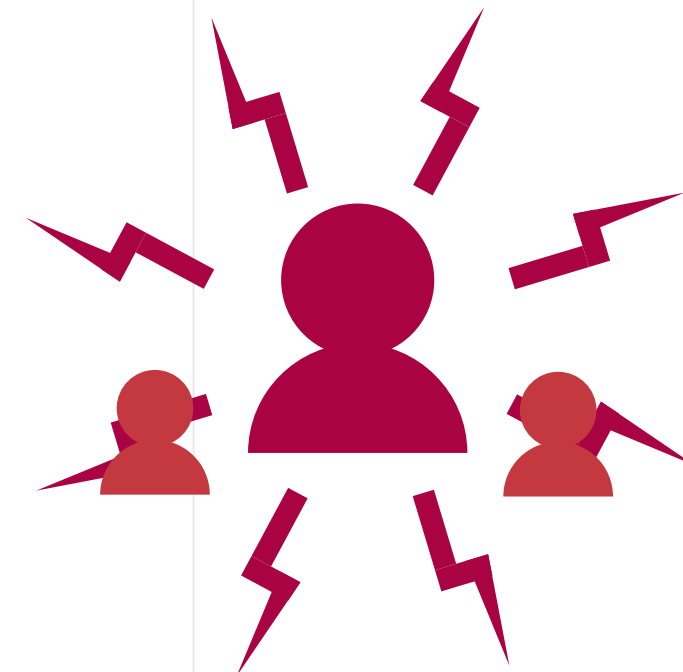
**Adverse Childhood Experiences Study**

*Resilience* looks at the birth of the CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study.

Researchers have discovered a dangerous biological syndrome caused by abuse and neglect during childhood. As *Resilience* reveals, toxic stress can trigger hormones that wreak havoc on the brains and bodies of children, putting them at a greater risk for disease, homelessness, incarceration, and early death.

While the broader impacts of poverty worsen the risk, no segment of society is immune. *Resilience*, however, also chronicles the dawn of a movement that is determined to fight back. Trailblazers in pediatrics, education, and social welfare are using cutting-edge science and field-tested therapies to protect children from the insidious effects of toxic stress.

— "Resilience - About The Film," *KPJR Films*, [kpjr-films.co/resilience/about-the-film/](http://kpjr-films.co/resilience/about-the-film/).





Case Study

# Food, Inc.

Social impact entertainment can be an incredible force for change. However, for that change to be quantified and proven, it's essential we understand how to measure impact, explains **Johanna Blakley**.



Food, Inc., 2009

© Magnolia Pictures

RATING  
PG

DATE  
June 12th 2009

RUNNING TIME  
01:34

SYNOPSIS  
An unflattering look inside America's corporate-controlled food industry.

STARRING  
Michael Pollan,  
Eric Schlosser,  
Richard Lobb

DIRECTED BY  
Robert Kenner

PRODUCED BY  
Robert Kenner,  
Elise Pearlstein

## Johanna Blakley

Managing Director of the Norman Lear Center, based at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California



### The genesis of the study

Since its inception in 2000, the Norman Lear Center at USC has provided students and scholars with the means to study and research the social implications of entertainment and media. One of our inaugural initiatives, Hollywood, Health and Society (HH&S), embodies the type of work we do — connecting television showrunners with medical experts and resources to help inform health-related storylines. HH&S ensures that while being entertained, audiences also learn and are provided with accurate and potentially useful medical information.



**There was already a real belief that this film had an impact on those who saw it, but it was our job to prove it.**

The Media Impact Project — also housed within the Lear Center — collects, develops and shares methods for measuring impact. It was founded as part of our effort to expand to platforms beyond TV. When we first started, we knew that we wanted to work with Participant Media because of their incredible presence in this space, so we were thrilled when they asked us to measure the impact of one of their titles.

*Food, Inc.* was the perfect candidate for many reasons. It prompted viewers to make simple behavior changes in their everyday lives and it encouraged them to effect broader social change by engaging local school administrators and policymakers. It had an extensive social impact campaign, the Hungry for Change outreach effort organized by Participant's digital arm, and it had a director, Robert Kenner, who had been traveling with the film and engaging communities of action across the US.

There was already a real belief that this film had an impact on those who saw it, but it was our job to prove it. We sought to understand whether there was any shift in the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of viewers that could be attributed to their viewing of *Food, Inc.* When you consider some of our results — like the fact that 84% of viewers said “this film changed my life,” or that 80% of viewers indicated a willingness to join a movement to reform agribusiness — you can start to build an incredibly strong case for the film's impact. If you take a look at the matched control group findings, that case becomes even more compelling.

### Controlling for self-selection bias

Media effect studies have long suffered from not having control groups. I really think that they should be instituted as a best practice in all media impact evaluations, and our study of *Food, Inc.* is a clear example of their value and importance.

When setting out to study the film's impact, we knew that we would likely be working with a highly self-selected sample. Respondents to the survey answered our call because they were already signed up to Participant's email newsletter, or had engaged with Participant on social channels. Naturally, this population would be more likely to say that a film like *Food, Inc.* had changed their lives, so finding a control group was essential.

The Lear Center developed an innovative survey instrument that would assess the impact of *Food, Inc.* on its viewers while considering these issues of self-selection bias. We used a method called propensity score matching (PSM) to help determine whether the different results that we saw between viewers and non-viewers were associated with watching *Food, Inc.*, rather than pre-existing differences between these two groups. Simply put: PSM allowed us to say, with a much greater degree of confidence, whether the differences between viewers and non-viewers in knowledge, behaviors and attitudes were attributable to the film.

Sure enough, the differences we uncovered between viewers and non-viewers (or the exposed group and the control group) suggested that with *Food, Inc.* there was a very, very powerful media intervention. We found that it was more likely that people who had seen the film were shopping at farmers' markets ▶



### Food, Inc. box office

**\$4.6M+**  
Worldwide gross

Domestic total gross:  
\$4,417,674

Foreign total gross:  
\$188,525

Opening weekend:  
\$60,513

Widest release:  
155 theaters

In release:  
168 days/24 weeks

"Food, Inc." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=foodinc.htm.



### Food, Inc. awards



"Food, Inc. (2008): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt1286537/awards?ref\_=tt\_awd.



and eating healthy food, were more knowledgeable about genetically modified foods and sustainable agriculture, and were more engaged in organized efforts around tackling issues in agribusiness.

### The self-reported impact

This is not to say, however, that nothing can be learned from self-reported changes in knowledge or attitudes. Over two-thirds of respondents said they learned “a lot” or “very much” about issues ranging from agricultural policies to food



**It’s clear that much of the data we need to measure impact is out there, and we have the chance to do this work better than ever before.**

safety. 79% of viewers agreed that *Food, Inc.* explained what they could do to help solve the problems addressed in the film, and 80% said that, having watched the film, they would consider joining a social movement to reform agribusiness. This last statistic became even more impressive when we noted that only 37% of respondents actually considered themselves to be politically active.

### The importance of “scaffolding”

Documentary is clearly a powerful tool for motivating social change, but it may not be enough on its own. You also need a supportive infrastructure outside of your media intervention — a social impact campaign, for example. This “scaffolding” will offer ways to carry on the conversation after watching the film, channel audience energies and bring people together to take action, both online and off. Without this, you’ll be left with a motivated but disappointed population — eager to act, but unsure of what to do. This scaffolding should already be in place before audiences see the film.

As part of the Hungry for Change campaign, Participant’s digital team built a robust website where people could find out more about the huge environmental impact of the food industry, from pesticide usage to factory farming. There were links to petitions they could sign to combat these issues, and detailed information about the steps they could take to reduce their own tacit support of an industrialized food system. There was also information about how to arrange local screenings of the film and downloadable discussion guides to help stimulate conversation in the community. These two resources in particular helped to build a strong grassroots activism component around the film.

### Theorizing change, measuring impact

Measuring impact is never going to be easy, but I think there are three categories of data that, if collected, can allow us to make very convincing arguments about what a piece of media can lead people to do.



Food, Inc., 2009

The first is content analysis. Starting off with a clear understanding of the content in a media intervention is key. Whether it’s a single documentary film or 32 episodes of scripted TV, we carefully analyze the content, including the language used, factual information shared, calls to action, as well as the tone and narrative framing.

The second is exposure and engagement data. If the media is available on a digital platform, we can gather data about who was exposed to the content and how they interacted with it. Did they watch the whole thing? Did they share it? We always encourage content creators to provide opportunities for people to take further action on the same platform, such as donating or joining a mailing list, so that we can draw a clear connection between exposure and taking action.

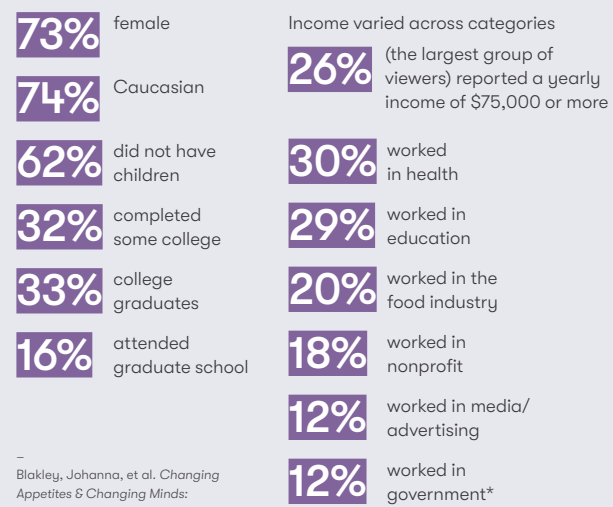
The third is survey data. If we want to know whether media content produced changes in awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and offline behavior then we need to gather survey data. Ideally, these surveys can be administered on the same digital platform where people consumed the media content. Then we have a very clear picture of what content people consumed, how they engaged with it and what potential impact it had.

It’s clear that much of the data we need to measure impact is out there, and we have the chance to do this work better than ever before. But there’s a growing (and completely warranted) concern around the misuse and abuse of data that could stymie our progress on this front. I think it will be difficult for academics, institutions, and organizations to win back people’s trust in this regard, but we have to — especially because we’re finally waking up to how crucial an impact media is having on our society. ■

### Media Impact Project survey for Food, Inc.

The Media Impact Project survey offered a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data on the impact of *Food, Inc.* 20,000 respondents took the survey.

*Food, Inc.* viewer demographics (based on survey respondents):

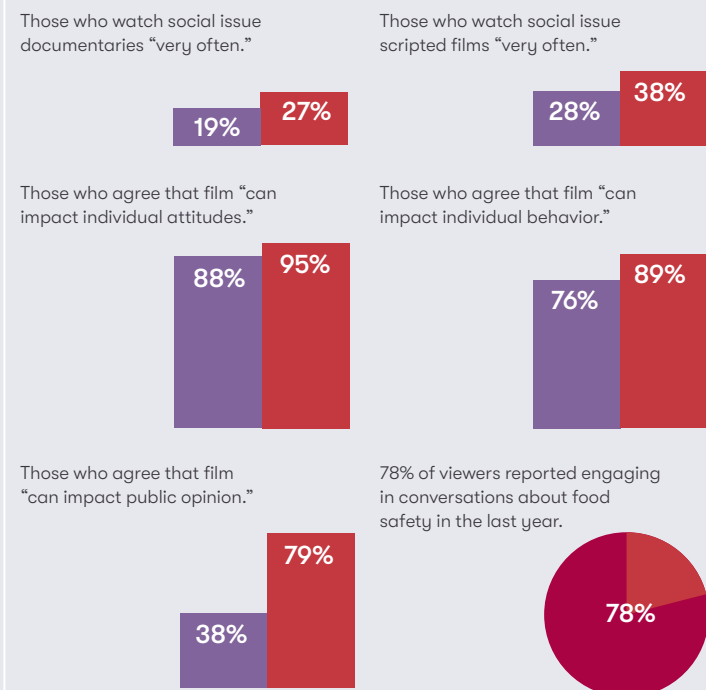


\*This was a check-all-that-apply question and these were all the options.

Blakley, Johanna, et al. *Changing Appetites & Changing Minds: Measuring the Impact of Food, Inc.* Media Impact Project, USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. [www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf](http://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf).

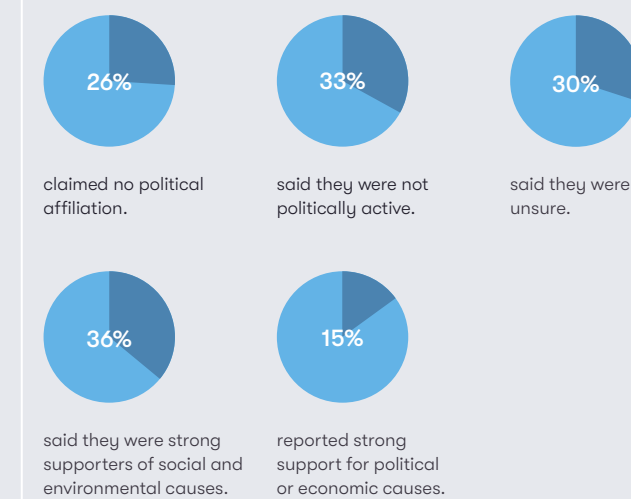
### Food, Inc. media exposure and preferences

Viewers frequently watched social issue documentaries and feature films:



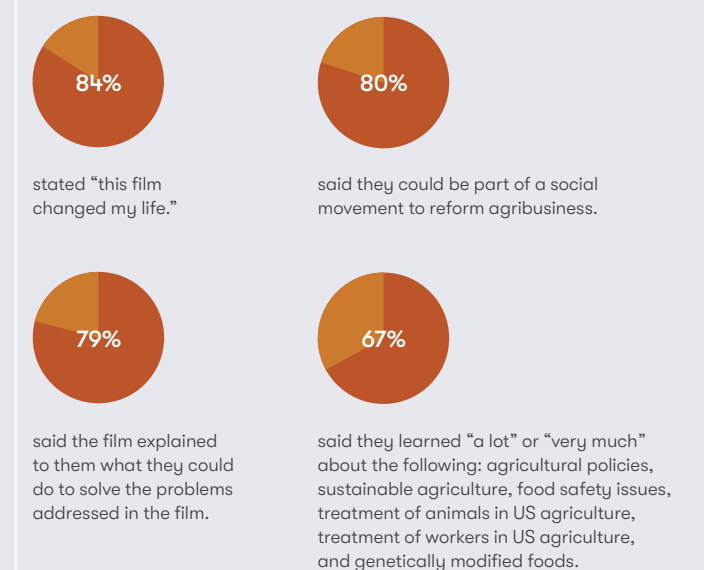
Blakley, Johanna, et al. *Changing Appetites & Changing Minds: Measuring the Impact of Food, Inc.* Media Impact Project, USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. [www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf](http://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf).

### Food, Inc. viewers’ political views



Blakley, Johanna, et al. *Changing Appetites & Changing Minds: Measuring the Impact of Food, Inc.* Media Impact Project, USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. [www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf](http://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf).

### Food, Inc. viewers’ self-reported changes in knowledge and attitudes

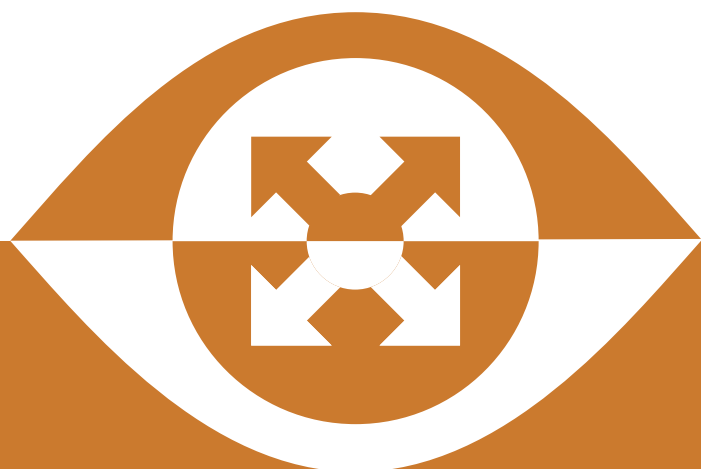


Blakley, Johanna, et al. *Changing Appetites & Changing Minds: Measuring the Impact of Food, Inc.* Media Impact Project, USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. [www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf](http://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/food-inc-summary-report.pdf).



Spotlight on:

# Propensity Score Matching



By and large, the majority of people choose the films they see based on personal taste and interests. As such, researchers looking to study the impact of a given title will almost always have to deal with a certain bias. The research done at USC's Lear Center was no different. To try and overcome this bias, however, they developed a unique survey instrument: propensity score matching (PSM).

"In this study, propensity score matching (PSM) techniques were used to control for self-selection bias among survey respondents. PSM helped identify factors that predict the likelihood of a person seeing *Food, Inc.* The Lear Center's research team performed a statistical analysis of survey responses from all the respondents who watched *Food, Inc.*, and determined what personal characteristics increased their likelihood — or propensity — to see the film.

We used these characteristics to generate a propensity score for survey respondents who had seen the film, and those who had not. People with all 17 of these characteristics received the highest score and those with the fewest received the lowest. However, just because someone has a high score does not mean that they have seen the film — it just makes it more likely that they have seen it. Therefore, a person with a very high score may not have seen the film yet, and a person with a very low score may have seen it despite themselves (for instance, a teacher may have screened the film in a class where students with low scores saw it). ▶

Once scores were assigned, we created two groups: people who had watched *Food, Inc.* and those who had not. Next we compared the range of scores in each group and then performed 'one-to-one matching,' which allowed us to use an automated method to remove subjects from each group until both groups were composed of the same number of respondents with the same range of propensity scores (e.g., each person who saw the film was paired with a person who did not see the film, but was equally likely to see the film based on their propensity scores). The salient difference between the two groups was whether or not they had viewed *Food, Inc.*

This method allowed us to create something similar to an experimental study design where subjects are randomly assigned to a control group and a treatment group. Here, the "treatment" group is comprised of those who had seen *Food, Inc.*, and the "control" group is comprised of those who had not seen the film but were equally likely to. By making these groups completely parallel, we were able to examine whether differences in knowledge and behavior are attributable to exposure to the film." ■

Viewers with a high propensity to watch *Food, Inc.* shared 17 characteristics:



#### Demographics:

1. No child
2. Not working in the media industry
3. Slightly more likely to work in education



#### Media exposure:

- Recalls seeing information about food safety on:
4. TV
  5. News websites
  6. Radio
  7. Visited the Hungry for Change website

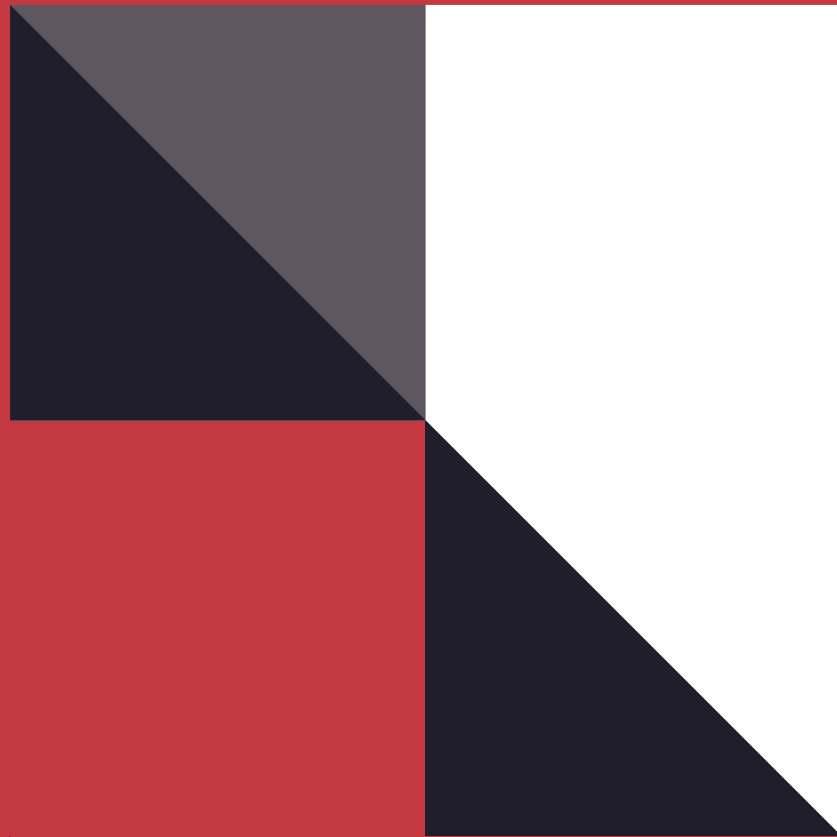


#### Ideology and taste:

8. Democratic affiliation
9. Believes that sustainable agriculture is important
10. Supports organized efforts to improve food safety/sustainable agriculture
11. Frequently watches social issue feature films
12. Frequently watches social issue documentaries
13. Believes that a film can impact:
  13. Individual attitudes
  14. Individual behavior
  15. Media coverage
16. Watched *An Inconvenient Truth*
17. Watched *Fast Food Nation*



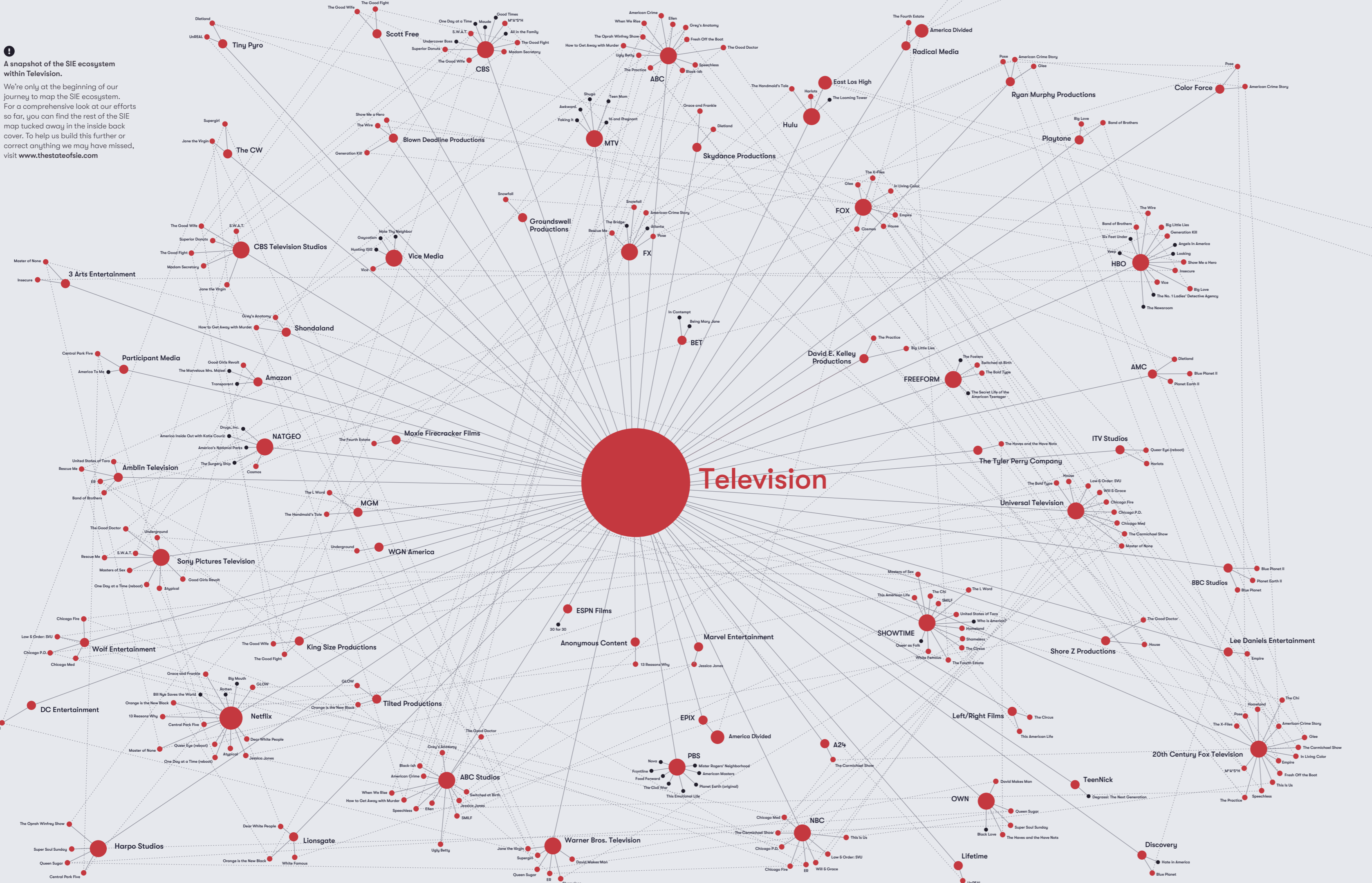
# Television





**i** A snapshot of the SIE ecosystem within Television.

We're only at the beginning of our journey to map the SIE ecosystem. For a comprehensive look at our efforts so far, you can find the rest of the SIE map tucked away in the inside back cover. To help us build this further or correct anything we may have missed, visit [www.thestateofsie.com](http://www.thestateofsie.com)



Since its creation in the mid-20th century, television has become one of the most versatile and widely consumed forms of entertainment media. For social impact storytellers, TV offers a means to bring powerful ideas directly into people's homes.

In the digital age, the rise of over-the-top content providers has had a dramatic, transformative effect on how TV shows are made, distributed, and watched. Yet this upheaval also presents unique opportunities for makers of SIE.

This section:

The Revolution Will Be Televised  
Pat Mitchell 84

Taking the Nation's Temperature  
Neal Baer 88

Divining the Future  
Miura Kite 92

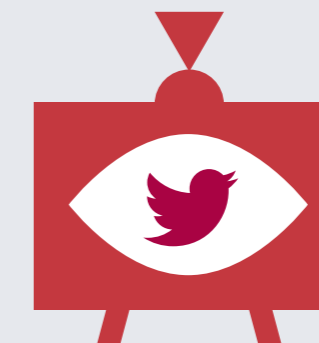
Case Study:  
Will & Grace  
Edward Schiappa 96



The changes the industry is experiencing make it an exciting time to be working in development. Television is embracing voices that are new, distinct, and authentic.

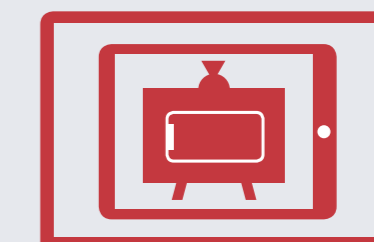
— Miura Kite, p95

**i** Technology and social media are reviving the old medium of television — and black viewers are leading these trends. Black audiences watch 37% more television than any other group and black internet users use Twitter more actively than any other group.



Williams, Sheri, and Lynessa Williams. "BlackSocialTV: How Black Viewers Are Dominating on Two Screens." *TheLitLit*. Medium, 5 May 2014. [medium.com/theLitLit/blacksocialtv-how-black-viewers-are-dominating-on-two-screens-7ef0aff5b66](http://medium.com/theLitLit/blacksocialtv-how-black-viewers-are-dominating-on-two-screens-7ef0aff5b66).

**i** Across broadcast TV, programmers are confronting hot-button issues with an intensity not seen in decades — from "event" limited series such as ABC's *When We Rise* to comedies such as NBC's *The Carmichael Show* and CBS' *Superior Donuts*. The new wave of "woke" broadcast shows is a response to the political and cultural moment, but also to long-simmering changes in the TV business. FX's *The People v. O.J. Simpson*, Amazon's *Transparent*, and HBO's *The Night Of* drove conversations and reaped awards. But in an era of extreme audience fragmentation, broadcasters must balance broadness with the risk of losing their audience to cable channels and streaming services that target specific segments.



Holloway, Daniel, and Debra Birnbaum. "TV Gets Woke: How Scripted Series Are Confronting Social Issues Like Never Before." *Variety*, 14 Mar. 2017. [variety.com/2017/tv/features/social-issues-on-tv-shots-fired-when-we-rise-120207874/](http://variety.com/2017/tv/features/social-issues-on-tv-shots-fired-when-we-rise-120207874/).

Read online at [thestateofsie.com](http://thestateofsie.com)



# The Revolution Will Be Televised

Pat Mitchell discusses the vital importance of public broadcasting in highlighting inequality, and its role in communicating the need for change.



Jacqueline Bisset with host Pat Mitchell, *Hour Magazine*, 1981

©Everett Collection Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

## Pat Mitchell

Emmy® Award-winning and Academy Award®-nominated producer, former CEO of PBS and the Paley Center for Media



Notable works:  
*Woman to Woman, Yes, We Can!*

When I started out in television in the early 1970s, the country had just emerged from a turbulent time of social change.

The civil rights movement had, in part, led to the creation of an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which required media companies to start to hire women and people of color. Yes, there were quotas, and they had an impact on what was seen on television and the programming that was produced.

So, I trace my interests in social impact programming to my own hiring as part of a social movement's impact. I believed that if we applied a social justice lens to our work, women and underrepresented populations could make a difference in media. I put that belief into practice immediately after getting my first job in television, first as a producer, then as a news reporter and anchor, and later a talk show host. Whether running my own production company or creating and hosting my own programming, I always approached everything from the perspective of what difference the report, show, documentary or special would have beyond the broadcast.

As one of the first women in network television on the frontlines of the women's movement, I faced the challenges of being the "first" or the "only." I was encouraged to stay away from women's issues to avoid being stereotyped. But I saw the tremendous opportunity to optimize the power of television as a mass media communications tool to raise awareness about women's lives; to elevate women's stories; to point out the challenges of inequality; and to push for programming with social change and impact agendas.

In one early, groundbreaking example, my female colleagues at WBZ-TV — the Boston NBC affiliate at the time — and I convinced management to devote 24-hours to programming for women, produced by women. The impact was beyond expectations, with huge ratings and thousands of women showing up to participate in an event we called *Yes, We Can!* *The New York Times*

described the event as "history-making," and it was — we proved the impact that women's programming could have on a community. This was a one-time-only event, but it convinced me of the power of the television medium to be transformative, and I became committed to using every media platform I could access to tell stories with impact.

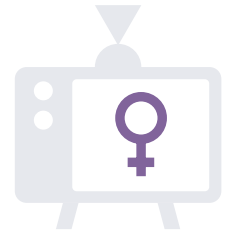
During my early years in Boston, Washington, and Los Angeles I sustained my commitment to impact programming, focusing — when possible — on women's stories. Frustrated with the limitations of network programs at the time, I left a good job to set up my own company and produce a daily series for national syndication. The *Woman to Woman* series featured conversations among carefully curated groups of women who shared stories, challenges, and ideas. The series won the Emmy® for Best Daytime Talk programming in its first year, and our success proved to me that programming intended to have impact could be more popular than the diet of soap operas and game shows that were being offered to women audiences at that time.



**I believed that if we applied a social justice lens to our work, women and underrepresented populations could make a difference in media.**

I also witnessed the growing impact of documentary films, and by partnering with former UCLA professor and author, Dr. Diana Goldberg-Meehan, launched a nonprofit division of a very successful Hollywood production company, Ubu Productions. Our mission was to produce films with social impact campaigns attached. The films exposed child labor abuses, infant and maternal mortality, and explored the challenges for women in politics and on the frontlines of global conflicts. In each instance, the documentaries had a specific and actionable impact agenda.

That time was financially tough, as no one believed impact or mission-based films could be popular or make money, and there were far fewer media companies buying them. "You never have to make money, all you have to do is have impact." That was the way Ted Turner described the job opportunity when he offered ▶



### Yes, We Can!

In 1974, Mitchell was involved in the history-making show *Yes, We Can!* — 24 hours of television programs about women, for women, produced and hosted by women. The televised women's fair was organized by Boston's Channel 4 and attended by some 20,000 women. Participants included Helen Reddy, Gloria Steinem, Julia Child, Elma Lewis, Betty Friedan, Jaye P. Morgan, Florjuncy Kennedy, Kitty Carlisle Hart, Arlene Dahl, and Margaret Heckler. The special telecast was created and supervised by Raysa Bonow and the WBZ-TV reporters included Sonya Hamlin and Pat Mitchell.

Channel 4 set up 35 booths inside the Hynes Convention Center, providing literature and referral information to women on issues such as contraception, adoption, investment counseling, and employment discrimination. Panel discussions were held on stage, hosted by station personalities Sonya Hamlin during the day and Pat Mitchell at night, while also being broadcast to thousands of viewers watching at home.

— "Pat Mitchell, President and CEO of the Paley Center for Media, Named One of Women's ENews 21 Leaders for the 21st Century 2012." *PR Newswire*, 5 Jan. 2012. [advance.lexis.com/api/permalink/?e6133c6-be2a-4b39-b67b-c83f30db3482?context=1516831](https://advance.lexis.com/api/permalink/?e6133c6-be2a-4b39-b67b-c83f30db3482?context=1516831).



me the position of leading his documentary unit as part of the cable media empire he was building in the early nineties (which included TBS, TNT, and CNN). His vision for media was that it could help create a better world. He actually named our unit “The Better World Society” and often reminded us that creating a better world began with more informed media consumers.



**This kind of content has never been more needed to strengthen and sustain a democracy.**

We produced 400 hours of documentaries, most of which had social change agendas attached from the beginning — partnering with National Geographic for conservation awareness, or telling the untold story of women’s contributions to the 20th century, or exposing the threat of nuclear annihilation. Ted never hesitated to tackle controversy or to advocate for a more sustainable, peaceful world, and he used the power of his media companies to promote this agenda. Many years later when Jeff Skoll set up Participant Media,

he acknowledged that it was Ted Turner’s documentary work during this period that had, in part, inspired him.

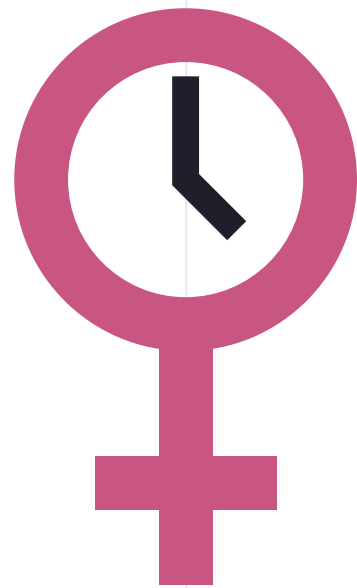
After the Time Warner/AOL media merger, there was no longer support for social impact work at Turner Broadcasting; Ted was fired and I decided to leave, too. I stepped into my next big opportunity for impact by becoming president of PBS. PBS’s mission is to serve, not sell, and it’s the only major media company with national reach and impact — it’s connected to local communities through 359 independent public television stations. PBS doesn’t have the profit motive of other media companies, and even though the funds have to be raised every year, they are from the public, who values their PBS station. PBS’s programming is mission-driven and less accountable to sponsors or shareholders. It’s not a perfect model for impact because there are built-in limitations to what PBS can do, given its mission to serve the local stations. Also, what they see as positive impact varies greatly, and there is always the threat of government disapproval of an impact agenda — even though government support is less than 20% for more public television. However, I feel good about the impact programming PBS was able to commission and distribute, and I remain a big proponent for a better-funded public media enterprise in a democracy.

For me, the next position was to lead the Paley Center for Media, and use that platform of an organization that served all media and

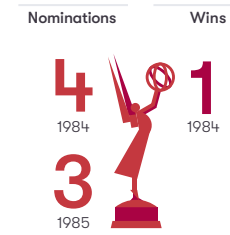


In 1992, Pat Mitchell approached Ted Turner about producing *A Century of Women*, a 10-hour series that documented the history of women in America. Turner convinced Mitchell to join Turner Broadcasting as President of Turner Original Productions and later CNN Productions. It was there that Mitchell executive-produced hundreds of hours of documentaries and specials, which earned 35 Emmy® Awards and 5 Peabody Awards.

— “Bio.” Pat Mitchell, [www.patmitchellmedia.com/pat-mitchell-bio/#detailed](http://www.patmitchellmedia.com/pat-mitchell-bio/#detailed).



**Woman to Woman Daytime Emmy® Awards**



— “Woman to Woman (1983–1984): Awards.” IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt1057462/awards?ref\\_tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1057462/awards?ref_tt_awd).



**Pat Mitchell awards and honors**

Women’s Media Center’s first annual Lifetime Achievement Award  
2012 Sandra Day O’Connor Award for Leadership  
Honored by the Center for the Advancement of Women  
Awarded Bodleian Medal from the Bodleian Library at Oxford University  
Appointed by Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi as one of nine Commissioners to develop a plan to build a National Women’s Museum in Washington, D.C.

— “Bio.” Pat Mitchell, [www.patmitchellmedia.com/pat-mitchell-bio/#detailed](http://www.patmitchellmedia.com/pat-mitchell-bio/#detailed).

technology companies. I had an opportunity to approach social impact from the perspective of what was changing in the entire media ecosystem — changing at cyberspeed — and the increasing globalization of media as a powerful force connecting the world, as well exposing the dangers of media consolidation of ownership. Soon all broadcast networks and cable companies will be owned by less than seven companies, and local stations are being bought up by media conglomerates, further narrowing the focus of programming and diminishing the commitment to provide accurate information and news and entertainment that uplifted or informed as well as entertained.



**Media is one of the single biggest forces in our world today.**

Today, most local media outlets are staggering under a burden of unrealistic financial pressures. In terms of impact, local media serves as a countervailing force against the present deterioration of both the quantity and the quality of news coverage, and the production of compelling content intended to compel social change. This kind of content has never been more needed to strengthen and sustain a democracy.

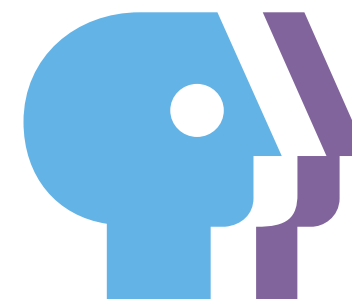
I’ve been fortunate to work with media visionaries who believed in optimizing media’s power for good — Ted Turner, Robert Redford and now Jeff Skoll, as I sit on the Participant Media board. We need more visionaries willing to put their money where their values are, and we are seeing more entrepreneurs with means moving into media content and distribution. Hopefully, they too will harness media’s power for good and follow the path of these three men — and the many others who have invested in stories well-told to compel social change.

Overall, what I have learned through my various positions in media — as a journalist, documentary producer, network executive, media board director, and as an engaged supporter and board member of many social impact organizations — is this simple but profound truth: media is one of the single biggest forces in our world today. It’s capable of influencing elections, shifting policies, starting revolutions, ending wars, and transforming lives and communities. That power can be optimized for good: for exposing wrongdoing and exploring solutions; for shaping opinions and attitudes; for reinforcing values and shifting perceptions; for changing the world for the better; and for envisioning a more equitable and sustainable future for all. Can there be a better reason to tell a good story, make a great film, write or produce a series, or create new realities through technological advances? It all begins with a good story, well told, and the best have outcomes of positive social change. ■

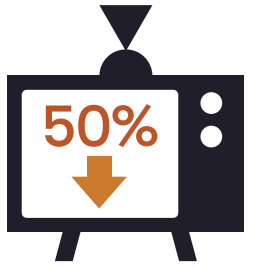


**PBS itself will not go away, but a number of our stations will.**

— Paula Kerger, PBS President



— Holloway, Daniel. “PBS Chief Paula Kerger: ‘Outcome Is Uncertain’ for Federal Public-Television Funding.” *Variety*, 30 July 2017, [variety.com/2017/tv/news/pbs-federal-funding-1202510494/](http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/pbs-federal-funding-1202510494/).



The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) received an advanced appropriation of \$445 million for 2020. Funding is set two years in advance, with Trump proposing to eliminate nearly all of it.

The bulk of CPB money is distributed through grants to PBS and NPR member stations, who use it primarily to cover operational costs. In rural areas, local public television stations are among the only programming options — CPB funding can account for more than 50% of a station’s budget.

— Holloway, Daniel. “PBS Chief Paula Kerger: ‘Outcome Is Uncertain’ for Federal Public-Television Funding.” *Variety*, 30 July 2017, [variety.com/2017/tv/news/pbs-federal-funding-1202510494/](http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/pbs-federal-funding-1202510494/).



# Taking the Nation's Temperature

To fully portray an issue requires understanding the people who actually live it. **Neal Baer** discusses television's ability to affect the lives of its viewers through its depiction of characters.



© NBC and other respective production studios and distributors

## Neal Baer

Creator, writer, producer, and social activist



Notable works:  
*ER*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*

To be a good physician, you have to know your patients. You have to understand their stories in order to help them.

The more you are exposed to people, the more you realize that health is intimately tied to issues of social justice. Wealthier people have better food, better healthcare, and less violence. It was my understanding of and passion for these issues that led to my career in television. I wanted to explore these complex ideas through long-running, relatable characters that audiences not only loved and trusted, but also hopefully learned something from.

Television as a medium has the potential to dramatically influence people's understanding of health issues. During my first season at *ER*, the *New England Journal of Medicine* published an article that lambasted representations of CPR on television. This was an important milestone for me: it made me realize that people got their healthcare information from TV, and that as a consequence, we had a duty to be as accurate as possible. We put so much effort into making our shows look real because we wanted people to believe these were real doctors doing their jobs, so the issues we were presenting had to be equally authentic.

Unlike with film, TV can explore themes repeatedly over years or even decades. We did that on *ER* with Gloria Reuben's character, who was diagnosed with HIV early on in the series. In year 14, she was brought back to the show so viewers could see that she was doing well and living a healthy life, to give closure to this character and to say something important about how people can live and thrive with HIV. This kind of storytelling has a measurable impact on audiences. A 2003 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation revealed that 53% of *ER*'s regular viewers learned about important health issues from the show, and 51% revealed they also ▶



**The Joyful Heart Foundation**  
When *Law & Order: SVU* featured the rape kit backlog in the third episode of its 12th season, "Behave," the Joyful Heart Foundation hosted a screening event in Los Angeles. It was attended by key members of the LAPD and city leadership, who were asked tough questions about the backlog progress.

Update on the Rape Kit Backlog in Los Angeles. End the Backlog. [www.endthebacklog.org/blog/update-rape-kit-backlog-los-angeles](http://www.endthebacklog.org/blog/update-rape-kit-backlog-los-angeles).



### HIV rates

**1.1M+**

people in the US are living with HIV, as of 2017, but...

**1 in 7**

of them don't know it.

**37,600**

The estimated number of Americans who became newly infected with HIV in 2014.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicted that if current rates continue:



**1 in 2** African American gay and bisexual men will be infected with HIV during their lifetime.

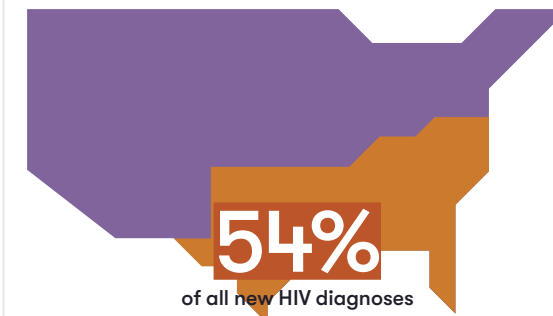


**1 in 11** white gay and bisexual men will be infected with HIV during their lifetime.

"U.S. Statistics." HIV.gov, [www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/data-and-trends/statistics](http://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/data-and-trends/statistics).



### HIV in the South



HIV infection is most acute in Southern states, which, as of 2014, accounted for **54%** of all new HIV diagnoses.

The South is also home to **21 of 25** metropolitan areas with the highest HIV prevalence among gay and bisexual men.

In 2014, nearly **3,000 people** in the Deep South died with HIV as an underlying cause. Among black men in this region, the HIV-related death rate was seven times as high as that of the US population at large.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that only **48%** of black gay and bisexual men effectively suppress the virus with consistent medication and the numbers are even lower for these men in their late teens and 20s.

Villarosa, Linda. "America's Hidden H.I.V. Epidemic." *The New York Times*, 6 June 2017, [nytimes.com/2017/06/06/magazine/americas-hidden-hiv-epidemic.html](http://nytimes.com/2017/06/06/magazine/americas-hidden-hiv-epidemic.html).



spoke with family and friends about the health issues addressed on the show.

People trust what they see on TV, but you can't just preach about complicated social issues, and that's where the art of storytelling comes in. In 2010 we aired an episode of *Law & Order: SVU* that was inspired by a woman who spoke at a fundraiser for the Joyful Heart Foundation, which was started by *SVU* star Mariska Hargitay in 2004. The Foundation — which sheds light on issues that affect sexual assault survivors, like the backlog of rape kits — has served more than 18,500 survivors and healing professionals, effected policy changes, and connected more than 3.9 million people to help and resources.

At the fundraiser, we learned that the police had never even opened this woman's rape kit. Our episode of *SVU* starred Jennifer Love Hewitt as a sexual assault survivor afraid to leave her house, and it became an emotional springboard for existing and new social impact campaigns to clear the backlog of untested kits. Thousands of rape kits have now been processed, leading to investigations, convictions, and the identification of serial rapists via the CODIS and NDIS DNA databases.



© NBC and other respective production studios and distributors

Law & Order: SVU, 1999

I'm really proud of the impact that our show has had on certain issues, but I've also learned that it can often take a long time for change to happen. Sometimes an issue is too fresh or the audience isn't ready. I'm happy that *ER* is streaming on Hulu, and that *SVU* is in perpetual repeats, so that these shows are seen over and over. They're great boosters of social issues, and serve to keep the message in people's minds.

There is a lot of talk about this being the golden age of television, but I'm not so sure. There may be more violence and nudity, but networks and cable companies are very conservative as they try to retain viewers in a world with endless options for entertainment. There are shows now that are beautiful and are spending huge amounts of money, but in terms of social issues I think there's so much competition that there's a fear of offending audiences.

**Times have changed, and so has the television landscape.**

There's a reticence to tackle subjects that are loaded, even taboo — topics like abortion, HIV, and gun control. HIV is still a real problem in the US, particularly amongst people of color. At the end of 2015 there were 1.1 million people in the US who were living with HIV, but we haven't seen that reflected on screen. It's the same problem with abortion, which we tackled in season six of

*ER* with "Match Made in Heaven." The episode received a lot of attention, but now the issue is rarely mentioned on TV.

On the other hand, I couldn't get much press interest for the 2008 *ER* episode we did about rape in the military, but now it's a more widely discussed topic. Likewise, on *SVU* we did the first show about a transgender youth taking hormone blockers around 2009, and today there's a much more open discourse around gender and identity. Either way, times have changed, and so has the television landscape. Our episodes may have paved the way for a dialogue around certain issues, but they're one part of a larger cultural shift in entertainment.

I do believe that networks are willing to listen if you show them the data behind the issue you want to explore. You have to start the conversation and — through multifaceted characters struggling to cope with complex issues — lay the groundwork, even if it's not the right moment for that particular topic. Television is an extremely powerful tool for influencing people's understanding of public health, and there are so many great writers out there who are passionate about these issues. If given the opportunity, they can tell stories that will really make a difference. ■

**Law & Order: SVU episode viewing figures**

04/18/2003  
**S04 E21: "Fallacy"**  
ORIGINAL AIR DATE VIEWERS  
**13.8M**  
18-49 AGE DEMOGRAPHIC  
**4.7 rating/15% share**  
SYNOPSIS  
After Cheryl Avery (Katherine Moennig) defends herself from sexual assault against her boyfriend's brother, killing him, it is revealed that she actually attacked him to keep her transgender identity a secret. Cheryl is found guilty and sent to Rikers, a men's prison.

02/17/2009  
**S10 E14: "Transitions"**  
ORIGINAL AIR DATE VIEWERS  
**4.63M**  
18-49 AGE DEMOGRAPHIC  
**1.0 rating/3% share**  
SYNOPSIS  
After a man is attacked, his estranged transgender daughter (Bridger Zadina) and her transgender boyfriend (Daniel Sea) are both suspected.

09/23/2009  
**S11 E01: "Unstable"**  
ORIGINAL AIR DATE VIEWERS  
**8.36M**  
RATING:  
**5.5 rating/9% share**  
SYNOPSIS  
ADA Sonya Paxton (Christine Lahti) joins detectives Stabler and Benson to help put away a serial rapist after incorrectly convicting an innocent man for the crimes 10 years prior.

09/29/2010  
**S12 E03: "Behave"**  
ORIGINAL AIR DATE VIEWERS  
**9.48M**  
RATING:  
**6.0 rating/10% share**  
18-49 AGE DEMOGRAPHIC  
**2.8 rating/8% share**  
SYNOPSIS  
Detective Olivia Benson helps Vicki Sayers (Jennifer Love Hewitt), a rape victim, find the evidence to put the perpetrator away despite Sayers' rape kit being improperly handled and even accidentally destroyed.

11/13/2013  
**S15 E08: "Military Justice"**  
ORIGINAL AIR DATE VIEWERS  
**6.16M**  
18-49 AGE DEMOGRAPHIC  
**1.6 rating/4% share**  
SYNOPSIS  
Amelia Albers (Shiri Appleby), a Coast Guard officer, is arrested for a DUI, however the detectives become involved because she clearly had been raped. Their investigation leads them to suspect a group of officers in her unit.

**ER episode viewing figures**

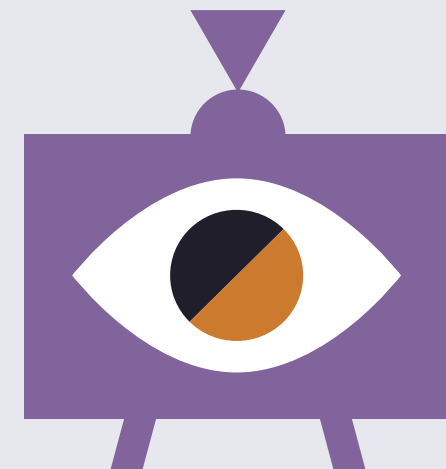
02/24/2000  
**S6 E15: "Be Patient"**  
ORIGINAL AIR DATE VIEWERS  
**31.3M**  
18-49 AGE DEMOGRAPHIC  
**15.6 rating/39% share**  
SYNOPSIS  
Nurse Hathaway (Julianna Margulies) discovers that a promiscuous 14-year-old schoolgirl (guest star Cara Delizia) has cervical cancer and is torn when the frightened teen refuses to tell her parents.

04/13/2000  
**S6 E18: "Match Made in Heaven"**  
ORIGINAL AIR DATE VIEWERS  
**26.0M**  
18-49 AGE DEMOGRAPHIC  
**12.2 rating/33% share**  
SYNOPSIS  
Abby Lockhart (Maura Tierney) treats a pregnant mother who — unhappy with her pregnancy — attempted to induce abortion via fasting. Abby gives her the option of abortion, to which the mother agrees. The woman's husband intervenes moments too late and the woman ends up regretting her abortion. The couple leave agreeing to try for another baby, leaving Abby confused and disappointed.

- ER rankings**
- #1**  
Top-rated US television program of the 1995–1996 season with a 22.0 rating and a 36% share.
- #45**  
Empire's 2016 list of "The 50 Best TV Shows Ever"
- #29**  
TV Guide Magazine's 2013 list of "60 Best Series of All Time"
- #27**  
Writers Guild of America's 2013 list of "101 Best Written TV Series of All Time"
- Dyer, James, et al. "The 50 Best TV Shows Ever." *Empire*, Bauer Consumer Media, 15 June 2016, empireonline.com/movies/features/best-tv-shows-ever/?tv=29/.
- Fretts, Bruce, and Matt Roush. "TV Guide Magazine's 60 Best Series of All Time | TV Guide." *TV Guide*, CBS Interactive, 23 Dec. 2013, tvguide.com/news/tv-guide-magazine-60-best-series-1074962/.
- "101 Best Written TV Series Of All Time" From WGA/TV Guide: Complete List." *Deadline*, Penske Business Media, 2 June 2013, deadline.com/2013/06/wgas-101-best-written-tv-series-of-all-time-complete-list-512061/.

**Law & Order: SVU rankings**

- #12**  
Top-rated television program of the 2001–2002 season with a 10.4 rating.
- Brooks, Tim and Earle Marsh. *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows 1946-Present (Ninth Edition)*. Ballantine Books, 2017, pp. 1695–1698.
- In the first 10 months of 2018, over 258 million episodes of *Law & Order: SVU* were streamed on Hulu.
- Haring, Bruce. "Today' and 'Law & Order: SVU' Lead Hulu's Streaming Tally For 2018." *Deadline*, Penske Business Media, LLC, 20 Dec. 2018, deadline.com/2018/12/today-and-law-and-order-special-victims-unit-lead-hulu-streaming-tally-1202524200/.







THE CENTRAL PARK FIVE, 2012

© AF archive / Alamy Stock Photo

# Divining the Future

## Miura Kite

Senior Vice President of Narrative Television at Participant Media



### Central Park Five

Ava DuVernay is working with Participant Media, Harpo Films, and Tribeca Productions to bring the notorious story of the Central Park Five jogger case to Netflix, for premiere in 2019.

Based on a true story that gripped the nation, *Central Park Five* will chronicle the case of five teenagers of color who were convicted of a rape they did not commit. The four-episode limited series will focus on the five teenagers from Harlem – Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Yusef Salaam, Raymond Santana, and Korey Wise. The series will span from the spring of 1989, when each were first questioned about the incident, to 2014 – when they were exonerated and a settlement was reached with the City of New York.

— Petski, Denise. "Ava DuVernay Teaming With Netflix On Central Park Five Limited Drama Series." *Deadline*, 6 July 2017. [deadline.com/2017/07/ava-duvernay-netflix-on-central-park-five-limited-drama-series-1202124535/](https://deadline.com/2017/07/ava-duvernay-netflix-on-central-park-five-limited-drama-series-1202124535/).

Television has an incredible power to inspire social awareness, understanding, and behavior change around key issues.

The best thing for any project is when it joins the public zeitgeist. If press coverage of a show moves past the entertainment section into op-ed and other arenas, it's a sign that it's made it into the larger cultural discussion which is helpful not only for the economics, but also in getting the messaging out. However, this is not something that's easy to engineer. You could try to develop a social impact project based on the big headlines in today's news, but by the time it makes it to air, you'll often find the world has moved on. This means you have to try to look into the future to identify the themes that will dominate public discourse a few years from now. As SVP of Television at Participant, I'm responsible for trying to address these considerations when building Participant's narrative television slate.



The best thing for any project is when it joins the public zeitgeist.

**Miura Kite** discusses why television is the best medium when it comes to inspiring social awareness and behavior change around key issues.

Every year, Participant produces a wealth of content across a range of formats: narrative film, documentary, digital short form, and episodic television. The process for projects starts with a search for stories that excite and inspire us. We then option the intellectual property in a variety of forms: completed scripts, treatments, novels, existing films, life rights, podcasts, and so on. Participant's approach means that when we option a piece of intellectual property, we're not always sure of the form it will ultimately take. This allows projects to migrate from one internal team to another during the development process. If it ends up being narrative television, the project goes on my slate, and I oversee securing the high-level talent to create the pilot. ▶



As an example, *Central Park Five* was originally meant to be a two-hour film, but swiftly became a limited TV series when filmmaker Ava DuVernay realized she had more than two hours' worth of material. This kind of flexibility is a wonderful thing. It means that the content can determine the format and ultimately its impact, rather than vice versa.

*Central Park Five* really showcases some of the strengths of scripted television as a format. The true story behind the series — the scandal of five young men of color wrongfully convicted of rape — had already been the subject of an incredible documentary by Ken and Sarah Burns, which used some amazing archival footage. However, a scripted television version is able to dramatize real events that may not have been captured on film at the time the event actually happened.

Television also allows you to follow more characters and explore more plotlines than a feature film might, making it a perfect fit for a story like this with five lead characters. The dramatic structure of TV also helps, because

every TV episode has five acts to its narrative, unlike a feature, which has just three. The ending of a film usually has a resolution, but the final act of a TV episode introduces new questions that make the viewer want to watch more.



**Now, networks can aim to hit one audience with a given show, and to hit it really well.**

We usually begin assessing the potential social impact of a project as soon as it comes to us. Our social impact team helps us identify the partner organizations whose work can be highlighted during a resulting social impact campaign. Broadly speaking, an impact



13th, 2016

© DuVernay, Ava. "13th" Official Trailer (HD) | Netflix. YouTube. Uploaded by Netflix, September 26th, 2016. youtube.com/watch?v=653WJ2CKk

campaign for a television show could have a longer lifespan than one for a feature film, which has a single launch window.

*Central Park Five* is (unfortunately and sadly) a perfect case study for social impact because systemic issues within the police system, the legal system, the penal system, and the post-incarceration system contributed to a marginalization of the boys at every step along the way. When you pair this limited series with Ava DuVernay's documentary *13th*, you get a pretty good sense of some deep-rooted problems that need to be assessed.

It's clear that the right type of social impact project can resonate powerfully with audiences. However, we have yet to see how the evolution of today's various streaming platforms might inform this relationship between viewer and content. What is clear is the impact the rise of this over-the-top (OTT) entertainment is having on viewing habits. A recent study showed that 2.6 million US consumers cut their cable TV subscriptions in the first nine months of 2017,

which is a steep increase from the overall figure for the previous year, when 1.7 million consumers did the same. Meanwhile, the audience base for Netflix rose from 130 million to 137 million subscribers worldwide in the third quarter of 2018.

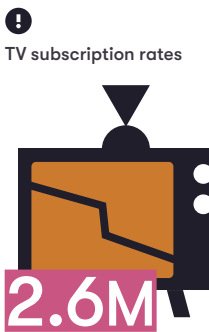


**The world needs TV shows that are created for these underserved demographics.**

Streaming platforms like Netflix have clear advantages for content creators and consumers alike. Audiences can consume shows whenever they want, and in a full run if they wish. Meanwhile, the show's creators are no longer tied to a five-act structure that must accommodate ad breaks. The only minor downside is that this flexibility has sacrificed something of the communal nature of television watching. When all of the episodes of a season of TV are released at the same time, people will watch at their own pace rather than on a set schedule, so there may still be value in staggering the release of episodes. This is more likely to create those "water cooler moments" that an audience will watch and discuss simultaneously, and which can ignite broader discussions of themes and key issues.

The changes the industry is experiencing make it an exciting time to be working in development. Television is embracing voices that are new, distinct and authentic. Networks are realizing that previously underserved audiences have real financial power and are galvanizing themselves to use it. Once, the leading strategy was to try to create content that appealed to all four quadrants — female, male, over 25, under 25. Now, networks can aim to hit one audience with a given show, and to hit it really well. This revised approach to finding audiences has resulted in an increasingly diverse array of content.

While our commitment to social impact entertainment has remained constant, its place within and importance to society and culture has been growing and changing. The world needs TV shows that are created for these underserved demographics, that engage with the biggest issues of our time, and that inspire people to take action. We have never been more committed to making them. ■



US consumers cut their cable TV subscriptions in the first nine months of 2017. 1.7M cut their cable TV subscriptions in 2016.



The audience base for Netflix rose from 130 million to 137 million subscribers worldwide in the third quarter of 2018.

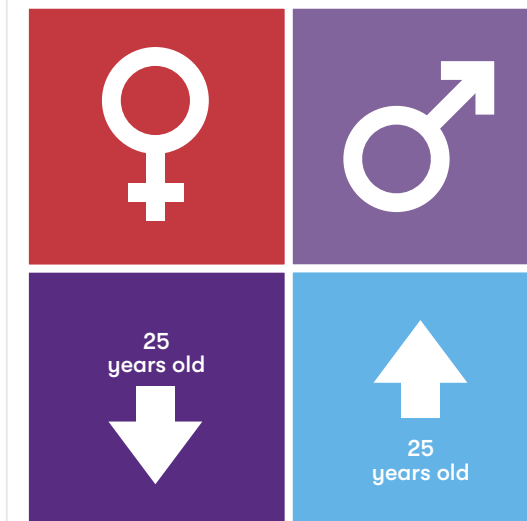
Tran, Kevin. "Online TV Services Offset Cord Cutting Losses in Q3." *Business Insider*, 21 Nov. 2017. [www.businessinsider.com/online-tv-services-offset-cord-cutting-losses-in-q3-2017-11?r=UK&IR=T](http://www.businessinsider.com/online-tv-services-offset-cord-cutting-losses-in-q3-2017-11?r=UK&IR=T).



**Four-quadrant movie**

In the film industry, a "four-quadrant movie" is one which appeals to all four major demographic "quadrants" of the moviegoing audience: both male and female, over and under 25 years old.

Tomasi, Rollo. "Film Term of the Week: Four-Quadrant Movie." *FilmBook*, 30 Apr. 2012. [film-book.com/film-term-of-the-week-four-quadrant-movie/](http://film-book.com/film-term-of-the-week-four-quadrant-movie/).





Case Study

# Will & Grace

*Will & Grace* was a seminal television moment. **Edward Schiappa** explores the impact one show can have on the attitudes and actions of viewers.



*Will & Grace*, 1998–2006

—  
DATE  
1998–2006 (original run)

—  
RUNNING TIME  
00:22

—  
STARRING  
Eric McCormack, Debra Messing, Megan Mullally, Sean Hayes

—  
SYNOPSIS  
Will and Grace live together in an apartment in New York City. He's a gay lawyer; she's a straight interior designer. Their best friends are Jack, a gleeful but proud gay man; and Karen, a charismatic, filthy rich, amoral socialite.

—  
CREATED BY  
David Kohan, Max Mutchnick

—  
DIRECTED BY  
James Burrows

© NBC and other respective production studios and distributors

## Edward Schiappa

Professor and Head of Comparative Media Studies/Writing section at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, John E. Burchard Chair of Humanities



### The study: can one TV show make a difference?

The prejudice people feel toward minority groups is so often fueled by ignorance. That's why the relationship a viewer has with characters on television, whether fictional or not, can be a tool for increasing understanding of different groups, even if it's one-sided. In 2002, as a professor at the University of Minnesota, my team set out to prove that through the power of this kind of indirect contact known as "parasocial interaction," a TV show like *Will & Grace* could transform people's attitudes toward gay men.

Our research is an evolution of an existing psychological theory known as the contact hypothesis. Proven through hundreds of studies, the theory states that one way to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members is for there to be sustained interpersonal contact between them. However, there are certain conditions that must be met for this contact to be productive, such as ensuring that the participants feel of equal status or that they share a common goal.

We set out to prove that in the case of *Will & Grace*, despite the characters being fictional, the show provided an opportunity for people who had little or no contact with openly gay men to gain a greater understanding of people in the gay community. When actual contact under the conditions mentioned above is not possible, parasocial contact is often the next best way of getting people to feel an affinity with a different group and confront their own prejudices.

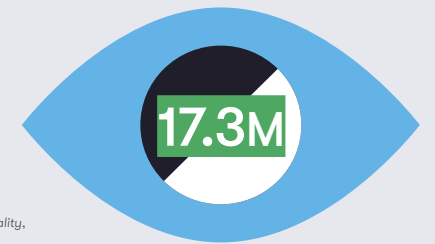
### Challenging prejudice with *Will & Grace*

Airing between 1998 and 2006, the Emmy® Award-winning TV show *Will & Grace* challenged stereotypes about gay men in its depiction of the friendship between gay lawyer Will Truman and straight interior designer Grace Adler. They were often joined by their gay friend Jack McFarland, a struggling actor, and socialite Karen Walker. *Will & Grace* was one of the first TV shows to portray openly gay characters in major roles; in fact, only 0.6% of all characters appearing on television in 1995 were gay or lesbian. Today, the percentage of LGBTQ series regulars on broadcast primetime scripted programming is up to an all-time high of 8.8%, according to the 2018 GLAAD report.



#### *Will & Grace* viewership

By Spring 2001, an average of 17.3 million viewers each week were watching *Will & Grace*.



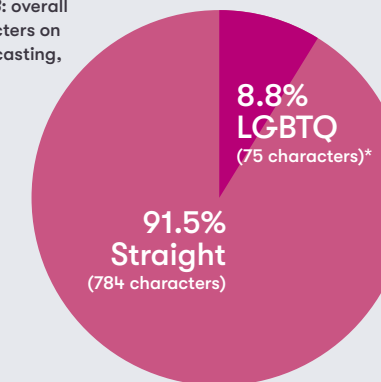
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Schiappa, Edward, Peter B. Gregg, and Dean E. Hewes. "Can One TV Show Make a Difference? *Will & Grace* and the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis." *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2006, pp. 15-37.

There were some early suggestions that *Will & Grace* actually reinforced heteronormativity. However, these claims were based on a conceptual idea of what the show was rather than an actual interaction with the content and its real impact on viewers. Once researchers talked to audience members and gathered data on how the viewing experience actually influenced people, they found the opposite to be true.

Working with Peter Gregg and Dean Hewes, I launched an empirical investigation while the show was still on air to see whether it (and other shows like it) could reduce prejudice. ▶



GLAAD Media Institute *Where We Are on TV Report, 2018*: overall diversity of regular characters on primetime scripted broadcasting, 2018–2019 season



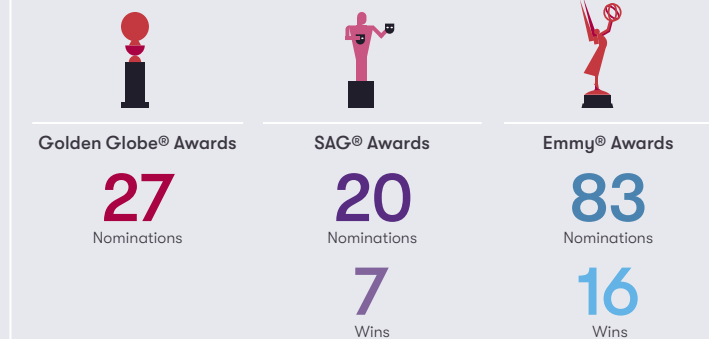
\*Two transgender characters are also straight

—  
GLAAD Media Institute. *Where We Are on TV 2018–2019*. GLAAD Media Institute, [glaad.org/files/WWAT/WWAT\\_GLAAD\\_2018-2019.pdf](http://glaad.org/files/WWAT/WWAT_GLAAD_2018-2019.pdf).



#### *Will & Grace* awards

Original run from 1998–2006:



—  
"Will & Grace (1998-): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt0157246/awards?ref\\_=tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0157246/awards?ref_=tt_awd).



### The results

It was our feeling that both the quantity and quality of viewing consumption was important in order to change attitudes, so we came up with a hypothesis that had two parts. First, we proposed that the more that people watched the show, the lower their reported prejudice toward gay men would be. Second, we suggested that if a viewer reported feeling a sense of affinity with the characters (or “parasocial interaction”) the lower their prejudice would be as well.

Our results proved both parts of this hypothesis. Of those we surveyed, *Will & Grace* was shown to reduce people’s prejudice the more they watched it and the more they felt positive about the characters. As we noted in our case study, “increased viewing frequency and parasocial interaction were found to correlate with lower levels of sexual prejudice — a relationship that was most pronounced for those with the least amount of social contact with lesbians and gay men.”

To cite a few findings: 60% of viewers agreed that watching the show led to positive perceptions of gay people, and 71% of *Will & Grace* viewers disagreed with the statement that “heterosexual relationships are the only ‘normal’ sexual relationships” compared with 45% of non-viewers. Among viewers, 73% disagreed that *Will & Grace* “provides a negative view of gay men” and 65% agreed that the character of Jack represents a refreshing challenge to “normal” conceptions of masculinity.

### Will & Grace Parasocial Contact Hypothesis

Parasocial contact is more effective in changing attitudes on sexual prejudice when the majority group “interacts” with both typical and atypical representations of the minority group. *Will & Grace* provides multiple representations of gay men, as seen in the social/economic/romantic differences between characters such as Will and Jack.

— Schiappa, Edward, Peter B. Gregg, and Dean E. Hewes. “Can One TV Show Make a Difference? Will & Grace and the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis.” *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2006, pp. 15-37.



These results were so strong that we did a series of other studies that were increasingly more sophisticated in their experimental design. The subsequent research provided additional evidence that the more a viewer learns about a particular group of people as depicted in a positive way in the media, the greater the reduction in prejudice. We published these findings in a paper entitled *The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis*.

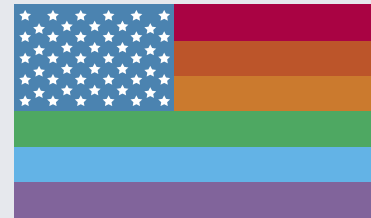
### The importance of engaging stories

In order to influence people, positive representation of minority groups needs to be encased within a great story.

Good intentions are not enough by themselves; from an artistic standpoint, a comedy needs to be funny and a drama needs to be dramatic. In my opinion, the key to attitude or belief shift is to provide a learning experience for viewers that is relatable and also entertaining. People will keep watching a show if it is of sufficient quality and they get their comedic or dramatic payoff. This is why the quality of representation is as important as the quantity. Judging by the show’s impressive ratings — an average of 17.3 million weekly viewers during the spring of 2001 — as well as its subsequent syndication, it’s safe to say *Will & Grace* had enough quality to keep viewers coming back for more.

### Joe Biden praises Will & Grace

In 2012, Vice President Joe Biden referenced *Will & Grace* as part of the social evolution of American culture/politics toward embracing same-sex marriage.



— Abramovich, Seth. “Joe Biden Cites ‘Will & Grace’ in Endorsement of Same-Sex Marriage.” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 6 May 2012, www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/joe-biden-cites-will-grace-320724-0.

Also, having two very different gay characters represented by Will and his friend Jack allowed viewers to learn at least something about the diversity of gay men in general, and the more viewers learn, the less likely they are to perpetuate narrow stereotypes based on ignorance.

### Reaching the tipping point

Through expert storytelling on complex social issues, entertainment can play an important role in opening people’s minds, but it’s hard to say that it can drive social change by itself. Shows like *Will & Grace* are always part of a more complicated ecosystem, which itself is influenced by the wider social and political landscape.

However, when it comes to societal attitudes toward gay men, I believe the show did help us get past a tipping point of sorts. We found that 81% of those we surveyed agreed that the show was “an important step forward in television situation comedies because it features gay men in major roles.” The sitcom *Ellen*, where main character Ellen Morgan comes out as a lesbian, was also a significant step along the way, but was arguably not as popular. Looking around today, shows like *Modern Family* continue to break down stereotypes and provide opportunities for parasocial interaction — and they do so while attracting huge audiences and winning plenty of awards.

When it comes to impact, the popularity of a show is key. As we have proven in our studies, the more people watched *Will & Grace* and cared about the characters, the greater the reduction in their prejudice. The show is a powerful example of the important role social impact entertainment can play in transforming people’s beliefs or prejudices about important issues in our world. ■

### Findings from Schiappa’s survey of 245 undergraduate students:

The apparent influence of contact with *Will & Grace* was similar to the influence of direct interpersonal contact with gay friends.

For those who reported they had few to no gay friends or acquaintances, the correlation between increased viewing/parasocial contact and decreased sexual prejudice was strongest.

Viewing frequency correlated positively for wanting to know each character (their social attractiveness/likeability).

### Survey demographics

Of those surveyed:

**60%** were between 18 and 21 years old.

**63%** of participants were women.

**4%** black or African American.

**98%** reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual.

**33%** were between 22 and 25 years old.

**86%** of participants were white.

**1%** Hispanic or Latino.

**7%** were between 26 and 60 years old.

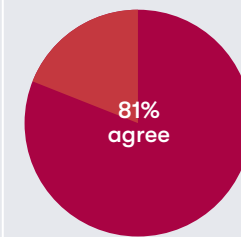
**6%** Asian/Subcontinental or Asian/Pacific Islander.

**3%** identified as other.

### Survey method

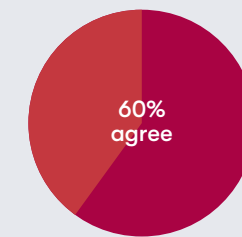
Participants completed a 74-item survey with the understanding that their individual answers would be kept confidential. In addition to basic demographic information, the survey included items to assess how much social contact participants have with non-heterosexual individuals, viewing frequency of *Will & Grace*, attitudes toward gay men and lesbians (with the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men [ATLG] scale), as well as items concerning the four main characters.

“The show is an important step forward in television situation comedies because it features gay men in major roles.”

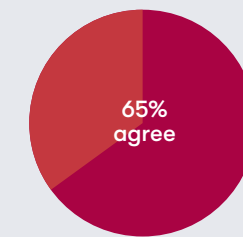


— Schiappa, Edward, Peter B. Gregg, and Dean E. Hewes. “Can One TV Show Make a Difference? Will & Grace and the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis.” *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2006, pp. 15-37.

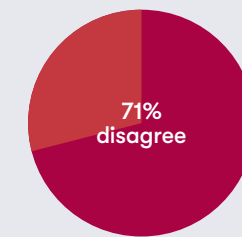
“Viewing the show has led to positive opinions of gay people.”



“The show is a refreshing challenge to ‘normal’ conceptions of masculinity.”

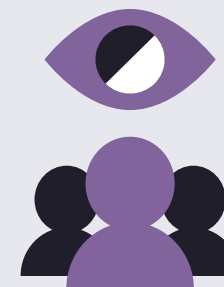


“Heterosexual relationships are the only ‘normal’ kind of relationship.”



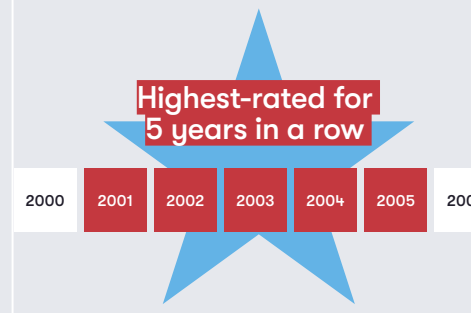
### Will & Grace can effect a change in perception

Herek and Capitanio (1996) found that contact experiences with two or three individuals are associated with more favorable attitudes than contact experiences with only one individual. In *Will & Grace*, viewers “interact” with multiple gay characters through parasocial contact. Therefore, the ability for a show like *Will & Grace* to effect change in the perceptions and prejudices of majority viewers is grounded in psychosocial empirical evidence.



— Schiappa, Edward, Peter B. Gregg, and Dean E. Hewes. “Can One TV Show Make a Difference? Will & Grace and the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis.” *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2006, pp. 15-37.

*Will & Grace* presented America with a perspective that was completely contrary to popular belief. In September 1998, following the 1997-1998 failure of ABC’s *Ellen*, *Will & Grace* was launched on NBC-TV as the first program to have an openly gay male character as the lead on primetime television. Defying expectations, the sitcom would run from 1998 through 2006 and be ranked as the highest-rated sitcom in America, among viewers aged 18 to 49 from 2001 to 2005.



— Myers, Jack. “Will & Grace: The TV Series That Changed America.” *The Huffington Post*, 2 Feb. 2016, www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-myers/will-grace-the-tv-series-that-changed-america\_b\_5543315.html.

### Will & Grace TV advertising costs

In 2003, *Will & Grace* averaged a \$414,500 fee for a 30-second spot, coming in at No. 2 on Ad Age’s list for the year.

At the time, Ad Age wrote: “The success of *Will & Grace*, which was No. 4 in pricing last year, as well as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* on NBC sibling cable channel Bravo and ABC’s new *It’s All Relative* appears to demonstrate that gay themes are not only mainstream but profitable.”

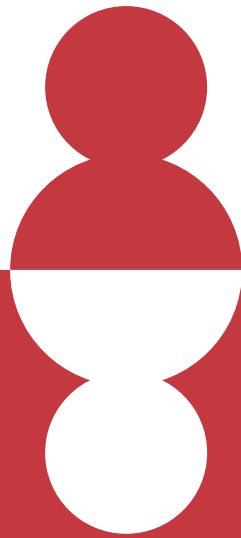


— Poggi, Jeanine. “New ‘Will & Grace’ Ad Prices On Par With Show’s Final Season In 2006.” *Ad Age*, 26 Sep. 2017, adage.com/article/media/nbc-s-grace-reboot-averages-200-000-commercial/310620/.



Spotlight on:

# The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis



As formulated by Gordon W. Allport in 1954, the contact hypothesis states that interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between people, specifically “minority” and “majority” group members. Two years after Allport’s book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, was published, Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl argued for studying what they dubbed parasocial interaction.

They claimed that “one of the most striking characteristics of the new mass media — radio, television and the movies — is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the consumer.” In Edward Schiappa, Peter B. Gregg and Dean E. Hewes’ follow-up to the *Will & Grace* study (entitled *The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis*) the team described a “mass communication equivalent to Allport’s Contact Hypothesis” that they termed the “Parasocial Contact Hypothesis (PCH).”

It was the trio’s feeling that “if people process mass-mediated communication in a manner similar to interpersonal interaction” as Horton and Wohl suggested, “then the socially beneficial functions of intergroup contact may result from parasocial contact.” ▶

The paper described and tested the PCH in three studies: two involving parasocial contact with characters in series depicting gay men — analyzing *Six Feet Under* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* — and one involving parasocial contact with self-identified transgender comedian Eddie Izzard.



**In all three studies, parasocial contact was associated with lower levels of prejudice.**

As Schiappa, Gregg and Hewes note: “In all three studies, parasocial contact was associated with lower levels of prejudice. Moreover, tests of the underlying mechanisms of PCH were generally supported, suggesting that parasocial contact facilitates positive parasocial responses and changes in beliefs about the attributes of minority group categories.”



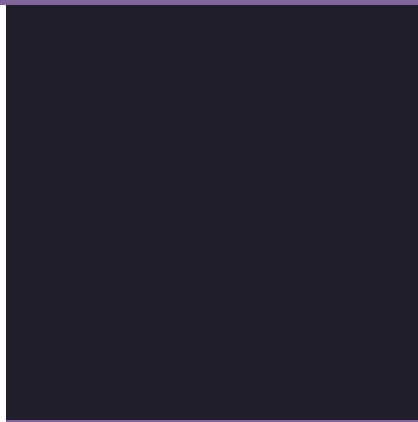
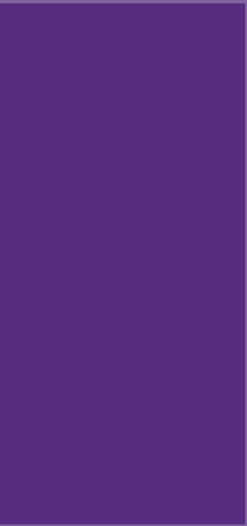
**Parasocial contact facilitates positive parasocial responses and changes in beliefs.**

There is now a substantial body of scholarship around the world that attests to the power of positive mediated representation to reduce prejudice toward minority groups. Though obviously not all of these studies are indebted to the *The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis*, it was one of the first works published that documented this phenomenon. ■

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Schiappa, Edward, Peter B. Gregg, and Dean E. Hewes. “Can One TV Show Make a Difference? *Will & Grace* and the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis.” *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2006, pp. 15-37.



# Theater









# V

# for Victory

*The Vagina Monologues* has been translated into more than 48 languages and performed in over 140 countries. Playwright **Eve Ensler** reflects on the immediacy and importance of political theater.

© U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Natasha Stannard/Released



The Vagina Monologues performance, 2013

## Eve Ensler

Award-winning playwright and founder of V-Day and One Billion Rising, co-founder of City of Joy



Eve Ensler © Mike McGregor

Notable works:  
*The Vagina Monologues*

I have always thought of theater as a radical church — a holy space in which we come together to think and feel deeply about the things that really matter to us.

All my working life, artists and audiences have been educating me about the power of this space. I was thrilled when the Skoll Center told me that my play *The Vagina Monologues* is regarded by them as a model of how art can lead to social change — and it made me think back over what I have learned in the 20 years the play has been occupying that holy space across the world, in spaces from Paris to Pakistan, from Manhattan to Mumbai.

As a playwright I'm biased, but my hunch is that theater is the most transformative of all art forms — for three reasons.



**As an audience member you get to respond to a film; but with a piece of theater, you get to create it.**

Theater is one of the only forms that's happening in the present tense. It is literally alive, in front of you, at that moment. Where other art forms like film or novels have been frozen ahead of time, theater will always be unpredictable and unexpected because it depends on the people in that particular room on that particular day. This is true of the actors, of course — but it's also true of the audience. One audience can be silent at the precise moment when another audience fell into raucous laughter — and that response transforms the performance, which in turn transforms the response of the audience, and so on. Every work of theater is a co-creation with the audience. As an audience member you get to respond to a film; but with a piece of theater, you get to create it, in that room, with those people, in that moment, which will never be repeated in the same way again.

That produces danger and surprise. You don't know what will happen. Maybe the set will fail to open, and the actors will find themselves stuck in front of gorgeous scenery the ►

The Vagina Monologues awards



Winner of an Obie in 1997.

#20

The New York Times' 2018 list of "The 25 Best American Plays Since *Angels in America*"



**No recent hour of theater has had a greater impact worldwide.**

— The New York Times

"The Vagina Monologues." Lortel Archives, Lucille Lortel Foundation, www.lortel.org/Archives/Production/178.

Brantley, Ben, and Jesse Green. "The Great Work Continues: The 25 Best American Plays Since *Angels in America*." The New York Times, 1 June 2018, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/05/31/theater/best-25-plays.html.



audience will never see. Maybe an actor forgets a key line. Maybe she goes further out with an emotion than she's ever done before — and she opens up a space with the audience neither of them could have imagined.

And thirdly, theater is *embodied* in a way other art forms can't be. The actors are there in their bodies, in their voices, in their beings, sharing their physicality with your body as an audience member. I love what Terence McKenna said — "The only thing we can trust is our experience." Theater gives you a physical experience. You can remember a great play the way you remember an experience you had in your own life — because it is an experience in your own life.

I am often asked for advice about how to create art that has a social impact. My first and most important piece of advice is always — don't take yourself too seriously. When I started, I thought it was my obligation to teach people my politics and my point of view, but what I quickly learned is that's not how people change. They change through dialectic, through hearing people in dialogue and challenging one another — and people particularly change through laughter. If you want to promote political change you have to be funny. Otherwise people will feel beaten up and plowed over the head.

If you are writing about social issues, your job is not to communicate what you feel — it is to communicate what characters feel.

You need to crawl into the bodies and minds of people you don't agree with so you can allow that point of view to be fairly and clearly communicated. As a writer, you fear that what you believe won't come through if you channel yourself into your characters. I learned you have to trust it will come through. The paradox of art that wants to produce social change is that the less you try to persuade people to change, the more successful you will be — you have to tell a deeper emotional truth, and be funny, and you will find that those connections produce the change you want.



**My first and most important piece of advice is always — don't take yourself too seriously.**

I wrote my play *The Vagina Monologues* because one day I was speaking to an older feminist I admired and I was startled when she described her postmenopausal vagina as "dead," and spoke of it with real contempt. I realized that as women, we were taught to be silent about our vaginas. I began to have hundreds of conversations — and to be honest, I thought when I stood up on stage and talked

! New monologues have been released with each subsequent edition of the text, including 2004's *They Beat The Boy Out Of My Girl...Or So They Tried*, created from a series of interviews with transgender women.

Other "spotlight" monologues have focused on the experiences of Afghan women, Native American and First Nations women, and the "comfort women" who were forced to provide sexual services to the Japanese army during the Second World War. The latest edition features monologues dedicated to the women of Haiti, the women of New Orleans who suffered after Hurricane Katrina and women who face sexual violence in the workplace.

— "The Vagina Monologues," 20 Years On." *The Economist*, 9 Jan. 2018, [www.economist.com/prospero/2018/01/09/the-vagina-monologues-20-years-on](http://www.economist.com/prospero/2018/01/09/the-vagina-monologues-20-years-on).

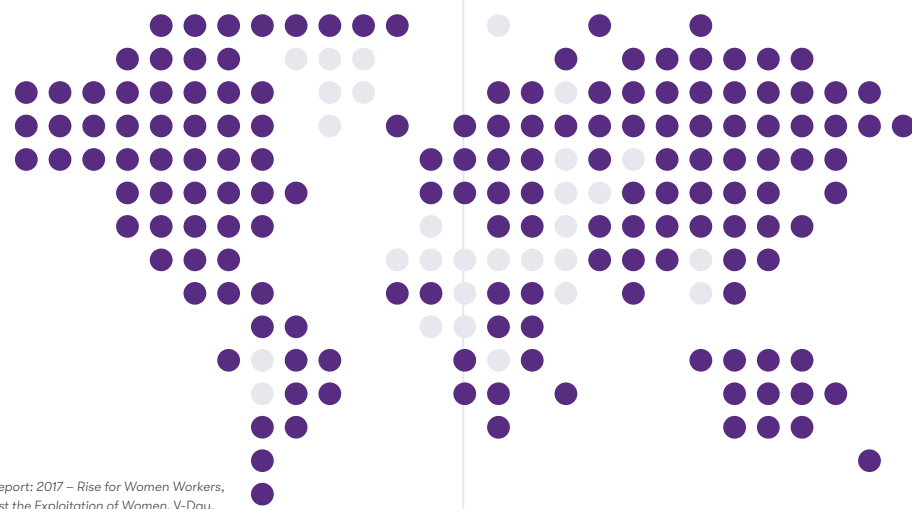


! There were 1,381 performances off-Broadway at NYC's Westside Theater from 1999–2003.

— "The Vagina Monologues." *Lortel Archives*, Lucille Lortel Foundation, [www.lortel.org/Archives/Production/178](http://www.lortel.org/Archives/Production/178).

? V-Day global reach

● V-Day events



— *V-Day Annual Report: 2017 – Rise for Women Workers, Solidarity Against the Exploitation of Women*. V-Day, 2018, [www.vday.org/press/annual-report-archives.html](http://www.vday.org/press/annual-report-archives.html).

about this, somebody would shoot me. Instead, women lined up after every performance in their dozens or their hundreds to tell me their stories — about the first orgasm, or their incestuous rape, or anything in between. A silence had been broken, and women started to pour into the silence.



**In dark times, art can move us beyond the binaries of good and evil, left and right.**

I started to feel like the keeper of these extraordinary secret stories — of joy, of grief, of rage — and I felt like it was unethical to keep them stored away, informing only me. So I gathered together in 1998 some extraordinary women and asked them: how do I use this play, which is connecting with so many people, to end violence against women and girls, and to set us free? Soon, we had established a group named V-Day. Every 14th of February, women all over the world began to perform *The Vagina Monologues* in their communities, with the proceeds going to feminist causes.

What has been the result? I see it playing out every day, and I think it has three layers. The

first is: we have raised \$100 million, for everything from domestic violence shelters in Arizona to a sanctuary and revolutionary center in the Democratic Republic of Congo treating survivors of sexual violence. The women who have been transformed are out there, now transforming the world. The second is: thousands of women have performed these monologues, and I meet women all the time who tell me that it led them to choose a life of activism — whether as social workers, or campaigners, or politicians. The third is: all those audiences can never go back into that silence. They have listened to a conversation — blunt, funny, raw — about vaginas. They have been awakened to the issues facing women.

I wish that *The Vagina Monologues* had been rendered politically redundant, and the world could now enjoy it as purely a piece of art. You don't need me to tell you that we aren't there — and we are in fact facing horrific forces of misogyny rising once again (alongside a heroic resistance).

In dark times, art can move us beyond the binaries of good and evil, left and right. It can offer us new energy and activate our imaginations. It can inspire empathy and a much-needed compassion. It can bond us in community and offer us solidarity and protection. It doesn't become a luxury that we turn to when we have finished marching and lobbying (though we need them urgently too). Art is as necessary as light and water. We need to turn to that holy space, where we make something profound together — now, more than ever. ■

! In 1999 V-Day launched its College Campaign, and in the first year, there were 65 V-Day campus productions. By 2007, 700+ colleges had registered to participate.



— Swan, Susan Cella, and Purva Panday Cullman. "Say It, State It: V-Day at Twenty." *The Vagina Monologues: 20th Anniversary Edition*, 2018, pp. 169–208.

! On April 11th–12th 2008, V-Day celebrated its 10th anniversary, V to the Tenth, in New Orleans, to shine a light on the issues facing the Gulf South community in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.



**30,000+**

30,000+ people attended the events over the two days V-Day transformed the Superdome into "SUPERLOVE," with conversations, slam poetry, performances, storytelling, and art.

Thousands traveled from out of state and overseas for events that featured 125+ speakers and 40 stars, a choir of 200, and 800-plus volunteers.



**125+** speakers



**40** stars

— Swan, Susan Cella, and Purva Panday Cullman. "Say It, State It: V-Day at Twenty." *The Vagina Monologues: 20th Anniversary Edition*, 2018, pp. 169–208.



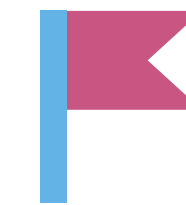
**V-Day**  
The V in V-Day stands for "victory," "valentine," and "vagina."  
V-Day's work is grounded in four core beliefs.



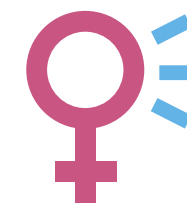
**1** Art has the power to transform thinking and inspire people to act.



**2** Lasting social and cultural change is spread by ordinary people doing extraordinary things.



**3** Local women know what their communities need and can become unstoppable leaders.



**4** We must look at the intersection of class, environmental catastrophe, gender, imperialism, militarism, patriarchy, poverty, racism, and war to fully understand violence against women.

— Swan, Susan Cella, and Purva Panday Cullman. "Say It, State It: V-Day at Twenty." *The Vagina Monologues: 20th Anniversary Edition*, 2018, pp. 169–208.



# All the World's a Stage



© VENN Rights Ltd. / Alamy Stock Photo

From *Angels in America* to Shakespeare in the Park, **Oskar Eustis** works on the front line of exploring social dynamics through theater. He highlights how empowering the right voice can make a difference.

## Oskar Eustis

Artistic Director of The Public Theater and a Tony Award®-winning producer



Notable works:  
*Fun Home, Hamilton, Sweat*

**In your 2018 TED Talk you called theater the “essential art form of democracy.” Could you please elaborate on this? What role do you see theater playing in society at large?**

There are a couple of aspects to this. One is that the art form itself is a training in democratic citizenship. By that, I mean that it assumes, as a form, that the truth is dialectical: truth is not monolithic or singular but can only emerge in the conflict between different points of view. I think that's true about the world, but I think it's also terribly essential for a democracy: people have to believe that the debate between different points of view will produce a better result than a monolithic imposition of one person's will or one party's will.

The other thing that I think is key to theater is that it requires an imaginative leap of empathy. In order to enjoy a piece of theater, you have to put yourself in the shoes of the characters on stage — and by the way, you put yourself into more than one pair of shoes. To understand that people can see things differently and come from different points of view — again, I think that's crucial to democratic citizenship.

Finally, there's the experience of being in an audience. When people laugh together, it's not simply their personal reactions — it's a collective response. We don't have many places in culture where we can feel that sense of sharing a communal experience with people who are not pre-selected to share our ideological beliefs.

**While working at the Eureka Theater Company you commissioned a groundbreaking work of American theater: Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. What was it you saw in Tony Kushner that made you want to fight in his corner?**

In 1985, when Tony was still a student at NYU, I saw a staged reading of one of his very first plays, *A Bright Room Called Day*. By the intermission, I knew that my life was about to change. Part of it was reaching that moment in your professional life where you think, this is it, this is the reason I do this: to find a writer who is this bright, this young, at the beginning of their career.

Tony was a great writer, and that was obvious just from the writing, but he also cared about the same things that I did. Up until that point I had been despairing over whether I'd ever be able to have a life in the American theater where I would be surrounded by people who embraced the kinds of social, political, and historical issues that I cared so passionately about. I was a red diaper baby and was raised by Communist parents — and most red diaper babies didn't go into the theater, so I had felt very lonely.



**In order to enjoy a piece of theater, you have to put yourself in the shoes of the characters on stage.**

We applied for a commissioning grant for *Angels in America* and got it, and the play ended up going beyond our wildest dreams. It was the first high-level American artistic artifact in which gay people were not only openly gay, complexly gay, totally secure in their gay identity, but were also struggling with what it meant in the world. These characters were staking their claim to speak for America itself. They were saying that their experiences were in no way marginalized or reduced because they were gay: Prior Walter is an American everyman, and being gay is central to that identity but in no way limits the size of his identity. I think that is something that the theater does particularly well — to take the experience of people who have previously been marginalized and say no, this is actually central to the story of America. ▶

## Angels in America

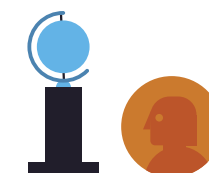
*Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, a play by Tony Kushner, explores the AIDS epidemic as a metaphor for spiritual decay in the 1980s. The play won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for Drama before its first Broadway performance had even opened.

— Fritsch, Jane. “Pulitzer Prize to a Play on AIDS and the 1980's.” *The New York Times*, 14 Apr. 1993. [www.nytimes.com/1993/04/14/us/pulitzer-prize-to-a-play-on-aids-and-the-1980-s](http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/14/us/pulitzer-prize-to-a-play-on-aids-and-the-1980-s).

## Hamilton

*Hamilton: An American Musical* is a sung-and-rapped-through musical about the life of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton. Created by Lin-Manuel Miranda, the play incorporates hip-hop, R&B, pop, soul, traditional-style show tunes, and conscious casting of non-white actors as the Founding Fathers and other historical figures.

— Viagas, Robert. “Hamilton Tops Tony® Awards With 11 Wins.” *Playbill*, PLAYBILL INC., 12 June 2016. [www.playbill.com/article/tony-time-its-broadways-biggest-night#](http://www.playbill.com/article/tony-time-its-broadways-biggest-night#).



## Hamilton 2016 Tony Awards®

*Hamilton* won 11 awards at the 2016 Tony Awards®. It won in nearly every category in which it was nominated. However two losses kept it from tying (or surpassing) *The Producers* for most Tony® wins ever. The play also won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

— Viagas, Robert. “Hamilton Tops Tony Awards® With 11 Wins.” *Playbill*, PLAYBILL INC., 12 June 2016. [www.playbill.com/article/tony-time-its-broadways-biggest-night#](http://www.playbill.com/article/tony-time-its-broadways-biggest-night#).



The theater is particularly good at putting the spotlight on people, putting them center stage and saying these people speak not only for themselves but for all of us, and *Angels* really did that in a way. It was part of a larger movement that changed what meant to be gay in America, in a way that was unimaginable 25 years ago. At the time, none of us could have believed that gay marriage would be possible within 25 years, let alone commonplace. Though many factors contributed to this, I like to think the play had something to do with that change, in some small way.

**You also helped to create another landmark of American theater: Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*. Could you tell us how the show ended up premiering at The Public Theater?**

Lin-Manuel Miranda is an absolutely astonishing writer and composer: his work, tones, and conceptual insight are remarkable. This is evident in his use of hip-hop as an extraordinary vehicle for conveying expository information. There is more information in the first song of *Hamilton* than exists in most musicals as a whole! You can take in an enormous amount of information in verse form that you couldn't if it were prose. Shakespeare figured that out, and Lin did too.

I think the deeper thing that *Hamilton* was responding to was the realization that there were millions and millions of people who were desperate to feel patriotic again: American

citizens who in many ways were deeply ashamed of what our country had been doing, really for its entire existence — because this beautiful bastard of a democracy was built on a legacy of



**There is not a single play or program I've done that has had a real impact that didn't feel impossible when I started thinking about it.**

slavery and genocide. Many of us were desperate to feel there is an idea of an America which is fundamentally democratic, fundamentally inclusive, fundamentally meritocratic. Not only by telling the story of *Hamilton*, but by casting it the way he did, Lin managed to unleash that patriotic lust within parts of the audience, and it's been wonderful to watch that happen.

**Could you please tell us about some of the programs you run at The Public Theater, and how they typify the theater's philosophy?**

Shakespeare in the Park is our gold standard. We've been doing it for more than 60 years at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, and I think



**Hamilton Off-Broadway**

*Hamilton* originally opened at The Public Theater (Off-Broadway) on January 17th 2015 with a sold-out run and moved to the Richard Rodgers Theatre (on Broadway) in August.

— Feldman, Adam. "Why *Hamilton* Is the Broadway Musical to See Now." *Time Out New York*, Time Out, 9 July 2015, [timeout.com/newyork/theater/why-hamilton-is-the-broadway-musical-to-see-now](http://timeout.com/newyork/theater/why-hamilton-is-the-broadway-musical-to-see-now).



**Hamilton on Broadway**

As of June 2016 (a year after opening) *Hamilton* was consistently selling out all 1,321 seats at the Richard Rodgers Theatre and grossing and estimated \$1.9M a week in ticket sales.

— Paulson, Michael, and David Gelles. "'Hamilton' Inc.: The Path to a Billion-Dollar Broadway Show." *The New York Times*, 8 June 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/theater/hamilton-inc-the-path-to-a-billion-dollar-show.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/theater/hamilton-inc-the-path-to-a-billion-dollar-show.html).

The Public Theater Mobile Unit, 2018



© Jim West / Albany Stock Photo

it's been so powerful and enduring because it's a completely simple idea. We put on fantastic productions by the world's greatest writer, you get to see them without paying — and the idea is contained in the title!

We almost never have an empty seat at Shakespeare in the Park — we have 2,000 people come out all summer to see these shows. The quality of the productions is very high and people are passionate about them, so you can feel the sense of connectivity in the audience.

The Mobile Unit, which takes Shakespeare to community centers, prisons, and homeless shelters is the only program we have where the demographics of the audience precisely matches the demographics of New York City. There's no difference between the populations that see our mobile Shakespeare and those that make up the city, and that's thrilling for us. There was a lesson from this that we incorporated into our recent mobile, national tour of Lynn Nottage's *Sweat*: if you want to make sure you reach people that you wouldn't normally, go to them. Don't make them come to you; go to where they are.

**What advice or key learnings would you pass on to people who are just starting out in the world of theater — particularly those who would like to create social impact through their work?**

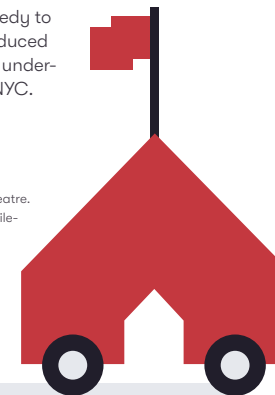
First, there is not a single play or program I've done that has had real impact that didn't feel impossible when I started thinking about it.

**The Public Theater Mobile Unit**

The Public Theater's Mobile Unit is a reinvention of Joseph Papp's "Mobile Theater," which began in 1957. Papp's original touring company evolved into the New York Shakespeare Festival, and ultimately became The Public Theater.

Today, 80% of the New York City population lives outside Manhattan — in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx — yet a 2011 study shared that only 25% of the city's cultural institutions are located outside Manhattan. The current Mobile Unit is one remedy to the lack of professionally-produced theater available to culturally under-resourced neighborhoods of NYC.

— Murphy, Clara, and Kevin Landis. "The Public Theater's Mobile Unit: Lean and Mean Shakespeare." *AMERICAN THEATRE*, 29 Mar. 2017, [www.americantheatre.org/2017/03/29/the-public-theaters-mobile-unit-lean-and-mean-shakespeare/](http://www.americantheatre.org/2017/03/29/the-public-theaters-mobile-unit-lean-and-mean-shakespeare/).



It is almost the definition of something that is going to break new ground. Perhaps it's because it's never been done before that it seems like it's not possible, and you have to actually school yourself to suppress your own doubts. You must continue to ask questions, to try to solve the problem you think is most worth solving, even if you think it can't possibly work. Of course, sometimes it doesn't work, sometimes you can't do it. But what I've found is if you don't give up, it's astonishing how much of what seems impossible becomes possible. It just means you have to have your values pretty clear, and you have to be willing to pursue them pretty ferociously.

The second thing is that 95% of the success of my work has been because I have identified people of great ability, talent and vision, and then did everything I could to empower them. In this way you support the artists and visionaries that need that support, but also from the very beginning of a project there is not one person trying to push it through, there are at least two: me and the person I am supporting, me and Tony, me and Lin-Manuel.

The geometric progression of an idea — whether that's a play, a new program, or a new way of reaching audiences — never happens because you're just that smart and you have figured out how to do it. It happens because you are gathering around you the people with the abilities, the talents, the drive, and the ideals to help make it real. ■

**Shakespeare in the Park**

Created by the late Joseph Papp in 1962, The Public Theater's series offers free, large-scale productions of works by William Shakespeare. Past casts have included Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline, Al Pacino, Blythe Danner, Philip Seymour Hoffman, George C. Scott and Denzel Washington.

— Feldman, Adam. "The Complete Guide to Shakespeare in the Park in NYC." *Time Out New York*, Time Out, 22 Jan. 2018, [www.timeout.com/newyork/theater/shakespeare-in-the-park](http://www.timeout.com/newyork/theater/shakespeare-in-the-park).



**Sweat**

Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* is set in Reading, Pennsylvania, and examines the effect of the economic downturn on its inhabitants. The play chronicles dramatic events in the lives of a group of blue-collar workers, many of whom have worked in the local factory for generations. When Cynthia — an African-American woman — is promoted, a once-close group of friends is torn apart by mistrust and jealousy.

— Cox, Gordon. "How Broadway Play 'Sweat' Tells the Personal Stories Behind the News." *Variety*, 24 Mar. 2017, [variety.com/2017/legit/news/sweat-broadway-timely-politics-relevance-trump-1202015437/](http://variety.com/2017/legit/news/sweat-broadway-timely-politics-relevance-trump-1202015437/).



**Sweat awards**

*Sweat* was nominated for three awards at 2017 Tony Awards® and was awarded the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in Drama, making Lynn Nottage the first woman to win the prestigious award twice.

— Clement, Olivia. "Broadway's *Sweat* Announces Closing." *Playbill*, PLAYBILL INC., 13 June 2017, [www.playbill.com/article/broadways-sweat-announces-closing](http://www.playbill.com/article/broadways-sweat-announces-closing).



# Theater of the Moment

**Dustin Lance Black** discusses his use of theater as a means of generating an instant impact and emotional engagement in making the case for marriage equality in the United States.

## Dustin Lance Black

Academy Award®-winning filmmaker, writer, and social activist



Notable works:  
*Milk*, *8*, *When We Rise*

Throughout my career, most of the work I've created has been for the screen.

Making a movie or TV show takes time — sometimes a really long time. But in 2011 when I wrote *8*, a play about the courtroom battle for same-sex marriage equality in the United States, time was exactly the luxury that we didn't have.

When the judge decided not to allow cameras to film the crucial *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* case —

the California trial that led to the overturning of Proposition 8 — I knew I had to find a way to make what happened in the courtroom visible to a wider audience as soon as possible. The judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, making gay marriage legal in the state once more, but soon after, an appeal was launched. This was just the start of the battle. We knew that the eventual decision at the Supreme Court would determine the legal status of gay marriage across the country.

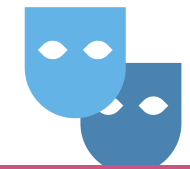
I decided to use theater to try to make a significant impact on the issue as quickly as possible, because we couldn't wait around for something to get greenlit, shot, and distributed. We needed to get it out there almost as soon as I'd hit "save" on the final draft, and only theater would let us move at that speed and scale.



**We needed to get it out there almost as soon as I'd hit 'save' on the final draft, and only theater would let us move at that speed and scale.**

*8* tells the story of the plaintiffs as they fought to win marriage equality. As I was one of the four founding members of the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER), the organization that brought the case to court in the first place, there was a more urgent need for *8* than anything I'd ever done before. It was written purely to make the case for marriage equality in the United States, making it one of the most impact-focused works of my career.

At the time, most material on the subject of same-sex marriage was presented in pamphlets or on TV. This content simply echoed the subjective views of the people who made it. During the trial, the argument took place in a different arena, with different rules. For the first time in the debate, both sides had to raise their right hands and promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What happened in that courtroom was incredibly emotional and dramatic; it was hard to sit there and not feel like banning same-sex marriage was inherently wrong. I wanted to use theater to transport people into that courtroom, so that they could feel that way too. The challenge was to do this without the opposition being able to dismiss my version of events. I needed to be able to say: "This is what ▶



**40 nationwide productions**

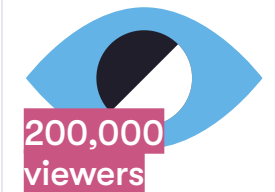
### Disruptive distribution tactics of 8

Throughout 2012 more than 40 nationwide productions of *8* were scheduled across 17 states by the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER).

Productions were followed by a talkback where cast and audience members discussed the issues presented in the *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* trial.

The play was licensed free to colleges and community theaters, and readings took place in states where gay marriage legal issues were in play, including New Hampshire, North Carolina, Maryland, and Maine. Other readings were scheduled at universities including Stanford and the University of North Carolina, and at theater companies across the US.

— Potts, Kimberly. "Dustin Lance Black Gay Marriage Play '8' Going on Tour." *Reuters*, 17 Jan. 2012. [www.reuters.com/article/idUS187526126720120117](http://www.reuters.com/article/idUS187526126720120117).



**200,000 viewers**

The livestream reading of *8* featuring George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Martin Sheen, Kevin Bacon, Jane Lynch, Jamie Lee Curtis, and directed by Rob Reiner, attracted 200,000 viewers.

— Wetherbe, Jamie. "George Clooney, Brad Pitt Reading of '8' Comes to CD and Download." *Los Angeles Times*, 3 May 2012. [articles.latimes.com/2012/may/03/entertainment/la-et-cm-dustin-lance-blacks-prop-8-drama-to-hit-the-airwaves-20120503](http://articles.latimes.com/2012/may/03/entertainment/la-et-cm-dustin-lance-blacks-prop-8-drama-to-hit-the-airwaves-20120503).

"Watch Brad Pitt, George Clooney In Prop. 8 Play Online." *The Huffington Post*, Oath, 4 Mar. 2012. [www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/04/prop-8-play-youtube\\_n\\_1319379.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/04/prop-8-play-youtube_n_1319379.html).





happened in court, and if you don't believe me, go and check the transcripts.”

So that's where I started. Every time I got on an airplane I took a binder of court transcripts and just started redacting, cutting things down. The final script that I wrote wasn't verbatim, otherwise it would have been a three-week-long play, but I still wanted it to be authentic and full of specific detail that would pique the audience's interest. In short, it would make them feel like they'd sat through the entire trial in 90 minutes.

Emotional engagement is one of the key things that makes theater an effective tool for creating empathy, and through that, impact. People go to the theater to feel things, and at one point in the writing process I realized I needed to make 8 more personal. So I interviewed the plaintiffs and their kids, and added interstitial scenes where we could meet these characters outside the courtroom. This was essential, because when you really get into the details of how people live their lives under circumstances that are very different from your own, you start to see the light of universality. You start to see humanity.

The Supreme Court's final ruling was going to affect every state in America, so I wanted 8 to be performed in as many of them as possible. We knew that the judges didn't live in bubbles:



**To maximize our reach, the performance was also streamed live on YouTube and later released as an audiobook.**

they read newspapers, watched television shows, and were aware of public opinions, so if there was anything we could do to make this decision simpler for them, it was worth a try.

My friend Richard Socarides — whose father, Charles Socarides, was the psychiatrist who came up with the entire notion that being LGBT

was a mental illness — encouraged me to write 8 for free for Broadway Impact, an organization that has been using the theater to raise money for HIV/AIDS since 2009. Not only would all the money it made go to LGBT causes, but with their network of contacts there was a chance we could get it to play across the entire country. It seemed like a fantasy, but it was worth a shot.

Broadway Impact turned out to be the best producers I've ever worked with, because everything they promised came true. The New York reading of 8 raised over \$1 million and with their assistance we were ultimately able to bring the show to all 50 states. On March 3rd 2012, we arranged a special one-off reading at LA's Wilshire Ebell Theatre, directed by Rob Reiner and with an all-star cast that included George Clooney, Brad Pitt, and Jamie Lee Curtis. To maximize our reach, the performance was also streamed live on YouTube and later released as an audiobook. On the night, the livestream drew an audience of 200,000 viewers, and by the end of 2018 the video had been watched over 950,000 times, accruing almost 10,000 "likes" in the process.

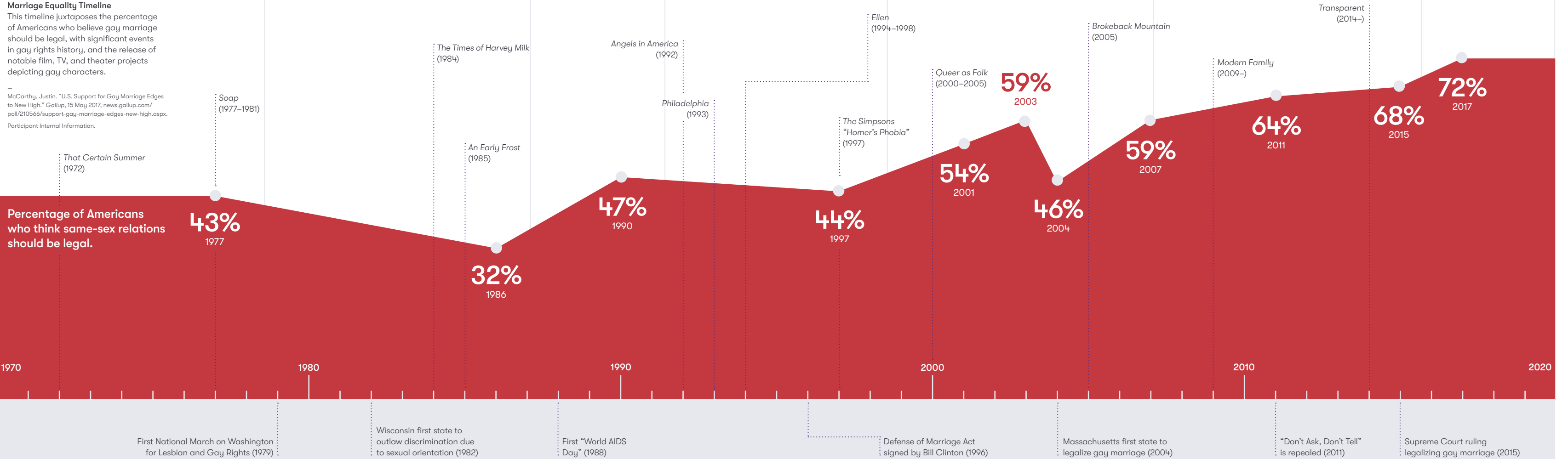
Between the show itself and donations from online viewers, the Wilshire Ebell performance raised a further \$2 million for our cause.

The show ended up traveling far beyond the US; the last time I checked, the play had also been performed in eight other countries — notably in Australia, where it was recently used in support of another national battle for gay marriage equality. In the end, the most triumphant impact of 8 was in the US where we eventually won our battle. The US Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in June 2015, making gay marriage a reality across the entire nation.

No matter which medium I work in, I strive to write stories that will correct the misconceptions we have about people of diversity. It's my firm belief that if we can clear out all that still divides people today, we can start to see what we have in common instead. This is yet another reason why detail is simply crucial for a good story — because in detail lives authenticity, authenticity cultivates curiosity, and curiosity can help you to build the audience that these works deserve. ■

**?**  
**Marriage Equality Timeline**  
This timeline juxtaposes the percentage of Americans who believe gay marriage should be legal, with significant events in gay rights history, and the release of notable film, TV, and theater projects depicting gay characters.

— McCarthy, Justin. "U.S. Support for Gay Marriage Edges to New High." Gallup, 15 May 2017, news.gallup.com/poll/210566/support-gay-marriage-edges-new-high.aspx. Participant Internal Information.





# Reading Between the Lines

Art and activism can go hand-in-hand. **Shirley Jo Finney** talks about her most impactful projects and explains why now, more than ever, we must learn to trust in art.



In the Red and Brown Water, 2010

©Photography by Ed Krueger

## Shirley Jo Finney

International theater and television director



Notable works:  
*Facing Our Truth*, *Citizen: An American Lyric*

People have always learned about themselves through storytelling.

What an artist does is study human behavior — our wants, needs, and desires. Since the beginning, humanity has had to understand how to navigate our everyday existence by seeing nature and ourselves within it. I became involved in the Black Arts Movement in the late 60s, while still in

college. The nation was in crisis and the civil rights movement was exploding, pulling the scab off the historical wound of systemic racism in this country. The artists of the time were fearlessly telling our narratives with a sense of urgency. Black theater companies emerged throughout the country. It was a time of reclamation, of breaking from Western storytelling. They reintroduced ritual improvisational storytelling, embracing the diaspora and ancestral spirituality that is unique to the African American experience. ▶



**When directing social impact theater, it is important to create a safe space.**

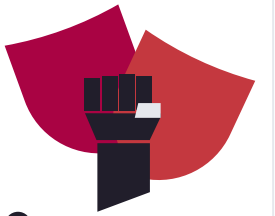


### **Facing Our Truth**

In response to the George Zimmerman verdict, The New Black Fest commissioned the following six plays about Trayvon Martin, race and privilege:

- Colored*  
by Winter Miller
- Night Vision*  
by Dominique Morisseau
- Dressing*  
by Mona Mansour and Tala Manassah
- No More Monsters Here*  
by Marcus Gardley
- Some Other Kid*  
by A. Rey Pamatmat
- The Ballad of George Zimmerman*  
by Dan O'Brien and Quetzal Flores

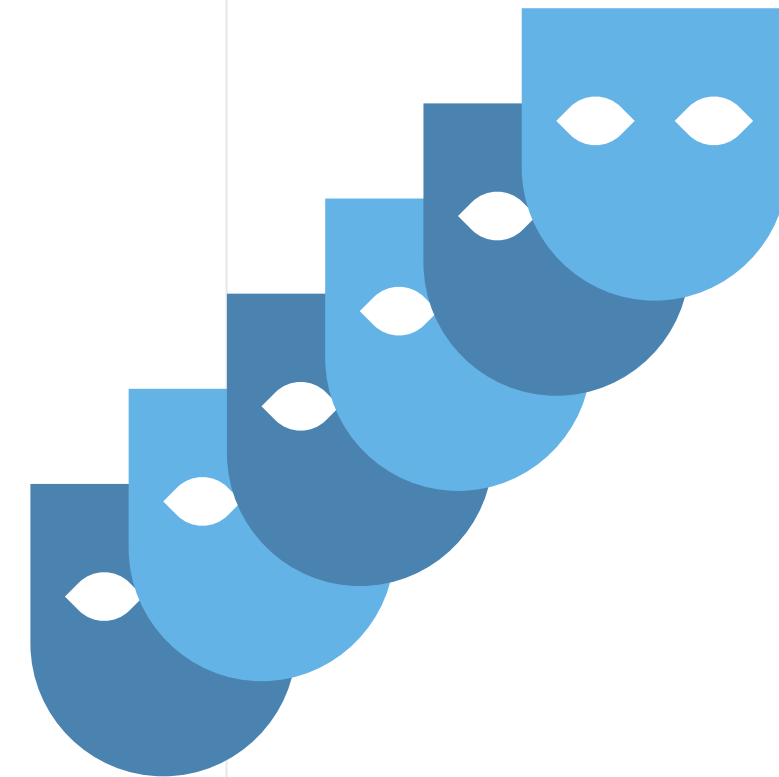
—  
"Facing Our Truth: Ten Minute Plays on Trayvon, Race and Privilege." Samuel French, [www.samuel french.com/p/58272/facing-our-truth-ten-minute-plays-on-trayvon-race-and-privilege](http://www.samuel french.com/p/58272/facing-our-truth-ten-minute-plays-on-trayvon-race-and-privilege).



### **Black Arts Movement**

The Black Arts Movement is the name given to a group of politically motivated black poets, artists, dramatists, musicians, and writers in the wake of the Black Power Movement that lasted from 1965–1975. Amiri Baraka is considered the father of the Movement after he opened the Black Arts Repertory Theatre in Harlem in 1965. The Movement soon spread from New York to Chicago, Detroit, and San Francisco, and art was created by the black community for the black community in order to achieve artistic and civil liberation.

—  
Foster, Hannah. "The Black Arts Movement (1965–1975)." *Boley, Oklahoma (1903–)* | *The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed*, [blackpast.org/aah/black-arts-movement-1965-1975](http://blackpast.org/aah/black-arts-movement-1965-1975).





The Movement and the stories being produced were transformative, daring, and political. It made audiences aware and uncomfortable. It was theater and art-as-activism. I call it “edutainment” — where the audience is being educated and transformed while being entertained.

Nelson and Winnie Mandela believed the artists of South Africa helped to dismantle and expose apartheid to the world. We are witnessing another artistic revolution which is addressing the political unrest of our day. Once again, the artists of our time are answering the call for what is right and just.

Trayvon Martin’s assassination was a moment that tore and broke through our psyche. For my generation it was seeing the Vietnam War, the assassinations of leaders, and pictures of Emmett Till on television; for this generation it’s Trayvon Martin. In New York City in early 2015, Keith Josef Adkins brought six writers together to express the rage and frustration of people following the George Zimmerman verdict. *Facing Our Truth* — a series of six, 10-minute plays — captured their reaction to Martin’s assassination and many others of the black male body. The plays became part of the national conversation on race and privilege. Theaters across the country took up the call, producing the play in different venues. I directed the Los Angeles production for the Center Theater Group at the Kirk Douglas Theater. We held public talks with the audiences after the performance — they needed a safe space to give voice to their feelings before leaving the theater.



**Trayvon Martin’s assassination was a moment that tore and broke through our psyche.**

Two years later, I directed another production of *Facing Our Truth* with students at the University of Southern California. Several more shootings had happened in the intervening period. The students were 18 to 22 years old — the same age as many of those murdered. There was a tangible reaction in the rehearsal hall. The wound was raw and immediate. It was important for them to have a place, through story, in which to



channel their emotions and feel empowerment. I recalled my passion and how I felt so many years ago, and how that drove me to actively participate in a movement.

When directing social impact theater, it is important to create a safe space. Most of the time the work that is being performed is immediate and living — it’s personal. I never want my actors to act; I want them to identify what they’re feeling and then express that in the room. That means feeling safe enough to dig into your own experience — that’s the challenge. My way of working is totally organic. I leave the intellectual meaning to the writers; my work takes place in the space between the lines.

This organic process was particularly important when Stephen Sachs invited me to direct an

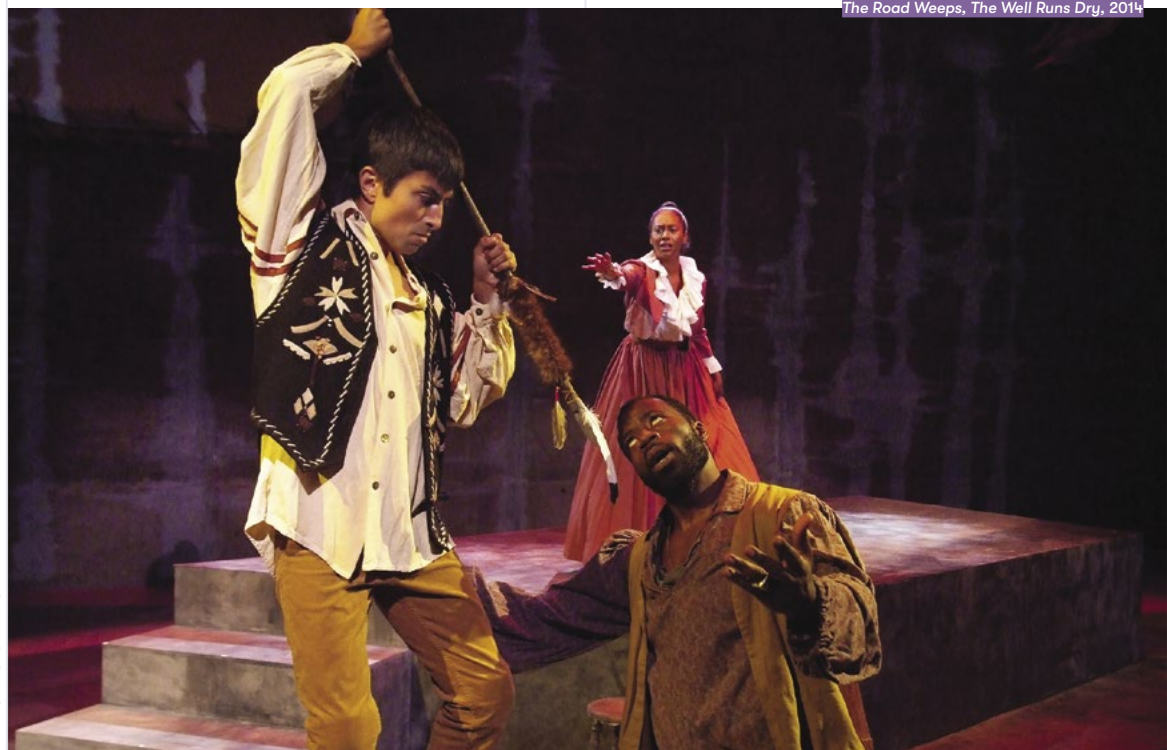
© Photography by Edi Krieger

adaptation of Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*. The publication is an award-winning collection of vignettes — expressed through prose, poetry, and imagery — that detail the experience of race and racism.



**The audience needed an opportunity to give voice to their emotions.**

Claudia wrote *Citizen* for white, middle and upper-class privileged people to examine everyday microaggressions towards black people. *Citizen* is told through a variety of perspectives, and by narrators seeing themselves in the shared experience of systemic racism. It can make privileged audiences uncomfortable, but it’s important that those audiences see how they interfere with our lives. For the audience member of color, they find it cathartic to have the moments they have kept to themselves out in the open. It is language that pulls moments into reality. This show, like *Facing Our Truth*, demanded an audience talkback. The audience needed an opportunity to give voice to their emotions. They needed to have a conversation about what they had just experienced.



© Photography by Edi Krieger

At one point, the show traveled to Charleston, South Carolina. The theater was just around the corner from the church where Dylann Roof murdered nine black parishioners. I was walking in newly dug up soil; the community and the actors had suffered that experience just a year before my arrival. It was as emotionally raw as working with the USC students. In the post-show talkbacks, the first question I asked was not “What did you think?” but “How did you feel?”



**We need our tools of empathy and imagination more now than any other time.**

— T. Michelle Murphy

Murphy, T. Michelle. “Broadway Shows Are Taking on Activist Issues.” *Metro US*, 4 May 2017, [www.metro.us/things-do/ew-york/broadway-shows-are-taking-activist-issues](http://www.metro.us/things-do/ew-york/broadway-shows-are-taking-activist-issues).

In every era, theater has had a social and emotional impact on people. Artists have a responsibility as storytellers to research the culture, politics, and music around their stories because they can affect the energy and temperament of the people. You also need to trust your work. Trust yourself, your impulses, trust your feelings, then trust those working around you. Even now, I’m still learning to trust my art. ■

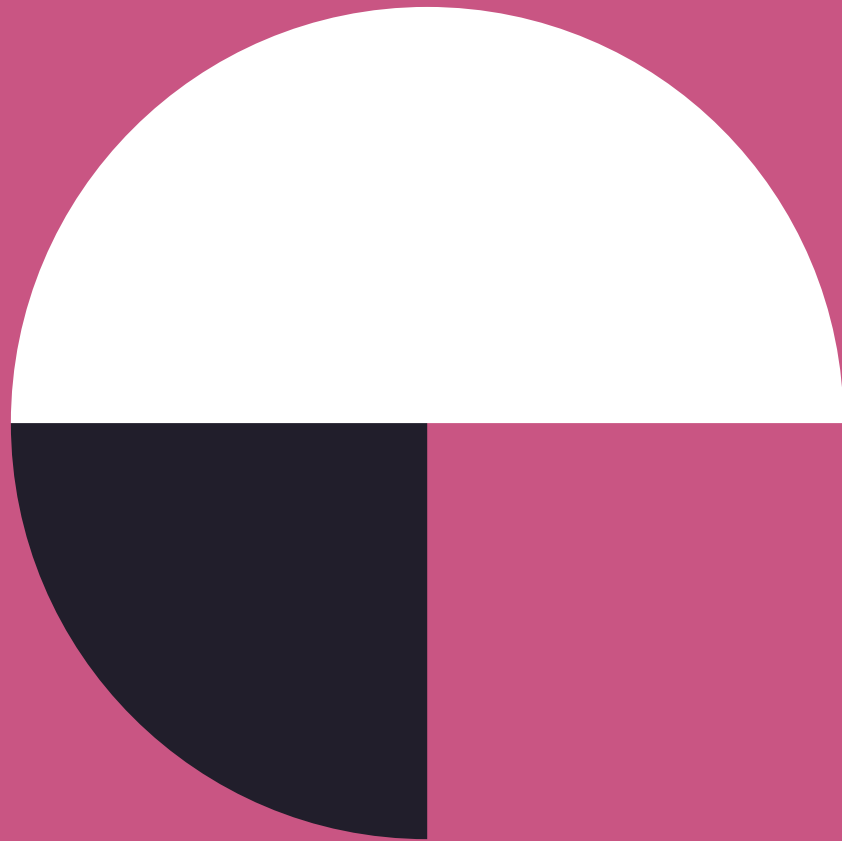


Stephen Sachs is Co-Artistic Director of The Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles, which he co-founded in 1990. A multiple award-winner, Sachs wrote the stage adaptation of Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*, the winner of the 2016 Stage Raw Award for Best Stage Adaptation, put on by The Fountain Theatre and Kirk Douglas Theatre in Los Angeles and PURE Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina.

“Home.” Stephen Sachs, [stephensachs.com/home.html](http://stephensachs.com/home.html).

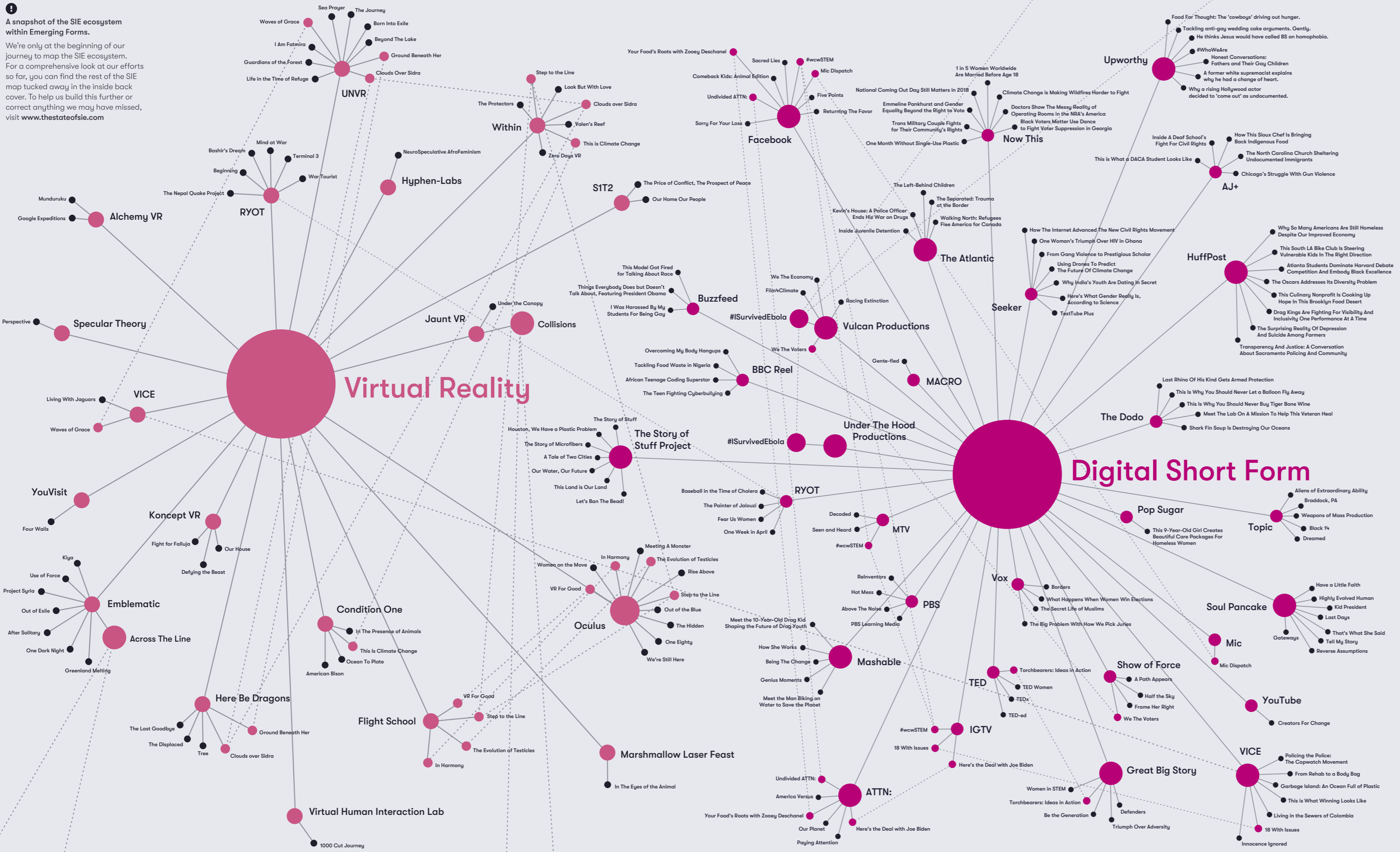


# Emerging Forms





**i** A snapshot of the SIE ecosystem within Emerging Forms. We're only at the beginning of our journey to map the SIE ecosystem. For a comprehensive look at our efforts so far, you can find the rest of the SIE map tucked away in the inside back cover. To help us build this further or correct anything we may have missed, visit [www.thestateofsie.com](http://www.thestateofsie.com)



Over the past two decades, technological progress — and the arrival of the Internet in particular — has given rise to a wide array of new entertainment forms. These have been seized upon by social impact artists, ever keen to find new ways to tell stories that drive essential change.

While there are many of these emerging forms of SIE, our inaugural report focuses on two of the most exciting examples: virtual reality (VR) and digital short form.

This section:

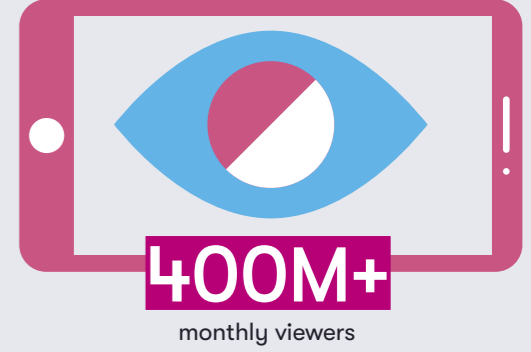
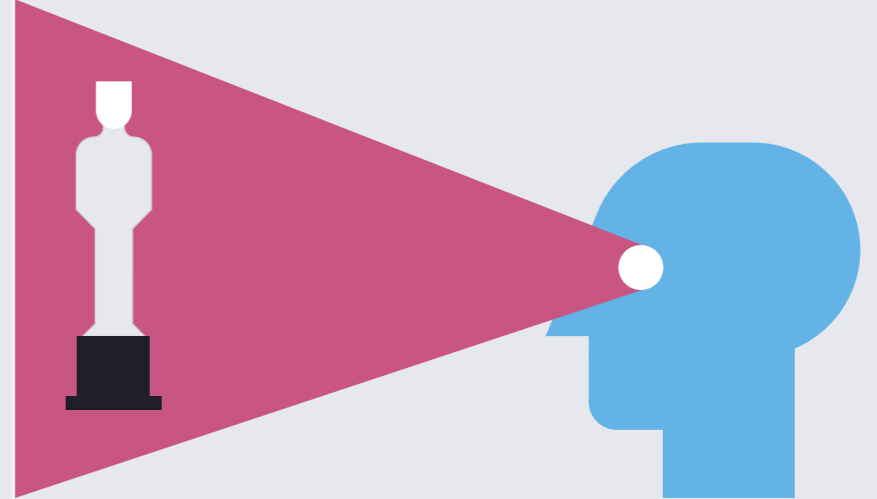
Creating Soulful Content Shabnam Magharabi & Rainn Wilson	120
Less is More Carole Tomko	124
Stepping Inside the Issue Nonny de la Peña	128

**Digital short form doesn't need to fit into a traditional slot or platform, and that's one of its greatest strengths.**

— Carole Tomko p126

**i** In 2017, Alejandro González Iñárritu was awarded a rare special Academy Award® for his VR installation *Came y Areña*. It was the first time a special Oscar® had ever been awarded in the VR medium, and the first time a special Oscar® had been given out since 1996. The award demonstrates the acknowledgement of VR as a powerful and important form of storytelling.

**i** Facebook said its nascent Watch service is attracting 400 million monthly viewers who spend at least 1 minute checking out videos, 75 million of whom spend an average of 20 minutes watching shows every day. The self-reported data reflects strong momentum for the year-old service which, prior to its global launch in August 2018, reported just 50 million monthly users in the US.



— "Alejandro Iñárritu: *Came y Areña* awarded special Oscar®," BBC News, BBC, 28 Oct. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-41786923](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-41786923).

Read online at [thestateofsie.com](http://thestateofsie.com)



# Creating Soulful Content



© SoulPancake. Kid President meets the President of the United States of America. YouTube, uploaded by SoulPancake, April 4th 2013, youtube.com/watch?v=7u20Umo1aw

For **Shabnam Mogharabi** and **Rainn Wilson**, the future of all content is in digital short form. The question is, how do we give that content purpose, meaning and soul?

## Shabnam Mogharabi

General Manager of SoulPancake



Notable works:  
*Kid President, My Last Days*

We are bombarded with a dizzying amount of information every single day.

The average American spends 35–45 minutes per day on Facebook; 500 million tweets are sent every 24 hours, and 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute. At the same time, our attention spans are shrinking — a study by Microsoft found that our average attention spans had dropped from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds in 2015. That’s one second less than a goldfish. So it makes sense that our consumption

## Rainn Wilson

Actor, writer, co-founder of SoulPancake and Haiti-based educational initiative Lidé



Notable works:  
*The Office, Kid President*

In 2008, when my friends and I began talking about the idea that would eventually become SoulPancake, there was very little positive content on the web.

There was, to put it bluntly, a lot of crap out there: porn, Kardashians, crass humor, and materialism. We wanted to create a positive destination where thinkers, innovators, misfits, artists, and activists could congregate to explore their universal human experience — a place to examine ideas, chew on life’s big questions, and dig into thought-provoking content.

Once up and running, we quickly realized that the video content we were producing for the website was our strongest and most engaging content, so we pivoted to becoming a content studio focused on video storytelling. Our first big initiative was to create inspirational short-form episodic series via a premium YouTube channel.

habits have evolved to favor short-form and social content. Social platforms cater to our shrinking attention spans, and short-form content allows us to maximize the time we are spending on entertainment. Short-form content takes advantage of the five, 10 or 20-minute “micropockets” of time that we now program our days with.



**Consumers are looking to use the Internet to find a sense of meaning, purpose, and identity.**

But does this type of content work to communicate a social impact message? I believe it does, and I have a theory why. If you’re familiar with Abraham Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs” from your psychology class, humans must progress through five stages of needs, each being fulfilled ▶

And it was there that we found our first big hit and really homed in on our voice.

The future of all content must include short-form video. It’s the most consumed content on social platforms, and the most easily accessible (and streamable) by phone, which is the device more and more consumers use to watch entertainment. When students are between classes or have time to fill, they don’t turn to movies or TV shows, they use their phones to find some entertainment. This content is often immediately shareable, unlike traditional television and film, so it can reach huge audiences in a short amount of time — something that was unthinkable 10 years ago.

The real potential in this medium lies in giving youth hope: hope that they matter, hope that their voices are heard, hope that they can make a difference. This young, tapped-in, influential audience has the potential to change the world, but they don’t want content that lectures them. They want to be inspired and to find their own path towards change. They want content that punches them in the heart and the gut.

And content creators? We have the biggest responsibility here. As the world becomes more fractured and perilous, it’s up to content creators to tell the stories that move us forward as a species on our sacred planet. I hope that SoulPancake can continue to serve the world by making content that ignites a fire toward positive change. ■



**!** Microsoft Attention Span Study  
Addictive technology behaviors are evident, particularly for younger Canadians. A 2013 survey asked participants from different age demographics whether they agreed with the following statements:

■ 18–24 ■ 65+

**77%**  
**10%**

“When nothing is occupying my attention, the first thing I do is reach for my phone.”

**52%**  
**6%**

“I check my phone at least every 30 minutes.”

**73%**  
**18%**

“The last thing I do before I go to bed is check my phone.”

— McSpadden, Kevin. “Science: You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish.” Time, 14 May 2015, time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/.



before the next can be reached, in order to reach the ultimate goal of self-actualization. I believe the Internet, and particularly our online lives, are progressing through Maslow's hierarchy. Our "physiological" needs online were met in the early days of the online boom with transactional entities like eBay and Amazon. The birth of online banking and secure email like AOL Online and Microsoft gratified our need for "safety;" our "belonging" needs were met with social sites like Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook; and we're now living in the "esteem" stage where sites like Twitter and Instagram fulfill our needs to be seen, heard, and appreciated. I believe we are finally on the verge of entering the final phase of "self-actualization" online where consumers are looking to use the Internet to find a sense of meaning, purpose, and identity.

This is where I see SoulPancake and our parent company, Participant Media, fitting in. As storytellers, it's our job to help people find a common sense of purpose and meaning. This doesn't always mean direct social action; most of the time, it's actually about forming an identity and connecting with other humans. In the social sphere, this understanding is especially important. You don't want to ask your audience for something every time they interact with you because it can cause fatigue. Broadly speaking, the vast majority of our

content is entertainment that asks the viewer to think and feel, but only a small percentage has a direct call to action.

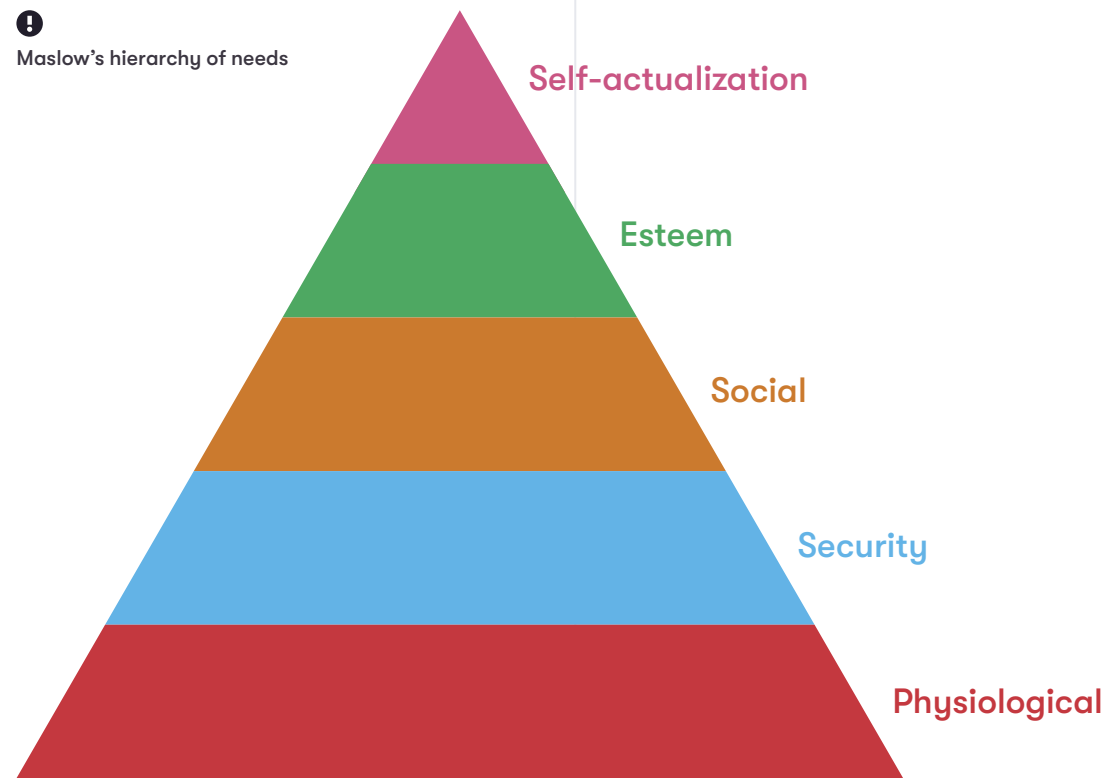
One of my favorite sayings is, "Strive to be a virus; not viral." In practical terms, this means creating a steady drumbeat of content that can infect an audience, not focusing on getting a viral hit. That way, if and when you do have an organic breakthrough hit, you can capitalize on the momentum of that one video by having a library of content for viewers to engage with that helps sustain views and engagement during the inevitable post-viral drop.



**Strive to be a virus; not viral.**

Take our hit series *Kid President*. It wasn't an overnight success. We'd been releasing *Kid President* episodes for a long time — an original video, once a week, for six months — before the "Pep Talk" video went viral, hitting nearly 30 million views in less than one week. *Kid President* certainly had a viral moment, but because of

**Maslow's hierarchy of needs**



— Maslow, A.H. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychology Review*, vol. 50, 1943, pp. 370-396, psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm.



**Kid President**  
*Kid President* began when 11-year-old Robby Novak and his brother-in-law Brad Montague started posting their videos online to inspire positivity. The videos cover a range of topics but all center around the simple premise that the world can be more awesome, and that all kids deserve to be heard. Since its inception, *Kid President* videos have included notable guests — such as President Obama and Beyoncé — and garnered more than 100 million views.

As of the end of 2018:

**43M+**

views on YouTube for "Pep Talk"

**850K+**  
likes on Facebook

**380K+**  
followers on Twitter

**280K+**  
followers on Instagram

— "Kid President." Facebook, www.facebook.com/KidPresident/.  
 "Kid President (@iamkidpresident)." Twitter, twitter.com/iamkidpresident.  
 "Kid President Official (@iamkidpresident)." Instagram Photos and Videos." Instagram, www.instagram.com/iamkidpresident/?hl=en.

SoulPancake. "A Pep Talk from Kid President to You." YouTube, 24 Jan. 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-gQLq9f4to.

the deep vault of content already in place, it wasn't a one-off sensation.



**SoulPancake's target audience epitomize what I like to call the optimistic millennial and the altruistic Gen Zer.**

After its viral success, we continued to focus most of *Kid President's* weekly videos on being entertaining, inspiring, and meaningful. Only two or three times a year we would ask viewers to engage at a more significant level. For example, the annual Socktober campaign — which aimed to prove that even the smallest acts of kindness, like donating a pair of socks, can make a difference in the lives of the homeless — was a prime example of using these asks sparingly, but to great effect. Over time, something fascinating happened: our viewers started asking *Kid President* for more ideas on how else they could make a difference.

These viewers — SoulPancake's target audience — epitomize what I like to call the optimistic millennial and the altruistic Gen Zer. These generations

believe that humans are generally good, there is hope for the future, and they have the power to make a difference. A big part of that is by using their dollars as consumers to show what they stand for. Given the choice between brands, millennials and Gen Zers will often opt for the brand that stands for something. In fact, a recent study by Cone Communications suggested that 89% of Gen Zers would rather buy from a company that's addressing social or environmental issues over one that is not.

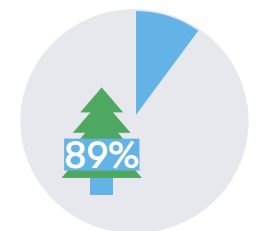
In early 2018, Larry Fink, chairman of BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, sent a letter to the CEOs of the company's holdings. In it, he explained that it was essential for businesses to have a social purpose, or else risk losing consumers and the support of BlackRock. This was a clear signifier that even Wall Street is starting to pay attention to the demand for social responsibility and conscientious impact, and if that is happening, then it's a trend everyone needs to start embracing.

The next generation, powered by social networks, mobile technology, and the drive to find meaning, will change the way the world works, and for the better. Ignoring that will be an obstacle to progress and success. The change is already happening; it's just up to us to engage with this new culture. ■



**Kid President campaigns**  
 After *Kid President's* success, SoulPancake took viewers' requests into consideration. They shifted *Kid President* videos to include advice, tips, and lessons. They also built the Socktober campaign, which provided socks for homeless children.

— "SoulPancake." YouTube, 24 Jan. 2013, youtube.com/watch?v=l-gQLq9f4to.



Nearly nine-in-10 (89%) say they would rather buy from a company addressing social or environmental issues over one that is not, and 92% would switch brands to one associated with a good cause, given similar price and quality, skewing just slightly higher than the national average (89%).

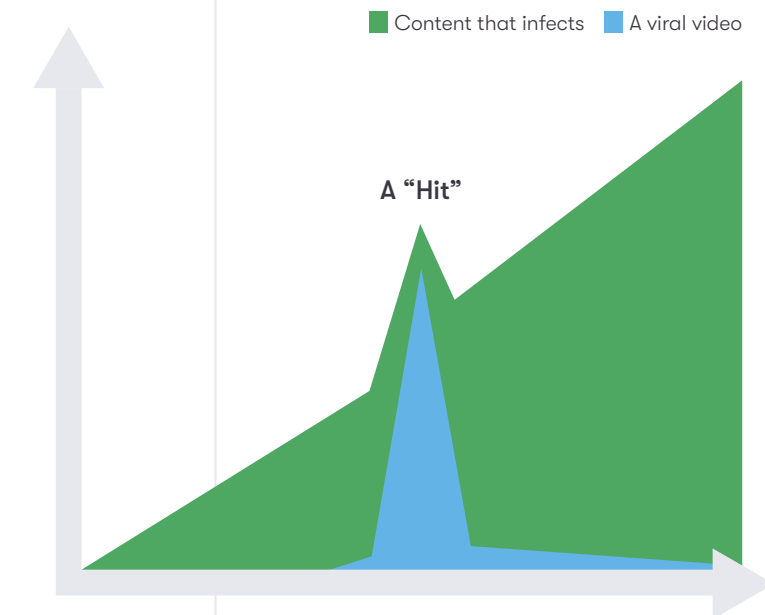
— "2017 Cone Gen Z CSR Study: How to Speak Z." Cone Communications, www.conecomm.com/research-blog/2017-genz-csr-study.



**Be a virus, not viral**

SoulPancake had been releasing the *Kid President* videos once a week for six months prior to their "Pep Talk" video that has now garnered over 43 million views. The video was an infectious "virus" thanks to the steady drumbeat of content that had preceded it. Many prior *Kid President* videos saw a lift in viewership after the "Pep Talk" release.

— SoulPancake. "Strive To Be a Virus, Not Viral."







We The Voters "MediaOcracy," 2016

# Less is More

**Carole Tomko** explains how digital short form has become this generation's go-to format, and why, when tackling the big issues, the shorter the better.

## Carole Tomko

Former General Manager and Creative Director of Vulcan Productions



Notable works:  
*We The Economy, We The Voters, Racing Extinction*

Storytelling can drive public awareness of big issues in a way that conventional philanthropy can't match.

The emotional bond generated from compelling content, partnered with information that empowers people to do something about it, is the key to real, positive change. Our mission at Vulcan Productions is centered around five pillars — technology, data, policy change, philanthropy, and storytelling — and how these tools help us to create content that builds awareness and drives engagement. The work we do ranges from production to campaigns and outreach, but all of it aims to generate impact through information-rich storytelling.

Two of our most successful digital short-form projects are *We The Economy* and its follow-up, *We The Voters*. Both aimed to demystify big, thorny issues a lot of people remain uninformed about throughout their lives. *We The Economy* arose from shocking insights gathered on how the average American struggles to understand the fundamentals of the country's economy. We commissioned 23 digital short films with a totally

uncommercial agenda, allowing 20 directors to produce content that explained an economic topic they felt needed unraveling — such as how the global trade system works, or why healthcare is so expensive. The creative freedom we gave them meant that the films took all shapes and forms: documentary, narrative, and even one that is told through dance! We partnered with more than 70 distributors online and with Landmark Theatres across the country — all of which resulted in 18 million views across various platforms.



**We wanted to reach younger voters and those harder-to-reach, traditionally disengaged groups.**

With *We The Voters*, the impetus was instead the imminent 2016 US presidential election. We were discovering, as with the economy, a lot of Americans were trying to make sense of the political system and voting process. Again, we commissioned 20 films — about topics like student debt, lobbying, and immigration — to break down the issues and inform diverse audiences. We wanted to reach younger voters and those harder-to-reach, traditionally disengaged groups, so we chose our platforms based on these targeted demographics. We also partnered with PBS Learning and 10 national educational organizations where our content was used by 2 million teachers, with 13,000 downloads of our ▶



### **We The Economy awards**

*We The Economy* won more than 12 major film and digital awards:  
Webby Winner in the 2015 "Online Film & Video / News & Politics Series"  
"Best Mobile App" at the 2015 Shorty Awards  
2015 Gold World Medal Winner for "Online Educational Program" and Silver World Medal Winner for "Short Films" at the 2015 New York Festival's Best TV & Film Awards

—  
"We The Economy." Vulcan Productions, www.vulcanproductions.com/our-work/we-the-economy/.

"We The Economy 20 Short Films You Can't Afford to Miss." The Webby Awards, www.webbyawards.com/winners/2015/online-film-video/general-film-categories/news-politics-series/.

Monillos, Kristina. "These Brands Are Vying to Be the Best on Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and More." Adweek, 17 Mar. 2015. www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/these-brands-are-vying-to-be-the-best-on-instagram-snapchat-youtube-and-more-163508/.

"2015 NEW YORK FESTIVAL'S TV & FILM AWARDS WINNERS." New York Festival's World's Best TV & Films, www.newyorkfestival.com/tvfilm/pop/dirwinner.php?CmptnlD=200.



### **We The Voters partnerships**

*We The Voters* worked with over 60 digital partners, including exhibition partners, VOD, media properties, online platforms, and news outlets.

*We The Voters* features talent including Anabelle Acosta, Tom Arnold, Mario Cantone, Rosario Dawson, Grace Helbig, Richard Kind, Joshua Malina, Charlotte McKinney, Ana Ortiz, Harold Perrineau, and Analeigh Tipton.

—  
"We the Voters" Digital Initiative Announces Distribution Partners, Releases Trailer." The Hollywood Reporter, 14 Sept. 2016, www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/we-the-voters-digital-initiative-announces-928827.

### **We The Voters audience reach**

The films continue to provide fact-based, nonpartisan information to help lead informed discussions on issues brought up during Trump's presidency.



18M+ people reached within 3 months of launch.

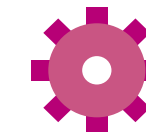


*We The Voters* and PBS Education partnered to disseminate 50+ lesson plans and materials for the classroom.

—  
"We the Voters: 20 Films for the People." The Shorty Awards, shortyawards.com/9th/we-the-voters-20-films-for-the-people-2.

### **We The Voters topics**

The 20 videos produced in the series were grouped into the following areas of focus:



The System



The Issue



Taking Part

—  
"About We The Voters." *We The Voters*, Vulcan Productions, 2016, wethevoters.com/about-we-the-voters.



accompanying curriculum. The films alone had 20 million views — with the social media campaign generating a staggering 13 million views immediately after the election, as people were trying to work out what the heck had just happened.



**Digital short form corresponds neatly to the technological and generational shifts we're seeing in how we consume media.**

Quick to produce and quick to consume, digital short form corresponds neatly to the technological and generational shifts we're seeing in how we consume media. A lesson we learned between *We The Economy* and *We The Voters* was that viewers wanted even shorter content, so while *We The Economy* films were 5–8 minutes, *We The Voters* films were 3–5 minutes. Digital short form doesn't need to fit into a traditional slot or platform, and that's one of its greatest strengths — it's always the right size for what you want to convey, and using it with social media means you can micro-target audiences. Not only will this allow you to reach people who wouldn't normally see a documentary, but audiences feel like it's a consumable and entertaining nugget versus a more mission-driven documentary. Additionally,



**We The Economy topics**

The 20 videos produced in the series covered the following topics:



Economy



Money



Role of Government



Globalization



Inequality

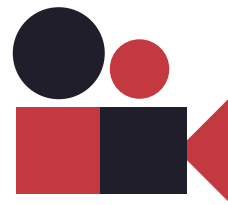
— "We The Economy: About." *We The Economy*, [wetheeconomy.com/about/](http://wetheeconomy.com/about/).

the agility you get with online streaming means you can test different theories of change in a responsive, immediate way. The only downside of the medium is it's hard to track actual behavior change or overall impact beyond views, likes and shares. That's still a challenge to be tackled and one the greater SIE space faces as well.



**The responsiveness and ease of production you get with digital short form allows you to really extend a project's life.**

A more sustained example of what Vulcan Productions does is the short-form content that was commissioned in concert with the release of the documentary *Racing Extinction*, which Discovery Channel premiered worldwide within a 24-hour window. The feature premiered in December 2015, but Vulcan's social impact work continued long after with a campaign featuring additional short films to help grow the community of advocates. We also created a website that is regularly refreshed with content, and we launched a public challenge and campaigned for policy change. We partnered with more than 75 NGOs to drive viewership, petitions, and support for bans. We even partnered with the Vatican and



**We The Economy directors**

*We The Economy* featured work from well-known directors such as Adam McKay, Catherine Hardwicke, John M. Chu, Mary Harron, Albert Hughes, Steve James, and Barbara Kopple.

— Appelo, Tim. "Morgan Spurlock, Paul G. Allen Announce Directors of 'We the Economy' (Exclusive)." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16 Sept. 2014, [www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/morgan-spurlock-paul-g-allen-733089](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/morgan-spurlock-paul-g-allen-733089).



**YouTube in numbers**



logged-in users visit YouTube each month, and every day people watch over a billion hours of video and generate billions of views.



of YouTube watch time comes from mobile devices.



YouTube has launched local versions in more than 91 countries.

You can navigate YouTube in a total of 80 different languages (covering 95% of the Internet population).



The number of channels earning six figures per year on YouTube grew more than **40% year-on-year**

The number of channels earning five figures per year on YouTube grew more than **50% year-on-year**

The number of channels with more than one million subscribers grew by more than **75% year-on-year**

— "YouTube in numbers." YouTube, 2018, [www.youtube.com/intl/en-GB/yt/about/press/](http://www.youtube.com/intl/en-GB/yt/about/press/).

© Oceanic Preservation Society



*Racing Extinction* projections on Empire State Building, 2016

produced an event that projected images of species facing extinction onto St. Peter's Basilica as well as other iconic buildings including the UN headquarters and the Empire State Building.

All this generated 24 million views of the short-form videos associated with the project. It has driven 1.3 million unique visitors to the website, and reached people in 196 countries. The responsiveness and ease of production you get with digital short form allows you to really extend a project's life. We haven't even finished with the *Racing Extinction* campaign yet and our community of activists is at 400,000 and growing. Those kinds of numbers are a real thrill.



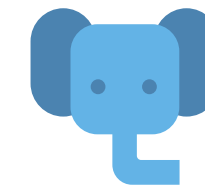
***Racing Extinction* and #StartWith1Thing**

The #StartWith1Thing campaign launched in support of Discovery Channel's debut of *Racing Extinction*.

#StartWith1Thing pledged simple lifestyle changes that can add up to big benefits for endangered species, the environment and humanity itself.

Discovery leveraged its additional platforms, including custom branded content, digital, social media, virtual reality and Discovery Education, along with its partners to ignite curiosity and global actions people can take in the four areas illustrated here.

— "Discovery Communications Launches Unprecedented Global Initiative and Campaign Focused on Species Conservation." *Discovery Communications, corporate*, [discovery.com/discovery-newsroom/discovery-communications-launches-unprecedented](http://discovery.com/discovery-newsroom/discovery-communications-launches-unprecedented).



Fight wildlife trafficking



Reduce carbon emissions

**#StartWith1Thing**



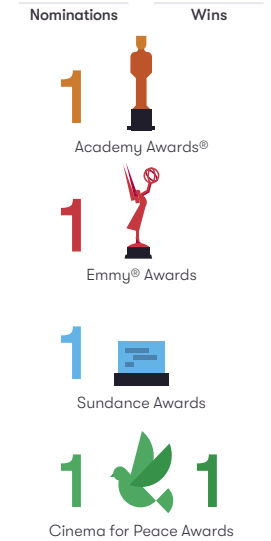
Support green causes



Eat less meat



**Racing Extinction awards**



— "Racing Extinction (2015): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt1618448/awards](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1618448/awards).



# Stepping Inside the Issue

Nonny de la Peña discusses the promising present and bright future of virtual reality, and why it's the perfect medium for creating social impact.

## Nonny de la Peña

Founder and CEO of Emblematic Group



Notable works:  
*After Solitary, Hunger in Los Angeles, Project Syria*

Imagine that you are walking down the street when you see somebody hit by a car.

You could go home and describe your experience, you might even be able to show photographs or a video of the aftermath — but nothing would do justice to the visceral experience of having been there on the scene. Virtual reality (VR) is the closest we can get to communicating an exact sense of being physically present at an event.

This is why as a research fellow at USC in 2010

I wanted to apply the VR medium to social impact stories. I've always been driven by a desire to connect people to these topics: I've worked as a Newsweek correspondent and created documentaries such as the HBO investigation *Death on the Job*. But a two-dimensional screen can be distancing. Concerns like poverty or war can fail to resonate or feel relevant when we see them as flat images on the news, as if these things are somehow separated from our day-to-day lives.

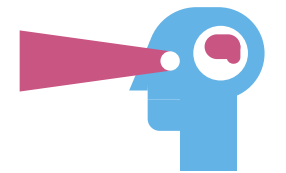
For people to feel empathy about a specific story, they need a sense of "being there." They need to understand what a situation feels like to connect with the issue. VR is the perfect tool to create this sensation and, by extension, to create social impact. That's why I decided to use VR to change public perception around the issue of food insecurity, wherein poverty deprives people of adequate access to food.

*Hunger in Los Angeles* recreates an actual scene using real audio in which a man collapses into a diabetic coma while waiting in line at a food bank in California. The viewer is placed on the ▶

! According to Statista, in 2022, the augmented and virtual reality market is expected to reach a market size of \$209.2 billion. As of 2018, the global AR/VR market size is \$27 billion.

2018  
**\$27B**  
2022  
**\$209.2B**

— KZero. "Number of active virtual reality users worldwide from 2014 to 2018 (in millions)." Statista, Jul. 2014, www.statista.com/statistics/426469/active-virtual-reality-users-worldwide/.



! Media Impact Project researchers have established that virtual reality "evokes presence, encourages perspective-taking, and gives participants a sense of being in control of their environment."

— Karlin, Beth, et al. *Does Medium Matter? Exploring the Role of Virtual Reality in Journalism*. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, 2018, www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/1/5127770/frontlinereport\_final.pdf.

! According to the Venture Reality Fund, in the first quarter of 2017, the global VR industry grew by 40%.



— Hills-Duty, Rebecca. "Global VR Industry Grows 40% Over Last Quarter." VRFocus, 10 Mar. 2017, www.vrfocus.com/2017/03/global-vr-industry-grows-40-over-last-quarter/.

Hunger in Los Angeles, 2012





street when the diabetic man falls to the floor and starts having seizures, while others in the scene stand around helplessly waiting for paramedics to arrive. The experience, which launched in 2012, was the first VR piece to be featured at the Sundance Film Festival, and ultimately helped to set the vernacular for the space, coining the term “immersive journalism.” It went on to inspire directors and artists like Chris Milk, Adrian Grenier, and Alejandro González Iñárritu, the latter of whom referenced the project when he won an Oscar® for his VR film *Carne y Arena* in 2017. We have seen many users become so immersed in the experience of *Hunger in Los Angeles* that they actually crouch down to try to help the fallen man.



### VR can contribute to or even change a narrative that’s still unfolding.

The empathetic power of VR goes beyond the anecdotal, as evidenced by a 2018 study by Johanna Blakley’s team at the Norman Lear Center. The Lear Center studied participants’ reactions to *After Solitary*, a VR piece I created in partnership with the documentary series *FRONTLINE* that takes users inside a solitary confinement cell. Ex-prisoner Kenny sits with

you, explaining exactly how the experience drove him insane. Walking around the cell yourself, you get a physical sense of the claustrophobia; the impact of those four walls is felt viscerally. The study proved that participants felt both transportation (the feeling of being absorbed into a story) and spatial presence (the sense that they could carry out actions in the virtual environment). Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents said they were “likely” to “extremely likely” to seek out further reporting on the issues of prison conditions and solitary confinement.

It’s important to note that VR isn’t just about communicating an existing, finished story — it can contribute to or even change a narrative that’s still unfolding. For example, my piece *One Dark Night* brought new evidence to light in the case of the shooting of Trayvon Martin. Here we used architectural recreations of the surroundings and recordings from the actual 911 call to put people in the immediate vicinity of the crime, moments before the shooting. During the creative process, I took these recordings to a forensic audio specialist who cleaned up the sound. After relistening to the audio, the specialist said he would testify that George Zimmerman cocked his gun as he got out his car. It turned the VR piece into a breaking news story.

VR isn’t just about narrative development, either. The technology of the medium is also constantly evolving, and we’ve helped create some real breakthroughs. We created code for Google VR and *The Wall Street Journal* that enabled a live

### FRONTLINE and Emblematic Group study

In a study with *FRONTLINE* and Emblematic Group, the Media Impact Project team (at the Norman Lear Center) studied participants’ reactions to *After Solitary*. Researchers compared the effects of viewing the same material over separate platforms, including room-scale VR with headset, 360 video, 360 immersive video, and 2D.



The presence of a guide or central character gave participants context for the physical experience and was extremely valuable.



Novice users appreciated VR experiences and were inspired to look for more content afterwards, although they did not foresee easy access to the hardware in the near future.



Room-scale VR was the easiest to use, and inspired feelings of transportation (the feeling of being absorbed into a story), and spatial presence (the feeling that one could carry out actions in the virtual environment).

— Karlin, Beth, et al. *Does Medium Matter? Exploring the Role of Virtual Reality in Journalism*. USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, 2018. [www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/frontrlinevrreport\\_final.pdf](http://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/frontrlinevrreport_final.pdf).

Participants were randomly assigned to experience *After Solitary* in room-scale VR or a comparison group. They were given a pre- and post-survey to ask about their participant experience as well as to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intention based on their experience.



The experience helped viewers gain empathy/understanding of the prisoner’s “emotional journey.”



“More immersive platforms created the best user experience overall.”

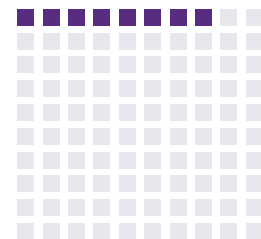


“The participants who used more immersive platforms were more likely to recommend the experience, look for more information about the topic, and look for more VR journalism on other topics.”

### Crunchbase 2017 Women in Venture report (results compared to 2016)



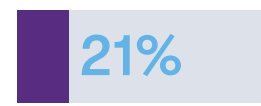
Among the top 100 venture firms, the percentage of female partners rose from 7-8%.



Eight firms in the top 100 added a female partner for the first time.



Women hold 15% of the partner roles at accelerators and corporate venture firms.



Women founded 16 micro-venture funds in the last three years, 21% of all the new firms in that category.



10% of venture dollars globally between 2012 and Q3 2017 went to startups with at least one female founder.

— Teare, Gené. “Announcing the 2017 Update to the Crunchbase Women in Venture Report.” *TechCrunch, Oath Tech Network*, 4 Oct. 2017. [techcrunch.com/2017/10/04/announcing-the-2017-update-to-the-crunchbase-women-in-venture-report/](http://techcrunch.com/2017/10/04/announcing-the-2017-update-to-the-crunchbase-women-in-venture-report/).

feed of the stock market to be explored in both a virtual environment and in augmented reality. Despite this, it’s an ongoing struggle to secure investment. As a woman, I’d say it’s the biggest challenge I face. For example, in 2017, \$85 billion was invested by venture capitalists. All-female teams received just \$1.9 billion of that money, 2.2% of the total pot. Meanwhile, all-male teams received roughly 79% or \$66.9 billion.



### Soon you’ll be able to experience VR on your personal device wherever you are.

Funding challenges have forced me to work on shoestring budgets — I’ve even had to finance some of my own projects myself and VR is not a cheap medium to be working with! The setup costs are huge, particularly as you have to create dedicated, fairground-like environments in order for people to view your work. This also limits how widely your content can be distributed and how many people can be impacted by the stories you’re telling.

Another challenge is that right now, 2D video is the only way to promote your work. Needless to say, this hardly represents what the experience is like when you’re there and how it engages the

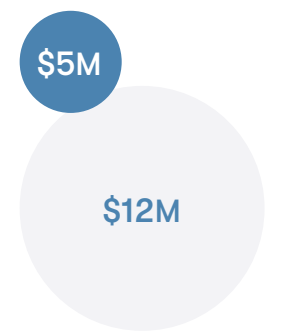
whole body. You lose the essence of what makes this work so effective, which is beyond frustrating!

Thankfully, I think many of these challenges will dissipate once our phones and headsets are merged. We’re getting closer to this happening due to advancements in technologies like edge computing and 5G mobile Internet; soon these will enable us to create more seamless experiences for less and allow for much wider distribution. At that point there’ll be no need for the “fairground” spaces — you’ll be able to experience VR on your personal device wherever you are. We’re also making great progress towards making volumetric experiences accessible through a web browser in a platform we are calling REACH, and we’ve been making simple tools to not only eliminate our own reliance on 2D video for promotion, but to open the space for everyone.

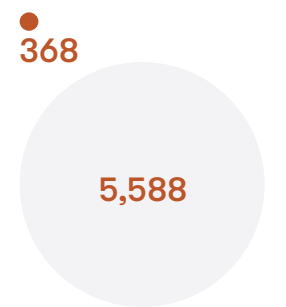
VR is becoming ever more mainstream. The number of consumers using VR increased from 1.6 million to 41 million people worldwide between 2015 and 2018, while startups raised \$3 billion in investments in 2017 across 28 AR and VR categories, breaking previous records. In short, it’s inevitable that our digital world is going to “go spatial.” There’s no reason for us to experience a flat Internet when our real surroundings are dimensional. It’s a no-brainer that this change will happen, and as it does the opportunities for engaging social impact content will increase dramatically. ■

### Female founders and venture capitalism

The average deal size for a female-led company in 2017 was just over \$5 million, compared to almost \$12 million for a male-led company.



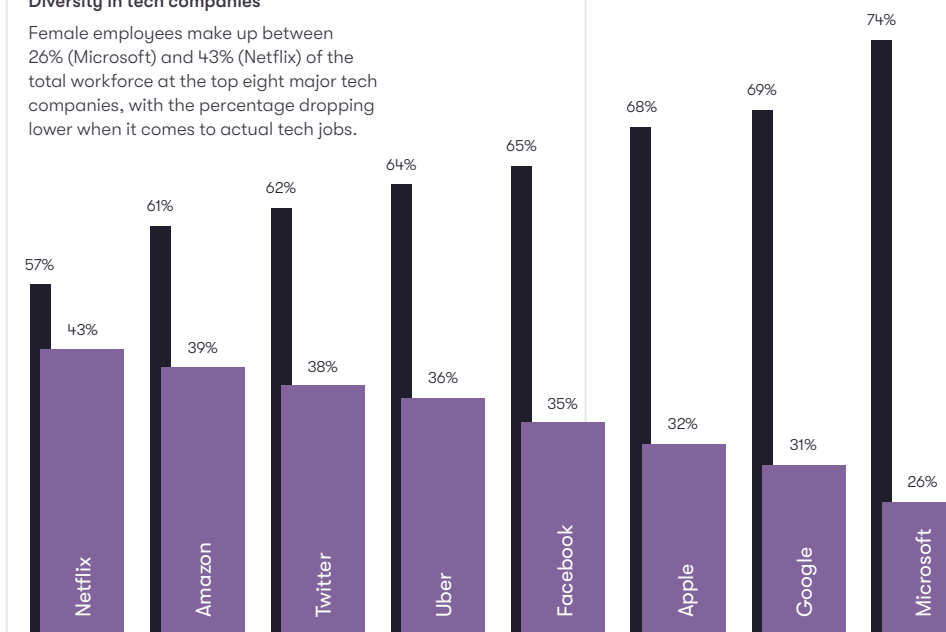
The number of deals involving female-led startups is still low at 368, compared to 5,588 for all-male teams.



— Zarya, Valentina. “Female Founders Got 2% of Venture Capital Dollars in 2017.” *Fortune, Time Inc.*, 31 Jan. 2018. [fortune.com/2018/01/31/female-founders-venture-capital-2017/](http://fortune.com/2018/01/31/female-founders-venture-capital-2017/).

### Diversity in tech companies

Female employees make up between 26% (Microsoft) and 43% (Netflix) of the total workforce at the top eight major tech companies, with the percentage dropping lower when it comes to actual tech jobs.



— Richter, Felix. “The Tech World Is Still a Man’s World.” *Statista*, 8 Mar. 2018. [www.statista.com/chart/4467/female-employees-at-tech-companies/](http://www.statista.com/chart/4467/female-employees-at-tech-companies/).



# SIE Agenda



**Content creation is an integral part of SIE. But in order to fully understand this space, it's vital that we also look to broader points of discussion.**

In this section we explore three notable trends in the entertainment industry: the effective use of SIE by international change organizations; the increasing value and importance of social impact campaigns; and Hollywood's ongoing efforts to improve diversity and inclusion.

This section:

<b>The Story of Change</b> Holly Gordon	134
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<b>Picturing Progress</b> Dr. Ana-Christina Ramón & Dr. Darnell Hunt	142
<b>Dismantling Gender Bias</b> Cathy Schulman	146
<b>In Media We Trust</b> Shamil Idriss	150

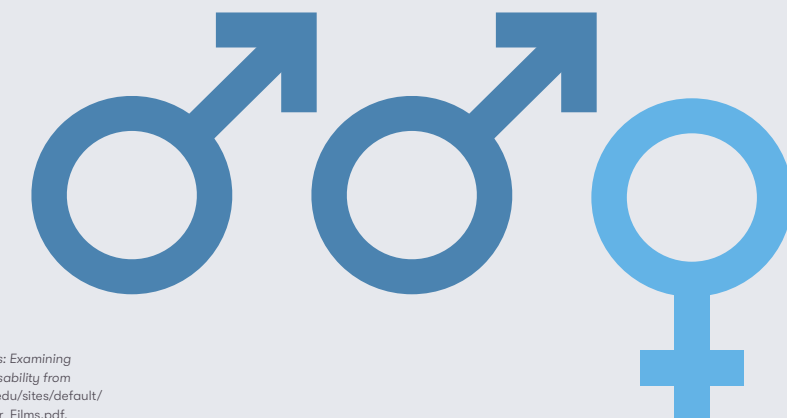


**Gestures toward diversity just won't cut it. We need diverse creatives who have the sensitivity and perspective to produce the type of content that audiences are increasingly demanding.**

— Dr. Darnell Hunt & Dr. Ana-Christina Ramón, [p144](#)



"A total of 4,583 speaking characters were assessed for gender across the 100 top fictional films of 2016. A full 68.6% were male and 31.4% were female, which means viewers will see 2.18 males for every 1 female character on screen. The prevalence of female speaking characters has not changed meaningfully across the 9 years evaluated. The difference between 2007 and 2016 is only 1.5%!"



— Smith, Stacy L, et al. *Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, and Disability from 2007–2016*. USC Annenberg, 2017, [annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Dr\\_Stacy\\_L\\_Smith-Inequality\\_in\\_900\\_Popular\\_Films.pdf](https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Dr_Stacy_L_Smith-Inequality_in_900_Popular_Films.pdf).

Read online at [thestateofsie.com](http://thestateofsie.com)



# The Story of Change

Participant Media understands the power of content. Chief Impact Officer **Holly Gordon** tells us how storytelling can spark the inner activist.

**Holly Gordon**

Chief Impact Officer at Participant Media



As Chief Impact Officer at Participant Media, I lead the team that develops the social impact campaigns that are launched alongside our film projects.

In simple terms, my job is to use our content to make a difference — to help it become a catalytic tool for leaders working to address key social issues around the world. The overarching vision for our work is set by Participant’s founder, Jeff Skoll: we strive to create a more sustainable world of peace and prosperity.

Social impact producing, the work of driving impact through content, is experiencing a moment of growth and transformation. As the world shifts to new structures of power, accelerated by the digital revolution we are experiencing across society, content and storytelling has a new potency as a tool for change. I am passionate about the opportunity that exists today to harness that storytelling to make a difference in the world. There has been a lot written about how an increasingly connected world is impacting society, and one book I love is *New Power*, written by Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms. Whereas old power is hierarchical, structured, and formalized, like a traditional company, new power is open, flexible, and informal in its distribution. While old power delivers a product from the top down, new power asks for enrollment and participation in engaging with a product or an idea, building support from the bottom up.

Content is an incredible new power tool. At Participant, we build our social impact campaigns from this fundamental perspective — we are creating frameworks for open, networked collaboration amongst people who share a vision or values that are in alignment with the stories we tell. We endeavor to build “armies” of support for ideas whose time has come, and to use art to galvanize activism around the

basics: equity, justice, sustainability, health, and peace. We strive to inspire, empower, and connect audiences to take action and to lead change, in their homes, communities, or countries.

When Jeff Skoll founded Participant, he did so with the fundamental belief that every person has the power to create change. Following his lead, we believe the role of storytelling is to spark that inner activist, to seed change by increasing understanding, deepening compassion, and ultimately inspiring action. As social impact producers, our role is to create



**The more people our films reach, the greater the opportunity for impact.**

the opportunities and pathways for those citizen-leaders to step into the arena and experience the transformational power of personal “agency.” The more people our films reach, the greater the opportunity for impact.

It is worth noting that a consistent theme across Participant’s films is that of leadership. All of our films tell stories of everyday citizens who stand up to speak truth to power. These heroes and heroines provide visible role models for audiences of what it looks like to lead change. Every great advancement in society begins with a leader, a story, and an engaged audience. This is a belief that is at the center of Participant’s core theory of change.

At Participant, we apply a social impact lens to every project we consider. Before a film is given the green light, we ask ourselves a set of questions which include the scale of an issue ▶

**+** How to turn audiences into activists: five lessons in social engagement from Participant Media

**1**

**Become a hub** for the existing social action community and super-fans.



**2**

**Give people tools** to act locally.



**3**

**Provide incentive** for action.



**4**

**Create content** around the content.



**5**

**Let the message take on** a life of its own.



— Karpel, Ari. “How To Turn Audiences Into Activists: 5 Lessons in Social Engagement from Participant Media.” Participant Media, [www.participantmedia.com/2012/05/how-turn-audiences-activists-5-lessons-social-engagement-participant-media](http://www.participantmedia.com/2012/05/how-turn-audiences-activists-5-lessons-social-engagement-participant-media).

Green Book, 2018





the film tackles, the timeliness of whatever issue the film focuses on, and the clarity of the film's message. We consider whether the message is a targeted or more of a diffuse idea



**We seek to understand the issue context and history, and to identify opportunities for change.**

embedded in the story and if, as a company, we feel we can make a significant contribution to moving the needle on the issue.



**Old power works like a currency. It is held by few. Once gained, it is jealously guarded, and the powerful have a substantial store of it to spend. It is closed, inaccessible, and leader-driven. It downloads, and it captures.**

**New power operates differently, like a current. It is made by many. It is open, participatory, and peer-driven. It uploads, and it distributes. Like water or electricity, it's most forceful when it surges. The goal with new power is not to hoard it but to channel it.**

— Heimans, Jeremy, and Henry Timms. "Understanding 'New Power.'" *Harvard Business Review*, 2014.

— Heimans, Jeremy, and Henry Timms. "Understanding 'New Power.'" *Harvard Business Review*, Dec. 2014, [hbr.org/2014/12/understanding-new-power](http://hbr.org/2014/12/understanding-new-power).

On the Basis of Sex, 2016



© Participant Media and respective production studios and distributors

Once the film is greenlit, we assign a social impact team to the project. Each campaign starts with what we call a listening tour during which we reach out to leaders and organizations who are working to solve the challenges our film is addressing. During this period of learning, we seek to understand the issue context and history, and to identify opportunities for change. Our goal, in every case, is to be of service to the leaders and organizations who have



**We focus on reaching a particular subset of a film's general audience, a group I call 'super-fans.'**

dedicated their life's work to making progress. In contrast to these life-long advocates, our timeline is usually short and so it is important that we recognize, and plan for, our finite, but potentially powerful, contribution to accelerating change. As a result of this consultative process, and in partnership with issue leaders, we compose a framework that describes the impact opportunity and describes a theory of change for that particular film.

I am often asked whether there is a specific audience for impact work, and the answer is yes. At Participant, we focus on reaching a particular subset of a film's general audience, a group I call "super-fans." These are most often activists or leaders who are already engaged in the change that the film speaks to, and for whom professionally created content,

that supports their vision for change, is an invaluable tool. Our job is to help these super-fans find innovative and powerful ways to use our content to engage with their own audiences, at a local, regional, or national level.

As a social impact entertainment producer, you're most likely not a "resident" of the space affected by the issue you're exploring. For this reason, it's essential to approach every partnership from a place of humility, curiosity, and learning. You're trying to build trust with folks who have been in this space before you — and who are going to be there a long time after your campaign is done. In short, you are an invited guest to someone else's revolution, so it's important to listen carefully and see what you can provide to help capture hearts and minds for social good. ■



New Power values



— Heimans, Jeremy, and Henry Timms. "Understanding 'New Power.'" *Harvard Business Review*, Dec. 2014, [hbr.org/2014/12/understanding-new-power](http://hbr.org/2014/12/understanding-new-power).

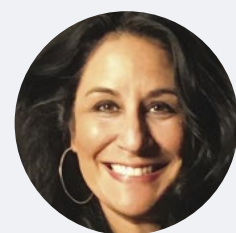


# Fortune Favors the Prepared

What's the secret behind a successful social impact campaign? For **Bonnie Abaunza** it's all about collaborating with the right partners and — perhaps more importantly — giving yourself enough time to do so.

**Bonnie Abaunza**

Founder of the Abaunza Group



Storytelling has the power to mobilize people around the world to effect positive change.

Through the company I founded, the Abaunza Group, I create social impact campaigns to help films move the needle on critical social, political and cultural issues.

Social impact campaigns help drive audiences to films (as well as documentaries, TV series and other content) by launching advocacy initiatives and calls to action based on the social issues they address. The campaigns bring together filmmakers, production companies and distributors with organizations engaged in the issues such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based groups (CBOs), think tanks, and foundations.

Collaboration is vital right from the beginning. First, you have to define the issue that you want to highlight to the public and then create specific initiatives that will help individuals take action. It's critically important in any social impact campaign to define those initiatives, metrics and goals in partnership with the people doing the work on the ground, on the policy side, and in agencies and governments who have the power to effect change.



**It's important to give social impact campaigns a long runway.**

Working with organizations helps you to analyze your issue from all perspectives, and this is crucial. With the right NGO on your side, you'll have credible experts who understand the complexity of the issues and who are prepared to stand up and say that your case is absolutely accurate. This is vital because if you want to have a successful social impact campaign, you have to be able to answer people's questions.

You also need to address the naysayers or the people who are on the fence in order to bring them over to your side to take action. In doing so, you have to take into account the fact that some people are going to question you or point to competing arguments. You need to be prepared for this, and with the right partners, you will be.

Building a strong coalition behind a movie takes time though, partly because securing NGO support requires many levels of approval before sign-off to support a film. This is one reason why it's important to give social impact campaigns a long runway. If you truly want to make an impact, a minimum of four months lead-time before the movie is released is what I would recommend — but eight months to a year is preferable so that conversations can start even during the production of



**Hotel Rwanda**

*Hotel Rwanda* is based on the true story of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager who housed over a thousand Tutsi refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia in Rwanda during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The film explores the themes of political corruption and violence associated with the genocide.

©United Artists and other respective production studios and distributors



Hotel Rwanda, 2004

the film. This allows the impact producer to see the film far enough in advance to start coordinating effectively, and for NGOs to harness their networks of influencers, press contacts and begin to mobilize their members. Plus it gives you time to define your impact goals and come up with a plan of action for how to achieve them.

Some distributors are often reluctant to allow that much time for social impact campaigns because they are concerned about "politicizing" a film that is not necessarily political in nature. They need to understand that the public is engaged and interested in the issues raised in the movie, and that it's not fair or feasible to only allow a short window of, say, four weeks to raise awareness of the film and then mobilize people before a film's theatrical release. If you're able to work with ample lead-time, you'll be able to make the most of your partnerships.

For example, during my tenure at Amnesty International as Director of the Artists for Amnesty Program, I worked on Terry George's 2004 drama *Hotel Rwanda*. One of the most strategic decisions that the studio MGM/UA made

was to engage Amnesty International eight months before the theatrical release of the film. As a result, we were able to build a campaign for a film about the Rwandan genocide that was, somewhat counter-intuitively, released during the Christmas holiday.



**Social impact campaigns can create value long past the film's theatrical life.**

With time on our side, we were able to work closely with the MGM/UA marketing team on a joint campaign that targeted people within and beyond the activist and human rights networks. We promoted the story as one of a heroic man trying to save his family and community, as well as a film about the Rwandan genocide. With the engagement of Amnesty staff, including the organization's directors of Africa

Advocacy, Human Rights Education, Membership Mobilization, Social Media and Communications, we were able to come up with a really effective, multi-tiered marketing campaign that appealed to a wider demographic.

In terms of budget, a social impact campaign for a studio feature film can cost between \$300,000 and \$500,000 (depending on number of initiatives, events and whether the impact campaign has a domestic and /or international focus). Documentaries and indies will cost less, perhaps between \$75,000, and \$150,000. When the filmmakers are negotiating those deals with potential distributors, they should consider the fact that these campaigns can bring many additional benefits to a film's release. When you have a strong social impact campaign in place, you can — in addition to affecting the issue — activate new audiences, new press opportunities, and create social media buzz for the film. These campaigns can also create value long past the film's theatrical life. They can continue to increase DVD sales, drive viewers onto streaming platforms and raise viewership on cable. ▶



The long lifespan of these films can allow them to become part of the fabric of society. Take Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering's documentary *The Hunting Ground*, for example, which brought the issue of sexual assaults on college campuses into the national spotlight.



**We then had to come up with concrete ways to effectively mobilize the public.**

One of the film's social impact campaign partners was the *It's on Us* Campaign, which was created by President Barack Obama's administration to raise awareness about sexual assault on college campuses. Diane Warren and Lady Gaga wrote the Oscar®-nominated song "Til It Happens to You" and performed it at the 2016 Academy Awards®. After Lady Gaga appeared on stage alongside dozens of survivors of sexual abuse, *It's on Us* reported that 22,000 people signed the campaign's

pledge. There was a 400% increase in Google searches for the campaign, Snapchat reached millions by releasing an "It's On Us" filter during the telecast, and there were 48,719 #itsonus tweets with a reach of 250 million. The campaign website had 154,704 page views in just 24 hours. The number for a sexual assault support hotline was also broadcast at the end of the "Til It Happens to You" music video, and saw a 34% increase in calls after the video was released. By the end of 2018, the music video had over 45 million views.

The enduring power of a social impact campaign is perhaps no better illustrated than with our work for Edward Zwick's 2006 movie *Blood Diamond*. Set in Sierra Leone in the 90s, the movie sheds light on how diamonds are mined in war zones to finance conflicts. For our campaign, Warner Bros. and director Ed Zwick worked closely with Global Witness and Amnesty International to come up with ways to engage audiences around this incredibly complex issue of conflict diamonds. Having Amnesty International and Global Witness on board — both experts on the issues of conflict diamonds and the human rights situation in Sierra Leone long before the film was produced — proved essential.



"Til It Happens to You," performed by Lady Gaga at the 2016 Academy Awards®, was also nominated for Best Original Song. The song won Outstanding Original Music & Lyrics at the 2016 Primetime Emmy® Awards.

— "The Hunting Ground. (2015): Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt4185572/awards?ref\_=tt\_owd.



**The Hunting Ground box office**



**Opening weekend:**  
\$22,464

**Widest release:**  
25 theaters

**In release:**  
182 days/26 weeks

— "The Hunting Ground." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=huntingground.htm.

*Blood Diamond*, 2006



© Warner Bros. and other respective production studios and distributors

For example, when the World Diamond Council found out the film was being made, they sent a three-page letter to Ed Zwick pointing out the strides the diamond industry had already made to remove conflict diamonds from the market. In our eyes, they were throwing down the gauntlet, and we picked it up. There was tremendous press interest in the film and the two organizations had the facts, the reports, and the witnesses — and most importantly, we had a very powerful film. With our experts, we were able to effectively engage in a very public battle that ensued over the film.



**To this day, people continue to ask jewelers whether the diamonds they are buying are certified clean.**

We then had to come up with concrete ways to effectively mobilize the public. We created a downloadable, easy-to-read consumer guide explaining the supply chain of blood diamonds and

providing questions people could ask when shopping for diamonds. We also created a school curriculum containing activities and lessons designed to spark classroom discussions about the conflict in Sierra Leone and how conflict diamonds played a role. We knew that students would tell their parents and other adults about the issues — and the adults were the ones buying the diamonds.

Because of the film and its impact campaign, people asked jewelers whether the diamonds being sold were "conflict-free." Jewelers put up signs in their shops to reassure conscious consumers. To this day, people continue to ask jewelers whether the diamonds they are buying are certified clean. This illustrates how the movie and campaign led to a new populist vernacular to describe the industry around blood diamonds — one that now extends to blood chocolate, blood minerals, blood gold and more.

Beyond educating consumers, we also needed to challenge the romantic imagery perpetuated by the phrase "diamonds are forever." So we decided to fight symbolism with symbolism. At the time, everyone was wearing charity bracelets inspired by the original Livestrong band. We created a blood

red bracelet with "Blood Diamond" emblazoned across it. It was a huge success, with 35,000 bracelets distributed across the country prior to the film's opening day.



**We fought a good fight, and I like to think we won.**

When the movie was nominated for five Academy Awards®, we decided to drive our message home on the red carpet. We created a special pin for people to wear on Oscar® night and gave them to the *Blood Diamond* cast as well as other celebrity activists. It received huge press attention and helped combat the established narrative.

Looking back, we were ready to go to battle with this campaign because we had such confidence in the cause, in our film, and in our partners. Our grassroots campaign became a juggernaut against goliaths with millions of dollars at their disposal. We fought a good fight, and I like to think we won. ■



**Blood Diamond box office**



**Domestic total gross:**  
\$57,377,916

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$114,342,482

**Opening weekend:**  
\$8,648,324

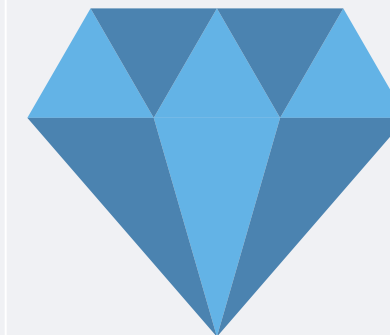
**Widest release:**  
1,920 theaters

**In release:**  
126 days/18 weeks

— "Blood Diamond." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=blooddiamond.htm.



During the National Day of Action on Conflict Diamonds, Amnesty International activists visited 246 jewelry stores to conduct a survey of how well jewelers knew company policies about conflict diamonds.



— Leavitt, Charles, and C. Gaby Mitchell. "Companion Curriculum to Blood Diamond." Amnesty International, 8 Jan. 2007, www.amnestyusa.org/files/bd\_curriculumguide\_0.pdf.



Leading up to the release of *Blood Diamond* (December 8th 2006), Amnesty International volunteers handed out 35,000 red rubber bracelets donated by the studio (they were also available at amnestyusa.org for \$2).



— Meyer, Norma. "Hollywood May Want to Know: Where Have Those Diamonds Been?" San Diego Union-Tribune, 4 Dec. 2006, legacy.sandiegouniontribune.com/uniontrib/20061204/news\_1c04diamondm.html.



# Picturing Progress

Representation matters. **Dr. Ana-Christina Ramón** and **Dr. Darnell Hunt** explain why diversity is imperative to audiences and businesses alike.

**Dr. Ana-Christina Ramón**

Director of Research and Civic Engagement for the Division of Social Sciences at UCLA



**Dr. Darnell Hunt**

Dean of Social Sciences at UCLA and Professor of Sociology and African American Studies



Diversity sells. That much is abundantly clear from the data we have seen over the course of our careers as researchers.

During our tenure at UCLA's Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies we established the *Hollywood Diversity Report*, which is now in its sixth edition and released annually by the Division of Social Sciences. This publication analyzes the top theatrical film releases and thousands of television shows in order to make the business case for employing and casting women and people of color.

Thanks to the recent success stories of films like *Black Panther* and TV shows

like *Insecure*, *Empire*, and *Atlanta*, the industry is slowly waking up to how much money it's leaving on the table. Five years ago, many network executives saw diversity as a luxury, whereas now most say that it is a business imperative.

*Black Panther* has made over \$1.3 billion worldwide. The first season of *Atlanta* averaged 5.2 million total viewers across all platforms, with 1.8 million people tuning in for the season two premiere. The show's first season was nominated for six Emmy® Awards and won two, making Donald Glover the first black director to win an Emmy® for directing a comedy series.

Results like these — and the success around *Black Panther* in particular — come as no surprise when you look at the data. A recent study by the MPAA showed that 45% of movie theater tickets are bought by people of color, even though this demographic accounts for about 39% of the US population. This happens despite the fact that the majority of films released blatantly fail to represent this audience, both on screen and behind the scenes. People of color are clearly helping to keep the industry afloat. If Hollywood wants to sustain itself and maintain its profitability, it has to be aware of and appeal to this audience.



**A lot of our work has involved shattering old myths and 'industry truths.'**

A lot of our work has involved shattering old myths and "industry truths" ingrained since the early days of Hollywood, such as the idea that to be successful, films need a Brad Pitt-type A-lister as the lead, rather than a person of color. While 50 years ago it might have made business sense to cater primarily to a largely white population, that logic no longer holds. Demographics have shifted so much since then.

Despite the clear business case for diversity, we've only seen incremental progress since we started our research.

A degree of positive change is evident in the fact that there are now more people of color working in front of the camera and in television. This is partly because the number of original scripted shows has exploded with so many different platforms creating original content. While previously there were only so many jobs available, the increased demand for content has forced executives to consider new talent.



**The industry is losing out on profit opportunities by failing to produce content that aligns with what people want.**

The same white male creatives can't make everything. In this respect, these new platforms have opened up opportunities for diverse and unique voices.

The title of our most recent report sums up where we are now: *Five Years of Progress and Missed Opportunities*. Despite the minor improvements, the industry is losing out on profit opportunities by failing to produce content that aligns with what people want. Audiences are becoming more diverse every year. In the US, people of color bought the majority of the tickets for half of the top 10 highest-grossing films in 2016.

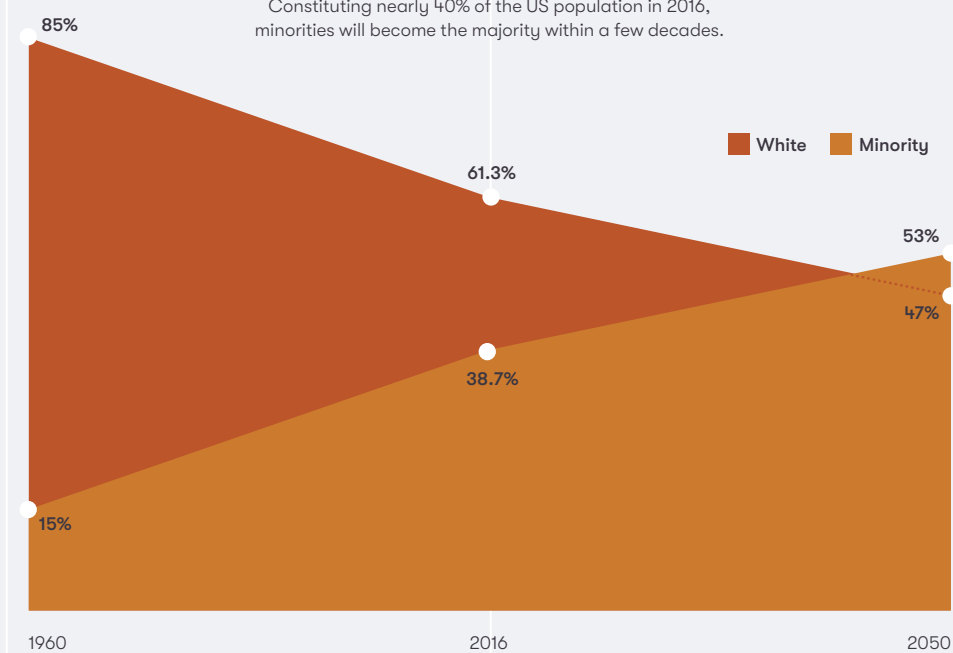
Of course, the business argument isn't the only reason why Hollywood should diversify. There's a considerable amount of research showing the impact images have on people's identities and sense ▶

**UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2018: Five Years of Progress and Missed Opportunities**

The *Hollywood Diversity Report* considers the top 200 theatrical film releases in 2016 and 1,251 broadcast, cable, and digital platform television shows from the 2015–2016 season in order to document the degree to which women and people of color are present in front of and behind the camera. It discusses any patterns between these findings and box office receipts and audience ratings.

**US population shares, white and minority, 1960–2050**

Constituting nearly 40% of the US population in 2016, minorities will become the majority within a few decades.



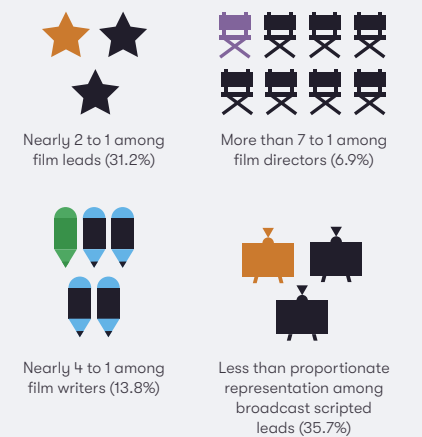
Hunt, Darnell et al. *Hollywood Diversity Report 2018: Five Years of Progress and Missed Opportunities*. UCLA College of Social Sciences, 2018. [socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2018-2-27-18.pdf](https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2018-2-27-18.pdf).

**Statistics from the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2018**

People of color remained underrepresented on every front in 2015–2016:



and women remained underrepresented on every front in 2015–2016:

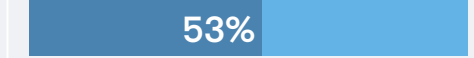


Hunt, Darnell et al. *Hollywood Diversity Report 2018: Five Years of Progress and Missed Opportunities*. UCLA College of Social Sciences, 2018. [socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2018-2-27-18.pdf](https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2018-2-27-18.pdf).

**Black stereotypes**  
Hollywood's problem with inauthenticity may stem from its use of stereotypes to portray certain groups. According to a 2018 YouGov survey:



of Americans say black characters are often stereotyped.



of black Americans say black characters are often stereotyped.

Nguyen, Hoang. "Representation in Film Matters to Minorities." *YouGov*, 6 Mar. 2018. [today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2018/03/06/representation-film-matters-minorities](https://today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2018/03/06/representation-film-matters-minorities).



of self. If you don't have positive role models on screen, it will restrict the way you see yourself and your place in society. Many underrepresented groups rarely see themselves depicted, and when they do they often see one-dimensional characters. For example, Latinos are often represented as criminals or as service-oriented workers, while Asian Americans commonly get cast in stereotypical roles like the "computer nerd."

"Symbolic annihilation," coined by professor George Gerbner, describes how minorities are written out of existence by TV shows and movies that don't represent them at all. This impacts how people see themselves and their place in society, leading them to feel as if they have been erased. It can also distort how these minorities

are widely perceived: Native Americans have been so grossly underrepresented since the days of one-dimensional characters in old Western movies that in a recent study — a 2018 report by the Reclaiming Native Truth project — 40% of respondents believed that they no longer existed.

If people experience an underrepresented group in film and TV but the group's characters are all stereotypes, then they are likely to believe that it is a true reflection of that group. If you live in a small, segregated town and never interact with Latinos, then you might believe that the stereotypes repeated in images are true.

While we believe the moral argument for diversity is the most important, it's

not the one that's moving the industry. We made the strategic choice to focus on how diversity benefits the bottom line because all of our discussions with industry stakeholders told us that this would be the most compelling and persuasive argument.

But the industry is not going to change in a foundational way until the executive suites more closely resemble broader society. Real progress requires institutional commitments to doing business differently so that change trickles down the entire culture of a given organization. In the past, networks and studios have tried to appease critics without really changing the way they do business.

Gestures toward diversity just won't cut it. We need diverse creatives



©Everett Collection Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

who have the sensitivity and perspective to produce the type of content that audiences are increasingly demanding. Until that happens, we'll carry on making only small changes. The bottom line is that it starts at the top.

What gives us the most hope is that there are rapidly changing demographics that the industry must cater to in order to maintain profitability now. It will also help if movies that grow out of exclusionary business practices continue to struggle, and ones like *Black Panther* continue to set new box office records. Audiences are more diverse than ever before, so the industry's profits and its very existence rests on whether it can meet their needs. Social imperatives aside, diversity is key for business survival. ■

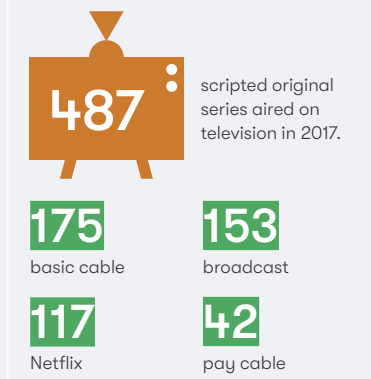


**Representation matters. It's a powerful and important thing for people to know they are seen and to see themselves reflected in our films and the stories we tell.**

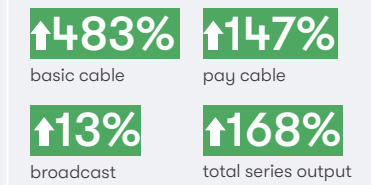
— Alan Horn, Chairman of Walt Disney Studios

— Setoodeh, Ramin. "Chadwick Boseman and Ryan Coogler on How 'Black Panther' Makes History." *Variety*, 2019, variety.com/2019/film/features/black-panther-chadwick-boseman-ryan-coogler-interview-1202686402/.

**Rise in quantity of TV content**



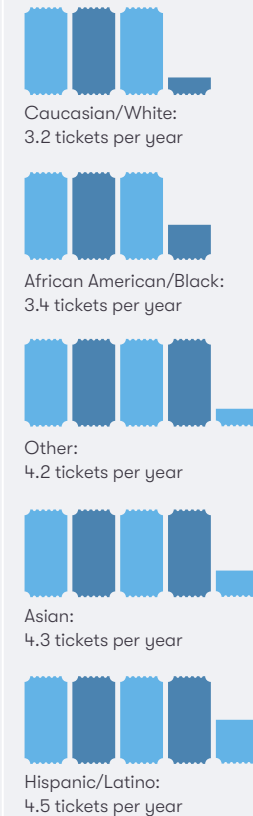
Series output since 2002:



— Otterson, Joe. "487 Scripted Series Aired in 2017, FX Chief John Landgraf Says." *Variety*, 5 Jan. 2018, variety.com/2018/tv/news/2017-scripted-tv-series-fx-john-landgraf-1202653856/.

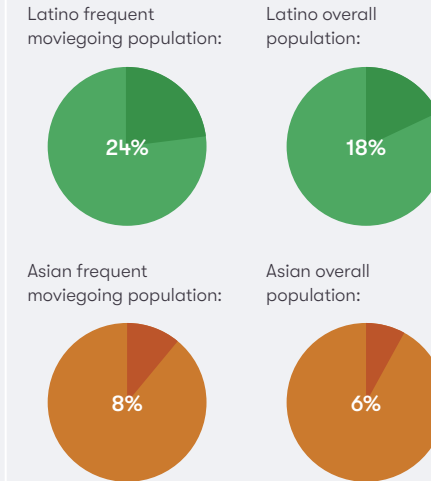
**Movie audience demographics**

In 2017, the Hispanic/Latino category reported the highest annual attendance per capita, going to the movies an average of 4.5 times in the year. Caucasian/White reported the lowest, at 3.2.

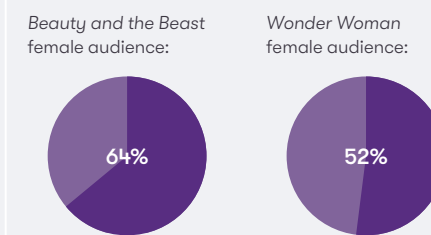


— "2017 THEME Report." Motion Picture Association of America, MPA, www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MPAA-THEME-Report-2017\_Final.pdf.

Latino and Asian audiences were overrepresented in the population of frequent moviegoers relative to their proportion of the overall population.



In 2017, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Wonder Woman*, the 2nd and 3rd top grossing films, attracted majority female audiences.

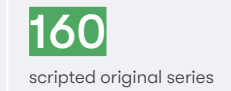


— "2017 THEME Report." Motion Picture Association of America, MPA, www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MPAA-THEME-Report-2017\_Final.pdf.

495 scripted original series aired on television in 2018.



"Online services," such as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, and Apple took the top spot, with:



— Patten, Dominic. "Netflix, Amazon, Hulu & Apple Top TV For 1st Time; Broadcast & Cable Decline." *Deadline*, Penske Business Media, LLC., 13 Dec. 2018, deadline.com/2018/12/streaming-series-surpass-cable-broadcast-first-time-fx-study-120251971/.



# Dismantling Gender Bias

Gender parity in the screen industries requires cultural transformation. **Cathy Schulman** discusses the systemic change needed to make it happen.

## Cathy Schulman

Academy Award®-winning film producer, President and CEO of Welle Entertainment



When #MeToo and the TIME'S UP movements gathered steam as a response to the Harvey Weinstein allegations, they sent shockwaves around the globe and raised awareness about the intersection point between workplace discrimination and the prevalence of sexual harassment.

From my perspective as President Emerita of Women In Film — a leading advocacy organization for women in media — the screen industries are now becoming conscious, woke and are slowly making progress towards demonstrable change. But there is confusion between the culture of sexual harassment post-Weinstein and the need for gender parity in the business. They are often treated as the same thing, but sexual harassment is a symptom of the wider issue of discrimination. At the top of the issue sits the fact that, across seven of the biggest media companies, just 17.9% of C-suite positions are held by women.

When we don't have a diverse body of high-level decision-makers, men end up hiring more men and conversations continue to orient in the male direction. This highly masculine environment cultivates cronyism and leads to men thinking it's easier to keep women out than to deal with them professionally. This ultimately leads to a culture where men are able to utilize their power in a sexual way.

There's no question that #MeToo and TIME'S UP have helped to expose this culture, and that's tremendously important work. But unfortunately, hashtag movements don't touch the C-suite. They don't even get close. The only way to change the industry is to transform it from the top down using practical, concrete actions.

This is why Women In Film decided to create an initiative to mobilize people who have access to high-level decision-makers. ReFrame is a group of more than 50 female and male influential leaders within the entertainment industry, including agency partners, senior network executives, directors, writers, actors, and guild leaders. Working together, we apply theories of systemic change thinking — which requires you to look at all parts of, and relationships within, the system you wish to alter — to effect cultural change.



**The only way to change the industry is to transform it from the top down.**

In most systemic change projects you end up with a triangulation of problems, and ours was no different. The ReFrame model identified three core needs, the first of which is to expand the talent pipeline, which requires advancing and amplifying female content makers. We must also address the culture and habits of entertainment executives when employing women — financial decision-makers need to incentivize inclusive



**We need to prove that content by and for women is profitable.**

hiring and remove bias from corporate practice. Finally, there's the business case for diversity. We need to prove that content by and for women is profitable.

The theory is that you can't fix one part of the triangle without fixing the others, otherwise the whole model collapses. So in our first year, we presented three different tactical plans to actualize each systemic change goal.



### Female Filmmaker Initiative becomes ReFrame

ReFrame is a partnership between the Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles to increase the number of women of all backgrounds working in film, TV, and media.

The original summit that brought the industry at large together was called the Systemic Change Project — with over 65 Ambassadors signing on to the project.

Since rebranding as "ReFrame," the initiative's programs have been developed, the ReFrame Stamp for Features and Television has been launched, and a ReFrame Rise Directors Program launched last year.

ReFrame has developed a research-based action plan to further gender parity that includes several initial, iterative programs, as well as ongoing research with Dr. Stacy Smith and the Annenberg Inclusionists at USC.

To tackle the pipeline, we created the ReFrame Rise cross company operative sponsorship program for mid-career female directors, creating opportunities for them to access tangible support and maintain sustainable careers. My first job was actually on Kathryn Bigelow's second movie, *Blue Steel*. Seeing her working in the director's chair was an incredibly important experience for me. It made my own ambition of being a producer more realistic. However, the reality of the situation quickly set in, and it was another 17 years before I was able to work with a female director again. This isn't unusual. Female directors can often go six or seven years between projects, and that's a trend reflected in all areas.

To challenge hiring culture, we created an online resource called the ReFrame Toolkit, which provides practical ways

ReFrame Partners have committed to participate in the following three programs:



**1. ReFrame Culture Change** (workshops, ReFrame Production Roadmap): partners conduct one or more internal training initiatives using the Conscious Inclusion framework, and adopt tactics to mitigate bias as recommended by the Production Roadmap.



**2. ReFrame Stamp** (recognizing projects that achieve gender equality milestones): partners provide production personnel data to ReFrame for stamp qualification and celebrate success of projects receiving the stamp.



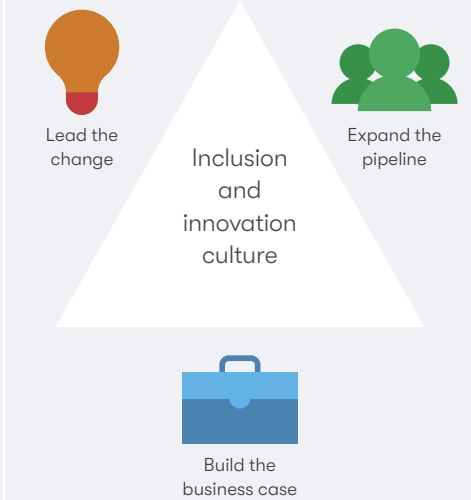
**3. Sponsor/Protégé Program** (advancing six to eight high-potential women directors): partners designate project sponsors to provide guidance and introductions to protégé talent.

— ReFrame internal data.



### The ReFrame Triangle

The ReFrame theory of change identifies three core needs for systemic change.



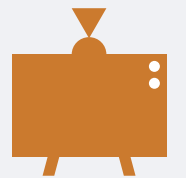
— ReFrame internal data.



### The ReFrame Stamp

As of November 13th 2018, the ReFrame Stamp for Television Recipients included (among others):

- Empire* (season 4)
- Grey's Anatomy* (season 14)
- How to Get Away with Murder* (season 4)
- Jessica Jones* (season 2)
- Killing Eve*
- One Day at a Time* (season 2)
- Scandal* (season 7)



As of August 28th 2018, the ReFrame Stamp for Features Recipients included (among others):

- Crazy Rich Asians*
- Girls Trip*
- Lady Bird*
- The Post*
- The Shape of Water*
- Wonder Woman*



— ReFrame internal data.



to dismantle gender bias at every decision-making inflection point within the trajectory of making and financing content. For me, the key here is that gatekeeping executives, producers, directors, and department heads interview as many women as men and practice blind hiring, which means they review resumes before seeing the name of a candidate.

The trickiest part of the triangle is the business case. The biggest target group for studios for the last 25 years has been men and boys between the ages of 14 and 24. However, working with IMDb and experts in econometrics, we have created an algorithm that analyzes responses to stories created by and for women. Our results have shown that diverse content is better for business. And interestingly enough, the people who are deserting content viewing the most are those men and boys between 14 and 24. Unlike other demographic groups, we're just not seeing that traditional target audience go to movie theaters together anymore.



**This experience made it painfully clear that, in many instances, the talent pipeline just isn't there.**

Throughout my time as an executive, working across six different studios and producing more than 30 movies, I was always taught you have to pick content that pleases men and boys. I wanted to completely reverse that model and create content that served women and girls first. This was my primary motivation for setting up Welle Entertainment. The name is a combination of "we" and "elle," and reflects our commitment to making great content with women, for women.

Running Welle has also given me an insight into just how difficult it can be to achieve gender parity in the

entertainment industry, even when your company is set up to do just that! For instance, while working on the upcoming Netflix film *Otherhood*, we set out absolutely determined to hit a 50/50 balance in our crew in terms of male and female representation. We got close. We brought in every woman we could, but in the end we fell short. This experience made it painfully clear that, in many instances, the talent pipeline just isn't there. For me, this only served to underline the importance of the work we're doing at ReFrame.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it's streaming companies like Netflix and Amazon that are among the most eager to sign up to ReFrame. Both businesses have already created diverse content and reaped the rewards. The fact that two of the world's most disruptive and forward-thinking companies are really backing diversity shows that's where we need to head. If the big studios don't catch up, if they continue to cater to a deserting audience, and if they fail to diversify at the C-suite level, they risk not being part of this industry's future at all. ■

**Women In Film**

Women In Film (WIF) advocates for and advances the careers of women working in the screen industries, to achieve parity and transform culture. Their educational programming includes:



**A Speaker Series:** features filmmakers and industry leaders across many areas of entertainment.



**The WIF Film Finishing Fund:** a grant program that has awarded millions in funding and in-kind services to 200+ films.

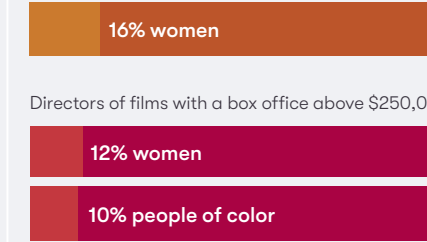


**The WIF Scholarship Program:** awards scholarships to female students at major film schools.

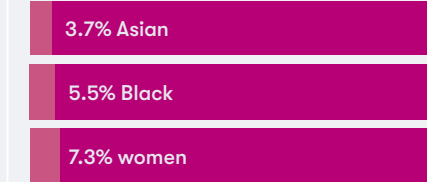
"About Women In Film Los Angeles." Women In Film, Women In Film Los Angeles, 2017, womeninfilm.org/about-wif/.

**Demographics in Hollywood**

Of all films released theatrically in 2017, women only accounted for 16% of directors.



Directors of films with a box office above \$250,000.



"DGA Publishes Feature Film Inclusion Report: Study Reveals Feature Film Director Diversity Remained Low in 2017." Directors Guild of America, 21 June 2018, www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2018/180621-Feature-Film-Director-Diversity-Remained-Low-in-2017.aspx.  
Smith, S., et. al. *Inequality in 1,100 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT & Disability from 2007 to 2017*. USC Annenberg, 2018, assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inequality-in-1100-popular-films.pdf.



**The WIF Mentoring Program:** annually provides 80-100 members the opportunity to learn from experienced entertainment industry professionals.



**The WIF/Black List Episodic and Feature Labs:** gives female writers the opportunity to learn from established showrunners and screenwriters.



**The WIF Production Program:** selects nonprofit organizations in Southern California to receive a pro bono PSA.

Otherhood set photo, 2018



**Demographics of executive ranks at the seven major entertainment companies**

	Men	Women
C-suite	82.1%	17.9%
Board of directors	81.2%	18.8%
Executive film teams	69%	31%
Total	76.4%	23.6%

Smith, Stacy L., et. al. *Inclusion in the Director's Chair? Gender, Race & Age of Directors across 1,100 Films from 2007-2017*. USC Annenberg, 2018, assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inclusion-in-the-directors-chair-2007-2017.pdf.

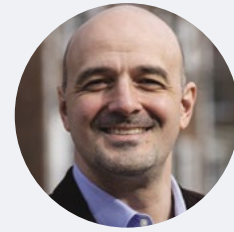


# In Media We Trust

**Shamil Idriss** of Search for Common Ground argues the case for building sustainable peace through media, using content to provoke discussion and overcome differences.

## Shamil Idriss

CEO of Search for Common Ground



One way we build peace is through media. Our content is designed to provoke discussions within communities in conflict and model new ways to overcome differences. Depending on the issues at hand, we might create community theater, television dramas, reality TV shows, radio programs, or call-in shows, all complemented by extensive community outreach and engagement.

popularization: when we effect a change in social norms, or how a large portion of a population deals with differences; this is where social impact entertainment is particularly powerful.



**Our content is designed to provoke discussions within communities in conflict and model new ways to overcome differences.**

At Search for Common Ground, we are on a mission to change the way the world handles conflict: away from adversarial approaches, toward collaborative problem-solving.

There are three ways that the change we help bring about becomes sustainable. The first is institutionalization: when a government ministry, police department, media syndicate, or other important institution adopts new policies or procedures reflecting principles of peace. The second is commercialization: when a local market emerges to resource a peacebuilding approach so that its continuation need not rely on philanthropic support. The third is

To achieve such change, our teams and partners must all be local, drawn from across the very dividing lines they seek to bridge in their communities. ▶

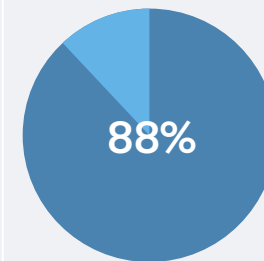
As CEO, I have the privilege to represent nearly 700 staff supporting communities to prevent and recover from violent conflict in more than 30 countries around the world.

Ndakisa, 2017

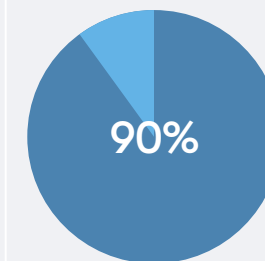


### The President season 1 Common Ground study results

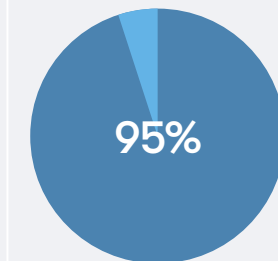
The President season 1 viewers:



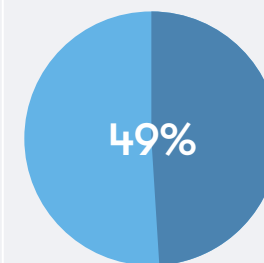
of polled viewers believed that youth could play a positive role as leaders in Palestine.



of the decision makers in the program took the initiative to readdress at least one public issue after participating in town hall meetings centered on the show.



of the audience reported they believed that the program was relevant to youth needs, and that the activities and topics raised during the program were relevant to them and to people's daily lives.



of the population in the Palestinian Territory (West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem) had heard of the program, of which, 26% regularly watched the show.



were following the weekly episodes through the Ma'an satellite Network TV broadcast, Ma'an's Facebook, or its YouTube channel.

Common Ground Productions 2014-2016. Search for Common Ground, Summer 2016, p. 4.



They alone understand the social and political opportunities and dangers that must be navigated. Building trust across divides in Syria or Myanmar cannot be done by people in the US or Europe. All programming must be conflict-sensitive and rooted in local culture.

In this process, the characters we create are critical. They have to be realistic and relatable in order to engage target audiences and spark community dialogue. So, we train local writers, actors and producers in developing character-driven dramas.



**Our teams and partners must all be local, drawn from across the very dividing lines they seek to bridge.**

We've found that repeated exposure to content is much more effective than a one-off. This means that it's easier to drive change with a popular series than with a film. Neuroscience explains that spaced learning — learning that happens through repetition over time — enables you to fully process material and connect it, often subconsciously, with other things in your life. Plus, the ability to adapt scripts weekly based on what's



**One of the reasons social impact entertainment is so effective is that it harnesses our emotions.**

happening in a community is useful when working in situations that are often fluid or turbulent.

Illustrating the potential of spaced learning, our weekly series *The President* inspired young Palestinians to believe they can play an active role in the political process. This reality TV show tasked 100 young citizens with tackling difficult political challenges. With many Palestinians disengaged or mistrustful of politics, the show was designed to inspire a new generation of leaders to create positive change through democratic means. Around 3.8 million people watched each episode, and 88% of viewers polled said they believed young people could make a difference after watching the series. Six of the show's contestants eventually ran for real positions in local politics, while the first season's winner was hired by the office of the President



**The Common Ground Approach**

A methodology to transform how we respond to conflict, away from confrontation and violence and toward collaboration.

**1**

**Beliefs**

Conflict is inevitable, violence is not; humankind is interdependent; change is always possible; when everybody wins, change lasts; common ground is both static — waiting to be discovered, and dynamic — ready to be created.



**2**

**Methods**

Start with hope: find it, invest in it; build trust through locally-led, inclusive, adaptive programming; drive change that starts with people and endures through systems.



**3**

**Outcomes**

Decreased violence; increased collaboration; improved relations across communities and between citizens and state institutions; safer, healthier, and more just societies.



— *Mapping the Next 10 Years at Search for Common Ground. Search for Common Ground, 2018, pp. 3-4, www.sfcg.org/strategic-plan/content/sfcg-strategic-plan.pdf.*

*The President, 2013*



In 2016, Search for Common Ground worked with 48,000 military and police officers, 6,000 political leaders, 3,000 artists, and 1,215 local partners.

In 2016, Search for Common Ground reached more than 50 million people through media.



— *Conflict Reimagined: Search for Common Ground 2017 Progress Report. Search for Common Ground, 2017, p. 8, www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-Progress-Report-spread.pdf.*



**Search for Common Ground's Theory of Change**

The Common Ground Approach becomes self-perpetuating when its rewards align with people's aspirations. When the outcomes of the Approach satisfy the needs of individuals, communities, and institutions, there is a strong

incentive for them to adopt it in their daily behaviors and practices. When this happens, change can endure without reliance on third-party support; it is the stakeholders to the conflict themselves that make it sustainable. The Theory of Change outlines three ways in which change becomes enduring:

One of the shows I'm most excited about is our first cop drama, *Ndakisa*. Set in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it tells the story of a former combatant who continues to serve his country by becoming a senior police officer. Like some actual police officers there, he hasn't been paid for months, there are corrupt cops in his unit, and much of the population fears or distrusts him — or both. We co-produce this show with the police force in Congo. They love it because they are effectively the stars, but we use the show to foster dialogue between police and locals to improve their relations and conduct.

One of the reasons social impact entertainment is so effective is that it harnesses our emotions. Attitudes,

behaviors, and even world views are developed from people's emotional experiences, not their rational thinking. This is clear in how extremist groups inflame passions to recruit and mobilize young people. The emotional experiences of being ignored, humiliated, and disrespected — or on the flip side, respected, included, and heard — have a powerful determinative effect on how people see the world and how they behave in it.

To leverage this emotional power, you need to craft character-driven social impact entertainment from the inside out, making sure the characters and the content resonate with what people are seeing and living in their daily lives. By collaborating with people who are living with the conflict, we're able to create those stories and lay the groundwork for sustainable, enduring change. ■

**1**



**Institutionalization:**

when a government ministry, police department, media syndicate, or other important institution adopts new policies or procedures reflecting principles of peace.

— *Mapping the Next 10 Years at Search for Common Ground. Search for Common Ground, 2018, pp. 5-6, www.sfcg.org/strategic-plan/content/sfcg-strategic-plan.pdf.*

**2**



**Commercialization:**

when a local market emerges to resource a peacebuilding approach so that its continuation need not rely on philanthropic support.

**3**



**Popularization:**

when we effect a change in social norms, or how a large portion of a population deals with differences.

Once change takes one of these forms, it will remain and grow without reliance on external support.



# The Bigger Picture

In this section we shift our focus from the makers of social impact entertainment to the businesses and organizations that operate around — or work in support of — SIE creation.

From educators to conveners, funders to talent agencies, the efforts of these professionals are an essential part of the SIE landscape. Their insight has much to reveal about the challenges and opportunities that are inherent in this space.

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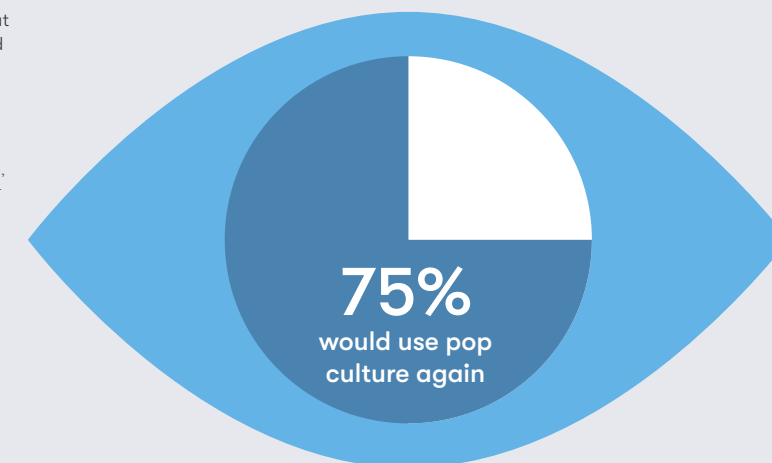
For our projects to bring about lasting change in the world, we need to join forces with unlikely allies, develop trust, share control, and build toward opportunities for mutual benefit.

— Sandy Herz, p180



In a survey of 50 [nonprofit] organizations, 61% of those surveyed used pop culture in the last two years as part of a communication strategy, but only 53% used it all the time (compared to 46% who said "not that often"). Of those surveyed, 75% said they would use pop culture again — so there is a significant opportunity to grow this discipline.

— Pop Culture Works for Social Change. AndACTION, [andaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Pop-Culture-Works-for-Social-Change\\_FINAL.pdf](https://andaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Pop-Culture-Works-for-Social-Change_FINAL.pdf).



Read online at [thestateofsie.com](http://thestateofsie.com)



# Seeding a New Generation

Educators can guide and nurture the next wave of SIE creators and scholars. **Teri Schwartz** sets out the unique vision behind the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, and it's work to champion the power of humanistic and social impact stories.

## Teri Schwartz

Dean, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television



Our world is evolving at a rapid pace. The challenges we face are more complex than ever.

With an optimistic eye to the future, I believe that storytellers, artists and scholars are the ones who will illuminate our common humanity and help us make sense of our lives and the world around us. The more that we share our stories, ideas and information across cultures and borders, the better we'll understand our interconnectedness and how to create deeper reservoirs of empathy, tolerance and understanding for our shared future.

Without question, this shifting landscape presents vast opportunities for educators. We're ideally placed to serve as mentors and teachers for the next generation of diverse storytellers and scholars whose dynamic works will create common ground for new stories



Dean Schwartz pictured with UCLA TFT Commencement Speaker director/screenwriter Ava DuVernay '95

and new ideas to show us a positive way forward. This is the very essence of social impact entertainment, and the reason I believe it's so vitally important that it be central to entertainment and performing arts education at all levels.

I had a wonderful 30-year career as an award-winning feature film producer in Hollywood. In 2003, I was appointed the inaugural dean of the LMU School of Film and Television. In 2009, I became the first woman dean of the historic UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television (UCLA TFT). I like to call us the Storytelling School. As Dean of UCLA TFT, I have the great privilege of leading an extraordinary creative and scholarly community. I have been able to put my life philosophy to the test — a belief that humanistic story can be used for good and for transformational change. I have the honor to help nurture and develop a new generation of diverse artists and scholars who embrace our UCLA TFT vision around the power of story to not only delight and entertain, but to enlighten, engage and inspire change for a better world. It's exciting to educate a new generation who have this consciousness — students who are inspired to use their stories, their creative works, their leadership and their research to make a difference.

At UCLA TFT, we are home to remarkable faculty — diverse thought leaders, scholars and artists who have long focused their work around themes of social responsibility. Each faculty member has a rich, individual interpretation of what social impact entertainment is, and each brings their



**Our vision is for TFT to serve as a premier interdisciplinary global professional school that develops outstanding humanistic storytellers, industry leaders and scholars whose diverse, innovative voices enlighten, engage, and inspire change for a better world.**

— "About," UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, UCLA, 2018, [www.tft.ucla.edu/about](http://www.tft.ucla.edu/about).

own work to life in powerful and unique ways. There are far too many great UCLA TFT faculty to mention here, so I invite you to visit our website: [www.tft.ucla.edu](http://www.tft.ucla.edu) to learn more about our School, our renowned alumni and our faculty's remarkable teaching, research and creative work in our Film/TV/Digital Media Department and our Theater Department.

For this section of the report, I am very proud to highlight two immensely talented professors — Ellen Scott and Sean Metzger. Professors Scott and Metzger represent an outstanding new generation of educators, scholars and creative practitioners who are forging groundbreaking research, ideas, insights, connections and new directions across the social impact entertainment landscape. The focus of Scott's and Metzger's teaching and research is breathtaking in its depth and originality.

As a result, both professors have garnered wide recognition for excellence in research and scholarly contributions to the field. I know you will enjoy reading about them and encourage you to find out more about their exceptional work.

In 2014, with a \$10 million transformational leadership gift from visionary philanthropist, Jeff Skoll, to name and endow the Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment (Skoll Center SIE), we launched the new center to advance the role of entertainment and performing arts to inspire and drive social impact. It was a proud moment for all of us at UCLA TFT and our campus. We are deeply honored by Jeff's generous, enduring belief in us. It is a great privilege to reflect his profound core values and ideals to make the world a better place for all. We are also very proud to be associated with Jeff's groundbreaking company, Participant Media, along with his colleagues across the entire range of his enterprises and organizations.

The Skoll Center SIE's mission is to define and foster the new field of social



**I have been able to put my life philosophy to the test — a belief that humanistic story can be used for good and for transformational change.**

impact entertainment. In laying the foundation for this emerging field, we hope to support and convene a diverse array of industry leaders, game changers, innovators, faculty, students, staff, alumni, distinguished artists and scholars to unite and support the creation of this new global ecosystem. It's a dream come true for all of us to now have this major center at our School where these ideas and work can come together in one place in such a powerful way. It's exciting for the Skoll Center SIE to be a north star magnet for the finest, most diverse leaders, thinkers, doers, innovators and creators from around the world to join our journey.

There are three core pillars to the Skoll Center SIE's work:

**Pillar #1:** Research. A dedicated UCLA TFT faculty committee is helping to shape and define our ongoing research agenda as we move forward with publications, research findings, symposia and special reports.

**Pillar #2:** Education and Special Initiatives. While there are many elements to this, three great examples are: 1) The recent workshop for students conducted by Participant Media focused on the development and execution of a social impact campaign based on two Oscar®-winning Participant films: *Spotlight* and *An Inconvenient Truth*; 2) The 2018 Future Storytelling Summer Institute — a six-week interdisciplinary program with UCLA TFT students, faculty and industry experts that focused on augmented reality as a viable platform for social impact storytelling; 3) The upcoming development of the first-of-its-kind graduate degree in social impact entertainment in 2019. ▶



### UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television

**729**

students across Film/TV/Digital Media and Theater Departments

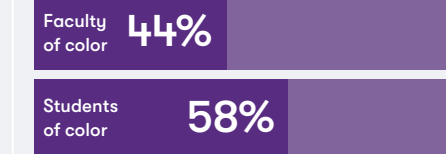
**\$3M**

awarded in scholarships for 2018

**\$3.7B+**  
Worldwide box office

2017–2018, for alumni across writer, producer, and/or director categories.

### Diversity at UCLA TFT:



### Our Mission

We are re-imagining entertainment and performing arts education as an interdisciplinary enterprise, one grounded in humanistic story, social impact, diversity/global diversity, research, and technology/innovation.



### The LA Rebellion

The modern African American independent film movement started at UCLA in the late 60's. One of the founders of the movement, alum Charles Burnett '69 MFA '77, received the Academy®'s Governors Award in 2017.



Alumna Channing Dungey '91 was the first African American woman to become President of a major US television network — ABC Entertainment. She is now co-head of Original Content at Netflix.



UCLA TFT Distinguished Professor José Luis Valenzuela is the Artistic Director of the Latino Theater Company (LTC) and The Los Angeles Theatre Center (LATC). He's been a visionary advocate for Chicano/Latino theater for over 30 years.

**1,880**

nominations and awards for faculty and alumni over the years, including:



— UCLA TFT internal data.



**Pillar #3:** Public Programming and Exhibition. This encompasses a broad variety of campus-wide, public events, including workshops, festivals, conferences, symposia and special screenings, the latter often in conjunction with Participant Media. Our annual Spark Change Summit is particularly important to us, bringing together leading authorities in the SIE space, along with rising talent, industry leaders, faculty and students in a single convening that welcomes both the local and global academic and professional communities at large.

As we build out the work of the center, we are drawing upon the ideas and experiences of a wide circle of UCLA TFT, campus and external experts. In addition, I am contributing several findings that have emerged from my own experiences over the past several years while advancing our vision and strategic goals. In my work as dean, I have found three distinct categories of alliances and partnerships that I believe help to define, move forward and fund our goals for social impact entertainment. They are: 1) Enlightened individuals; 2) Foundations and select organizations; 3) Like-minded

companies across the creative industries. All three strongly share our ideals and world view. I believe these relationships are essential for anyone looking to make headway in this space. When you strike up a great dialogue with someone who shares your mission and values, it inevitably benefits both parties — and often the wider communities that surround you.

### Ellen Scott

Associate Professor, Vice Chair, Cinema Media Studies, Film/TV/Digital Media Department, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television



My work centers on the political meanings of media, focusing on race — and African American identity specifically.

I am currently engaged in two major research projects. The first explores the history of slavery on the American screen, with reference to film production and reception. Built on extensive archival research into the production politics behind depicting slavery from the silent era — when many viewers still had personal memory of the institution — to the present, my book, *Cinema's Peculiar Institution*, will be the first comprehensive history of American slavery on screen. The project is accompanied by a digital, archival component supported by the Institute for American Cultures here at UCLA. This digital component is a public-facing, online archive and resource which seeks to allow researchers of all ages to explore the history of slavery's representation in films.

My second book project *Bitter Ironies, Tender Hopes: Black Women Film*

*Critics from Classical Hollywood to Blaxploitation*, explores the film writings of over forty black American women, from the Classical Hollywood era through to the year when the first black woman made her own feature film. The project departs from existing, largely theoretical scholarship on black women's spectatorship by bringing greater historical specificity and by drawing attention to the intersections of black women's film writing with broader struggles to define freedom. The book includes a substantial edited section collecting reviews written by black women film critics from the 1920s through to the 1970s. It wasn't until 1980 that a black woman had an opportunity to direct a feature film. But before there were black women directors like Julie Dash, Cheryl Dunye, and Ava DuVernay, there was a generation of black women who did not have access to the director's chair and whose powerful ideas about the screen were expressed through critical writing.

Both projects investigate the ways that media converges with social practice, influencing larger social institutions through representation but also through surrounding acts of censorship, protest, and criticism. TFT makes a good home for this work because of its long history of engagement, through scholars like Teshome Gabriel, with the work of theorizing media as a site of political engagement and political imagination. ■



### More individuals are understanding the great value of investing in educational programs and scholarships that inspire social impact and diversity.

Here are three examples that I would like to share with you:

**Example #1** — Enlightened individuals: I have traveled tirelessly around the world over the past 10 years for our UCLA TFT telling our story and sharing our vision and mission. I have had the privilege of cultivating really interesting and inspiring relationships with enlightened individuals for the benefit of our diverse students, faculty, staff, as well as our research and creative projects.

One example has been garnering generous support from amazing individuals around the idea of empowering women to tell their stories. I have raised seven-figure leadership gifts from a wide array of enlightened donors from around the world for full-ride scholarships for our Master of Fine Arts (MFA) graduate degree in directing that “gives voice to the unique perspective of Arab women”; for full-ride scholarships for our MFA graduate degree in directing, screenwriting and producing that “gives voice to the unique perspective of Indian women”; and for full-ride scholarships for our MFA graduate degree in directing that “gives voice to the unique perspective of African American and Hispanic women.” These individual gifts have been transformational for the scholarship recipients, for our School and for the campus. This unique model

### Sean Metzger

Professor, Critical Studies, Vice Chair, Undergraduate Studies, Theater Department, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television



I work on performance and visual culture — art, fashion, film, and theater.

More specifically, I study the articulation of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality across media platforms in transnational contexts. I wrote two books on this topic — *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* and *The Chinese Atlantic: Seascapes and the Theatricality of Globalization* — as well as dozens of articles, and I've co-edited several

for visionary philanthropy has had a ripple effect around the world, too, by inspiring other enlightened individuals from many countries, including the US, to participate in this kind of mission-driven giving at our School supporting a wide variety of SIE focused programs and initiatives.



### I think it's going to be sharing our stories across borders and cultures, and women's voices in particular, that is going to help save our world.

Without question, we have a compelling vision and story to tell. As such, more individuals are understanding the great value of investing in educational programs and scholarships that inspire social impact and diversity. Enlightened, generous individuals are discovering that they, too, have a very important

anthologies, including *Awkward Stages: Plays about Growing Up Gay*.

I often tell students I want them to imagine differently. In other words, I am not primarily interested in reproducing what people already know (a canon of playwrights, for example). I see my research as addressing social issues like racial and socio-economic disparities, but I also hope it enables us to reframe pressing problems. As one instance, because I am interested in different gender formations across time and cultures as well as the position of women and sexual minorities in American society today, I have structured my undergraduate theater history class to emphasize women. Indeed, all the plays and performances we study are authored by women, in part to help students realize how male-centered traditional theater history tends to be. I provide my students with a different archive by which to imagine

part to play in making a difference by leaving a lasting legacy that benefits everyone — for this example, by empowering women with the opportunity for a great UCLA TFT education — one that allows for remarkable women, from all walks of life, to share their inspiring stories with the world — stories that until now have gone untold and that, in the telling, will make our world a far richer and more meaningful place for all.

theater and performance in order for them to create art that matters in relation to often-submerged histories.

In my capacity as President of Performance Studies International, I see graduate students around the world working through a variety of interdisciplinary frameworks. Such frameworks include “performance as research,” a category that brings experiential knowledge together with more theoretical work. I have been thinking about bringing more of this paradigm into the undergraduate and PhD curricula. I wish to collaborate with institutions where that model has worked well, for example, in Australia and South Africa. My hope is that some international collaborative work can be facilitated across the faculty and student body. I'd love for us to create more work that not only engages with social issues but also helps to enact solutions to those problems. ■

Frankly, I think it's going to be sharing our stories across borders and cultures, and women's voices in particular, that is going to help save our world. This is the power of what enlightened individuals can do with visionary giving focused on advancing social impact entertainment.

**Example #2** — Foundations: The William Randolph Hearst Foundation (WRHF), one of the most important and forward-thinking foundations in the US, also ▶

Recipients of the full-ride Hani Farsi Graduate Scholarship Fund giving voice to the unique perspective of Arab women: Farah Shaer, Amani Alsaied, Hanadi Elyan and donor Hani Farsi.









# Closing the Gap

There's so much to be gained by bringing SIE's creative and academic communities closer together, says **Caty Borum Chattoo**.

## Caty Borum Chattoo

Director of the Center for Media & Social Impact, American University's School of Communication



At the Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI) we believe that all forms of entertainment have the potential to shape culture.

As Director of the Center I spearhead the convening, thought-building, and research we do, which strives to demonstrate the ways in which media can be a force for public good. I am a documentary producer as well as a strategist and scholar, so all of our work is deeply informed by questions and opportunities that arise from our colleagues in media, philanthropy, and civil society working in this area. From investigating the effects of different types of storytelling, to developing practical guides for filmmakers, at CMSI we aim to inform all parts of the process of creating social impact entertainment.

Based at American University's School of Communication, our research covers a broad spectrum of entertainment mediums, with a goal

to make that work as impactful as possible. As only a few recent examples: we've studied how documentaries can influence public policy at both local and federal levels, and developed a code of best practices around fair use and copyright for documentary filmmakers to help educate them about their rights. Our project, *The Laughter Effect*, analyzes the power of mediated comedy when it comes to fueling social change. Over the past year, we have also worked deeply with Rise Up, the social impact division of Univision Communications, to help shape and research different storylines and projects across their broadcasting platforms. The Univision media projects were developed across a variety of genres, including reality television, documentary and news shows, and explore public health and education topics that are relevant to Hispanic American audiences. We produce research about independent documentary, as well. And finally, as conveners, we produce the Story Movements conference, which is a re-launch of our successful Media That Matters conference.



**Every nonfiction film project is unique in terms of how it may seek to have societal influence.**

Across all our projects, our research is designed to help inform the common objective of how to learn more and inform the practice of media and storytelling to serve the public interest and social good. This is a goal shared by creative and academic communities alike, and I believe greater cross-pollination between these two worlds will be strategic and important moving forward. There are many studies, for example, that help us to understand how storytelling reduces our cognitive barriers to persuasion. The narrative transportation theory, for example, describes what happens when a viewer

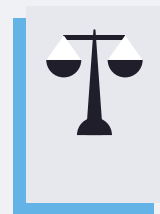
is so absorbed in a story that they become momentarily disconnected from the real world. Research shows that this state of being is a key factor in enabling a narrative to influence a viewer's attitudes and beliefs. It's a beautiful theory and a powerful idea that offers a real opportunity to storytellers, yet many organizations and media companies don't know this kind of research exists — and more importantly, how it can be leveraged to further develop the idea of entertainment storytelling and social good.



### Story Movements

Story Movements is a CMSI convening that invites media makers, strategists, NGOs, and philanthropists to come together to meaningfully engage with the role of narrative and civic media in contemporary movements for social justice. Story Movements examines and captures the current and future-looking moment in story-led demands for social change. This project is part of CMSI's work in civic storytelling, funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

— "Story Movements," Center for Media & Social Impact, 2018, cmsiimpact.org/program/story-movements/.



On the other side, there is another gap; research that interviews the creatives or producers behind social impact entertainment to better understand the process of telling a good story is not as prevalent in peer-reviewed research. Researchers could benefit from understanding the creative process and the art of storytelling. This understanding helps inform what questions they should ask, and the way in which they should ask them.

One of our key publications, *Assessing the Impact of Issues-Focused Documentaries*, illustrates the bespoke approach we take to research. I published the study to show that every nonfiction film project is unique in terms of how it may seek to have societal influence. For example, there are many projects that put a social issue on the map for the first time. In these cases, having a "behavior change" goal might be tricky.

Josh Fox's documentary about fracking, *Gasland*, is a good example of this. When the film came out, people hadn't even heard of fracking, so behavior change wasn't relevant. For any nascent social issue, it doesn't make sense to study whether people's perspective on the issue changed, because they didn't know about it in the first place. What could be helpful is to look at whether the film helped influence public or media discourse, perhaps for the first time or in a more concerted way.

This example shows why it's inaccurate to assume that one method can be used to evaluate the impact of all stories. As researchers, we need to understand the context of a social issue. Our studies need to take into account necessary nuances such as where an issue currently is in terms of audience awareness, or what I like to call the "movement moment." What is the public opinion on a given issue and how is it moving? Is there potential for a structural shift, like policy change? Is it an issue that requires changing attitudes? Those questions should guide the research



### Rise Up for Social Change project

Rise Up for Social Change was a joint effort between Univision and CMSI. The research-based initiative was created to shape and evaluate the depiction of key social issues in entertainment media. The findings will inform content produced across Univision's leading Spanish-language broadcast, radio, and digital platforms, and Fusion Media Group's (FMG) English-language platforms.



— Univision PR Team. "Univision and Fusion Media Group Launch New 'Rise Up for Social Change' Project with American University." Univision Communications Inc., 30 Jan. 2017, corporate.univision.com/press/2017/01/30/univision-and-fusion-media-group-launch-new-rise-up-for-social-change-project-with-american-university/.



**Understanding what moves us in storytelling, seeing what's worked before, and moving forward through learning are some of the biggest hurdles the industry faces.**

methodology, but they also show why any kind of research about storytelling is itself a creative process.

I also don't use the word "measurement" to describe research that examines the social good influence of mediated narrative. For me, this term implies quantitative research, which isn't always appropriate. Similarly, I don't often use the word "evaluation" in this particular work also because it can imply there being "good" and "bad" elements that need to be weighed.



### The Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use

"Since the creation of the Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use in 2005, documentarians have embraced fair use.

**70%**

of documentary filmmakers said they have a 'good' or 'excellent' understanding of fair use.

**75%**

said fair use is 'absolutely necessary' or 'very useful.'

**60%**

of documentary filmmakers report having recently used fair use in production.

**95%**

report never having had a broadcaster accepting fair use, with a lawyer's letter.

**99%**

of documentarians report never having had a problem with insurance accepting fair use, with a lawyer's letter."

— "INFOGRAPHIC: Can I Employ Fair Use In My Documentary?" Center for Media & Social Impact, 2018, cmsiimpact.org/resource/infographic-can-i-employ-fair-use-in-my-documentary/.

Whatever our research approach, the creative work is always the centerpiece. The first step is to understand the process of storytelling, because if a mediated story about a social issue is didactic, overtly educational or preachy, it will turn audiences off. People come to care about the issues profiled in a work of mediated entertainment because they connect with the characters and artistry of the story.

This means that increased collaboration between the creative and research processes is of the utmost importance. Understanding what moves us in storytelling, seeing what's worked before, and moving forward through learning are some of the biggest hurdles the industry faces. The researchers are there, ready and waiting, we just need to build the funding to uncover and share those learnings. If we can do this, we'll take another step toward ensuring the stories we tell realize their true potential, and the research we conduct faithfully captures their impact. ■

"The best practices have been:

- Endorsed and/or used by PBS, WGBH and ITVS.
- Adopted into business practice by IFC and used case-by-case by other cable companies.
- Accepted by all four US insurance companies for Errors & Omissions insurance of fair use claims — AIG, MediaPro, ChubbPro, and OneBeacon.

Films that could never have been seen publicly, nor have been finished if the best practices hadn't been published, include: *This Film is Not Yet Rated* and *The Trials of Darryl Hunt*.

Since the best practices were published, millions of dollars of unnecessary licensing costs have been saved. They have also been adopted into business practice in public television."

— "Success of the Statement of Best Practices." Center for Media & Social Impact, 2018, cmsiimpact.org/resource/success-of-the-statement-of-best-practices/.



# Agency for Change

The first talent agency to develop a social impact department, CAA has a long-standing influence as creative change-makers. **Michelle Kydd Lee** and **Natalie Tran** explain how big ideas create big impact.

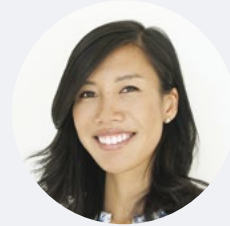
## Michelle Kydd Lee

Chief Innovation Officer and member of the Management Committee, Creative Artists Agency



## Natalie Tran

Co-Director of the CAA Foundation



CAA is a global company of diverse individuals whose mission is to identify, create, and expand opportunities for the people who shape culture and inspire the world.

The agency works with the world's premier entertainers and athletes, leaders in politics and policy, Nobel Prize Laureates, Pulitzer Prize winners, and many other of today's foremost thinkers and change agents.

Social action is woven into the fabric of the agency, and has been since 1995, when the new leadership of the company established the CAA Foundation.

We are veterans in this space. We were the first talent agency to establish a department that would solely focus on developing enduring ideas to make a positive impact on the world. Created to put a nonprofit sensibility at the heart of the entertainment business, throughout the last 20 years CAA has led the way in some of the most transformative social action in our industry.

We live in a world of big, bold ideas. We sit at the epicenter of popular culture with each individual who comes through our doors — from world-renowned artists, content creators, and athletes to presidential candidates, activists, and innovators who are setting out to change the world. This gives us a very particular insight into the zeitgeist. We can see “the wave” coming months, if not years in advance, and this has enabled us to become a hub for social impact work — not only in Hollywood, but around the world. As our colleagues say, people around the planet may never visit our country, but they will see our movies, listen to our music, and watch our television shows. That is a great gift and an awesome responsibility.



**People around the planet may never visit our country, but they will see our movies, listen to our music, and watch our television shows.**

With access to CAA's global network of resources and relationships, CAA Foundation has a long history of bringing together individuals and organizations that might not have initially seen the mutual benefits of collaborating. We do this in several ways — by connecting research to entertainment, clients to causes, and the broader industry with social issues.

With the 2004 climate change blockbuster feature film, *The Day After Tomorrow*, for example, CAA used our convening power to bring environmental

scientists into the fold. The goal was to help them see the teachable moment this “popcorn” film would create in the public discourse. We sent them the script in advance of the film's release and noted that this film could help put climate change on the public agenda in a meaningful way. We persuaded them to use this fiction to tell the true science of climate change. While the movie would go on to receive plenty of press in the arts and leisure sections of newspapers and magazines, the environmentalists could work with the science writers to connect the two stories in the same editions. For the first time, environmentalists realized the power and potential of popular culture in supporting their work.



**CAA Foundation has a long history of bringing together individuals and organizations that might not have initially seen the mutual benefits of collaborating.**

Some 18 months later, we found ourselves deeply involved in another movie about climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth*. On the heels of hosting Vice President Gore in our screening room for his now famous “slide show,” we convened producers and director Davis Guggenheim into our conference room to put the wheels in motion for a documentary film that would tell the story at scale. The film, which was produced by Participant Media, went on to gross \$49.8 million worldwide (making it the 11th highest-grossing documentary film of all time) and earned Al Gore a Nobel Prize. One of the reasons the film was so successful is that it was able to capitalize on the pre-existing relationship the CAA Foundation has helped nurture between the environmentalists and the entertainment industry. We had helped develop a trust that simply hadn't existed before. This relationship embodies what social impact entertainment is all about: the collaboration between content

creators and those actually working on the issues in the field.

Another core strength of the CAA Foundation is our ability to connect clients and partners to a single, common cause. For example, in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections, we saw an opportunity to rally the entertainment community to help shift the way we think about voting, and ultimately increase voter turnout.

The CAA Foundation led the formation of a coalition of entertainment, studio, distribution, and retail companies to launch “I am a voter.” — a nonpartisan movement dedicated to increasing voter turnout in the 2018 midterm elections and beyond. The combined efforts of the nonprofit organizations with our connectivity to influential companies and individuals enabled us to supercharge the message around voter registration and participation. Our work resulted in \$14 million of donated ad space and a multifaceted social media campaign featuring high-profile personalities, athletes, and everyday citizens, generating 1.1 billion impressions. We activated in retail and used brands to help carry the message across the country through unique ▶

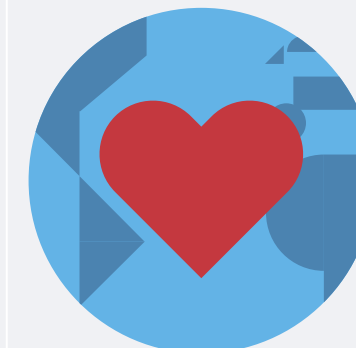


### The CAA Foundation

Since launching in 1995, the CAA Foundation has become a leader in the entertainment community on education, the environment, and health and social issues.

The CAA Foundation harnesses the power and reach of the entertainment industry to create positive social change by forging strategic partnerships, encouraging volunteerism, making financial contributions, stimulating public awareness, and providing in-kind donations.

“CAA Foundation.” Creative Artists Agency, [www.caa.com/foundation](http://www.caa.com/foundation).



© Participant Media and other respective production studios and distributors



An Inconvenient Truth, 2006



products. We built a state-of-the-art text platform, which was used by tens of thousands of individuals across the country and provided information on local elections, polling place locations, and ballot information.

Our proximity to contemporary culture also enables us to connect the industry as a whole to current issues. For example, the first meeting for TIME'S UP was organized and held in CAA's office. In October of 2017, after a slew of allegations of sexual misconduct within the entertainment industry and beyond, we went to work to not let this crisis pass without significant and fundamental change. At the very first meeting, we made sure we assembled an intersectional group: half of the 26 people we convened were women of color, and we assumed there was also appropriate LGBTQ representation.

Our mission was to use the momentum of #MeToo to keep attention on this critical issue and help create actionable solutions and real, tangible progress.

TIME'S UP is dedicated to ensuring safety, equity, and dignity in the workplace for women of all kinds. The original mandate has been signed by more than 300 women who work in Hollywood, including founders Shonda Rhimes, America Ferrera, Reese Witherspoon, Kerry Washington, and Natalie Portman. The movement has already raised more than \$22 million from 21,000 donors across 80 countries to help survivors of abuse. We believe that when we can come together and create more safe spaces, share credit rather than take it, and if we refuse to lead by ego and instead lead by the desire for positive change, then anything is possible.



**We went to work to not let this crisis pass without significant and fundamental change.**

While the work of the CAA Foundation has been going on for decades, its central mission has not changed. Today, our goal is still to make it as easy as possible for people to do the right thing. That is not only limited to our clients: every five business days, we offer our 2,000 employees the opportunity to participate in some act of community service, just as we have since day one. Our philosophy is: to lead is to serve.

What has changed is that the entertainment industry, businesses, and high-profile individuals have become more purposeful about the ways in which they participate in social justice. This has become so visible and so prevalent; we feel that people now equate the idea of a successful life with having the ability to serve others.

Looking at the younger generations who have grown up in this new culture is also inspiring. They are tuned-in to the social issues of our time. By regularly protesting and marching with their peers, they self-identify as activists. We are incredibly proud to be playing our part in cultivating and nourishing that atmosphere — and if this generation is any indication of what lies ahead for this field and for this work, we expect great things. ■

**TIME'S UP**

TIME'S UP was launched on January 1st 2018, after months of women coming forward as survivors of sexual assault and/or harassment by men in Hollywood. Powered by women, TIME'S UP addresses the systemic inequality and injustice in the workplace that have kept underrepresented groups from reaching their full potential.

TIME'S UP features their own Legal Defense Fund, which helps defray legal and public relations costs in select cases for those who have experienced sexual harassment or related retaliation in the workplace.

— "Home." Time's Up, 2018, timesupnow.com/.  
Time's Up (TIMESUPNOW). "Over 2,500 people have come to the #TIMESUP Legal Defense Fund seeking assistance since we launched on January 1." 28 Apr. 2018, 12:53 PM. Tweet. twitter.com/TIMESUPNOW/status/99031814885444034.

**TIME'S UP at the Golden Globes®**

At the 2018 Golden Globe® Awards, both women and men dressed in black (and implemented #WhyWeWearBlack), donned TIME'S UP pins designed by Arianne Phillips, and invited activists and important female figures as their plus ones.

— Weaver, Hilary. "Golden Globes 2018: Black Dresses, Time's Up Pins, Activist Plus Ones, and Everything Else You Need to Know." Vanity Fair, Condé Nast, 7 Jan. 2018, vanityfair.com/style/2018/01/golden-globes-2018-red-carpet-times-up.



Billboard in LA promoting the TIME'S UP campaign

**The CAA Foundation**

The Foundation provides additional monetary and in-kind support for the schools and nonprofit organizations with which they work. In 2017:

  
**12,557 students**

were served directly through the Foundation's programs at partner schools.

  
**120 volunteers**

traveled to Haiti, New Orleans, the Rockaways, and Tuscaloosa to help provide resources and goods to communities recovering from natural disasters.

  
**183 days**

spent volunteering in the community.

— "CAA Foundation." Creative Artists Agency, caa.com/foundation.

  
**40 scholarships**

were awarded to refugees rebuilding their lives in communities where the Foundation has offices.

  
**110 middle school students**

were sent to an overnight camp with activities including ropes courses, a music production workshop, arts and crafts, and a hike.



© Benny King / Alamy, Stock Photo



# Community Spirit

Many hands make light work. **Beadie Finzi** discusses why it is essential to convene independent documentary filmmakers with good partners to help their work have the greatest possible impact.

## Beadie Finzi

Director, Doc Society



At its core, Doc Society is an organization that's committed to supporting independent documentary filmmakers and the extraordinary films they create. We want to help them realize their vision, to connect them to the audiences and partners they need to flourish, and to help their work have the biggest impact possible.

How do we do this? With direct funding for documentary films and mentorship of individual filmmakers but also through a series of programmatic interventions designed to help build capacity and grow resources for the whole field. From the Doc Impact Award to Doc Academy, Safe + Secure to Good Pitch, some of these projects are wholly experimental, some more mature. The trick is to be in constant listening mode, a state of permanent R&D, asking ourselves, "Is what we're doing most useful?" and,

"How can we respond to the changing needs of independent filmmakers?"

Bringing together the documentary community with civil society and forging new partnerships to support funding, distribution, and impact campaigns is an essential part of this strategy. For this reason, organizing convenings is a huge focus for us. In particular, our convenings primarily focus on four groups: independent filmmakers who want to understand how their films can have impact beyond a traditional distribution cycle; the burgeoning community of global impact producers who are forging a new professional class; foundations and philanthropists who are doc-curious; and leading NGOs and organizers who recognize how powerful media can be and wonder how to partner. Sometimes we bring them all together and sometimes we convene them as individual communities, and these gatherings range from informal to theatrical.

As one of the Doc Society Foundation Directors, my prime area of focus is Good Pitch. Since 2009, this annual program has been bringing together documentary filmmakers with foundations, NGOs, campaigners, philanthropists, policymakers, brands, and media around leading social and environmental issues. Our aim is to forge coalitions and campaigns that are good for the films and good for those partners.



**We decided to redirect our resources in the US toward convening at the city and state level.**

Each annual cycle includes Impact Labs for the participating filmmakers to devise an impact strategy for their feature docs. Then comes six months of deep outreach to potential allies, before the whole cycle culminates in a live event, featuring several hundred changemakers from across civil society. The event is a day of connections and radical collaboration, which forges new alliances and raises

financing for documentary productions and their impact campaigns — over \$30 million at the last count.

This model is now well-proven to work across continents and cultures. In addition to annual hub programs in Europe and in the United States, we have now successfully shared the model with local media organizations in South Africa, Canada, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Taiwan, Argentina, Australia and Kenya, with new programs in development in Brazil, and in the MENA and Pasifika regions.



### The Doc Impact Award

The Doc Impact Award is first prize to celebrate the power of documentary film as a driver of change, and the first to compel filmmakers to capture and articulate evidence of impact. Impact Award documentaries have created significant and measurable social or environmental impact. Past winners include *The Act of Killing*, *Armadillo*, *Blackfish*, *Burma VJ*, *Gasland*, *Granito*, *Chasing Ice*, *Citizenfour*, *Food Chains*, and *Virunga*.

— "Doc Impact Award." Doc Society, 2018, docsociety.org/projects/#impactaward.



While we have seen great success with national and continental editions of Good Pitch, the dramatic global political tremors of the last three years demanded soul searching amongst media makers and support organizations like ourselves. Following the 2016 US Presidential election, we decided to redirect our resources in the US toward convening at the city and state level, helping lift up stories missing from the news cycle — and so Good Pitch Local was born.

Good Pitch Local is a day-long networking event showcasing short-form nonfiction media projects that are deeply relevant to that community. This is where artists and storytellers connect with local allies — from lawyers, to musicians, local journalists, or community foundations — to find the resources they need to get their work made and seen. A more rough and ready convening, Good Pitch Local costs less and can happen faster,



### Good Pitch

Doc Society is known for Good Pitch, which brings together filmmakers with foundations, NGOs, campaigners, philanthropists, policymakers, brands and media around leading social and environmental issues. It forges coalitions that are good for the partners, films and society.

134 film projects from 60 countries have been presented to more than 3,000 organizations through Good Pitch.

— "Good Pitch." Doc Society, 2018, docsociety.org/projects/#goodpitch.

Films that have stemmed from Good Pitch include: *Last Men in Aleppo*, *Whose Streets?*, *Chasing Coral*, *Dark Money*, *The Hunting Ground*, *Strong Island*, *Virunga*, *The Yes Men Are Revolting*, *The Square*, *The Invisible War*, *How to Survive a Plague*, *Conviction*, *Her Song*, *The Pushouts*, *iHUMAN*, *The Negotiators*, *Cosas Que No Hacemos*.

— "Films at Good Pitch." Good Pitch, Doc Society, goodpitch.org/films.

134

film projects

60

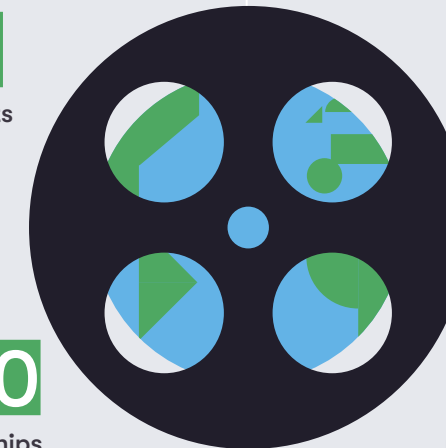
countries

1,200

new partnerships forged

\$17M

raised in additional funding



**Having a physical gathering alongside a virtual networking group has been invaluable.**

meaning we can do more, which is great. It's also a smart way to share the resources we have developed working with the global community over the years including *The Impact Field Guide & Toolkit* and essential toolkits for film teams like *Safe + Secure*.

If Good Pitch is an example of a structured convening by Doc Society, we also have more informal strategies for getting people together. For one thing, we're big believers in a damn good party! Filmmaking is typically lonely and isolating, and involves working solo or in small units over

many years. There can be huge periods of doubt about the story, and enormous stress or anxiety about the process. Creating formal and informal spaces where filmmakers and the organizations that support them can come together, in solidarity, is absolutely vital.

But it's not just the producers and directors who need love. In the last couple of years we have started convening the Global Impact Producers Assembly. Given the term "impact producer" was only coined six years ago, it was pretty darn impressive to see 116 colleagues from over 30 countries at the 2018 edition. This feat was made possible with generous travel stipends provided by the Ford Foundation, Participant Media, and Bertha Foundation. As this new professional class emerges and defines its role, having a physical gathering alongside a virtual networking group has been invaluable to share practice and inspiration, and build connections across continents.



### Good Pitch Local

Good Pitch convenes filmmakers with changemakers around urgent issues to catalyze coalitions and create campaigns for social good. Good Pitch Local events support the creation of innovative local media that can galvanize communities. It differs from Good Pitch in that it presents opportunities for organizers to connect and creatively collaborate with media makers in their own communities. Good Pitch Local events have taken place in Dallas, TX, Durham, NC, Miami, FL, and Detroit, MI.

— "Good Pitch Local." Good Pitch, Doc Society, 2018, goodpitch.org/local.



Let's be clear — we are not alone. Doc Society exists in a rich soup of colleagues and peers delivering really good work. The US in particular has such a rich ecology; Firelight Media and Chicken & Egg provide the community with deep professional development. We have sophisticated and strategic funders like Fledgling and Perspective Fund. We are spoiled for choice with world class festivals from Sundance to True/False.

When people ask me does convening work, my answer is "hell yes!" The documentary community is proudly tenacious and highly entrepreneurial. We have had to be. But we live in complex and challenging times, and so if anything, we need to do more of it — creating purposeful gatherings that bring us together, to offer solidarity and a chance to learn. We must keep asking the question — is what we are doing most useful? ■



# The Ecosystem of Change

Richard Ray Perez extols the benefits of a meeting of minds between filmmakers and social entrepreneurs to facilitate change together.

## Richard Ray Perez

Director of Creative Partnerships, Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Program



At Stories of Change (SOC), we don't believe social impact happens in a vacuum.

It's generated by a larger ecosystem involving multiple players: storytellers and filmmakers, philanthropists and the private sector, community organizers and activists. At its most effective, change happens when these players work together to address an issue.

Stories of Change is a partnership between Sundance Institute and the Skoll Foundation. We support collaborations among independent storytellers working in nonfiction, fiction, and emerging storytelling platforms — like VR and AR — and social entrepreneurs. The goal is to create independent media projects and support the life cycle of the project from inception to impact through grants and strategic advice. It's a collaborative model that leverages the respective talents of the filmmaker and the social entrepreneur. The idea is that the filmmaker tells a great story and the

social entrepreneur takes that story and integrates it into their work, using the power of independent film to move the needle on their issue.

This process starts at key convenings around the world and then throughout we provide the guidance, advice, mentorship, and sometimes additional funding to ensure the creation of high-quality storytelling projects that have an impact on the pressing issues of our time.

Today, we understand the power of storytelling better than ever before. We have seen how it can be a force for good, and we have seen its dark side in the fake news circulating on social media before the 2016 election. Yet many content creators are still far removed from the problems on the ground, while the changemakers embedded in the issues are often unaware of the true power of independent storytelling. Our program is an intentional effort to remedy this. We close the gap between those working in entertainment, and the lived experience of the people affected by a social issue. We strive to deliver social impact with a community rather than for a community.

Many storytellers also have a limited understanding of the different uses of social impact media, specifically independent film and entertainment. For example, there are many different types of change you can drive, from shifting public opinion, to influencing new policies or legislation, to creating changes in behavior. Each of these has its own timeline, and has different challenges and opportunities.



### The Legend of the Vagabond King of Lagos

In this scripted feature film, a Nigerian community activist unearths a vast sum of corruption money and sets out to use the dirty cash to upgrade his community. However, he inadvertently creates many more problems than he solves.

\*Highlights From the Stories of Change Portfolio Completed Projects." Sundance Institute, [www.sundance.org/pdf/SOC-highlights-films-and-impact.pdf](http://www.sundance.org/pdf/SOC-highlights-films-and-impact.pdf).

At the same time, many social entrepreneurs working on complex issues do not grasp how entertainment can intervene in culture and society. They may not recognize that an independent film has value that's deeper and more

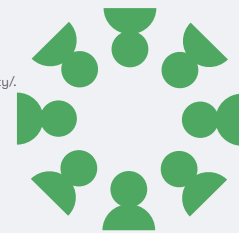
lasting than media created for marketing or fundraising. And if social entrepreneurs do recognize that value, they may still lack the knowledge, capacity, and skill sets to harness it.

While initially focused on supporting feature documentaries, we've expanded the Stories of Change application process to accommodate different formats. I call this responsive approach "cultivating the emergent," and it has yielded promising results. One example is *The Legend of the Vagabond King of Lagos*, a rags-to-riches thriller shot in a Lagos slum. This scripted film is a micro-budget production with a Nollywood ethic, in part because the filmmakers wanted to ensure that it would appeal to the very community that it portrays. It seeks to embed the voice of its subjects, emphasizing their humanity and dignity, and it has a clear political purpose as well: to halt the Nigerian government's policy of forced slum evictions.



The Skoll World Forum is one of the primary convenings for Stories of Change. At the 2018 Skoll World Forum, entitled *The Power of Proximity*, 5 filmmakers, 4 advisors, and 11 heads of social organizations met to discuss their passions, current projects, and potential collaborations. The ideas that came out of this workshop were funded by a grant proposal process.

"2018 Skoll World Forum: 'The Power Of Proximity.'" Skoll Foundation, 2018, [skoll.org/2018-skoll-world-forum-power-proximity/](http://skoll.org/2018-skoll-world-forum-power-proximity/).



Filmmakers alone would struggle to achieve this impact, even with the best intentions in the world. It is up to us, as a program, to help coordinate the various players involved — from the community affected by the change, to the activists and decision-makers in the region; from the impact producers, to the international audience that can help influence Nigerian government policy.

Alongside fictional treatments like these, we carry on telling factual stories. With *The Pushouts*, a documentary about a former Oakland

gang member-turned-university-professor, we aligned the filmmakers with YouthBuild — a nonprofit that has helped thousands of young Americans from low-income families acquire job skills and employment after having dropped out of school. The collaboration is part of a powerful social impact campaign that uses the film to engage and train YouthBuild participants and alumni.

Stories of Change organizes three main convenings throughout the year. Each is predicated on the assumption that, by working together, independent storytellers and social entrepreneurs can reach wider audiences and find pathways to a better world. The first convening takes place at the Sundance Film Festival. Here, we work to support the creation of compelling film and media projects by bringing independent filmmakers into direct dialogue and partnership with Skoll-Awarded Social Entrepreneurs. The goal is to build a network of storytellers and entrepreneurs, to enhance story skills, and to promote the exchange of knowledge within our community.



### Stories of Change

Stories of Change supports the creation of film and media projects inspired by the work of renowned social entrepreneurs, and builds a network of independent storytellers and Skoll-Awarded Social Entrepreneurs. Since 2008, the initiative has provided funding and development support for many independent documentary film projects by award-winning filmmakers. In 2015, Sundance Institute and Skoll Foundation established the Stories of Change Content Fund to support a new generation of narrative film and interactive, transmedia, and nonfiction projects.



22 films funded



\$2.2M in production grant dollars



72 participating filmmakers



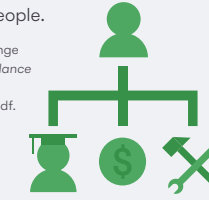
83 participating social entrepreneurs

"Stories Of Change Dashboard." Sundance Institute, 2019, [www.sundance.org/support/storiesofchange/dashboard](http://www.sundance.org/support/storiesofchange/dashboard).



*The Pushouts* was part of an impact campaign led by YouthBuild USA. The film positioned YouthBuild to create pathways for its graduates, pushing them toward economic mobility and transforming their communities by expanding access to education and workforce development for young people.

\*Highlights From the Stories of Change Portfolio Completed Projects." Sundance Institute, [www.sundance.org/pdf/SOC-highlights-films-and-impact.pdf](http://www.sundance.org/pdf/SOC-highlights-films-and-impact.pdf).



We adopt a similar approach at the Skoll World Forum — a yearly gathering, hosted at University of Oxford's Saïd Business School, that brings together social entrepreneurs, renowned thought leaders, and impact partners from across the globe. Our convening here is an intensive, day-long event where entrepreneurs workshop with filmmakers from the Sundance Institute. The goal is to see how both parties might form lasting connections and collaborate in service of social impact.

Finally, there's the Art, Impact and



### Stories of Change Impact Lab

The Stories of Change Impact Lab is an immersive five-day prototyping lab to extend the film's story into the community through digital strategies. It is offered to invited social entrepreneurs and filmmakers as part of the Stories of Change partnership, and produced by Tomorrow Partners with the Sundance Institute.



"Stories of Change: Social Entrepreneurship in Focus Through Documentary." Tomorrow Labs, 2019, [labs.tomorrowpartners.com/partners/](http://labs.tomorrowpartners.com/partners/).

Strategy Lab, an intensive four-day event that takes place at the Sundance Resort. We invite selected project teams that have received SOC grants to co-vision their project and work through its storytelling and creative components. We also assign an advisor to each team to help them work through specific challenges. This could mean anything from addressing divergent ideas for the story to sourcing an impact producer to help map out the social impact campaign.

Social change is a complicated process. It typically does not follow a linear trajectory or formulaic models. There's no one-size-fits-all approach. Our experience has taught us this much. But one thing is certain: authentic, well-told stories — the kind of storytelling Sundance Institute has championed from our inception — can be transformative. But that work doesn't happen alone. When part of an ecosystem of change, working with changemakers with vision, storytellers and artists can give the audience an experience that is transcendent and transformative. Social impact entertainment can do that. ■



### Stories of Change financial impact

Over the course of the Stories of Change partnership, development and production grants of \$1.2M+ were awarded to support the creation of feature-length independent documentary films that examine social entrepreneurship as an innovative approach to the central challenges of our time. In addition to funding the films, Stories of Change supports convenings of leaders in both documentary film and social entrepreneurship at key gatherings globally including the Skoll World Forum and the Sundance Film Festival.



"Stories of Change: Social Entrepreneurship in Focus Through Documentary." Tomorrow Labs, 2019, [labs.tomorrowpartners.com/partners/](http://labs.tomorrowpartners.com/partners/).



# The Truth Shall Set Us Free

Creative Visions incubates and nurtures social impact stories. **Kathy Eldon** and **Amy Eldon Turteltaub** helm the organization that empowers filmmakers to tell stories that matter.

## Kathy Eldon

Journalist, author, producer / founder, Creative Visions Foundation



## Amy Eldon Turteltaub

Creative activist producer, author and co-founder of Creative Visions Foundation



Since we launched our nonprofit organization, Creative Visions, we have supported more than 360 projects and productions in 35 countries, impacting more than 100 million people.

We focus on supporting “creative activists” who use media and the arts to tell stories that will raise awareness of critical issues and ignite positive change.

The foundation for our organization was set in 1990 when we founded Creative Visions Productions in London. From the outset our goal was to make films

about issues we felt were important. We wanted our movies to spark a desire in audiences to get involved.

In 1993 Dan Eldon, our 22-year-old son and brother, was killed while working as a Reuters photojournalist in Somalia. Determined to raise awareness of the challenges faced by frontline journalists, we moved to Los Angeles to make a film on the subject. Together, as a mother-daughter team, we pitched an idea we had developed about Dan and his friends to TBS. In 1997 our documentary, *Dying to Tell the Story*, premiered at the United Nations. Accompanied by an innovative website and a high school curriculum, the film was distributed to 90 countries and triggered major public awareness of the true cost of this type of work, and of the huge risks facing freelance journalists in the field.

After producing four more films complete with websites, curricula, and social impact campaigns for major networks, we decided to use our nonprofit to aid other aspiring filmmakers. We wanted to help develop and distribute their films and manage impact campaigns that would ignite change around them. Today, Creative Visions is globally recognized for its accelerator and incubator programs that offer fiscal sponsorship, mentoring, funding assistance, and development and production resources.

Over the past few years we have prioritized supporting social impact stories focused on refugees and immigration, women and girls’ empowerment, and the environment. This year we are launching a Media Impact Fund that will offer funding to emerging, high-potential filmmakers, and provide emergency funding to enable storytellers to produce critical and timely stories.

Although it’s notoriously difficult to measure the impact of social impact entertainment, over the past two decades we have seen a major shift in public awareness around pressing social, environmental, and humanitarian causes. We believe this is due to a surge in the number of social impact films that have raised awareness around important causes, triggered

a desire in people to get involved, and influenced policy and public opinion. Creative Visions incubated many of these high-impact SIE film projects.

### Dying to Tell the Story award nominations



“Dying to Tell the Story (1998): Awards.” IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt0183024/awards?ref\_=tt\_awd.

One such project, *Living on One Dollar*, followed four friends as they experienced what it was like to live on \$1 a day for two months in rural Guatemala. While there, the group released a series of short YouTube videos that went on to receive over 700,000 views collectively. The positive response to those videos inspired the friends to make an award-winning feature film to raise awareness about extreme poverty and to engage youth around the same issue. The team also partnered with Whole Planet Foundation and Mayan Families in a social impact campaign to help support two great causes: providing microfinance loans to those in need, and providing educational opportunities to the residents of Peña Blanca, the film’s location. Ultimately, supporters of the campaign funded 1,600 microfinance loans totaling \$338,009, while a further \$350,000 was raised to help support educational initiatives including the Peña Blanca Community Development Fund and the Rosa Scholarship Fund.

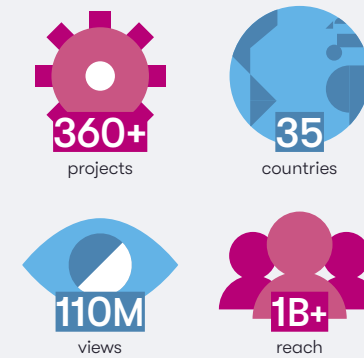
We also incubated *Landfill Harmonic*, a film about a group of Paraguayan students from the Cateura landfill who played instruments made from trash. The film has stimulated other landfill communities to create more sustainable and environmental practices. Many children from the Cateura landfill have learned to play music, and the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura has performed to audiences around the world, increasing awareness of the challenges faced by its members.



Know it won’t be easy, but at least you’ll never be bored!

Social impact filmmakers face a myriad of challenges as they endeavor to give voice to stories that deserve to be heard — stories that identify problems that need to be solved. Over the past few years, we have seen an increase in the number of festivals that showcase cause-oriented films — festivals like True/False, Human Rights Watch Film Festival, and the big staples like Sundance. Filmmakers can also now apply to a growing number of funding circles for support — like those offered

**Creative Visions**  
Creative Visions is an organization made up of “creative activists” whose mission it is to spark awareness of critical issues and ignite change through impact, media, art and technology.



“About.” Creative Visions, 2018, www.creativevisions.org/about-creative-visions-foundation-malibu.  
“Home.” Creative Visions, 2018, creativevisions.org/.  
“Programs – CV Productions.” Creative Visions, 2018, creativevisions.org/creative-visions-productions-malibu-ca.  
“Programs – The Network.” Creative Visions, 2018, creativevisions.org/creative-activist-network-malibu-ca.  
“Programs – Fiscal Sponsorship.” Creative Visions, 2018, creativevisions.org/creative-visions-fiscal-sponsorship-program.

by Doc Society or Impact Partners — and seek alternative forms of online distribution, making it easier than ever before to get the stories to audiences.

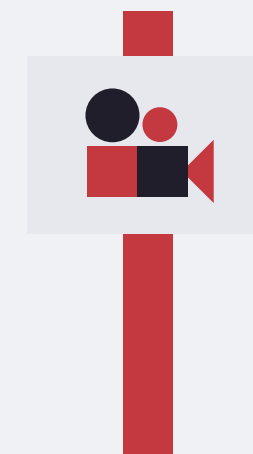
To those who wish to venture into the world of social impact entertainment, we advise that before you start, figure out the impact you want to create. Clarity counts. Check out organizations that could benefit from your film and explore all the possible outlets that may be interested in what you produce. Then, reach out to others who have traveled the same road and learn from their mistakes. Know it won’t be easy, but at least you’ll never be bored!

As you venture forth, we suggest that you tape these words by Winston Churchill onto your refrigerator and read them every day: “Never give in, never give in, never, never, never.” Your stories matter. Your audience awaits. ■

**Creative Activist Program Grants**  
The Creative Activist Program (CAP) has incubated over 360 projects and productions, from documentaries and feature films distributed on major networks, to photography exhibitions and theater projects that fuel a national conversation about pressing issues.

CAP projects have created significant impact and policy change in the areas of human rights, women and girls’ empowerment, the environment, and youth and education.

“Programs – Creative Activist Program.” Creative Visions, 2018, www.creativevisions.org/creative-visions-creative-activist-program.



### Landfill Harmonic

*Landfill Harmonic* follows the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura, a Paraguayan musical group that plays instruments made entirely out of garbage. When their story goes viral, the orchestra is catapulted into the global spotlight. However, when a natural disaster strikes their country, music director Favio must find a way to keep the orchestra intact and provide a source of hope for their town.

“Landfill Harmonic.” Creative Visions, creativeactivist.com/index.php/film/119-landfill-harmonic.

### Dying to Tell the Story

Dan Eldon traveled to Somalia in 1992 and took powerful photographs of the famine and war in the country. In 1993, he was asked to document the aftermath of a US raid that was responsible for the deaths of 70 people. Eldon and four other journalists went to the site, where they were attacked by an outraged mob. Four journalists including Eldon were killed. Only one wounded reporter escaped.

Dan Eldon’s sister Amy traveled to Somalia and interviewed other risk-taking journalists and photographers such as Martin Bell and Christiane Amanpour. *Dying to Tell the Story* is the resulting film — a portrait of an extraordinary man, and insight into why journalists’ coverage of international conflicts is so crucial and why they risk their lives to do it.

Chamberlain, Ryan, et al. *Dying to Tell the Story Curriculum Guide*. Journeys in Film, 2014, p. 9.

### Living on One Dollar

*Living on One Dollar* is a film and tool to help empower the extreme poor to take the first steps out of poverty. The film follows the story of four young friends who set out to live on just one dollar a day for eight weeks in rural Guatemala. They battle hunger, parasites and the realization that there are no easy answers. Yet, the generosity and strength of Rosa, a 20-year-old woman, and Chino, a 12-year-old boy gives them resilient hope that there are effective ways to make a difference.

“Living on One Dollar – The Film.” *Living on One Dollar*, livingonone.org/livingonone/film/.



# Altering Perceptions

**Cara Mertes** discusses how JustFilms combats nonfiction storytelling challenges to help create narratives that transform history.

## Cara Mertes

Director of JustFilms, Ford Foundation



Ford Foundation strategy rests on the five key drivers of inequality it perceives: persistent prejudice; cultural narratives that undermine fairness and inclusion; unequal access to government; unfair rules of the economy; and failure to protect public goods.

Following this, there is a generation of thought leaders, creatives, funders, and social justice stakeholders who understand that culture itself has become a primary battleground for gaining and maintaining the power to effect progressive social change, and this demands new strategies. The principles of democracy are under duress around the world — therefore, popular cultural interventions also become part of a social justice foundation's strategy to disrupt systems that reproduce inequality, modeling the values of justice, tolerance and equity.

The idea of having impact on social justice topics through popular culture has taken on a new momentum, as some foundations strive to harness the power of the entertainment industry as a part of a larger set of integrated approaches. In particular, strategies involving commercial film and television hold great promise, but foundations must also stay focused on where the need is greatest and the intervention most strategic. Ford Foundation is at the forefront of this exploration and many new initiatives are being supported by JustFilms, Ford's signature moving image strategy.

Ford Foundation has long had a commitment to independent cinematic documentary as the genre traditionally seen as the most capable of providing transformative narratives that reflect lived reality. Launched in 2011, JustFilms is the latest and most ambitious iteration of this commitment. JustFilms' mandate is to support nonfiction cinematic storytellers around the world who center the voices and experiences of those most affected by inequality. This requires a strong ecosystem, and in 2017, I used Ford's multi-year funding approach called BUILD to launch the JustFilms Global BUILD Film Network. Working with staff in Ford's regional offices, ultimately this network will support 11 social justice documentary organizations around the world with a \$23 million, five-year commitment. The cohort is exploring with JustFilms how such a network, the first of its kind, can strengthen creative nonfiction cinema at a time when creative and free expression is being challenged widely.



**Foundations must stay focused on where the need is greatest and the intervention most strategic.**

In finding the right projects to fund, JustFilms sets a high bar, seeking not only "good stories, well told," but to reach further. JustFilms assesses the transformative potential of the narrative, its originality in aesthetic, the perspective of the storytellers and the commitment

## JustFilms

In 2011, the day before the start of the Sundance Film Festival, the Ford Foundation announced a five-year, \$50M initiative to help find and support a new generation of filmmakers whose works address urgent social issues.

The JustFilms initiative was planned to invest \$10M/year for the next five years to support and expand the community of filmmakers and mediators around the world focused on creating documentaries with passion and purpose, but who often lack funding to realize their visions or reach audiences.

"Ford Foundation Launches \$50 Million Fund for Next-Generation Documentary Filmmakers." Ford Foundation, 19 Jan. 2011, [www.fordfoundation.org/the-latest/news/ford-foundation-launches-50-million-fund-for-next-generation-documentary-filmmakers/](http://www.fordfoundation.org/the-latest/news/ford-foundation-launches-50-million-fund-for-next-generation-documentary-filmmakers/).



to a "leave-behind" — something that brings resources back to the community, institution or individual that is the subject of their story. Examples of this range from the implementation of a policy or process that addresses the injustice depicted, or even something as direct as funding to address the issue profiled. These qualities start to define what I think of as social justice documentary, as distinct from nonfiction more broadly.

A recent Academy Award®-winning documentary that literally changed history is an excellent example. Laura Poitras' *Citizenfour* is about Edward Snowden and the leaking of NSA surveillance activities, and it shifted the way the world thinks about privacy, technology, surveillance, corporate practice, and government policy. In short, it redefined the forces at work in the modern age. The film awoke a global population to the emerging issue of individual rights, privacy, and security in a networked age. After the film was released, internet searches for "NSA surveillance" increased 300%, and Congress later passed the USA Freedom Act in 2015 to reform its surveillance programs. This is just one film out of the hundreds supported by JustFilms which has transformed entrenched social narratives.

JustFilms is often an early funder in social impact documentaries, allowing filmmakers to develop their voice and vision outside of commercial imperatives. They then go on to find mainstream acclaim and success, working with entities like Netflix, HBO, CNN, PBS, BBC, Participant Media and more. These artists

lead the market in storytelling innovation, and I believe that it is critical to better value the role the public, foundation, and nonprofit sectors play in supporting filmmakers who become the talent sought by the entertainment industry.

With independent documentary as its core mandate, perhaps the most interesting evolution under my directorship has been that JustFilms has also become an incubator for a set of initiatives at the intersection of social justice efforts, creative documentary, and entertainment for change. One such model is DocSociety's Good Pitch, which has raised millions of dollars for social justice documentary and created countless new partnerships across social justice movements, philanthropy, brands, government, and civil society. It has exponentially expanded the definition of who can harness the power of nonfiction for justice, and how they can do it better. Good Pitch launched at Sundance Film Festival in 2008, and is now being held in locations around the world.

The Pop Culture Collaborative (PCC) is another exciting experiment. PCC is a five-year, \$25 million multi-foundation effort with a mandate to connect the work of social justice leaders with entertainment changemakers and philanthropy. The PCC particularly focuses on trying to shape popular

culture so that it reflects the diversity of the American people. Its list of grantees for summer 2018 included 5050by2020 — a strategic initiative launched by TIME'S UP — Ava DuVernay's ARRAY Alliance, and IllumiNative, to name just a few.

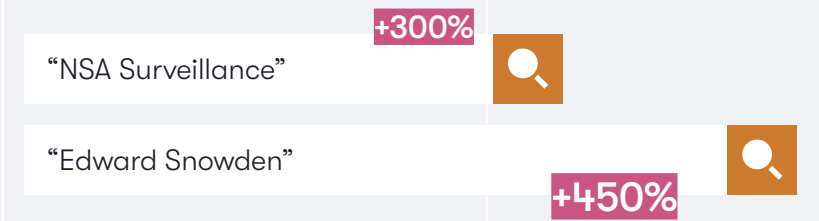
Supporting these groundbreaking initiatives since their inception is part of an effort to build capacity, expertise, and impact by aligning social justice leadership, philanthropy, entertainment, and justice-oriented moving image creators who are helping to build the momentum needed to guide a just transition to more sustainable and equitable societies.

We live in deeply challenging times which call for radical reimagining and powerful approaches, and in designing strategies, I keep in mind that social change processes are always human processes. They are not linear or predictable and, in many cases, they are not fully quantifiable. Examples of social impact through documentary and other forms of entertainment that show clear cause and effect do exist, but they are not the rule. Rather, the essential impact of moving image storytelling lies in its ability to transform stereotypes and misconceptions, and reveal new facts and perspectives that can fundamentally change our understanding of the complex issues of our age. ■

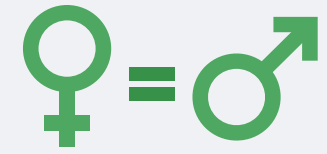
## Citizenfour impact

After *Citizenfour*'s release, Google search results for "Edward Snowden" increased 450% and "NSA surveillance" increased 300%.

CIGI-Ipsos Global Survey on Internet Security and Trust reached 23,000+ Internet users in 24 countries during Fall 2014. Of those surveyed, 60% had heard of Edward Snowden. Of those, 39% had taken steps to protect their online privacy and security as a result of his revelations. 64% of users were more concerned at the time of the study about online privacy than they were compared to one year earlier.



Doc Impact Award 2016 — *Citizenfour*. Doc Impact Award, 2016, [impactguide.org/static/library/citizenfour.pdf](http://impactguide.org/static/library/citizenfour.pdf).



## 5050by2020

As an emergent activist strategy of the recently launched TIME'S UP, 5050by2020 — which seeks to achieve gender parity by the year 2020 — is galvanizing high-level artists to interrogate structural systems, challenge leadership, and infuse social justice values into the content they create.

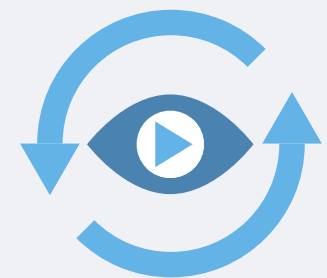
"Summer 2018 Grant Recipients — 5050by2020." Pop Culture Collab, Pop Culture Collaborative, [popcollab.org/grants/summer-2018-grant-recipients/5050by2020/](http://popcollab.org/grants/summer-2018-grant-recipients/5050by2020/).



## ARRAY Alliance

Ava DuVernay launched the ARRAY Alliance to establish a creative home for artists, activists, and audiences to come together to create and experience stories that advance social change. ARRAY Alliance amplifies stories of underrepresented communities by providing women filmmakers and people of color with the resources they need to ensure their diverse perspectives have a platform.

"Summer 2018 Grant Recipients — ARRAY Alliance." Pop Culture Collab, Pop Culture Collaborative, [popcollab.org/grants/summer-2018-grant-recipients/array-alliance/](http://popcollab.org/grants/summer-2018-grant-recipients/array-alliance/).



## IllumiNative

IllumiNative will use research and Native art and storytelling to harness, activate, and amplify original Native content on multiple pop culture platforms to bring about understanding, meaningful representation, and systemic change.

"Summer 2018 Grant Recipients — IllumiNative." Pop Culture Collab, Pop Culture Collaborative, [popcollab.org/grants/summer-2018-grant-recipients/illuminative/](http://popcollab.org/grants/summer-2018-grant-recipients/illuminative/).



# Pivotal Funding

Impact Partners was born of funding models that didn't work. **Geralyn Dreyfous** explains how looking to venture capitalists gave them inspiration for their unique model of equity investing for social impact films.

## Geralyn Dreyfous

Founder, Utah Film Center  
Co-founder, Impact Partners Film Fund



I got into filmmaking in 2000 with *The Day My God Died*.

This was a time when films were starting to be used as tools for social change, and documentaries, such as Lee Hirsch's *Amandla*, had begun to do well at the box office. But there was no infrastructure to build audiences for these films. Documentaries were being bought and sold for next to nothing, so there was no money going into them, and they weren't being distributed in a very imaginative way.

I realized something was seriously wrong with the system after releasing *Born into Brothels* in 2004. This was an HBO film that was eventually sold to Netflix, where it did exceptionally well. It had already won a Sundance Audience Award and an Academy Award®, and had taken \$3.5 million at the box office. Yet the filmmakers saw only a \$150,000 return, and very nearly lost money on the project. We were left scratching our heads; it just didn't make sense.

The next film I was involved in, *Living in Emergency*, was an abysmal failure, but it taught me a lot. We were working with a first-time filmmaker, we didn't have the proper contracts in place, it kept costing more, and we had to repeatedly go to the investors to bail it out. We learned that we shouldn't release large amounts of money until the whole budget is raised and that we must have systems in place that can hold filmmakers to account.



**Documentary film, and by extension the field of social impact entertainment, is one of those areas where it makes sense to pool your resources and your risk.**

These early successes and failures led me, in 2007, to form Impact Partners with Dan Cogan. By this point we had realized that the system was truly broken. We had to find a new model for funding and producing these kinds of important documentaries.

The act of making a documentary is in itself an entrepreneurial process. You're only as good as your ability to learn and to adapt — in other words, to pivot. At Impact Partners, while we learned a lot on our own, we also take lessons from the masters of pivoting: venture capitalists. We've introduced a unique model of equity investing for social impact films that seeks to ensure that the money leaving the system is ultimately replenished. Every film that we make stands on the shoulders of the ones before it.

In the old model, you'd seek out a grant from a foundation and try to make a documentary that fit the foundation's criteria. You'd be afraid of admitting when things went wrong. That's the exact opposite of what we do at Impact Partners. Instead of handing out grants, we tell the filmmakers that we'll put up the money to complete this film but we want it back, plus a certain percentage.

However, if the market doesn't bear out and they only return 20 cents on the dollar, that's still fine because it's better than zero.

As for when things go wrong — we're not afraid when that happens, nor do we want our filmmakers to be. *Icarus* is a great example of this. It began as a film about doping in cycling and turned into one about the largest doping scandal in sports, with its key character, a whistleblower, becoming a target for assassination by the Russian government. Some people may have pulled out when the stakes got so high, but we capitalized. We got the Justice Department and Homeland Security involved, and we got good legal counsel. Again, it was our ability to pivot that allowed us to capitalize on an opportunity that many others would have run from.

Equity investing was seen as controversial at first; we were accused of profiting off the backs of starving artists. But as one of our founding members, the venture capitalist Jim Swartz, has argued, filmmakers are essentially entrepreneurs — they spot things before other people. We can

### 📌 *Born into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids* awards



"Born Into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids (2004); Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt0388789/awards?ref\_ett\_owd.

help them by making films faster and by introducing the fiscal discipline of equity into the process. By amortizing the risks, we can accelerate the flow of capital to these cultural entrepreneurs.

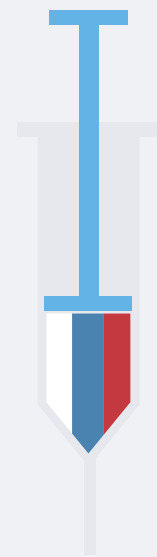
That said, we tell our investors that if your primary motivation is pure profit, you're likely in the wrong place. But if you're looking to make a real difference in the world, then come aboard. We want to leverage all the other resources our investors can provide: distribution, access to influential networks, even setting up screenings that can change policy. Their time and talents are ultimately worth more to us than their checks alone.

The fact is these kinds of social impact documentaries provide a huge public service. You have to remember that somebody spent three years and a million dollars making a film that you can see at a community screening for free, or on Netflix, or at a theater for 10 dollars. That's a lot of social innovation — it's practically a miracle! But how do we get audiences to hear about these films? The distribution and the targeting of audiences are the next

### 📌 *Icarus* impact

The *Icarus* protagonist, Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov, and his exposing of Russia's state-sponsored Olympic doping program led to the *McLaren Report*, "which concluded that more than 1,000 Russian athletes across over 30 sports benefited from state-sponsored doping between 2012 and 2015." In November 2017, the *McLaren Report* was confirmed as accurate by the World Anti-Doping Agency, which determined Russia's eligibility to participate in the upcoming 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang.

Ingle, Sean. "WADA Says Database Confirms McLaren Report on Russian Doping." *The Guardian*, 10 Nov. 2017, www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/nov/10/wada-mclaren-russia-doping.



frontier, and we still haven't quite figured that out yet.

No one person can make and distribute a film, so we're building communities that learn from each other. We tell potential investors that documentary film has the unique ability to align with, and to amplify, something that they already care about — provided they work with people that understand good storytelling.

For them, it boils down to a choice. They can create the same back office in their foundations to search for suitable films, staffing this for around \$300,000 a year, or they can pay us \$35,000 a year to cover our overhead. That way, they draw upon our expertise and avoid reinventing the wheel. They can test the waters and make sure any mistakes they make are not million-dollar mistakes but, say, \$25,000 mistakes.

Documentary film, and by extension the field of social impact entertainment, is one of those areas where it makes sense to pool your resources and your risk. The reward can be a story that changes the world and cuts through the noise and clutter like nothing else. ■

### 📌 *Icarus* awards



"Icarus (2017); Awards." IMDb, 2019, www.imdb.com/title/tt6333060/?ref\_=nv\_sr\_1.

### ★ Impact Partners

For the past 11 years Impact Partners Film Fund has provided millions of dollars in equity money to more than 90 documentaries.

Impact Partners have had multiple documentaires selected for Sundance each year. In 2018, selected titles included *Our New President*, about Trump's Russian supporters, and *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*

## 800 → 10

Between 700 and 800 projects apply for Impact funding each year. From those submissions Cogan and Dreyfous choose 10 to 12 projects to support partially or in full.

## \$100K per member

Members are expected to invest a minimum of \$100,000 of equity money each year in one or more of the selected titles. In many cases members give significantly more money than suggested. Impact's equity investments in a film range anywhere from \$25,000 to \$2.25M. Recently the group decided to fully fund Academy Award® nominees Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering's untitled documentary about sexual assault in Hollywood for seven figures.

## \$5M+

In 2017, Impact spent \$5M+ on various films. Impact-supported films landed record-breaking deal at Sundance — Netflix bought *Icarus* for \$4.6M and Fox Searchlight acquired *Step* for \$4M.

Morfoot, Addie. "Documentary Patrons Impact Partners Make Splashes at Sundance." *Variety*, 17 Jan. 2018, variety.com/2018/film/festivals/documentary-patrons-impact-partners-make-splashes-at-sundance-120266068/.



Some of the films that Impact Partners has funded include:

- American Promise**
- How to Survive a Plague** (nominated for 2013 Academy Award® for Documentary Feature)
- Icarus**
- Kick Like a Girl**
- Lioness**
- Meet the Patels**
- No Impact Man**
- No Man's Land**
- The Cove** (won the 2010 Academy Award® for Documentary Feature)
- The Crash Reel**
- The Hunting Ground**
- Who is Dayani Cristal?**
- Won't You Be My Neighbor?**

"Films." Impact Partners, Impact Partners Film Services LLC, 2019, impactpartnersfilm.com/films.



# Funding the Future

A compelling story is at the core of social impact entertainment, but as **Diana Barrett** explains, to increase its impact a film's production value has to be equal to its subject in terms of quality.

## Diana Barrett

Founder and President, Fledgling Fund



Financing a film is always difficult, especially in the social impact entertainment space.

While it has become easier to make a documentary film, both short form and long form, many films with the potential to really make a difference around an important issue never do so. Our organization exists to increase the chances that a well-made and compelling film has significant outreach potential; that it can move the needle in a strategic and sometimes measurable way.

So far, The Fledgling Fund has supported over 400 films and put \$14 million into the field. Each year, roughly 800 filmmakers apply to Fledgling for outreach funds and we generally consider funding when a film is at the rough cut stage which allows us to assess the quality and potential of the project.

We also maintain an online library of impact resources in the hope of

strengthening the field by sharing knowledge. One of those resources, the Creative Media Dimension of Impact diagram, lays out the five ingredients for SIE and reflects the way we assess applications for funding. By providing a framework for this kind of work, the diagram is one of our most recognizable contributions on this front and is still referred to today.

At the core of social impact entertainment is a compelling story — in essence, the subject of a film. But it's our belief that the production value is just as important as the story, which is part of the reason why, when selecting projects to fund, the first thing we look at is the footage. A film's production value has to be equal to its subject in terms of quality.

Public perception of a subject is also important, which is why awareness is the second rung on our diagram. Social impact films must shine a spotlight on issues that have been neglected and need to be talked about.

We also look for applicants that have proven engagement with outside partners; they need to tell us who they've spoken to and how their film would help to advance that organization's agenda. We also like to know how much money the filmmakers think they need to spend, if a project already has financial backing or not, and where else that backing might be coming from. Time and time again we see that it's the films that have very strong partnerships with NGOs and nonprofits that tend to have the biggest impact.

As we want the films we support to have real-world effect, the outer rings on our diagram explain how social impact work needs to be part of a wider movement in order to create social change. With every film, we consider the subject very carefully and look to see if we can take

### The Sentence

First-time filmmaker Rudy Valdez's *The Sentence* tells the story of his sister Cindy Shank, a mother of three who received a 15-year mandatory sentence for conspiracy charges related to her deceased ex-boyfriend's crimes. The documentary offers a look at the consequences of mandatory minimum sentencing and received critical acclaim when it premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival.

advantage of a tipping point in the issue. We try to find projects that are part of something much larger and could be shown to policymakers, legislators or influential organizations.

In 2008, we funded a film about incarcerated victims of abuse as we knew 13 states were looking at domestic violence legislation. *Sin by Silence* follows five members of the first inmate-initiated group in the US prison system to help abused women speak out and promote a future free from domestic violence. The film shines a light on the women as well as the abuse they suffered, and examines how that abuse contributed to them committing their crimes.

### Sin by Silence

From behind prison walls, *Sin by Silence* reveals the lives of extraordinary women who advocate for a future free from domestic violence inside California's oldest women's prisons.

*Sin by Silence* premiered at the Cleveland International Film Festival in March 2009.

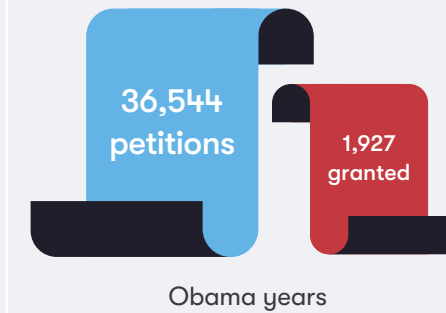
*Sin by Silence* was broadcast on Discovery Channel and reached 2.2 million viewers. We helped provide funding for social impact campaigns in the 13 states considering legislation. In addition to 40 tour events, 427 host-a-screening kits were ordered and there were 258 events hosted on university campuses. In the end, bills that would empower abuse survivors in court were passed in several states. In California, two were even named the "Sin by Silence Bills."

Raising the public's awareness of an issue can have a profound effect. With the documentary *The Sentence* we wanted to highlight the issue of mandatory minimum sentencing, which most Americans don't have a clue about. This documentary tells the story of Cynthia Shank, a woman charged with conspiracy years after she'd failed to report that her then-teenage boyfriend was dealing drugs.

Mandatory minimum sentencing laws dictate that judges must sentence offenders to a minimum, specified amount of time in jail for a specific crime. This meant that Shank — who had since married and had three children —

### Clemency statistics

36,544 petitions were received during the Obama years (2009–2017) and 1,927 were granted.



"Clemency Statistics: Barack Obama." The United States Department of Justice, 2018, [www.justice.gov/pardon/clemency-statistics#obama](http://www.justice.gov/pardon/clemency-statistics#obama).

was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2008. President Obama received 36,000 requests for amnesty during his tenure. Before leaving office, he granted almost 2,000 of these requests, many of which were related to mandatory minimum sentencing. Shank was one of them, and she was released on March 22nd 2017.

Timing is an important factor when

it comes to making an impact. As our application process can take a while, we offer another route for filmmakers who need to get their work out faster. The Rapid Deployment Fund was created in response to our turbulent political climate, so that issues can be addressed more quickly than the normal funding process would allow.

The initiative provides grants of \$2,500 to \$10,000 to support short nonfiction films or other visual stories that can be completed and distributed quickly. Sometimes we're able to supply the money overnight, though it tends to be within two weeks. For these projects we are funding work before it has begun, so we usually only work with experienced filmmakers.

Through our funding, our research, and the other resources that we offer online, we aim to provide the right support at the right time for issues that are poised for action. We believe film is a language, and if you can speak it in front of the right people, it has the power to educate, engage, and mobilize. By nurturing this language and those that speak it well, we hope to see more work have a profound social effect. ■

### Stop the Violence Tour

The Stop the Violence community tour took *Sin by Silence* directly into communities that needed to hear its message.



"Case Study: Sin by Silence." The Fledgling Fund, [www.thefledglingfund.org/impact-resources/sin-by-silence/](http://www.thefledglingfund.org/impact-resources/sin-by-silence/).

### Stop the Violence legislation change

In California, two bills — the Sin by Silence Bills (AB 593 & AB 1593) — were championed by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (D-San Francisco and San Mateo Counties).

The two Sin by Silence Bills were signed into California law in 2012 and became effective in January of 2013.

"Case Study: Sin by Silence." The Fledgling Fund, [www.thefledglingfund.org/impact-resources/sin-by-silence/](http://www.thefledglingfund.org/impact-resources/sin-by-silence/).



### Fledgling's Dimensions of Impact

In an attempt to apply lessons to efforts to measure the impact of their work, The Fledgling Fund has identified "Dimensions of Impact" to use as a framework to assess the projects they fund.

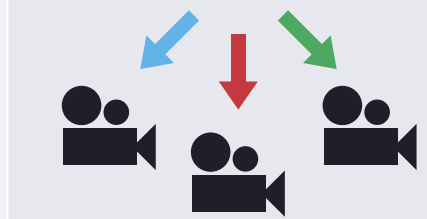


### The Fledgling Fund's Rapid Story Deployment Fund

The Fledgling Fund's Rapid Story Deployment Fund has awarded \$400,000 in grants, across 42 projects, from its inception in 2016, through December 2018.



In 2017, Fledgling Fund provided more than \$420,000 in Outreach and Engagement grant funding, spread across 20 documentary film projects.



"Fledgling Provides Over \$400,000 in Outreach and Engagement Funding in 2017." The Fledgling Fund, 21 Dec. 2017, [www.thefledglingfund.org/fledgling-provides-over-400000-in-outreach-and-engagement-funding-in-2017/](http://www.thefledglingfund.org/fledgling-provides-over-400000-in-outreach-and-engagement-funding-in-2017/).

"Rapid Story Deployment Fund — Highlights and Lessons." The Fledgling Fund, 20 Dec. 2018, [www.thefledglingfund.org/rapid-story-deployment-fund-highlights-and-lessons/](http://www.thefledglingfund.org/rapid-story-deployment-fund-highlights-and-lessons/).



# The Power of Partnerships

For **Sandy Herz** it's clear that the most successful SIE projects bring together multiple stakeholders. What's more, creating lasting change can often mean joining forces with unlikely allies.

## Sandy Herz

Director of Global Partnerships, Skoll Foundation



At its heart, the field of social impact entertainment is a collaborative space.

For our projects to bring about lasting change in the world, we need to join forces with unlikely allies, develop trust, share control, and build toward opportunities for mutual benefit. This is precisely why the most successful SIE projects tend to have multiple funders and stakeholders. Everyone brings something different to the table — from funding, networks and experience, to impact expertise and platforms that reach new audiences — all of which are necessary for success.

As Director of Global Partnerships at the Skoll Foundation, I work to ensure we engage the right partners to drive large-scale social change by investing in, connecting, and celebrating social entrepreneurs solving the world's most pressing problems. We focus on social entrepreneurs because we believe they offer society a new way of operating,

and a chance to fundamentally shift the systems that create and maintain global challenges like climate change and poverty. Our efforts range from funding and convening, to collaborating and storytelling. Partnerships are essential for outsized impact, especially in the social impact entertainment space.

For us, storytelling is a crucial tool for helping audiences see the world not just as it is, but as it could be. In addition to creating our own films about social entrepreneurs, the Skoll Foundation funds storytelling about and in support of social entrepreneurs through a curated network of partners. Each partnership fits roughly into one of three categories, and we like to think of these relationships as forming a funnel-like continuum for social change. These categories are: *raising awareness* around social entrepreneurs and their potential to drive transformative change; *targeted audience engagement* with social entrepreneurs; and *driving impact* on the issues as a result of that engagement.

### **Bending the Arc**

*Bending the Arc* tells the story of Dr. Paul Farmer, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, activist Ophelia Dahl, Todd McCormack, and investor Thomas White and the movement they started in 1980s Haiti that changed global health forever. The group set out to treat people who had been abandoned by the health system, especially those in poor or rural areas. They moved to Peru, then to Rwanda, fighting against deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Against official World Health Organization policy, they treated patients dying of a fatal TB epidemic and consequently became the first doctors to treat patients in a rural setting with full courses of antiretrovirals.

— "About Bending the Arc." *Bending the Arc*, [bendingthearc.com/about/](http://bendingthearc.com/about/).

Our broadcast media partners — like NPR, Public Radio International, BBC, and PBS NewsHour — tend to fit into the first category. These institutions reach millions of people through their reporting, and we support their coverage of social entrepreneurs to create awareness about social entrepreneurs' innovations. Editorial independence is key for journalistic partners, so we focus on the number of stories, the size of the reach, and the demographics of audiences, rather than on specific outcomes. In total, Skoll broadcast

partners have produced more than 100 social entrepreneurship stories in the last year, reaching a global audience of over 50 million.

With film and storytelling organizations like Sundance and Doc Society, the work that emerges often falls into our second and third categories: engagement and impact. With these partners we focus on building storytelling capacity within social entrepreneur organizations and supporting collaborations between individual social entrepreneurs and filmmakers.

The Skoll Foundation has invested approximately \$470 million worldwide, including presenting the Skoll Award to 128 social entrepreneurs and 106 organizations on five continents.



— "Stories Of Change." Sundance Institute, [www.sundance.org/support/storiesofchange](http://www.sundance.org/support/storiesofchange).

For example, our Sundance Stories of Change partnership connects independent storytellers with social entrepreneurs and supports the creation of compelling SIE film and media projects that result from those connections. Since 2008, Sundance has hosted 35 convenings between filmmakers and social entrepreneurs and funded 49 film projects, 29 of which are complete and 14 still in progress. One of Stories of Change's standout successes is the documentary *Open Heart* — a short film about eight Rwandan children with rheumatic heart disease who must fly to Sudan without their parents for high-risk and potentially life-saving surgery. *Open Heart* was nominated for an Academy Award® in 2013, which prompted the Rwandan Minister of Health to make a commitment to eradicate rheumatic heart disease in her country.

*Bending the Arc* — another Stories of Change documentary project — follows the struggles of Boston-based nonprofit Partners In Health as it works against established global health forces to make quality healthcare a human right. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017 and

### **Collisions**

*Collisions* is a VR project that takes place in the remote desert in Western Australia, home of indigenous elder Nyarri Morgan and the Martu tribe. Morgan recounts his profound first contact with Western culture, and the dramatic collision between his traditional world view and the cutting edge of modern technology.

— "The Film." *Collisions*, [www.collisionsvr.com/about-the-film](http://www.collisionsvr.com/about-the-film).

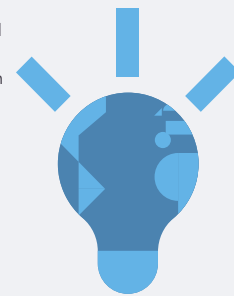
went on to raise more than \$21 million for the organization through targeted screenings across the country.

The Emmy® Award-winning *Collisions* is an example that found success in the policy arena. This VR film follows an indigenous elder of Western Australia's Martu tribe as he recounts his experience witnessing a nuclear test explosion in the 1950s. Director Lynette Wallworth and producer Nicole Newnham premiered the film in 2016 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Sundance Film Festival and the Skoll World Forum.

### **Collisions inspiring change**

*Collisions* has provoked meaningful change on a global level, forcing leaders to reconsider the effect of policies on the environment and health of the earth. Screenings have been held for decision makers at the Trimble Forum for Disarmament in Washington, D.C., the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty meetings in Vienna, the Climate Action Summit in Washington, D.C. and the UN General Assembly meetings in New York. Viewers of this film represent some of the world's major nuclear powers, heads of state, heads of industry, celebrities and more including the President of Argentina and the King of Belgium, cultural leaders including will.i.am, Olafur Eliasson and Yo-Yo Ma, as well as a large number of government ministers.

— "Landmark VR Film COLLISIONS Snags Emmy® for Outstanding New Approaches: Documentary." *Business Wire*, 9 Oct. 2017, [www.businesswire.com/news/home/20171009005251/en/Landmark-VR-Film-COLLISIONS-](http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20171009005251/en/Landmark-VR-Film-COLLISIONS-)



*Collisions* then went on to back rooms in high-level nuclear non-proliferation meetings around the world, culminating with a screening at the UN prior to their historic vote to ban nuclear weapons. It then helped prompt Australian legislators to pass a budget funding healthcare for aboriginal people exposed to nuclear tests in the 50s and 60s.

Having learned the lesson of the power of collaboration, we then joined forces with Just Films/Ford Foundation and Doc Society to launch FlexFund, to support entrepreneurs and filmmakers with existing projects poised for impact. There are now eight FlexFund initiatives

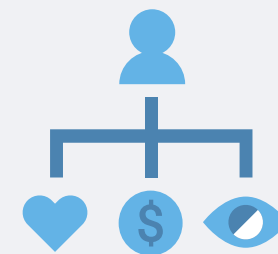
### **Open Heart**

*Open Heart* is the story of eight Rwandan children, afflicted with rheumatic heart disease, who leave their families and embark on a life-or-death journey to the Sudanese hospital, the Salam Center, which is the only facility in Africa capable of high-standard cardiac surgery, free of charge.

— "Skoll | Open Heart." Skoll Foundation, [skoll.org/open-heart/](http://skoll.org/open-heart/).

### **Skoll World Forum**

The Skoll World Forum is an annual three-day-long congregation in Oxford of nearly 1,000 distinguished delegates from the social, finance, private, and public sectors, where they can learn about the latest models for change across a range of issues and engage with leading thinkers and doers on critical questions, challenges, and opportunities in global systems change.



— "Skoll | About the Skoll World Forum." Skoll Foundation, [skoll.org/skoll-world-forum/about/](http://skoll.org/skoll-world-forum/about/).

from common Ford/Skoll grantees who receive financial support, expertise, and connections to ensure the highest likelihood of creating real impact. Illustrative projects include a partnership between Crisis Action, and the acclaimed documentary *Last Men in Aleppo* to protect civilian safety in conflict zones, and the recently launched short documentary *What Counts* that makes the case with Health Leads for addressing social determinants of health, like housing and food.

Our partnerships, our experiences, our successes and our failures have made one thing clear: it's really hard to predict which projects will gain the most traction, and for those that do, it takes everyone pushing together to maximize impact. My advice is to take risks and double-down on momentum when it happens. Not everything will succeed, but if we can recognize the early signs of uptake, collaborate, and commit to impact, we can continue to move the needle on the problems facing us today. ■

### **Open Heart award nominations**



— "Open Heart (2013): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt2348322/awards?ref\\_tt\\_qt\\_op\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2348322/awards?ref_tt_qt_op_1).



# Amplifying Impact

Partnerships are imperative to creating change.

**Wendy Cohen** explains the importance of impact campaigns to making a difference.

**Wendy Cohen**

President of Picture Motion



Independent film is anything but independent. If your goal in making your film is to drive meaningful and memorable change, you're going to need a lot of help and strong partnerships.

You have to find productive and rewarding ways to get the film in front of the community you want to impact. And that's where we come in.

Picture Motion, and companies like us, are known as impact consultants or producers — but I like to think of us as bridge-builders. If you imagine a Venn diagram of the film world and the nonprofit, community-organizing world, we sit right in the middle. We make sure a film has the largest possible audience and makes the greatest possible impact.

We start every project by asking all of the stakeholders — the filmmakers, the

distributors, the partners, the producers — what their impact goals are. Usually, a filmmaker has a sense of the change they want to see happen, whether it is legislation change, behavior change, or changing (sometimes even opening) hearts and minds. At this stage it's also essential to be honest about the campaign's budget and the time we have together, so we can be honest about what we can do. Money isn't always the key to making an impact, but you have to be realistic about the team it takes to bring your ideas to life. Perhaps most important is creating a film, a story, that is high-quality, engaging, and well-told. If the community you're hoping to engage loves your movie, you will likely have a successful campaign.

## Middle of Nowhere

When her husband is sentenced to eight years in prison, Ruby drops out of medical school in order to focus on her husband's well-being while he's incarcerated — leading her on a journey of self-discovery in the process.

Once we have clear goals from the stakeholders, we dive in and learn everything about the issue at hand at this moment in time. We think of ourselves as the experts at finding the experts. We'll make phone calls to the nonprofits, activists, professors — and we do a lot of listening. Who is already working on this issue? Where can the film make the most impact? Who are the people who might think differently if they experience this film? Those phone calls and meetings are the most important part of our job.

This is where we become the bridge-builders, because now we understand the goals and intentions of both sides. We never just ask a partner to promote a film and sell tickets for us; we make sure that we are helping them meet their goals as well. How can the film support their strategy? Can they be involved in the press around the movie? Can they be speakers at events? Can their current initiatives help us answer the question about what audiences can do after they see the film? Partnerships only work when they are mutually beneficial.

Where there was once a fear of

associating a film with an impact campaign, now people are starting to see that it's an opportunity, not a liability. We're getting press outside the review pages — stories about communities using films to create change. It's helping the bottom line at a time when breaking through has never been more difficult. In today's world, your project is competing not just with every film and TV series ever made, but with everything on the internet as well. Through this model of "Impact Distribution," we can demonstrate very specifically that we're bringing audiences directly to your film and driving greater change.

Audiences really are eager to do things much more meaningful than just clicking "like" on Facebook. We know this is true for millennials and Gen Zers in particular. We focus on leaving the audience with something powerful they can do the moment the movie ends.

Middle of Nowhere's social impact campaign linked audiences with ways to petition for an end to predatory prison phone rates. Participant's social impact campaign site features an online petition co-sponsored by the Center for Media Justice, to Federal Communications Commission Chairman Genachowski urging passage of the Wright Petition CC Docket No. 96-128 to regulate the cost of phone calls from prisons and establish benchmark rates no higher than \$0.25 per minute for collect calls.

"Middle Of Nowhere' Social Action to Link Audiences With Ways to Urge an End to Predatory Prison Phone Rates." Participant Media, Oct. 2012, [www.participantmedia.com/2012/10/middle-nowhere-social-action-link-audiences-ways-urge-end-predatory-prison-phone-rates](http://www.participantmedia.com/2012/10/middle-nowhere-social-action-link-audiences-ways-urge-end-predatory-prison-phone-rates).

Lion is a great example of this. The producers came to us very early in their process and asked, "How can this film make a difference in the lives of children who go missing in India?" We created a landscape report by researching and engaged grassroots organizations working on the ground in India and learned what they most need are funds. One of the things we did was put a card at the end of the movie before the credits that said, "Over 80,000 children go missing in India each year. You can

## Lion

Five-year-old Saroo gets lost on a train which takes him thousands of miles across India, away from home and family. Saroo must learn to survive alone in Kolkata, before ultimately being adopted by an Australian couple. Twenty years later, armed with only a handful of memories and a revolutionary technology known as Google Earth, he sets out to find his lost family and return to his first home.

help children — just like Saroo — by supporting extraordinary organizations working directly with children in India. Here's how: [www.lionmovie.com](http://www.lionmovie.com)"

We raised over \$650,000 in donations from audiences who saw the film in theaters and on Netflix alone. That money is going to three grassroots organizations in India to help make railway stations safer for children — because that's where so many go missing. These funds supported 24-hour staffed help desks looking out for missing children, and a new office for India's dedicated hotline for missing kids, with additional volunteers and workers available to answer any calls.

## Lion box office



**Domestic total gross:**  
\$51,738,905

**Foreign total gross:**  
\$88,574,023

**Limited opening weekend:**  
\$123,360

**Wide opening weekend:**  
\$2,073,433

**Widest release:**  
1,802 theaters

**In release:**  
168 days/24 weeks

"Lion." Box Office Mojo, IMDb.com, Inc., [www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lion.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lion.htm).

When I think of some of the projects I'm most proud to have been involved with, I always think of Ava DuVernay's *Middle of Nowhere*, which I worked on during my tenure at Participant Media. This beautiful narrative film is about a resilient woman whose life is turned upside down when her husband is incarcerated. Through the course of my research, I discovered the Campaign for Prison Phone Justice — conceived by Malkia Cyril's Center for Media Justice — which was already in motion trying to

See-Saw Films partnered with The Charity Network to launch #LionHeart, which provided financial support to the 11M+ children who live on the streets of India. The many nonprofit organizations that #LionHeart supported included Railway Children, a charity that works with kids living on the streets and railway stations to prevent them from being exploited or abused.

— Lang, Brent. "'Lion' Launches Social Impact Campaign to Help Children in India (EXCLUSIVE)." *Variety*, 22 Nov. 2016, [variety.com/2016/film/news/lion-heart-campaign-india-1201924715/](http://variety.com/2016/film/news/lion-heart-campaign-india-1201924715/).



## Middle of Nowhere awards



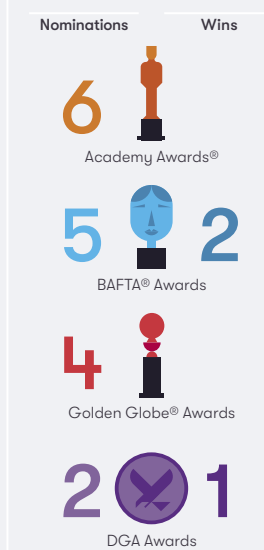
"Middle of Nowhere (2012): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt1371834/awards?ref=tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1371834/awards?ref=tt_awd).

end predatory fees on prison phone calls. In many cases, these fees were forcing families to choose between speaking to their loved ones and purchasing essentials like buying groceries.

So, instead of creating our own social impact campaign, we joined forces with the Phone Justice initiative already underway. We arranged for Ava to speak at private screenings for commissioners at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and we joined the Center for Media Justice at Capitol Hill to use the film to galvanize politicians into taking action around the issue. Ultimately, this combined pressure led to the FCC capping phone rates and fees. It was a perfect example of how a film can play a specific role in accelerating change.

It's important to remember that change doesn't happen in isolation. And this is why we believe the earlier you can share your film and form these partnerships, the better. You might have a clear vision for the impact you want to have, but more often than not, it's only with the support of the right partners that you'll be able to achieve it. ■

## Lion awards



"Lion (2016): Awards." IMDb, 2019, [www.imdb.com/title/tt1371834/awards?ref=tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1371834/awards?ref=tt_awd).



# Convenings Calendar

The SIE landscape is vast and ever changing. As we built this report, we began the process of putting together a list of convenings within the social impact entertainment space. The following calendar is only a preliminary snapshot of events and meant to be a jumping off point for anyone looking to connect with others within the entertainment industry for whom social change is the primary concern. To help us build this further or correct anything we may have missed, visit [www.thestateofsie.com](http://www.thestateofsie.com)

## January 2019

January 24 – February 3, 2019

### Sundance Film Festival

Sundance Institute, Park City, UT  
[sundance.org/festivals/sundance-film-festival](http://sundance.org/festivals/sundance-film-festival)

January 25–31, 2019

### Slamdance Film Festival

Slamdance, Park City, UT  
[showcase.slamdance.com/film-festival](http://showcase.slamdance.com/film-festival)

## February 2019

February 5–8, 2019

### Frank

University of Florida, Gainesville, FL  
[frank.jou.ufl.edu](http://frank.jou.ufl.edu)

February 6–8, 2019

### MAKERS Conference

MAKERS, Southern CA  
[makers.com/conference](http://makers.com/conference)

February 7–17, 2019

### Berlin International Film Festival

Berlinale, Berlin, Germany  
[berlinale.de/en/HomePage.html](http://berlinale.de/en/HomePage.html)

February 28 – March 3, 2019

### True/False Film Fest

True/False, Columbia, MO  
[truefalse.org](http://truefalse.org)

## March 2019

March 1–2, 2019

### Story Movements

American University Center for Media & Social Impact, Washington, D.C.  
[cmsimpact.org/event/story-movements-2019](http://cmsimpact.org/event/story-movements-2019)

March 8, 2019

### Spark Change Summit

The Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment, Creative Visions and Participant Media, Los Angeles, CA  
[sparkchangesummit.com](http://sparkchangesummit.com)

March 8–13, 2019

### SXSW Social and Global Impact Track

SXSW, Austin, TX  
[sxsw.com/conference/social-and-global-impact](http://sxsw.com/conference/social-and-global-impact)

March 12, 2019

### Good Pitch Local

Doc Society, Karnataka, India  
[goodpitch.org/events/gplka18](http://goodpitch.org/events/gplka18)

March 15–21, 2019

### Socially Relevant Film Festival

Socially Relevant Film Festival, New York, NY  
[ratedsrfilms.org](http://ratedsrfilms.org)

March 20–31, 2019

### CPH: DOX

Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival, Copenhagen, Denmark  
[cphdox.dk/en/](http://cphdox.dk/en/)

## April 2019

April 4–14, 2019

### It's All True International Documentary Film Festival

Government of the State of São Paulo and Itaú Ministry of Culture, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
[etudoverdade.com.br/en/home](http://etudoverdade.com.br/en/home)

April 9–12, 2019

### Skoll World Forum

The Skoll Foundation, Oxford, England  
[skoll.org/skoll-world-forum](http://skoll.org/skoll-world-forum)

April 15–19, 2019

### TED Conference

TED, Vancouver, Canada  
[ted2019.ted.com/?ted-conf](http://ted2019.ted.com/?ted-conf)

April 25 – May 5, 2019

### Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival

Hot Docs, Toronto, Canada  
[hotdocs.ca/p](http://hotdocs.ca/p)

April 29 – May 2, 2019

### Milken Institute Global Conference

Milken Institute, Los Angeles, CA  
[milkeninstitute.org/events/conferences/global-conference/2019](http://milkeninstitute.org/events/conferences/global-conference/2019)

## May 2019

May, 2019

### Webby Awards

International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, New York, NY  
[webbyawards.com](http://webbyawards.com)

May 4, 2019

### GLAAD Media Awards

GLAAD, New York, NY  
[glaad.org/mediaawards/events](http://glaad.org/mediaawards/events)

May 14–25, 2019

### Cannes Film Festival

Festival de Cannes, France  
[festival-cannes.com/en](http://festival-cannes.com/en)

May 29–30, 2019

### Environmental Media Association Impact Summit

Environmental Media Association, Los Angeles, CA  
[green+ema.org/impact2019](http://green+ema.org/impact2019)

## June 2019

June, 2019

### SmartPhilm Fest

SmartPhilm, Washington, D.C.  
[smartphilm.com](http://smartphilm.com)

June 6–11, 2019

### Sheffield Doc/Fest

Sheffield Doc/Fest, Sheffield, England  
[sheffdocfest.com](http://sheffdocfest.com)

June 9–16, 2019

### Encounters Film Festival

Encounters, Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa  
[encounters.co.za](http://encounters.co.za)

June 17–19, 2019

### Games for Change Festival

Games for Change, New York, NY  
[festival.gamesforchange.org](http://festival.gamesforchange.org)

June 19–23, 2019

### AFI Docs

American Film Institute, Washington, D.C.  
[afi.com/afidocs/default.aspx](http://afi.com/afidocs/default.aspx)

June 20–29, 2019

### Aspen Ideas Festival

The Aspen Institute & *The Atlantic*, Aspen, CO  
[aspenideas.org](http://aspenideas.org)

## September 2019

September, 2019

### Mashable Social Good Summit

Mashable, New York, NY  
[mashable.com/sgs/](http://mashable.com/sgs/)

September, 2019

### Media for Social Impact Summit

PUBLIC, New York, NY  
[pvblic.org/mediaforsocialimpact](http://pvblic.org/mediaforsocialimpact)

September 5, 2019

### Good Pitch Indonesia

Doc Society, Jakarta, Indonesia  
[goodpitch.org/events/gpid19](http://goodpitch.org/events/gpid19)

September 21–27, 2019

### Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival & Conservation Summit

Jackson Hole Wild, Jackson Hole, WY  
[jhfestival.org](http://jhfestival.org)

## October 2019

October, 2019

### BFI London Film Festival

British Film Institute, London, England  
[whatson.bfi.org.uk/lff/Online/default.asp](http://whatson.bfi.org.uk/lff/Online/default.asp)

October, 2019

### Fast Company Innovation Festival

Fast Company, New York, NY  
[events.festival.fastcompany.com](http://events.festival.fastcompany.com)

October, 2019

### Social Justice Film Festival

Social Justice Film Festival, Seattle, WA  
[socialjusticefilmfestival.org](http://socialjusticefilmfestival.org)

October, 2019

### Women in Entertainment Annual Summit

Women in Entertainment, Los Angeles, CA  
[womeninentertainment.com/summit](http://womeninentertainment.com/summit)

October 2–3, 2019

### Future of StoryTelling Summit

Future of StoryTelling, New York, NY  
[futureofstorytelling.org/summit](http://futureofstorytelling.org/summit)

October 9–13, 2019

### Reelworld Film Festival

Reelworld, Toronto, Canada  
[reelworld.ca](http://reelworld.ca)

## November 2019

November, 2019

### AFI Fest

American Film Institute, Los Angeles, CA  
[afi.com/afifest/default.aspx](http://afi.com/afifest/default.aspx)

November, 2019

### Variety Inclusion Summit

Variety, Los Angeles, CA  
[events.variety.com](http://events.variety.com)

November 20 – December 1, 2019

### IDFA

International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), Amsterdam, Netherlands  
[idfa.nl/en/](http://idfa.nl/en/)

## December 2019

December, 2019

### IDA Documentary Awards

International Documentary Association, Los Angeles, CA  
[documentary.org/awards2018](http://documentary.org/awards2018)

## Other notable events

### Agents of Change Summit

Agents of Change, San Diego, CA  
[agentsofchangesummit.com](http://agentsofchangesummit.com)

### Define American Film Festival

Define American, TBD  
[defineamerican.com/filmfest](http://defineamerican.com/filmfest)

### ForbesLive Events

Forbes, Various Cities Worldwide  
[forbes.com/forbes-live/about-forbeslive](http://forbes.com/forbes-live/about-forbeslive)

### Getting Real

International Documentary Association, Los Angeles, CA  
[documentary.org/gettingreal18](http://documentary.org/gettingreal18)

### Human Rights Watch Film Festival

Humans Rights Watch, Various Cities Worldwide  
[ff.hrw.org](http://ff.hrw.org)

### Media Impact Forum

Media Impact Funders, TBD  
[mediaimpactfunders.org/events](http://mediaimpactfunders.org/events)

### TEDWomen

TED, TBD  
[ted.com/attend/conferences/special-events/tedwomen](http://ted.com/attend/conferences/special-events/tedwomen)



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The Skoll Center for SIE at UCLA TFT serves to advance the role of entertainment and performing arts to inspire and drive social change. Its mission is to establish, define and foster the new field of social impact entertainment, and serve as a resource for students, practitioners, and organizations in this emerging ecosystem.

To explore the digital version of the report (complete with interactive map), find out more about our work and hear about upcoming events visit [www.thestateofsie.com](http://www.thestateofsie.com)



