

THE FIRST STEP

a film by Brandon and Lance Kramer



Official Selection — Tribeca Film Festival 2021
Official Selection — AFI DOCS Film Festival 2021
Official Selection — Woods Hole Film Festival 2021
Official Selection — Bentonville Film Festival 2021
Official Selection — Detroit Free Press FREEP Film Festival 2021
Official Selection — Nashville Film Festival 2021



2021, USA, 89 minutes

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THE FIRST STEP / SYNOPSIS



Logline:

In a divided America, Van Jones attempts to bring people together to pass a landmark criminal justice bill — and finds himself under fire from all sides.

Synopsis (BLURB - 75 words):

In a divided America, Van Jones controversially works across party lines on landmark criminal justice reform and a more humane response to the addiction crisis. Attempting to be a bridge builder in a time of extreme polarization takes him deep into the inner workings of a divisive administration, internal debates within both parties, and the lives of frontline activists fighting for their communities.

Synopsis (SHORT VERSION - 250 words):

In 2016, as the progressive left prepares to fight newly elected President Donald Trump on every front, a presidential adviser makes a surprise announcement. Jared Kushner — whose father once served time in federal prison — wants to pursue criminal justice reform as a major Trump administration priority.

This unexpected development creates a dilemma for TV host Van Jones — who has worked for 25 years to fix the criminal justice system.

Should he refuse to associate with the Trump administration? Or help free unjustly imprisoned people — but, in the process, possibly bolster an administration whose policies he otherwise bitterly opposes?

Jones makes his choice. Van and his team set out to help pass landmark legislation that would fix some broken aspects of the justice system — and bring thousands of incarcerated people home early. Simultaneously, Jones mobilizes community leaders in rural West Virginia and urban South LA to fight together for humane treatment — not incarceration — for communities devastated by addiction.

While trying to pass a bipartisan bill through a polarized Congress, Jones is condemned by the right for his progressive beliefs — and by the left for working with conservatives. The film reveals an intimate portrait of an activist's isolation and internal struggles as he fights to make change in a divided nation, and everyday people in both political parties drawn into a historic fight for freedom and justice.

Synopsis (LONG VERSION- 500 words):

In 2016, Donald Trump's upset presidential victory leaves the country deeply divided. The progressive left prepares to fight Trump on every front. But then a presidential adviser makes a surprise announcement. Jared Kushner — whose father once served time in federal prison — wants to pursue prison reform as a major Trump administration priority.

This unexpected development creates a dilemma for TV host and activist Van Jones — who has worked for 25 years to fix the criminal justice system. Should he refuse on principle to associate himself with the Trump administration — or should he do all he can to free thousands of unjustly imprisoned human beings — but, in the process, possibly bolster an administration whose policies he otherwise bitterly opposes?

Jones makes his choice. Jones and his team set out to help pass a landmark bill that would fix some broken aspects of the justice system — and bring thousands of incarcerated people home early. At the same time, Jones mobilizes community leaders in rural West Virginia and urban South LA to fight together to ensure humane treatment — and not incarceration — for communities devastated by addiction.

Facing fierce opposition from both political parties in a climate where bipartisanship has become a dirty word, Jones and his team enlist the aid of formerly-incarcerated individuals, faith leaders, grassroots activists and cultural figures — including Kim Kardashian West. The bill's champions immediately find themselves navigating a high-stakes game of political chess in Washington, D.C. Their quest brings them face-to-face with progressive champions like the U.S. Senators Kamala Harris and Bernie Sanders, as well as conservative icons like the U.S. Senator Rand Paul, Kellyanne Conway — and ultimately, Donald Trump himself.

While trying to pass the bill through a polarized Congress, Jones is thrust into the center of a national debate about whether to engage or “resist” Trump. He is condemned by the right for his progressive beliefs — and by the left for working with conservatives. The film reveals an intimate portrait of an activist's isolation and internal struggles as he fights to make change in a divided nation, and everyday people in both political parties drawn into a historic fight for freedom and justice.

THE FIRST STEP is an independent production of Meridian Hill Pictures (CITY OF TREES, PBS, Netflix 2016) and Magic Labs Media, in association with legendary filmmakers at Kartemquin Films (MINDING THE GAP, Hulu, 2019 Oscar Nomination) and Big Mouth Productions (DICK JOHNSON IS DEAD, Netflix 2020) and the editorial talent behind KING IN THE WILDERNESS (HBO, Sundance 2018) and BIRTH OF THE COOL (PBS, Sundance 2019).

THE FIRST STEP / AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS



WORLD PREMIERE

- Tribeca Film Festival (2021)

AWARDS

- Best Documentary Feature - Bozeman International Film Festival (2021)
- Audience Choice - Best Documentary Feature - Boston GLOBEDOCS (2021)

OFFICIAL SELECTIONS - US FILM FESTIVALS

- AFI DOCS (2021)
- Bentonville Film Festival - Spotlight (2021)
- Woods Hole Film Festival (2021)
- Bozeman International Film Festival - Closing Night (2021)
- Mammoth Lakes Film Festival - Closing Night (2021)
- Detroit Free Press FREEP Film Festival (2021)
- Nashville Film Festival (2021)
- Big Eddy Film Festival - Opening Night (2021)
- Berkeley Springs Film Festival (2021)
- Chesapeake Film Festival (2021)
- Tucson Film & Music Festival (2021)
- Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival (2021)
- Dallas International Film Festival - Opening Night (2021)
- Heartland Film Festival (2021)
- Boston Globe GLOBEDOCS Film Festival (2021)
- Tallgrass Film Festival (2021)
- United Nations Association Film Festival (2021)
- Virginia Film Festival (2021)
- Denver Film Festival (2021)
- St. Louis International Film Festival (2021)
- Hawaii International Film Festival (2021)
- Lone Star Film Festival (2021)
- Lake County Film Festival (2021)
- Central Scotland Documentary Film Festival (2021)

THE FIRST STEP / DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



I have lived in the DC area my whole life and heard the refrains: “nothing ever really gets done in Washington” and “working across the aisle is a nice idea but impossible in practice.” But the reasons why always seemed opaque to me. When Donald Trump was elected president, the escalating divisions in the country seemed to only further close the door to any possibility for progress. As an observational filmmaker dedicated to telling intimate stories around social leaders and movements, I felt drawn to making a film that dove into the complexities around a leader attempting to bridge political, racial and geographic divides during this moment.

In a conversation over breakfast shortly after Trump’s inauguration, activist and political commentator Van Jones shared with me his intentions to spend the next four years doing everything he could to make progress on criminal justice reform and addiction. I had known Van for many years, and he had a compelling theory of change in this moment: common pain could lead to common purpose. Van was prepared to take major risks by breaking ranks from other progressives to work with Republicans while they were in power. It was clear he was prepared to take a controversial path on these issues in a polarized time.

Van’s imminent political — and personal — quest felt compelling, urgent, uncertain and perhaps perilous. I wondered: *What does it look like to try to work across the aisle at such a deeply divided time? Can something be accomplished? What are the consequences?*

A story about Van’s attempt to engage one of the most divisive administrations in history — especially on issues as contentious as criminal justice and addiction — could start to untangle some of the myths of bridge building and illuminate why so few people take this path. I knew we could only do the story justice if we could capture Van and his team’s journey honestly, with nuance, integrity, and intimacy, and with all sides represented fully and fairly (including Van’s critics). As a media figure, Van constantly had cameras around him, but I wanted to introduce *our* camera as something different. When the other cameras turned off, we would still roll. I tried to always be transparent about my intentions and process. He did the same about his own actions. The transparency and trust allowed me to capture difficult moments in Van’s work and personal life. I continuously reminded Van that I wasn’t trying to pursue “gotcha” journalism, but I also wasn’t going to gloss over the hard moments either. I wanted to register his humanity and points of struggles respectfully and truthfully. I also tried to carry this same ethic and form into the relationships we built along the way, especially with the ten community leaders featured in the film from West Virginia and Los Angeles and leading activists on the Left who opposed Van’s strategy. By building this level of trust and humanizing all stakeholders, we opened a window to the complexity of different on-the-ground movements, as well as the legislative process playing out in D.C.

This was an extremely hard movie to make. There were many aspects of Van's experience and other participants that I could never fully understand — Black communities in South Los Angeles *and* white, rural communities in West Virginia; conservatives *and* progressives in Congress; leaders in Black Lives Matter *and* the American Conservative Union. I had a responsibility to continuously build my own understanding and work closely with a diverse team. We needed to connect with the life experiences we were trying to represent, and also confront our blind spots, misunderstandings, and prejudices. We not only had to build a team of extremely talented cinematographers, sound recordists, editors, and story consultants with strong artistry and ethics who could capture the story from many different perspectives, but also political consultants and field producers who helped us navigate access to capturing raw, behind-the-scenes moments with political leaders, inside prisons, Congress, and even the Trump White House.

In many of these places, the people we encountered were skeptical of cameras, as the media has historically looked down on, ignored, or distorted their communities, or the media is just never allowed access. Walking into the office of the Sheriff of McDowell County, West Virginia, there was a sign that read: "the media doesn't define us." Similarly, all doors were initially closed to our cameras from the Trump White House and political leaders. I had to build trust over time without a camera in order to gain a level of access where our cameras could be a fly on the wall as deeply sensitive conversations occurred in grassroots and political spaces. With time, patience, and persistence, we were able to gain the trust that was needed to create an intimate documentary that could humanize the political process.

Three threads felt critical to tell this story: Van's personal journey, his political work across the aisle to pass a criminal justice reform bill, and his grassroots work to bring people together around the addiction crisis. The intersection of these people and experiences is what I found captivating. In the field and in the edit, the biggest challenge was how to weaving all three threads together without smoothing over the complexities. This led to an involved two year edit, collaborating with incredible mentors like Lewis Erskine, Carol Dysinger, Gordon Quinn and Katy Chevigny. We continuously workshopped the structure to realize a singular film. While the film has a central protagonist and point of view (Van), it also felt essential to represent other activists and leaders with clarity and depth — including the people who opposed Van's strategy and actions. My hope is that audiences can find newfound understanding and connection with people whose perspectives are different from their own.

This film is not narrowly intended for just people who agree with Van. The film exists to create meaningful conversation around the opportunities and limitations of bridge building. I want audiences to walk away from this film with a new understanding of why trying to work across the aisle is so difficult, but also perhaps necessary.

The four years of the Trump administration were a deeply painful time for our country. I realize many people — especially on the left — may just want to move on. But it is critical to look back in order to move forward. The divisions remain and Trump is still the de facto leader of the Republican party. This story is not a time capsule of the distant past. I think an honest look back at this attempt at making change during this administration — successes, failures, all of it — can help equip ourselves to work through the next four, eight, twenty years ahead. Van and others' experiences during this time can be instructive in figuring out how we move forward, whether you agree or disagree with the strategy. The film (nor myself or Van) have all the solutions to these problems. However, films can provide a space for meaningful reflection and discussion as we urgently confront how to work together in this moment to preserve and strengthen our democracy.

THE FIRST STEP / STATEMENT FROM VAN JONES



This is a film about impossible things. After all, it is next to impossible to pass meaningful federal legislation -- especially on a hot-button, racialized issue like criminal justice reform. But we did it.

It is also nearly impossible for conservative, rural leaders to join forces with progressive, urban leaders -- for any reason at all. But in this film, they came together.

It is almost impossible to capture on film the roller coaster process by which a controversial bill actually becomes a law. It is even harder to transform that footage into a powerful, authentic and moving documentary. But the Kramer Brothers and their team got it done.

After Trump's election, I had to make the toughest choice of my professional career. I had worked for most of my adult life to fix the criminal justice system. During the Obama administration, at long last, we had begun to make bipartisan headway -- with both parties finally expressing concern about the system's most punitive and draconian laws. But Trump initially was no fan of justice reform. He just as easily could have launched a "tough on crime" prison building boom -- and rendered justice reform as partisan and polarizing as health care reform or climate solutions. To prevent that outcome, I joined forces with Jared Kushner, whose father had gone to prison. And we not only passed the First Step Act -- we kept the issue of justice reform so bipartisan that everyone from Bernie Sanders to Joe Biden to Donald Trump ran for office as champions of fixing the system.

Along the way, my team and I came under fire from both sides of the aisle. My organization lost donors and supporters. I lost friends and my brief standing as a darling of the progressive community. But the pain was worth it. Nearly 20,000 people have come home from federal prison early, thanks to that one bill. Some people -- especially those sent away for unconscionably-long crack cocaine offenses -- would never have come home.

It was important to let the Kramer Brothers film everything we were doing. Win, lose or draw -- we knew that we were in a moment of history that needed to be documented. And we knew that there would be lessons for all sides, no matter the outcome.

I am proud that the film shows all of my faults, flaws, mistakes and shortcomings. I am proud that it shows my many critics and detractors in a fair light. I am also proud that nobody in the film comes out looking terrible (except maybe Sen. Tom Cotton, but hey -- what can you do?). I think this doc represents a breakthrough, in that regard. The antagonist is really the status quo -- mainly the partisan interests and toxic political culture that make change so difficult. That was our real enemy. People think it's impossible to tell authentic stories about American politics without tearing down one side, to lift up another side. But this film shows you don't have to do that. Both as a law and as a movie -- THE FIRST STEP proves that much more is possible than most of us dare to believe.

THE FIRST STEP / PROTAGONISTS

Van Jones is a media personality, an entrepreneur and change maker — who has dedicated his career to bringing people together in clean energy solutions, criminal justice reform and racial inclusion in the tech sector. In 2007, Van was the primary champion of the Green Jobs Act, signed into law by George W. Bush. In 2009, he worked in the Obama White House as the Special Advisor for Green Jobs. Over the past 25 years, Van has founded and led social enterprises including REFORM Alliance, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Color of Change, Green For All and the Dream Corps. He worked with Prince to launch #YesWeCode (now called Dream Corps TECH) to get jobs in the tech sector for low-opportunity young people. Van is also a CNN host, an Emmy Award-winning producer and a 3X New York Times best-selling author.

Also Featuring: Jared Kushner, Senator Bernie Sanders, Senator Cory Booker, Senator Kamala Harris, Senator Shelly Capito, Senator Rand Paul, Senator Mike Lee, Congresswoman Karen Bass, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, Patrisse Cullors, Charlemagne Tha God, Karen Hunter, Kim Kardashian West, and Donald Trump





Louis L. Reed

Organized a national grassroots network of reform activists after serving 14 years in federal prison

Jessica Jackson

A passionate civil rights attorney who joined the reform movement after her husband was jailed for a drug felony

Virgie Walker

Leads People Coordinated Services of South Los Angeles

Pete White

An activist and organizer who has served as director of [LA Community Action Network](#) on Skid Row for 25 years

Tylo James

A former organizer at Community Coalition and native of South Los Angeles who was born addicted to heroin

Fabian Debora

An Latinx artist in South Los Angeles who runs the art therapy program at [Homeboy Industries](#)

Noreen McClendon

[Leads Concerned Citizens of South Los Angeles](#), which operates real estate and provides low income housing

Douglas Copenhaver

A native West Virginian and construction worker, who serves as the president of the [Berkeley County Council](#)

Martin West

A native West Virginian and former laid-off coal miner-turned elected law enforcement official

Dee Pierce

Co-founder of Bikers Against Heroin

William Thompson

Presiding judge of Boone County Drug Court

Rhonda Edmunds

Co-founder of [Lily's Place](#), a neonatal abstinence syndrome center



THE FIRST STEP / TIMELINE OF THE BILL

May 2018: House Passed Bill, Faced Senate Opposition Over Sentencing Reforms. "The House overwhelmingly passed legislation on criminal justice Tuesday, advancing an effort to reshape federal prisons that has the backing of the Trump administration.

But after months of deliberation, a White House endorsement and a bipartisan floor vote, the First Step Act has hit a road block in the Senate, due in large part to the bill's focus on prison policy without targeting mandatory federal sentencing rules. The controversy over the lack of sentencing reform in the bill has underscored sharp divisions among Democrats and other advocates of sweeping criminal justice reform.

Republicans who control the Senate indicate a vote is not likely there any time soon. Instead, Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican, is continuing to push for the bipartisan legislation he wrote with Illinois Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin that includes sentencing reforms that the White House are opposed to. ...

The House legislation is co-sponsored by New York Democratic Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, and its companion legislation in the Senate has the support of Rhode Island Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, who also supported the comprehensive approach.

Jeffries, speaking to reporters on Monday, said while he supported sentencing reform, the position of the Trump administration made it clear only the prisons legislation could be signed into law.

"Once we do our job and pass the First Step Act, then it will fall upon the Senate to evaluate what legislation can actually pass that chamber and be sent to the President's desk," Jeffries said ahead of the vote. "It's clear that the First Step act is the bill that the White House supports and can be signed into law.'" [CNN, 5/23/18]

May 2018: Senators Pushed Sentencing Reform. "Supporters of a federal criminal justice system overhaul seemed well on their way to victory after legislation breezed through the House last week on an impressive bipartisan vote. It has strong Trump administration backing, including the imprimatur of Jared Kushner, the presidential adviser and son-in-law who is eager for a progressive policy win, as well as important friends in the Senate. There is just one problem: Senior Senate authors of a long-stalled but much more comprehensive criminal justice package are steadfastly opposed to the alternative plan. They consider it an insufficient half-measure for its focus on prison programs without changes in federal sentencing laws. And they have the clout -- and perhaps the votes -- to stall it, if not block it altogether.

In a private huddle on Wednesday on the Senate floor, a group of senators corralled Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the majority leader, and asked for time for a last-ditch negotiation to try to find an acceptable compromise. Quite rightly, backers of changes in mandatory minimum laws fear that this may be the only chance for years to push a major criminal justice measure through Congress and that sentencing revisions -- a more politically difficult lift -- will languish if legislation aimed at reducing prison recidivism becomes law on its own.

'You don't get many opportunities around here to do anything meaningful or substantive,' said Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois and a chief author of the sentencing provisions. 'Let's not waste this one. Let's get this right.'

Mr. Durbin has a powerful ally in Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Mr. Grassley came around slowly to sentencing changes, but once he got on board, he has been committed. He warned again last week that no criminal justice measure can pass the Senate without new flexibility in mandatory minimum sentences." [New York Times, 5/27/18]

Aug 2018: White House Did Not Support Sentencing Reform. "The White House has been focusing its criminal justice reform efforts on improving re-entry, rehabilitation and workforce training programs, instead of sentencing reform, which many advocates argue would make a bigger difference. Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and adviser, has been leading the effort, which has included lobbying Congress to pass a bill called the First Step Act. The House passed the bill in May." [Associated Press, 8/1/18]

Aug 2018: Trump Indicated Would Support Sentencing Reform After Midterms. "Senator Charles E. Grassley of Iowa said on Thursday that President Trump had committed to supporting a rewrite of the nation's federal sentencing laws after November's elections, breathing life into a long-stalled priority that has united an unlikely coalition of conservatives, libertarians and liberals.

"He is very satisfied to have this thing come up after the election," Mr. Grassley, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said minutes after ending a phone call with Mr. Trump and his son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, who has helped push for the changes.

Mr. Grassley said that he and Mr. Kushner had earlier had a "very positive meeting" with Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the majority leader, who signaled he was willing to allow a vote on the legislation during the Senate's lame-duck session this fall if the bill could draw sufficient support from Republicans." [[New York Times](#), 8/23/18]

Sept 2018: Kim Kardashian West Lobbied for Senate Bill. "Kim Kardashian West arrived at the White House on Wednesday to discuss sentencing reform and clemency issues with White House officials, two White House officials told CNN. ...

The FIRST STEP Act, a bill aimed at criminal justice reform, passed the House earlier this year, but stalled in the Senate due to differences on sentencing reform.

Progress has been made, Sloan said, because Trump has now "given a thumbs-up to sentencing reform" after meetings with governors, pastors and formerly incarcerated advocates.

"I think there's a very strong commitment from the White House to improve the clemency process," she said, praising the "very dedicated group of staffers led by Jared Kushner," whom she described as "one of the most persistent and passionate advocates for criminal justice reform."

The bill has White House backing, and as passed by the House earlier this year, it focused on reforming federal prisons without addressing sentencing policy. Wednesday's event marked the latest overture from supporters of the bill and the White House for interest in passing the bill, but a clear timetable to passage has yet to materialize." [CNN, 9/5/18]

Nov 2018: Sessions Resigns. "Attorney General Jeff Sessions resigned on Wednesday at President Trump's request, ending the tenure of a beleaguered loyalist whose relationship with the president was ruined when Sessions recused himself from control of the investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign." [[Washington Post](#), 11/7/18]

Nov 2018: Senate Released Their Version With Sentencing Reform Included. "Senators released the text of a compromise bill that would overhaul parts of the federal criminal justice system on Thursday, setting the stage for an attempt at passage in the lame duck session.

President Donald Trump endorsed the legislation, known as the First Step Act, at a White House event on Wednesday along with leading congressional Republicans on the bill and other supporters. Trump's endorsement marked the furthest step yet he has taken following his call in his State of the Union speech for revisions to the federal prison system. ...

The First Step Act, in its previous iteration, passed the House in May by an overwhelming margin following changes put in place by its sponsors, GOP Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia and Democratic Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York. Its passage was heralded by Trump's son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner, who has emerged as the highest-profile criminal justice overhaul proponent in the administration. Its Senate companion, sponsored by GOP Sen. John Cornyn of Texas and Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, faced staunch opposition in the Senate Judiciary Committee, led by GOP Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, who has become a key advocate for some sentencing revisions. After the bill passed the House, Grassley and other sentencing overhaul proponents continued to press for more comprehensive legislation.

The bill would implement changes to the federal prison system, including increasing access and incentives for some prisoners to participate in programs aimed at decreasing their chances of returning to prison after release, and revise some federal sentencing provisions, including reducing mandatory minimum sentences." [CNN, 11/16/18]

Nov 2018: Trump Backed Senate Bill. "President Trump threw his support behind a substantial revision of the nation's prison and sentencing laws on Wednesday, opening a potential path to enacting the most significant changes to the criminal justice system in a generation. The tentative legislative package, developed by a bipartisan group of senators and called the First Step Act, builds on a prison overhaul bill already passed overwhelmingly by the House by adding changes that would begin to unwind some of the tough-on-crime federal policies of the 1980s and 1990s that incarcerated African-American offenders at much higher rates than white offenders. Combining new funding for anti-recidivism programs, the expansion of early-release credits for prisoners and the reduction of certain mandatory minimum sentences, the compromise bill would help shape the experiences of tens of thousands of current inmates and future offenders." [[New York Times](#), 11/14/18]

Dec 2018: Trump Signed Bill. "President Donald Trump on Friday gave Cory Booker his top legislative priority, signing the first step toward overhauling America's criminal justice system. The First Step Act was pushed over the finish line by Trump, his son-in-law Jared Kushner, a bevy of liberal and conservative interest groups and a bipartisan group of federal lawmakers, some of whom watched the president sign the bill." [[Star-Ledger](#), 12/22/18]

THE FIRST STEP / FILMMAKING TEAM

The film is independently produced by Meridian Hill Pictures and Magic Labs Media (CITY OF TREES, PBS 2016), in association with legendary filmmakers at Kartemquin Films (MINDING THE GAP, Hulu, 2019 Oscar Nomination) and Big Mouth Productions (DICK JOHNSON IS DEAD, Netflix 2020) and the editorial talent behind KING IN THE WILDERNESS (HBO, Sundance 2018), BIRTH OF THE COOL (PBS, Sundance 2019) and LEARNING TO SKATEBOARD IN A WARZONE (IF YOU'RE A GIRL) (Oscar 2020).

[BRANDON KRAMER](#) - director

Brandon is a Washington, DC-based filmmaker and co-founder of [Meridian Hill Pictures](#). Brandon directed [CITY OF TREES](#) (Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, national broadcast on PBS' America Reframed, Netflix); and the Webby Award-winning independent documentary series [THE MESSY TRUTH](#). Brandon won Best Director at the 2016 Chesapeake Film Festival and Indie Capital Awards, received the Audience Choice Award at the 2015 American Conservation Film Festival and was a 2015 DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities Individual Arts Fellow. Brandon has directed [over 30 short documentaries](#) commissioned by public agencies and nonprofits including AARP and US Institute of Peace. Before starting MHP, Brandon served as a teaching artist for the John F. Kennedy Center's national media education program. Brandon holds a bachelor's degree in film and cultural anthropology from Boston University.

[LANCE KRAMER](#) - producer

Lance is a Washington, DC-based filmmaker and co-founder of Meridian Hill Pictures. Lance produced [CITY OF TREES](#) (Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, national broadcast on PBS' America Reframed, Netflix) and the Webby Award-winning independent documentary series [THE MESSY TRUTH](#). Lance was invited to attend the Sundance Creative Producers Summit in 2018 and was selected to the 2017 [Impact Partners Documentary Producers Fellowship](#) cohort. Lance was awarded an Individual Arts Fellow by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities three times between 2014-2020, and in 2014, Lance received the prestigious DC Mayor's Arts Award, the highest honor bestowed upon working artists in the city. Lance has served two terms as Board Member of Docs in Progress, and has been an active member of the Documentary Producers Alliance since 2016, where he served as a member of the drafting committee for the new *Guidelines for the Documentary Waterfall*. Lance holds a bachelor's degree in history and film from Dartmouth College.

[EMILY TOPPER](#) — director of photography

Emily was born and raised in Baltimore, earned a Bachelors from Swarthmore College in Literature in 1999 and a Masters of Fine Arts from University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts in 2004. Emily got her start coming up through the ranks in lighting on independent fiction features, all the while cutting her teeth shooting shorts, music videos, and experimental art films. In 2007, she began work on her first feature documentary, "Aint In It For My Health: A Film About Levon Helm," an experience that left her infatuated with the itinerant, 'never-a-dull-moment' life of a documentary cinematographer. Emily has since shot several documentaries, including "Miss Americana: Taylor Swift" (2020), "Rebel Hearts" (Sundance 2021), "Framing Britney Spears" (2021), "Strip Down, Rise Up" (2021), "Bulletproof" (2020), and the 2015 Emmy winner for Best Documentary, "After Tiller."

[STEVEN GOLLIDAY](#) — editor

Steven served as co-editor with Maya Mumma on KING IN THE WILDERNESS (Sundance '18, Emmy) and co-editor with Ben Gold on FAR FROM THE TREE (DOC NYC '17). Steven was a fellow in the inaugural Karen Schmeer Diversity in the Edit Room cohort. Steven studied conceptual art films, documentary and critical theory at the California Institute of the Arts, where he received a BFA in 2007. Steven resides in Portland, Oregon, with his wife, Emily Singer Chapman, a documentary producer, and daughter. Within the documentary community and industry, Steven is committed to revolutionizing the structures that have long failed to incorporate marginalized peoples in an equitable and meaningful way.

[NATASHA LIVIA MOTTOLA](#) — editor

Natasha Livia Mottola was an Editor on Stanley Nelson's MILES DAVIS, BIRTH OF THE COOL, has collaborated as associate editor with Jennifer Fox on MY REINCARNATION and Abigail Disney on THE ARMOR OF LIGHT. Other assistant editor work includes, FREEDOM SUMMER, KOCH, HARRY AND SNOWMAN, THE ABOLITIONISTS and the SUNDANCE Documentary Story Edit Lab. She is a member of NYWIFT and ADE, Blue Collar Post Collective, a past mentor at Reel Works teen filmmaking and has collaborated on murals with Groundswell. Her passion for personal documentaries and cultural preservation have inspired her to begin post production on her film, LA STORIA DI NONNA, about her family's immigration experience from Italy to America.

[LESLIE SIMMER](#) — editor

Leslie Simmer is Kartemquin's Director of Editing and Senior Editor on staff. For over twenty-three years Leslie has worked at Kartemquin in various capacities. Most recently, she edited the U.S. episode of the Netflix Series *My Love* (directed by Elaine McMillion Sheldon); co-directed with Gordon Quinn and co-edited *For the Left Hand* (premiering in 2021); and served as a lead editor on the Starz multi-part series *America to Me* (directed by Steve James). Leslie edited and co-wrote *Raising Bertie* (directed by Margaret Byrne) which premiered on POV in 2018, and the Emmy Award-winning film, *The Homestretch*, (directed by Kirsten Kelly and Anne de Mare) which screened on PBS's Independent Lens in 2015. She edited and co-wrote the Emmy-nominated feature documentary which aired on PBS Independent Lens in 2012, *As Goes Janesville* (directed by Brad Lichtenstein. Prior to that, she edited with Steve James on the ESPN film *No Crossover: The Trial of Allen Iverson*. She edited the Emmy-nominated *In the Family* (for which she received the Best Editing prize at the "Best of the Midwest Awards"). In 2005 Leslie was co-editor with Steve James on *The War Tapes*. From 2001-2004 she wore dual hats on the seven-part PBS series *The New Americans* as both Series Story Editor and Post Production Supervisor. Leslie also teaches documentary editing classes at Columbia College, Chicago.

[SARA FUSCO](#) — editor

Sara began her work in the advocacy world, creating short videos covering refugee crises in the Middle East, the independence of South Sudan, earthquake recovery efforts in Nepal, and innovation in Uganda. Sara's editorial work on THE MESSY TRUTH web series was the winner of a 2017 Webby Award, and her short documentary MAKAPADS was a semi-finalist in GE's Focus Forward Filmmaker Competition in 2012. When not in the edit room, Sara has worked as a mentor and technical advisor in youth media and teacher training classes in New York City and Washington, DC. She spends most of her free time chasing around her toddler and dog, or training Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Sara has a master's in Media Studies from The New School in New York City.

[LEWIS ERSKINE](#) — consulting editor

Lewis began working in television on Evening Magazine at WJZ, then went on to Maryland Public Television PBS, NBC, The Disney Channel, Arts & Entertainment Television, and the BBC. Lewis has worked with Walter Cronkite, Michael Moore, Ken Burns, Shola Lynch, Bill Moyers, and Stanley Nelson. Notable projects include: BIRTH OF THE COOL (Sundance '19), FREEDOM RIDERS (2011 Emmy), and editing for the MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, The Cronkite Report, TV Nation, Faith and Reason, Free Angela, All Political Prisoners, and THE BLACK PRESS: SOLDIERS WITHOUT SWORDS. A born and bred New Yorker, Lewis attended Pitzer College and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from New York University, College of Arts and Sciences. Lewis taught at New York University's Tisch School. Lewis passed away from cancer in June 2021.

[GORDON QUINN](#) — consulting producer

Gordon Quinn is Artistic Director and co-founder of Kartemquin Films, where over the past 50+ years he has helped hundreds of documentary filmmakers advance their projects forward and been a champion of documentary filmmakers' rights. He is the 2015 recipient of the International Documentary Association Career Achievement Award and was a key leader in creating the Documentary Filmmakers Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use. His credits as director and producer include films: *Inquiring Nuns* (1966), *Golub* (1988), *A Good Man* (2011), *'63 Boycott* (2017), and *For the Left Hand* (2021). As executive producer his credits include four Academy-Award nominees: *Hoop Dreams* (1994), *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail* (2016), *Edith & Eddie* (2017), and *Minding the Gap* (2018), and six Emmy Award-winners: *The Interrupters* (2011), *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* (2013), *The Homestretch* (2014), and *Life Itself* (2014). He has also executive produced the acclaimed limited series *The New Americans* (2003), *Hard Earned* (2015), *America to Me* (2018), and *City So Real* (2020), and recent films including *Unapologetic* (2020), *Finding Yingying* (2020), and *The Dilemma of Desire* (2020).

[CAROL DYSINGER](#) — story consultant

Carol Dysinger directed the short documentary LEARNING TO SKATEBOARD IN A WARZONE (IF YOU'RE A GIRL) which won the OSCAR® for best short documentary and the BAFTA for best short. Dysinger is known for her feature length documentary CAMP VICTORY, AFGHANISTAN (SXSW 2010, Human Rights Watch Film Festival). Dysinger has edited DEADLINE for Big Mouth Productions (Sundance, and NBC), RAIN for Lola Films, Martin Scorsese Executive Producer (Sundance, Venice International) SANTITOS for Springall Pix, John Sayles Exec (Sundance, Guadalajara, San Sebastian) and PUNK (Warners) which was a finalist for a national Emmy. She is the recipient of the David Payne Carter award for excellence in teaching. Carol was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, and is currently developing a semi-autobiographical interactive piece depicting her experience with war and completing One Bullet, a feature length documentary film.

[MARILYN NESS](#) — consulting producer

Marilyn Ness is a two-time Emmy, Peabody, and DuPont Award-winning filmmaker. Most recently, she produced the Netflix Original documentaries BECOMING, about former First Lady Michelle Obama nominated for four Primetime Emmy's, and DICK JOHNSON IS DEAD (dir. Kirsten Johnson), which premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and won the Special Jury Award for Innovation in Non-fiction Storytelling and was shortlisted for the 2021 Academy Award® - Best Documentary Feature. She directed CHARM CITY (2018 Tribeca Film Festival, shortlisted for the 2019 Academy Award® - Best Documentary Feature). She produced CAMERAPERSON (dir. Kirsten Johnson), which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, was released by the Criterion Collection and was shortlisted for the 2017 Academy Awards® - Best Documentary Feature. TRAPPED (dir. Dawn Porter), which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, broadcast on PBS' Independent Lens, and was awarded a Peabody. She also produced the feature documentary E-TEAM, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2014 and was bought by Netflix Original, and later earned two Emmy nominations. Ness is a founding member of the Documentary Producers Alliance.

[KATY CHEVIGNY](#) — consulting producer

Katy Chevigny is an award-winning filmmaker and a co-founder of Big Mouth Productions. She has produced and/or directed over a dozen documentary features. Most recently, she produced the Netflix Original documentaries BECOMING, about former First Lady Michelle Obama nominated for four Primetime Emmy's. Ness also produced DICK JOHNSON IS DEAD (dir. Kirsten Johnson), which premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and won the Special Jury Award for Innovation in Non-fiction Storytelling and was shortlisted for the 2021 Academy Award® - Best Documentary Feature. She also produced DARK MONEY (dir. Kimberly Reed), which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and CHARM CITY, which premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival. Both DARK MONEY and CHARM CITY were shortlisted for the 2019 Academy Awards® - Best Documentary Feature. She co-directed (with Ross Kauffman) the Emmy-nominated documentary E-TEAM, which premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival and was acquired as a Netflix Original. She also directed one of the storylines in Kartemquin Film's documentary series HARD EARNED, winner of a 2016 Alfred I. DuPont Award. She directed ELECTION DAY which premiered at SXSW and was broadcast on POV in 2008. She also co-directed (with Kirsten Jonson) DEADLINE, which premiered at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival and, in an unusual acquisition, was broadcast as a primetime special on NBC. Her work has won multiple awards, been broadcast on networks including PBS, NBC, HBO, Netflix, Arte/ZDF and has played at festivals around the world.

[CHRIS JENKINS](#) — story consultant

Chris L. Jenkins is an award winning journalist, independent filmmaker and political strategist. Over a 20-year career, he has told stories about social justice, identity and progressive culture, with a focus on race, class and equity. Chris is the producer and writer of the Webby-nominated documentary, Trapped: Cash Bail in America streaming on YouTube Originals, and the executive producer, producer and writer for Mavericks, a 7-part docu-series currently in production. For nearly two decades, he was a reporter and editor at The Washington Post where he covered and led award winning coverage around national politics, criminal justice, immigration, culture and race. He has also served as Managing Editor for The Root and producer and writer for ESPN's HBCU Football: Our Time and the independent film Rikers: Innocence Lost; executive producer for BrotherSpeak: Exploring the Lives of Black Men; and the director and producer of numerous ads for a range of national and local political and social justice campaigns. While at The Post, Chris was the author of numerous award winning stories and productions, and was on the paper's team that won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for its breaking news coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting massacre.

[EDWIN MARTINEZ](#) — consulting editor

Edwin Martinez is a Bronx born award winning director, producer and editor of nonfiction films. He co-directed, edited, and shot PERSONAL STATEMENT (2019 AFI), the award winning TO BE HEARD (2011 NYT Critics' Pick), and THE SCARS OF STOP AND FRISK (New York Times). He has also brought his other storytelling skills as editor of CITY OF TREES (PBS), THE MESSY TRUTH (2017 Webby Award winner), producer of THE CLEMENTE EFFECT (ESPN), and as director of photography for RACHEL IS (2010 True/False), LEAVE NO SOLDIER, LAS MARTHAS (PBS), and WHAT ALICE FOUND (Special Grand Jury Prize, 2003 Sundance). Martinez was a Gates Millennium Scholar (2004), Firelight Media Fellow (2018), and Rockwood JustFilms Fellow (2019). He is in production on THE MONSTER AND THE STORM as a Concordia Studio Artist in Residence with additional support by the Sundance Institute. He is also developing a new project as a Catapult Film Fund Research Grantee. In addition, Martinez is an Assistant Professor of Film at the SUNY Purchase Film Conservatory.

[AMILCA PALMER](#) — archival producer

Amilca Palmer is a New York-based producer and researcher. She has worked on numerous critically acclaimed documentaries for television and theatrical release, including the celebrated PBS series AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and the Emmy Award-winning film THE MURDER OF EMMETT TILL. Her documentary work has taken her across continents, onto concert stages, and throughout vast archives, helping to give voice to often untold stories from the past and present. As Archival Producer she has worked on award-winning films, including the Emmy-nominated THE GREAT INVISIBLE, the Peabody Award-winning LENNONYC, and the Peabody-nominated docuseries WU-TANG CLAN: OF MICS AND MEN. Other projects include KOCH, CITIZEN JANE: BATTLE FOR THE CITY, and DETROIT: 48202. Amilca was a 2018-2019 Sundance Institute Creative Producing Fellow. She is currently producing RUN WITH IT, an animated feature documentary about the US criminal justice system, with Oscar-nominated directors Nomi Talisman and Dee Hibbert-Jones.

[JOSHUA ABRAMS](#) — composer

Joshua Abrams is a composer, bassist & improviser. He has appeared on over 100 albums recording & touring with a diverse range of artists including Fred Anderson, Bonnie "Prince" Billy, Theaster Gates, Nicole Mitchell, Matana Roberts & The Roots. Abrams has scored the music for nine feature length documentaries including four by Steve James: The Interrupters, Life Itself, the Oscar nominated Abacus: Small Enough To Jail, & the docuseries America To Me. He has also created the theme music for StoryCorps Animated Shorts. Since 2010 Abrams has composed, recorded & toured North America & Europe with a shifting-line up of musicians as Natural Information Society. Natural Information Society (NIS) creates long-form psychedelic environments that distill a wide range of musics & methodologies including jazz, minimalism & kosmiche. The group has released six albums for Eremite records including Simultaneity (2017), Mandatory Reality (2019) the group's latest decension (Out of Our Constrictions) (2021). Other recent releases include Cloud Script (RogueArt) a quartet with Ari Brown, Gerald Cleaver & Jeff Parker & Mind Maintenance (Drag City), a duo with Chad Taylor. Abrams was a 2018 Grants for Artist recipient from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts.

Jana Carter — executive producer

Jana Carter co-founded Magic Labs Media in 2013. Jana holds a JD from UC Berkeley School of Law. She practiced civil rights and education law, and holds an MA in theology from Bethany Theological Seminary. Jana received an Emmy award in 2020 for producing *The Messy Truth VR Experience*, Episode 2. She also executive produced the Webby award winner *The Messy Truth Digital Series* and produced Lumiere award winner *The Messy Truth VR Experience*, Episode 1.

THE FIRST STEP / PRODUCTION COMPANIES

ABOUT MERIDIAN HILL PICTURES

[Meridian Hill Pictures](#) is a documentary production company based in Washington, DC. Started by brothers Brandon and Lance Kramer in 2010, MHP produces films that attempt to tell deeply-honest and personal stories about diverse groups of people navigating complex contemporary social issues. MHP strives to make films that demonstrate excellence in storytelling craft, establish trust with participants and partners, strategic thinking, and a deep embrace of documentary ethics. MHP's film [CITY OF TREES](#) was broadcast nationally on PBS; played at renowned festivals including Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, St. Louis International Film Festival and the Yale, Princeton and DC Environmental Film Festivals; and is available to stream on [Netflix](#) and [iTunes](#). We have produced award-winning commercial [short-form documentaries](#) and [video storytelling trainings](#) with dozens of non-profit, educational, public and corporate partners. In 2014, MHP received the [DC Mayor's Arts Award](#), the highest honor given to working artists in the District of Columbia.

ABOUT MAGIC LABS MEDIA

[Magic Labs Media](#) is a multi-media production company led by Van Jones and Jana Carter. Van and Jana built Magic Labs Media to support visionaries who capture the world in new ways – or invent new worlds, altogether. In 2020, Magic Labs Media won an Emmy Award and a Lumiere Award for its ground-breaking [Virtual Reality Experience](#). It won multiple Webby awards for its [Messy Truth Digital Miniseries](#) (2016). Magic Labs Media also seeks to tell stories of people and communities who dig deep to find solutions that inspire us. Some of these projects include CNN's prime time series [The Redemption Project With Van Jones](#) (2019); a documentary short for *Sundance Now* called [A Deeper Patriotism](#) (2017); the feature documentary [City Of Trees](#) (2015); and the New York Times bestselling book [Beyond The Messy Truth](#) by Van Jones (2017).

ABOUT FORK FILMS — executive producer Abigail Disney

Fork Films LLC is a New York-based film production company that seeks to shed light, evoke compassion, stir action and build peace. Founded in 2007 by CEO and President Abigail Disney and Chief Creative Officer Gini Reticker, Fork Films creates and supports media that makes an important societal contribution, with a particular emphasis on projects that bring women's voices to the forefront. In addition to its original productions of [PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL](#) and the five-part PBS special series [WOMEN, WAR & PEACE](#), the company has supported nearly 90 documentaries in the promotion of peace building, human rights and social justice, including 1971, CITIZEN KOCH, FAMILY AFFAIR, HOT GIRLS WANTED, THE MASK YOU LIVE IN, OUT IN THE NIGHT, and the Academy Award-nominated films SUN COME UP (2011, Best Documentary Short) and THE INVISIBLE WAR (2012, Best Documentary Feature).

ABOUT KARTEMQUIN FILMS - consulting producers Gordon Quinn, Betsy Steinberg, Jolene Pinder

[Kartemquin](#) is a collaborative center for documentary media makers who seek to foster a more engaged and empowered society. In 2016 Kartemquin celebrated 50 years of sparking democracy through documentary. A revered resource within the film community on issues of fair use, ethics, story and civic discourse, Kartemquin is internationally recognized for crafting quality documentaries backed by audience and community engagement strategies, and for its innovative media arts community programs. The organization has won every major critical and journalistic prize, including multiple Emmy, Peabody, duPont-Columbia and Robert F. Kennedy journalism awards, Independent Spirit, IDA, PGA and DGA awards, and an Oscar nomination. Kartemquin is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization based in Chicago.

ABOUT BIG MOUTH PRODUCTIONS - consulting producers Katy Chevigny and Marilyn Ness

Started in 1997, Big Mouth Productions (BMP) is a documentary production company co-owned by Katy Chevigny and Marilyn Ness. BMP specializes in films about important contemporary social justice issues. Together, Marilyn and Katy have won or been nominated for a range of awards including Emmys, the Thurgood Marshall Journalism Award, a Peabody, two DuPonts and two Cine Golden Eagle Awards for Investigative Journalism. BMP films including CHARM CITY (Tribeca '18) and E-TEAM (Sundance '14) have been broadcast on PBS, HBO, NBC, Netflix, the Sundance Channel and other outlets around the world. BMP has produced short-form and online documentary-style series for the web and feature-length films for film festivals, DVD, educational distribution and broadcast in the past 15 years.

ABOUT HIDDEN EMPIRE FILM GROUP - executive producers Robert F. Smith, Deon & Roxanne Taylor

Hidden Empire Film Group (HEFG) is a multi-dimensional independent film company, which has produced highly engaging films since its inception, including multiple franchises, that have been distributed both domestically and internationally. Productions include: *Fatale*, a psychological thriller starring two-time Academy Award winner Hilary Swank (*Million Dollar Baby*, *Boys Don't Cry*) and Michael Ealy (*The Intruder*); *Black and Blue*, an action thriller starring Academy Award nominee Naomie Harris (*Moonlight*), Tyrese (*The Fate of the Furious*), Frank Grillo (*Captain America: Civil War*, *The Purge: Election Year*) and Mike Colter ("*Luke Cage*"); *The Intruder* a psychological thriller starring Michael Ealy (*Fatale*, *Think Like a Man*), Dennis Quaid (*The Right Stuff*) and Meagan Good (*Think Like a Man*); *Traffik*, a phenomenal & chilling thriller with a deep and profound true to life message starring Omar Epps (*Love & Basketball*, *Resurrection*) and Paula Patton (*Mission Impossible*, *Precious*); *Meet the Blacks*, a comedy-horror starring Mike Epps (*Resident Evil*), Bresha Webb (*Ride Along 2*) and Lil Duval (*Scary Movie 5*); *Supremacy*; based on a true story, follows a high-ranking white supremacist (played by Joe Anderson) which won the "Best Diaspora Feature" at the African Movie Academy Awards; and lastly; the thriller *Chain Letter*, featuring a great ensemble cast led by Nikki Reed (*Twilight*). Hidden Empire Film Group is led by founders Deon Taylor and Roxanne Avent Taylor, along with a devoted management team. We are a team of creative and business professionals that have worked hard to build a company that creates story-driven, innovative and relevant content. The library of quality original works we have been able to produce in such a short period of time is a tribute to the perfect storm of ingenuity brought to the table by this team.

ABOUT ARTEMIS RISING FOUNDATION - executive producer Regina K. Scully

Artemis Rising Foundation is dedicated to supporting media projects that transform our culture and challenge the status quo. Led by founder and CEO, Regina K. Scully, the foundation champions powerful stories about some of the most challenging social justice issues of our time — including gender-bias, healing, trauma, mental health, addiction and women's empowerment. With its focus on human rights, Artemis Rising Foundation has helped produce some of the most impactful documentary films of the past decade, inspiring meaningful policy change to legislation, education, corporate protocol and cultural norms. Films such as *THE INVISIBLE WAR*, *THE HUNTING GROUND*, *FED UP*, *MISS REPRESENTATION* and *WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?* address issues such as sexual assault in the military and on college campuses, women's representation in the media, and pushing back against special interest groups. Working closely with renowned journalists and filmmakers, including Amy Ziering, Katie Couric, Kirby Dick, Morgan Neville, Ross Kaufman and Freida Mock, Artemis Rising Foundation has supported over 100 films, many of which have received Peabody, Emmy and Academy Awards. In addition to documentaries, Artemis Rising Foundation supports a variety of projects that include narrative film, television, theater, education, and social programs.

THE FIRST STEP / CONTACT INFORMATION

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thefirststep.com

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original song by
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a film by
Meridian Hill Pictures
Magic Labs Media

in association with
Fork Films
Artemis Rising Foundation
Hidden Empire Film Group
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Dream Corps JUSTICE Empathy Network
Due Process Institute
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Faith and Freedom Coalition
Families Against Mandatory Minimums
George Washington University
Good Morning America
Green For All
Josephine Butler Parks Center
Justice Action Network
Karen Hunter Show
Kramer Architects
Lane College
Latino Economic Development Corporation
Latino Producers Action Network
Made in NY Media Center by IFP
Magnolia House
Maryland Small Business Development Center
National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls
National Convention Center
National Public Radio (NPR)
REFORM Alliance
ROC NATION
Ritz Carlton
Sirius XM Radio
Sixth and I Synagogue
Sterling Drive-In
Takoma Bev Co
The Breakfast Club
The Dream Corps
The White House
Tzedek Association
United States Capitol
Washington Post
Women in Film & Video DC
XTR
Zoom

and the people of South Los Angeles
Skid Row
Berkeley, Boone, Logan and McDowell Counties, West Virginia
War

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Impact Partners Producers Fellowship

Kartemquin KTQ Labs

ORIGINAL SONG "SET ME FREE" BY

ALOE BLACC

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

LORETTA KIRKENDOLL JONES

WILLIE ANTHONY JONES

PRINCE ROGERS NELSON

ALISA SWIDLER

DOUGLAS COPENHAVER

ROLAND LEGIARDI-LAURA

PRIYA HAJI

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