



**Youth
Collective
Film Festival**

2023 THEME:
DEMOCRACY

JUNE 7, 2023

CYCLE OF LITTER ■ DEMOCRACY - A MUSICAL PRODUCTION
GEN Z MENTAL HEALTH: CLIMATE STORIES
GROWING UP IN AMERICA: LIFE AFTER THE TALIBAN ■ ILLEGITIMATE VOICE
RETURN DATE UNKNOWN ■ THE OUBLIETTE ■ THE SPEECH OF TXAI SURUI
TOGETHERNESS (KAPWA) ■ TWO AMERICAS
UNPUNISHED CRIMES ■ YOU NEED TO VOTE ■ WHEN I SPEAK FREELY

|The WNET Group

Welcome

from The 2023 Youth Collective Advisory Board

As Youth Advisors for the Youth Collective, we believe that democracy would be a perfect topic for our Youth Collective Film Festival. We chose the theme for this event at the beginning of the year because we believe that this topic is of paramount importance because, at this moment in time, American democracy is at a turning point. Democracy is fundamental in maintaining our freedom but has fluidity in its definition. There is also an amalgamation of themes including voting, advocacy, and education which make up the mosaic of democracy. In recent years, we have seen not only what can occur when democracy is challenged, but also the influence social media and technology have on the amplification of youth voices in democracy. Because of all of the uncertainty and challenges to democracy that we are witnessing, we thought it would be important to amplify youth voices and perspectives to discuss the importance of protecting and preserving democracy. Youth has shown more participation in democracy now than ever which can inspire necessary change. Enjoy the Youth Collective Film Festival!

The Youth Advisors – **Janice Aragon, Nikki Jiang, Maekyla Massey, Julia Mechner, Leena Mirchandani, Vincent Tsay**

Land Acknowledgment

The WNET Group acknowledges and pays deep respect to the Lenape people, upon whose unceded homeland lies the city we call Manhattan. We make this affirmation in a spirit of humility and solidarity, with a commitment to decolonization and racial justice.



[Youth Collective](#) is a youth media and education initiative powered by public media that aims to amplify youth voice and provide a platform for young people to engage in the important work of building a more ethical world. Our goals:

- Promote understanding of differing viewpoints
- Foster civil dialogue about ethical issues
- Inspire young people to take action in their communities

The WNET Group, New York's flagship PBS station, started Youth Collective in 2019. Since then we've produced annual youth convenings, media created by, with, and for youth, and ethics education resources for young people. 2023 is our first film festival!

Learn more at youthcollectivefilmfest.org
and connect with us on Instagram at [@theyouthcollect](https://www.instagram.com/theyouthcollect)



Festival Program

Cycle of Litter Amanda Ho

Democracy - A Musical Production

Ryan Clarke, Jason Brady, Nia Green,
Richard Katz, Josue Mondragon, Jared Lopez Agurcia,
Bryant Reyes-Alvarez, Kingston Patterson

Gen Z Mental Health: Climate Stories Tehya Jennett

Growing Up in America: Life After the Taliban

Isabel Rose Soloaga, Najaf Ali Mohammady

Illegitimate Voice Taylor Bazile, Will Casse, Uma Chatterjee,

Ashley Clark, Victoria Cruell, Pedro Edmond, Stefie Gan,

Kacey Layson, Oscar Li, Armando Sepulveda Mendoza,

Giulia Pan, Aaron Parris, Rachel Priebe, Ashley Lynn Raymer,

Maria "Lupita" Roa, Lau Rodriguez

Return Date Unknown Tymur Tsapliienko

The Oubliette Max Hendrickson

The Speech of Txai Surui

Students of the Multimedia Project of Escola Parque

Togetherness (Kapwa) Jack Lacy

Two Americas Asher Anantham

Unpunished Crimes Ellis Chung

You Need to Vote Amogh Thakkar

When I Speak Freely Benjamin Negron

GROUP A

10am – 11:15am

WALTER READE THEATER

- ◇ WELCOME / OPENING FILM
- ◇ GUEST SPEAKER:
Dana Roberson
- ◇ KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
Chelsea Miller
- ◇ FILM SCREENINGS (A)
- ◇ AWARD PRESENTATION

11:45am – 1pm

**ELINOR BUNIN MUNROE
FILM CENTER**

- ◇ FILM SCREENINGS (B)
- ◇ DISCUSSION:
Ethics, Media, and Democracy

GROUP B

10am – 11:15am

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Ethics, Media, and Democracy

A Word from Andy Cullison

Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where we've upset someone and we had no idea what we did or said would be upsetting. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where we are upset, and we feel like the right thing to do is speak up for our values - but we keep quiet because we don't know how (or what) to express what we're feeling. And sometimes we know that no matter which path we choose *someone* will be upset because there are competing values and ideals.

This can make living in a democracy challenging, and this is why ethics and moral reasoning development is so important. It can make all of those situations described above more manageable and less tense and awkward.

Ethics involves learning difficult moral or ethical issues and then trying to come to a reasonable decision about what to do about those issues. This process often involves deep thinking and dialogue with other people that takes into consideration a wide range of potential values and interests that different people might have.

To get better at this practice it is useful to develop a set of skills that we call "moral" or "ethical" reasoning skills. That's what most ethics centers at colleges/universities across the country focus on helping students develop. These skills not only help you have these difficult conversations with people, but they have been shown to help develop other skills we care about for our personal and professional lives.

The theme of this film festival is democracy. Democracy and ethics are connected in a variety of important ways, and citizens who are better at moral reasoning are better equipped to be good participants in our democracy. In fact, Thomas Jefferson thought democracy could not succeed unless citizens were broadly educated, and he thought that moral reasoning development was an important part of that education.

It is also worth noting that films themselves are useful tools in the practice of ethics because film brings people's stories to life in ways that make it easier to identify and become aware of ethical issues. They also showcase different perspectives people might have on ethical issues. In short, films are an excellent way to kickstart the kind of moral dialogue citizens need to engage in to move our democracy forward in positive ways.

Andy Cullison



Dr. Andrew (Andy) Cullison is the founding executive director of The Cincinnati Ethics Center and comes to us from the Janet Prindle Institute for Ethics, DePauw University, where he had been its Director for over seven years. The Prindle Institute was the first and oldest ethics institute at a liberal arts college and one of largest collegiate ethics institutes in the country. There he coined the phrase “ethics education and leadership development from the wonder years to the golden years” which describes the kind of work he is most

passionate about. As an ethics center director, he specializes in K-12 ethics education, co-curricular ethics programs at the collegiate level for students/faculty/staff, and moral reasoning and leadership development for organizations and corporations. He also conducts workshops for teams and organizations that apply tools from philosophy and ethics to advance their diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

He is also a Research Professor in the University of Cincinnati philosophy department. Most of his scholarly work focuses on questions about how we can have moral knowledge. He defends the view that we can have moral knowledge, as well as the view that we sometimes know moral facts on the basis of perception. His current research interests include philosophy and ethics of leadership, moral epistemology, ethics of comedy, ethics of management, work place

Meet the Filmmakers

Cycle of Litter

AMANDA HO



My name is Amanda Ho and I am a film student at Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School. In addition to film, I have a passion for

environmental studies and conservation. My goal now and for the future is to utilize art forms to inspire change to solve environmental issues.

“My PSA *Cycle of Litter* connects to the theme of democracy because to solve the issue of pollution, everyone needs to participate. Effective environmental policies require cooperation among various stakeholders, including citizens, businesses, and the government. Everyone has the right to clean and healthy environments. I was inspired to create this PSA when finding out how pollution directly affects us, such as through food. We are told about how there's so much trash throughout the ocean, but we sometimes fail to realize how close it actually is to us.”

Democracy – A Musical Production

KINGSTON PATTERSON

(Songwriter, Composer, Musician)



My name is Kingston and I'm an artist from Long Island. At an early age, I found music fascinating and inspiring which led me to develop a passion for producing music. I view music as a platform that provides me the opportunity to express my creativity through a variety of beats, rhythms and lyrics represented on original tracks that I produce. People ask me what type of music I like. I never know what to answer, it seems I like almost every genre. Being able to combine my musical talents along with a visual component has been a real eye-opening experience for me. My goal with the music I create is for people to listen to it with an open mind and really just feel the mix of all the sounds, and hopefully inspire others to unlock their own form of creativity. I'm excited to continue pursuing my passion for music in the years to come and the paths it will steer me towards.

Credits: *Democracy – A Musical Production*

Jason Brady – Director Ryan Clarke - Cinematographer, Editor

Nia Green - Production Crew Richard Katz - Director, Background Actor

Jared Lopez Agurcia- Production Crew Josue Mondragon- Production Crew

Kingston Patterson - Songwriter, Composer, Musician

Bryant Reyes-Alvarez- Production Crew

“*Democracy, A Musical Production* is a film that explores and introduces the fundamental principles and values that underpin democracy, such as individual

rights, freedom of speech, and the rule of law. I feel this music video serves as a powerful tool for inspiring and informing audiences about the importance of democratic values and practices. Writing and composing the music and lyrics for this music video was a valuable learning experience for myself as a growing artist. It required me to consider the perspective of my audience, think critically about the subject matter, and develop a way to communicate my ideas creatively and effectively to my friends, fellow classmates and peers in a genre/medium that I felt would capture their attention.”

Gen Z Mental Health: Climate Stories

TEHYA JENNETT



Tehya Jennett (she/they) is a youth climate activist and filmmaker with roots in the climate storytelling space. They are a Co-Owner and Green Producer at Stranded Astronaut

Productions, an artist collective and production house that specializes in social impact content. Tehya has worked as a Sustainability Coordinator on numerous film/TV productions, and produced the award winning cli-fi short, *Stomach of the Earth* (2020). *Gen Z Mental Health: Climate Stories* (2022) is their directorial debut focusing on the mental health impacts of the climate crisis.

“*Gen Z Mental Health: Climate Stories* is a short documentary that explores the mental health impacts of the climate crisis on young adults worldwide, and considers what resilience means when fighting for the right to a livable planet. The film captures the emotions of a generation that may be frightened, yet is anything but hopeless, saving room for stories of love, community connections, and healing.

“In a true democracy, the people’s voices are heard and represented within legislation. Unfortunately, in our current system the calls for immediate climate action from young adults are being ignored by political officials. This documentary uses film as a tool to uplift these perspectives, to express the will of the people, and to inspire audiences to take action on this issue for the rights of the people they love and the people they’ve never met.”

Growing Up in America: Life After the Taliban

ISABEL SOLOAGA &
NAJAF ALI MOHAMMADY



Isabel Soloaga, 25, is a filmmaker and journalist who places viewers into the shoes of strangers through dynamic, reflexive approaches and vérité. She holds an MA in Migration and Global Development and previously worked in humanitarian relief efforts throughout Europe and the United States. She brings over six years of firsthand experience to the subjects explored in this docuseries. This is her reflection on the meaning of home and identity, written together with the family it follows as they transition from life in war-torn Afghanistan to their new homes in the U.S.

Najaf Ali Mohammady, 23, He was about to graduate with a BA in Computer Science from Kabul University before he was forced to evacuate. He is the beloved uncle to his nieces and nephews, an avid photographer and incredible friend. He co-directs this film.

“Ali and Isabel met in Fort Bliss, Texas, where Ali was sent after escaping from Kabul. There, Isabel was working with the International Rescue Committee at Fort Bliss as a first responder. They met on a lunch break. Understanding the need to share this story, the two of them decided to create this film together.

“Ali fled the Taliban in 2021, fearing for his life under the rule of a dictatorship which systematically persecuted people like him. In *Growing Up in America: Life After the Taliban*, Ali says, ‘In America, we have a chance to show the world what is really going on... We have a chance to make a difference.’

“In the United States, we are protected and empowered by our democratic political system and ideals. We are represented in government and play an active role in deciding our futures, and the future of our nation. This is a responsibility and a privilege that not everyone gets to experience.

“Ali is one of many individuals who, as minorities, have been stripped of their rights under the Taliban dictatorship. As a Hazara individual and as a Shia muslim, as opposed to the Sunni Taliban, he feared for his life in Kabul. Seeking to be free, he escaped to the United States. We hope this film resonates with people around the world who endeavor to build a home where they are safe, empowered, and able to express themselves just as they are.”

Illegitimate Voice

DOCUMENTARY ANIMATION CLASS AT USC, SPRING 2021



TAYLOR BAZILE is a rising senior at the University of Southern California. With a major in Communications and a minor in Media and Social Change, Taylor is most interested in the healing and transformative powers of art and storytelling. She hopes to further develop her storytelling skills in the years to come.



“Life is not the support system for art. It’s the other way around”
- Stephen King

WILL CASSE is a writer, editor, and content creator from Asheville, North Carolina. He will be graduating from the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School with a degree in Journalism in Spring, 2020. He is passionate about documentaries, southern barbecue, and the post-electric music of Bob Dylan.

UMA CHATTERJEE is a junior studying Cinema & Media Studies and Documentary at the University of Southern California. Her two main artistic practices are analog photography and filmmaking, though she has personal interest in various forms of new media and storytelling.

ASHLEY CLARK is a film producer from Chicago. She is currently a junior at University of Southern California studying Cinema and Media Studies. She will graduate in Spring 2022. After college she plans to pursue her dreams as a film and television producer.

VICTORIA CRUELL is a graduate student in the Animation & Digital Arts MFA program at the University of Southern California. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where she studied Filmmaking with an Animation concentration. Victoria enjoys art of many kinds, and likes to delve into various creative projects. She is especially passionate about 2D animation. Victoria dreams of owning her own animation company in the future.

PEDRO EDMOND is an animation major at the University of Southern California. While interested in various aspects of animation, he is currently focusing on storyboarding. Pedro hopes to someday be a leader in the creation of a successful show or animated film.

STEFIE GAN is a storyboard artist and animator from NYC. She spent her undergraduate career studying architecture. She will be graduating with a Master of Fine Arts degree in Animation and Digital Arts at the University of Southern California in Spring 2022. She is passionate about telling stories about the Asian American experience.

GIULIA PAN is a 3D/2D animator and visual development artist based in LA and Taipei. She will be graduating with a Master degree in Animation and Digital Arts at the University of Southern California in 2022. She loves making cute, whimsical films with some dark humor.

Her film "TOP DEATH" has won the Taiwan National Animation contest for Vocational Education and selected for several international film festivals.

KACEY LAYSON is an aspiring Character Designer and Story Artist in Animation. She is passionate about creating relatable characters and heartfelt stories. She is currently pursuing her MFA in Animation at USC's School of Cinematic Arts.

When she is not attending Zoom classes or drawing, she loves to take care of her potted plants, walk her dogs, or play Stardew Valley.

OSCAR LI is an animator and incoming medical student at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. He spent his undergraduate career studying Biological Sciences with a minor in 3D Animation in the Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. Oscar is passionate about storytelling and the intersection between animation and medicine. He aims to continue creating animated films as a medium for not only scientific literacy and research, but also humanizing the often esoteric medical field and sharing stories.

ARMANDO SEPULVEDA MENDOZA is an animation director and stop motion animator from Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico. He now lives in Los Angeles where he immigrated as a kid and has spent the majority of his life. Currently,

Armando is pursuing an MFA in Animation and Digital Arts at the University of Southern California continuing to make short films, while building the foundations for a career where he can continue to use stop-motion and experiment in other artistic mediums to tell his stories through animation.

AARON PARRIS is a class of 2022 animator at USC. He is an LA native and likes graphic novels and 90's hip hop.

RACHEL PRIEBE is a documentary filmmaker based in Los Angeles, California. She is in her senior year of undergraduate studies at the University of Southern California, where she studies Film and Television Production with a minor in French. She strives to bring untold stories to light and document people living outside of mainstream society. In addition to school, she has worked for the MY HERO Project since 2018, an organization that celebrates the best of humanity through film and media.

ASHLEY LYNN RAYMER (she/they) is a Creative Director and Production Coordinator located in Los Angeles, California. Ashley Lynn graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in Journalism and Documentary Production in Spring 2021. She is passionate about content production, creative design, and social media branding.

MARIA “LUPITA” ROA is a first-generation latinx showrunner and animator artist from Dallas, Texas. Lupita is now living in Los Angeles with her younger sister and two dogs studying animation and digital arts at University of Southern California with a minor in comedy. She is passionate about telling one-of-a-kind character-driven stories about underrepresented groups and perspectives.

LAU RODRIGUEZ is a Colombian multi-media artist from South Florida currently pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film and TV Production at the University of Southern California. After he graduates in the spring 2023, he hopes to pursue documentary filmmaking and editing professionally. He's most inspired by love in all its forms, nature, and the strength embodied by the trans and latinx communities he's a part of.

“Democracy requires us to be active participants as we respond to the challenges of our time. Through the engagement of a few thoughtful individuals using their voice and power, a movement is formed. Legislation was passed to give opportunities to Dreamers, and there's more work to be done to destigmatize and advocate for immigration reform. *Illegitimate Voice* personalizes these issues. Democracy requires us to be active participants as we respond to the challenges of our time. Through the engagement of a few thoughtful individuals using their voice and power, a movement is formed. Legislation was passed to give opportunities to Dreamers, and there's more work to be done to destigmatize and advocate for immigration reform. *Illegitimate Voice* personalizes these issues.”

Return Date Unknown

TYMUR TSAPLIENKO



I was born in Kyiv, Ukraine, in the family of prominent Ukrainian journalists (both parents). I have inherited their knack for filming and covering remarkable events.

Through my school years I have developed another passion: aviation. I used to film for several Ukrainian airlines. Yet, my favorite was filming for Antonov Company, the manufacturer of the world's biggest aircraft: AN-225 Mriya (Ukrainian word for “dream”). Right before the war broke out, I have scheduled filming of this plane and its crew. This event, for which I was so much looking to, never took place. On the first week of Russian invasion, a few days before my scheduled filming, an artillery strike destroyed Mriya. The atrocious Russian attack on the “Ukrainian dream” alongside world’s democracy brought along the death of tens of thousands of Ukrainians.

After the start of the full-scale invasion I volunteered with providing humanitarian aid for Ukrainians. I also spoke at the European and international institutions raising awareness about our people. Not only that, but I also had a great chance to make with BYkids the movie "Return Date: Unknown". It gave me the opportunity to apply my creative skills for Ukraine and the world to benefit. Work on this film, reflecting on my own experience, and the experiences of my friends and family, has helped me to rethink my life path in the new reality.

“On February 24th, the Russian attack on Ukraine took place. An attack on the society and people of Ukraine; people who aimed to become a progressive and flourishing country. This attack turned out to be an offensive on the whole world’s democracy.

“Democracy and freedom are values that compose a healthy and progressive society. We all seek for it. Freedom of speech, freedom of thoughts, freedom of feelings.

“The Russian aggressor is trying to take all of these freedoms away from me, my family my friends, my people.

“Ukraine has become the stronghold that protects the civilised world’s democracy. Ukraine is ready to defend its freedom and yours, paying the highest price for it.

“Soldiers are dying, people are suffering, and children are wounded and killed at the hands of Russians.

“*Return Date: Unknown* portrays my personal story and the story of people around me who despite all adversities continued to carry democratic values through the many obstacles on their path. At the time of war and uncertainty. The movie reflects my vision on the state of my country and my people through it I explore the values, which I hold dear. This film helped me understand how I can apply these values of freedom and democracy, how to better understand and apply them in difficult situations; this film helped me reach inner freedom and inner peace.

“Prominent members of my family whom you will see in the movie are defending those values right now on the informational frontline by bringing truth about Ukraine to light.

“This movie is the story of how those values of freedom and democracy have kept us all sane and helped to find a new cause to defend and a purpose to achieve. I want to share my vision with you through this movie so that both the viewer and I could take something remarkable or thought provoking from the film and apply or use it later on our life path.”

The Oubliette

MAX HENDRICKSON



I am a 17 year old filmmaker and animator from Dublin Ireland, and I have been making films since I was 7 years old.

I am particularly interested in 3D computer animation as well as some more traditional mediums such as stop-motion and hand-drawn animation.

“My film *The Oubliette* is set in a world with a menacing threat of surveillance and authoritarianism, and we explore this world with the protagonist as he arrives to the city.”

The Speech of Txai Surui

The film was directed by a collective of students enrolled in the Multimedia Project at Escola Parque.



Films made by students of the Escola Parque multimedia project have been selected and awarded at festivals in different countries around the world



Filmmakers:

Marina Horta Montero, Vicente Rubin Roly, Yongquan Li, Sofia Emi Kasai, Tainá S. Oliveira, Luisa Cymbalista, Luisa Marques Bras, Ana Julia Costa Abreu, Anair Constança Lima, Mylena Vitória Sales, Cecília Vila Maior Teixeira, Rafaela Ameli Muñoz, Rosa Flaksman Veloso, Anouk Margot Goldfeld, Eduarda Almeida Barreira, Maria Eduarda Mayrink, Maria Eduardha Mangi, Tomaz Weller Lopes, Maria Clara Busato, Fabio Borges de Oliveira, Felipe Salvatore, Gabriel Lent, Olivia Longo Rocha, João Marcelo Bertoti Sereno, Catarina Varejao Paz, Clara Ferreira Moreira, Julia Marinho Macedo, Rita Zerbini, Cecilia Vidal, Henrique Camara Veiga, Isabella Lima, Maria Barcellos Mendonça, Antonio Monteiro Lins, Clara luz de Salles, João Antonio Conde, Maria Luiza de Carvalho Duarte, Diogo Guaraná T. Cavalcanti, Ramon Gallindo Lima, Sophia Ribeiro Pouchucq, Nereo Cardoso Neto, Nina Sichinel Chávarry, Celine Badre, Marina Gomes Giancristoforo, Guadalupe Lima Torretta

“The film *The Speech of Txai Surui* presents the historic speech by Txai Suruí at the opening of COP-26: UN Conference on Climate Change, in Glasgow, Scotland (2021).

“Txai Suruí is a Brazilian indigenous activist leader of the Paiter-Suruí ethnic group.

“She was the only indigenous person in Latin America and the only Brazilian to speak at COP-26. Her speech was made in front of more than 100 heads of state and echoed across the planet.

“The film was shown the following year, at COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in a panel in which Txai Surui was participating.

“Native indigenous peoples across the planet need to be protagonists in climate change issues, especially those who live in the Amazon, the largest rainforest on Earth.

“The film's proposal is to leverage Txai Surui's powerful discourse to film festival audiences around the world, especially youth audiences.”

Togetherness (Kapwa)

JACK LACY



Jack Lacy is a gay, Filipino American filmmaker from Richmond, Virginia. He studies Film and Television at NYU to fulfill a personal goal of uplifting minority narratives within the stories he tells. He is currently pursuing learning the Filipino language, Tagalog, at NYU on top of his film studies, as a way of reconnecting with his Asian American heritage.

“*Kapwa (Togetherness)* is a short film expanded from a project in my Filipino class, following the fictional accounts of a student protestor, TJ, amidst the beginnings of the First Quarter Storm in the early 1970s Philippines. The film highlights the socio-political atmosphere of this time through a narrative-form short film sourcing actual accounts of the events by Jose F. Lacaba. ‘Kapwa,’ meaning togetherness, demonstrates the Filipino virtue of unifying oneself with others in a shared identity. My film stresses forgiveness, growth, and peace as Filipinos, and we as global citizens, all navigate political change.”

Two Americas

ASHER ANANTHAM



Asher Anantham is a sophomore in the STEM magnet program at Montgomery Blair High School. He resides in Bethesda, MD with his parents, two sisters and 4 cats. In addition to being a keen varsity wrestler, his passion is producing short documentaries to promote social and environmental justice goals. His filmography includes the award winning short documentaries Vaping: A Youth Crisis, White Picket Fence, Venus Ascending: Gender Equality & Water and The Dark Side of Pet Breeding.

“Democracy represents more than a system of government, but a way of living in a society. Federal, state and local housing policy has worked together to segregate the United States, through red-lining, federal housing projects, the interstate highway system and zoning. As a consequence, minorities generally live in communities with poorer schools and fewer amenities. So we must ask ourselves, is the segregation of America along racial lines consistent with our beliefs and notions of ‘democracy?’”

Unpunished Crimes

ELLIS CHUNG



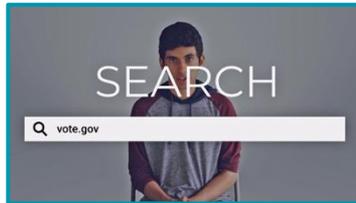
Ellis Chung is a 10th grader focused on advocacy for women, youth, and the AAPI community, and to that end has produced several documentary films. Her films cover topics such as local online education for girls in Afghanistan, urban community art spaces, teenage political cartoonists, and COVID-19 anti-hate crime legislation. Her films have received awards from

C-SPAN, Imagine This Women’s International Film Festival, All American All American High School Film Festival, and other national and international competitions. She is a film mentor and project leader through her work with Action Youth Media, an urban non-profit organization in the Washington, D.C. area that uses media for social justice activism. Outside of film, she plays squash and the cello, owns a small business, and loves to read and write.

“Legislation is important in making advancements towards social justice in a democracy. However, real change can only occur through educating our citizens, making them aware of critical social justice issues, and prompting them to act for or on behalf of those impacted by those issues. Even in a democracy, legislation won’t always be enough for progress, and in the case of hate crime legislation, it’s evident it hasn’t been.”

You Need to Vote

AMOGH THAKKAR



As a 19-year-old, Amogh is a student at New York University studying interactive media. While pursuing non-profit work through The Youth Project, he learned editing and filmmaking through interning for companies like The Garden Creative. He continued this skill through creative work

and social change work like *You Need to Vote*.

“*You Need to Vote* is all about encouraging the youth to vote in a democratic political landscape that doesn't usually consider this population heavily. Democracy is about allowing *all* the eligible people to lead, decide and influence their government. *You Need to Vote* drives young voters to take *their* place in *their* democracy.”

When I Speak Freely

BENJAMIN NEGRON



Benjamin Negrón is a Youth Mentor at WPAA-TV in Wallingford Connecticut. The same place where he graduated from Lyman Hall High School in 2020. He goes by BennyFL as he is a recording artist outside of his work and program responsibilities. He has won awards for his work and also played a hand in the awards of the summer youth programs he's had the pleasure of working with. Now going into his second summer with the title of Youth Leader, he's excited to see what's next for himself and the program.

“Everyone in a democracy has a right to Free Speech.”

Meet the Speakers

CHELSEA MILLER – Keynote speaker



A Columbia University graduate and Brooklyn native, Chelsea Miller is one of the leading voices in racial justice and digital organizing. After working in the Obama White House in 2016 on criminal justice reform, Chelsea would later become a global voice in activism. Chelsea is the Co-Founder of Freedom March NYC, one of the largest youth-led civil rights organizations in the country. Organizing movements in person and online, Chelsea is globally recognized for her ability to use social media to reach various audiences and build community.

With a digital reach of over 1.5 million through partnerships, ambassadorships, and digital campaigns, Chelsea has leveraged her knowledge to work with brands such as Versace, Nike, Puma, Toms, Facebook, and the WNBA.

As a public speaker, Chelsea has addressed thousands of people in speaking engagements that include Madison Square Garden, Yale University, and the

March on Washington. Her work has been featured in Forbes, Rolling Stone, Vogue, CNN, Financial Times, and more. In 2021, Chelsea was honored as the Voice of Justice on the Oprah Winfrey Network by Vital Voices and NowThisNEXT. She was also named as one of 12 recipients to receive the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian award. In 2022, Chelsea was named as one of the newest commentators for NOWThis, the #1 most watched news brand globally on social.

Chelsea has lent her voice to several television programs helping to tell the stories of movements and mobilization in the digital age. Most recently, Chelsea was featured in the PBS docuseries, *Making Black America*, exploring the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the fight for racial justice today. Some of Chelsea's key focus areas are racial justice, women's leadership, reproductive justice, youth advocacy, climate change, and intersectional movement building.

DANA ROBERSON – Guest speaker



Dana Roberson, is a multi-award winning veteran producer of national news and public affairs programming. She currently is executive producer of special projects and the Preserving Democracy initiative at WNET. Her previous role was as executive producer at *PBS NewsHour Weekend*.

Prior to joining *PBS NewsHour* she produced at WNYC/New York Public Radio for the national daily news program *The Takeaway*. She also had a long esteemed career at CBS News on acclaimed programs such as *CBS 60 Minutes*, *60 Minutes II* and *CBS Sunday Morning*. She also worked with legendary newsman Dan Rather both at CBS News and on his investigative team at AXS-TV. Her investigative reporting earned her a Peabody award for coverage of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq. She has reported globally on stories from the war in Afghanistan to the earthquake in Haiti and has covered on-going issues such as the opioid crises, criminal justice reform and racial injustice.

She is a graduate of the University of Iowa and received her M.S. from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. She also is an adjunct professor at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York and Fordham University. She resides in Harlem, New York.

Meet the Judges



Elis Estrada is the Director of Digital Operations for PBS Digital Studios. Prior to joining PBS in 2022, Estrada was senior director of PBS Newshour Student Reporting Labs (SRL). In that role, she oversaw operations, strategy, and the development of the national youth media organization providing thousands of educators and students with unique resources and programs to build journalism, media literacy and storytelling skills. During her time at SRL, Elis led numerous content initiatives featured on

the NewsHour, local PBS stations and partner organizations including MediaWise, TeenVogue, Snapchat and Instagram. Before joining the NewsHour, Elis helped to oversee program and digital strategy at the News Literacy Project and was a producer at NY1 News in New York.



Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg is the Newhouse Director of CIRCLE. She oversees CIRCLE's wide-ranging portfolio of research and impact projects with its diverse partners and for audience groups. Kei has a background in Community Psychology and Social-Emotional Learning, which she applies to various projects at CIRCLE. Before coming to CIRCLE, Kei worked with young people and families at a public high school, and at an emergency room and community health center as a therapist in training. Working with people who faced numerous structural

challenges made her want to work with systems that created those challenges in the first place, which attracted her to CIRCLE.

As a leading voice in the youth civic engagement field, Kei is frequently featured in major outlets such as The New York Times, The Atlantic, National Public Radio, C-SPAN, Channel 1, and NBC. Kei is a recipient of the Jobs for The Future Distinguished Fellowship for Student-Centered Learning (2016-2018), and serves on the National Board of Generation Citizen, Democracy Works. Most recently, she played a major role in development of the Our Common Purpose, a commission-report from the AAA&S, and the Educating for American Democracy initiative. She earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Loyola University, with an emphasis on positive youth development and community psychology.

Chelsea Miller (see bio under *Meet the Speakers*)



Geraldine Moriba is the Senior Vice President of TheGrio. She's an award winning media executive, filmmaker and journalist who has worked in senior leadership roles at PBS, CNN, NBC, ABC and CBC. Moriba has earned five Emmy Awards, an Alfred I. DuPont Award, two Peabody Awards, the Princeton University Ferris Professorship of Journalism Fellowship, the Anita Hill Gender Justice Award, and more.



Jeffrey Palmer is an Associate Professor of Performing and Media Arts, a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, and is an award-winning filmmaker and media artist. He describes his work as a multimedia exploration of Indigenous people's lives in twenty-first century America. He recently completed the feature film, *N. Scott Momaday: Words from a Bear*, examining the life and mind of the first and only Native American writer to win the Pulitzer Prize for literature. The film premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and aired nationally on the PBS series, *American Masters*. In 2020, the film

was nominated for an Emmy in support of *American Masters*' 33rd season, for Outstanding Documentary or Non-Fiction Series. The film also won the 2019 Ted Turner Award for the film that most encourages environmental stewardship. Of Palmer's numerous short films, *Isabelle's Garden*, was a winner of the Bill and Melinda Gates Short Film Challenge at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. His films screened at venues such as Hot Docs, The Seattle International Film Festival, The Berlinale European Market, and many others around the world. He received numerous awards, grants, and recognition from the Sundance Institute, ITVS, Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, and the Firelight Media Documentary Lab. He is a member of the Directors Guild of America, International Documentary Association, Television Academy, and in 2022 completed the short narrative film *Ghosts*, which chronicles Native American boarding schools in Oklahoma. He is currently working on the feature narrative script for the film *Ghosts*.



Hari Sreenivasan is a host for *Amanpour and Company* which airs domestically on PBS and internationally on CNN International. He is also the host and Executive Producer for *Take On Fake* a YouTube channel focused on misinformation and disinformation.

Sreenivasan has worked for several PBS programs including *SciTech Now* and the *PBS Newshour* where he anchored the Weekend Editions for 8 years. He continues to contribute to the coverage of Higher Education.

Prior to his time at PBS he has worked at both the CBS and ABC News networks as well as local television stations in San Francisco, Raleigh, NC and Yakima Washington. Sreenivasan also reported on technology for CNET.

He is the winner of National and Local Emmys, a Webby award.

Resources

[Ethics in the Classroom: PBS LearningMedia collection](#)

The *Ethics in the Classroom* collection was created as part of WNET's Youth Collective. The resources in this collection – videos, interactive lessons, and more – provide teachers with tools to incorporate ethics education in the classroom, promote understanding of differing viewpoints, and foster civil dialogue about bias.

[Preserving Democracy](#)

Preserving Democracy is a unique multi-platform initiative from The WNET Group covering what is perhaps the most critical national issue of our time. The initiative supports, coordinates, and disseminates innovative reporting from public media across all platforms on a national level, tracking efforts both to limit and to protect voter participation at all levels of government.

Watch the full documentary [Preserving Democracy: Pursuing a More Perfect Union](#) and explore educational resources

[Reel Works](#)

Change the story tellers, change the world! Reel Works mentors, inspires, and empowers underserved NYC youth to share their stories through filmmaking, creating a springboard to successful careers in media and beyond.

[Corrupt the Youth](#)

Corrupt the Youth is an outreach program that brings philosophy to high school students from backgrounds that have been historically excluded.

[Civic Life Project](#)

Civic Life Project empowers and advances youth civic engagement through the use of video storytelling, nurturing Democracy for generations to come.

[Films BYKids](#)

Films BYkids, a collaboration between THIRTEEN and the non-profit organization, BYkids, gives voice to youth from around the world. The series pairs teenagers from diverse cultures with accomplished filmmakers to create short personal documentaries that educate and encourage understanding about global issues.

[ALL ARTS](#)

ALL ARTS is a multimedia platform that documents and showcases established and emerging artists working in visual art, music, theater, dance, film, literature and more.

[CIRCLE](#)

CIRCLE, the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, is a non-partisan, independent research organization focused on youth civic engagement in the United States.

[FilmFreeway](#)

FilmFreeway is a way to discover, submit and get tickets to thousands of film festivals, screenplay contests, and more.

[Fresh Films](#)

Fresh Films is a production studio and training ground for youth in film. Fresh Films creates Emmy-nominated TV shows, feature films, and documentaries while training future filmmakers in all aspects of film.

[MediaWise](#)

MediaWise empowers people of all ages digital media literacy and fact-checking skills to spot misinformation and disinformation.

[Student Reporting Labs](#)

The PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs (SRL) connects students with a network of public broadcasting mentors and an innovative journalism curriculum to develop digital media, critical thinking, and communication skills while producing original news reports.

[Take on Fake](#)

Take on Fake debunks claims you've seen or shared online to show you how to stay informed. Host Hari Sreenivasan follows the Internet rabbit hole of misinformation, reading beyond a single headline to find credible sources to uncover the truth.

[The Conversationalist](#)

The Conversationalist is a non-partisan educational platform empowering Gen Z to break out of their echo chambers, have difficult conversations, and unify together.

[The Up and Up](#)

An online destination for what to know about Gen Z's politics: how young Americans are organizing, mobilizing, and participating in civic life and politics – or, how and why they're not.

[YVote](#)

YVote is sparking a cross-partisan youth voting movement through which young people connect their passions and beliefs with how they can make a difference, at and beyond the ballot box.

Partners

REEL WORKS

[Reel Works](#) mentors, inspires, and empowers underserved NYC youth to share their stories through filmmaking, creating a springboard to successful careers in media and beyond. Reel Works matches teens 1:1 with professional filmmaker mentors to tell their stories and have their voices heard. It's a powerful combination that changes young lives and creates films that have been seen by tens of millions of viewers worldwide.

PRESERVING DEMOCRACY

Preserving Democracy is a unique multi-platform initiative from The WNET Group covering what is perhaps the most critical national issue of our time. The initiative supports, coordinates, and disseminates innovative reporting from public media across all platforms on a national level, tracking efforts both to limit and to protect voter participation at all levels of government.

Preserving Democracy aims to facilitate an unprecedented level of collaboration and partnership among PBS programs and platforms, and perhaps most importantly, to build collaboration, capacity and infrastructure among member stations to facilitate local reporting, encourage local engagement across the political spectrum and stimulate dialogue among diverse voices.

The WNET Group's Preserving Democracy, a public media initiative, receives principal support from The Chang K. Park Foundation. And major funding from: William Ackman and Neri Oxman, Ronnie and Lawrence D. Ackman, The Dorothy Y. Pacella Fund, The Anderson Family Charitable Fund, and Janet Prindle Seidler.

Credits

Michelle Chen – Senior Producer, Kids’ Media and Education
Kristina Kirtley – Associate Director, Community Engagement
Hannah Dawe – Coordinating Producer, Kids’ Media and Education
Mia Weinberger – Festival Coordinator
Sophie Nadel – Production Assistant
Jenn Abramowski - Senior Educator Engagement Specialist, Kids’ Media and Education
Jesse Pilnik - Associate Producer, Kids’ Media and Education
Andy Cullison – Youth Collective Ethics Advisor
Sydney Harvey and **Alexia Papagiotis** – Ethics Discussion Facilitators
Jane Pennebaker – Associate General Counsel, The WNET Group
Adiata DeVore – Finance, Budget Senior Specialist, The WNET Group
B.T. Whitehill – Graphic Design
Sandy Goldberg – Director of Education, Kids’ Media and Education
Sandra Sheppard – Executive Producer and Director, Kids’ Media and Education

Special Thanks

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The WNET Group’s Preserving Democracy, a public media initiative, with principal support provided by **The Chang K. Park Foundation**.

The WNET Group

The WNET Group creates inspiring media content and meaningful experiences for diverse - audiences nationwide. It is the community-supported home of New York’s THIRTEEN – America’s flagship PBS station – WLIW21, THIRTEEN PBSKids, WLIW World and Create; NJ PBS, New Jersey’s statewide public television network; Long Island’s only NPR station WLIW-FM; ALL ARTS, the arts and culture media provider; newsroom NJ Spotlight News; and FAST channels Arts TWG+ and PBS Nature. Through these channels and streaming platforms, The WNET Group brings arts, culture, education, news, documentary, entertainment and DIY programming to more than five million viewers each month. The WNET Group’s award-winning productions include signature PBS series *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters* and *Amanpour and Company* and trusted local news programs *MetroFocus* and *NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozzi*. Inspiring curiosity and nurturing dreams, The WNET Group’s award-winning Kids’ Media and Education team produces the PBS KIDS series *Cyberchase*, interactive *Mission US* history games, and resources for families, teachers and caregivers. A leading nonprofit public media producer for more than 60 years, The WNET Group presents and distributes content that fosters lifelong learning, including multiplatform initiatives addressing poverty, jobs, economic opportunity, social justice, understanding and the environment. Through Passport, station members can stream new and archival programming anytime, anywhere. The WNET Group represents the best in public media. Join us.

