

W. WOMEN'S VOICES NOW



IMPACT REPORT | 2021

We use film to drive positive social change that advances women's and girls' rights globally

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Since 2010, Women's Voices Now has used film to drive positive social change that advances women's and girls' rights globally — with **YOUR** help and support. By promoting, producing, and sharing films focusing on women's and girls' rights issues, we provide active support to filmmakers who give voice to **unheard women and girls**, and activate **civil society** by moving audiences from **empathy to action**.

Our organization began with the vision of Women's Voices Now Founder, Leslie J. Sacks. Leslie believed that if we create opportunities for women to share their stories, we would all benefit.



“Women are the catalysts and their voices are the medium.”

— Leslie J. Sacks, Founder of Women's Voices Now

2021 marked eight years since Leslie's passing. While he is no longer with us, Leslie's vision to work toward a more equitable and just world by advancing women's and girls' rights lives on. I couldn't be more proud of leading an organization that strives to carry out this legacy.

This year, 2022, marks my 10-year anniversary as Women's Voices Now Executive Director.

I am so grateful for the wonderful community of supporters, friends, volunteers, staff members, foundations, and organizations that have aligned with Women's Voices Now over the years. We are a passionate and dedicated community, and we are determined to leave this world better than we found it. Our collective efforts reach toward the ultimate goal of a **global culture shift** in which communities and institutions **believe** in the **value of gender equality** and adapt their behaviors and actions to support **consistent** advancement of women's and girls' rights.

The need is still here: We continue to navigate a global pandemic that has exacerbated the challenges and inequalities faced by women and girls all over the world, as well as economic and environmental crises, and armed conflicts. Recent findings of UN Women and UNESCO report that after 25 years of diligent efforts to implement the 1995 UN Beijing Platform for Action, we have yet to tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Attitudes, beliefs, practices, and behaviors that perpetuate negative stereotypes, discrimination, and gender inequality are estimated to be held by **as much as 90 percent of the world's population**. From this shocking reality, it is high time we understand that no matter how much policy reform we implement, economic opportunities we create, or even increase access to education, **change needs to happen in people's perceptions of women and girls**. This is precisely where the work of Women's Voices Now enters the scene.

In the contents of this report you will learn about our unique approach to the advocacy of women's and girls' rights. Over the last decade, we have developed a model across our programs to move audiences from "empathy to action."

Using the **empathy** generated by film as it **moves** and **inspires us**, we challenge gender-based stereotypes and aim to change our collective and individual perceptions of women and girls. But we also invite stakeholders to take an **active role** in the fight for gender equality: Our films demonstrate how each of us has the potential to advocate for women's and girls' rights — for themselves, their loved ones, and society as a whole; and we include specific calls to action anywhere we can.

“There is no greater force for change, for peace, for justice and democracy, for inclusive economic growth than a world of empowered women.”

— Phumzile Mlambo-
Ngcuka, Former Executive
Director of UN Women

There are two key **results we see from our work**. First, there is the cultivation of a global audience consuming media that normalizes gender equality by representing women and girls in their full range of diversity and roles, as well as their struggles and triumphs. Second, we create a global community whose members feel personally responsible and capable of changemaking and take actions to do so. Today, Women’s Voices Now is one of few organizations uniquely at the intersection of girls’ and women’s rights, and film and social change — that implements targeted programs to effect change at the individual (youth and filmmakers), industrial (media and entertainment industry), and societal levels (global audiences).

With your support and partnership, we will continue to create opportunities for individuals and communities to come together to do and to be better, by changing attitudes and perceptions of the roles and rights of women and girls. Through film we have the most effective and available tool to manifest this culture shift, and we’re not afraid to use it.

In the pages of this report, it is my privilege to share with you our efforts to fulfill the mission of Women’s Voices Now in 2021. We invite you to join us in continuing this work for the next decade and beyond.

With great gratitude,



Heidi Basch-Harod
Executive Director

W. WOMEN’S VOICES NOW



WOMEN'S VOICES NOW FILM FESTIVAL

The Need

Female filmmakers continue to face difficulties in accessing funding and opportunities, especially when making films about women or minorities. This is also known as the “Celluloid Ceiling.”

- ◆ In 2021, female filmmakers in the United States still experienced a 32.4% drop between independent and top-grossing films and “women described difficulty in generating financing or interest in films about females, or individuals from underrepresented groups, [...] or for female oriented films.”
- ◆ In Europe, only 16% of the funding goes to films directed by women.
- ◆ Stereotypes about women’s skills and ambition and male-dominated networks remain a powerful barrier to entry.

Another example of the double standard faced by female directors and, especially women of color, is provided to us by a research conducted by the University of Southern California Annenberg’s Inclusion Initiative. In their [*Inclusion in the Director’s Chair: Analysis of Director Gender & Race/Ethnicity Across 1,500 Top Films from 2007 to 2021*](#) report, they have found that films directed by women of color earned the highest metacritic scores (62.2% compared to 54.3% for their male counterparts and 55% for their white female counterparts). Despite these impressive scores, major studios and motion picture distributors are still hiring women of color the least, amongst other demographic groups.



“There is a vibrant and emerging community of underrepresented directors out there who are creating powerful work. Through their festival, Women’s Voices Now joins the ranks of organizations and initiatives centering artists who have historically been at the margins by creating space to celebrate women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ voices in filmmaking.”

— Leah Meyerhoff, Founder of Film Fatales, Women’s Voices Now Jury Member in 2017

Our Approach – About the Festival

The Women’s Voices Now Film Festival is a women’s rights documentary film festival for emerging filmmakers.

It seeks to address the significant lack of representation of women in film, as well as the lack of access to essential funding for women in film. We support emerging women filmmakers creating social-change films to advocate for girls’ and women’s rights around the world.

Our independent film festival is designed to challenge gender-based stereotypes both on and off the screen. In the long term, our goal is to contribute to a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive film industry. To support this vision, our festival:

- ◆ Provides a platform for emerging women filmmakers telling essential authentic stories
- ◆ Supports women filmmakers with cash prizes and visibility
- ◆ Connects women filmmakers with each other and with film industry professionals

We seek films that address or shine light upon issues affecting women and/or girls through a social-change lens. We accept documentary films in the short, feature, and youth categories; and award a minimum of \$10,000 in cash prizes each year across categories. We receive submissions from August through December, and celebrate the winners and the film festival in March during Women’s History Month.

Check out our trailer
for more information
about our festival!



— Insights from
the 2020/2021
Women's Voices Now
Film Festival



Film Submissions and Selections

During the 2020/2021 edition of the Women's Voices Now Film Festival, eligible filmmakers were invited to submit their documentary films between September 1st and December 31st.

We received a total of 146 submissions from filmmakers coming from 36 different countries (see map below). The number of submissions was lower than during previous years, most likely due to a combination of the following reasons:

- ◆ Filmmaking was particularly affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic and many film productions were put on hold
- ◆ Our festival's strategy evolved to ensure that cash prizes would support directors and/or teams demonstrating gender parity and documentary films that proved a commitment to advancing women's rights, reducing the number of eligible films

Film Selection Process

Once submitted, films underwent a three-step selection process:

1

A team of 8 volunteer previewers conducted the first round of viewing and selection. The various locales from which these previewers were located included: Paris, Dubai, Prague, and Los Angeles. They viewed over 62 hours of film, and ensured that films matched eligibility requirements in terms of film categories, length, and topics.

2

3 staff members conducted the second round of film viewing and selection to assess film topics and their relevance to salient women's rights issues, as well as overall documentary quality (does the documentary film provide context on the social issue being addressed? Does it introduce multiple points of view from expert, cultural bearers and affected individuals? etc.).

3

Finally, our jury of 9 highly qualified members made the final selection of our 7 winning films and 7 honorable mentions.

Meet our 2020/21 Jury

Read more about our jury members [here!](#)



Sara Seligman
Director



Efuru Flowers
Distributor | Producer



Sherry Hakimi
Executive Director



Asha Dahya
Producer | Writer



Lorena Lourenço
Writer | Director



Elizabeth Weitzman
Film Critic



Viktoria I.V. King
Director



Vera Zambonelli
Founder | Executive Director



Keianna Johnson
Content Creator

Each year, we put out a general call for submissions of films pertaining to girls' and women's rights, broadly. The point of this approach, as opposed to pre-selecting a festival theme, is to leave it up to the filmmakers to bring our attention to the most important topics regarding women's rights around the world. After the second round of pre-selection, a theme naturally emerges from the pool of competing films.

This year, the theme was:

“Stand and Be Counted – rewriting convention and challenging injustice to forge a new path ahead.”



THE 2021 WINNERS AND HONORABLE MENTIONS



Sisters Rising

Directors: Willow Feral & Brad Heck

USA

**Leslie J. Sacks Best Film
\$3,000**

The Dilemma of Desire

Director: Maria Finitzo

USA

**Best Director
\$1,000**



Your Mother's Desire

Director: Adam Golub
Editor: Marina de Oliveira Cavalcante

Brazil

**Best Documentary Feature
\$2,000**

Ritu Goes Online

Director: Vrinda Samartha

India
Best Documentary Short
\$2,000



Lupita

Director: Monica Wise Robles

Mexico
Best Social-Change
Documentary Short
\$1,500

This is Not a Love Letter

Director: Ariel Zucker

USA
Best Experimental Film
\$1,000



Mávka

Director: Alona Shylova

Ukraine
Best Youth Film
\$500

Honorable Mentions

- ♦ **Hollie's Dress** — Documentary Short, Canada
Director: Annie Sakkab
- ♦ **How She Moves** — Documentary Feature, Pakistan
Director: Anya Raza
- ♦ **Liberate** — Experimental, USA
Director: Kaia Lavendar
- ♦ **Messania's Story** — Documentary Short, Kenya
Director: Laki Karavias
- ♦ **Nevertheless** — Documentary Feature, USA
Director: Sarah Moshman
- ♦ **Post Cards from the Orient** — Experimental, Turkey
Director: Sis Gurdal
- ♦ **Yellow Cards for Equal Pay** — Youth, USA
Director: Maia Vota

Watch the winning films trailers [here](#).





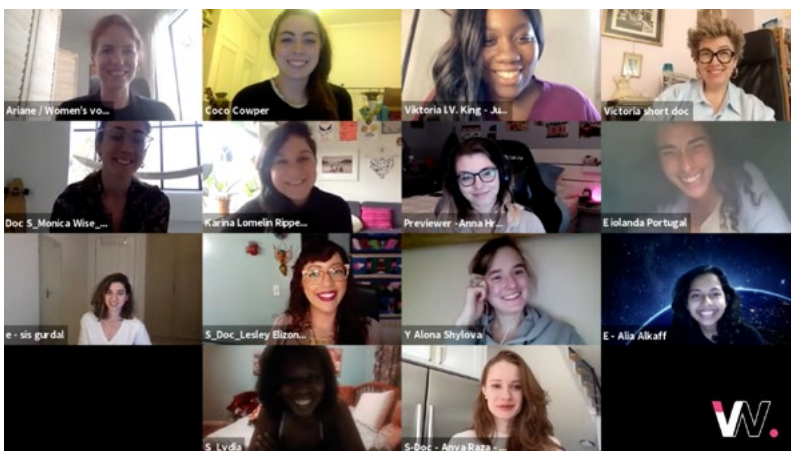
“Women’s Voices Now carefully selects films and filmmakers to its festivals that have the capacity to catalyze positive social change. With a world that is so connected, yet, at the same time, so polarized, we need exposure to stories that remind us of our shared humanity. When it comes to women’s rights, we need empathy because we must all feel the necessity for this movement. After all, it is a human rights struggle, the success of which, ultimately, serves to improve the status of all.”

— Helen Mirren, Actress and 2021 Women’s Voices Now Film Festival Keynote Speaker

Live Events

- On **March 11th**, we launched our festival kick-off event with **Dame Helen Mirren as keynote speaker**. We announced the 7 awarded films (details available [here](#) and below) and hosted a Q&A discussion with the winning filmmakers. They received a total of \$10,000 in cash prizes to support their current or future film projects. **247** attendees attended this virtual event.
- On **March 14th**, we organized a virtual private networking event for all preselected filmmakers and jury members, during which they connected with, and were able to receive direct feedback from the jury. 26 filmmakers joined this private event.
- On **March 25th**, we screened *Lupita*, which won Best Social-Change Documentary Short, during a special virtual event at the 65th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and in partnership with the Tom Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice. The event included a Q&A with the filmmaker, Monica Wise Robles, and representatives from Women’s Voices Now and the Lantos Foundation. 80 attendees from all over the world attended this event.

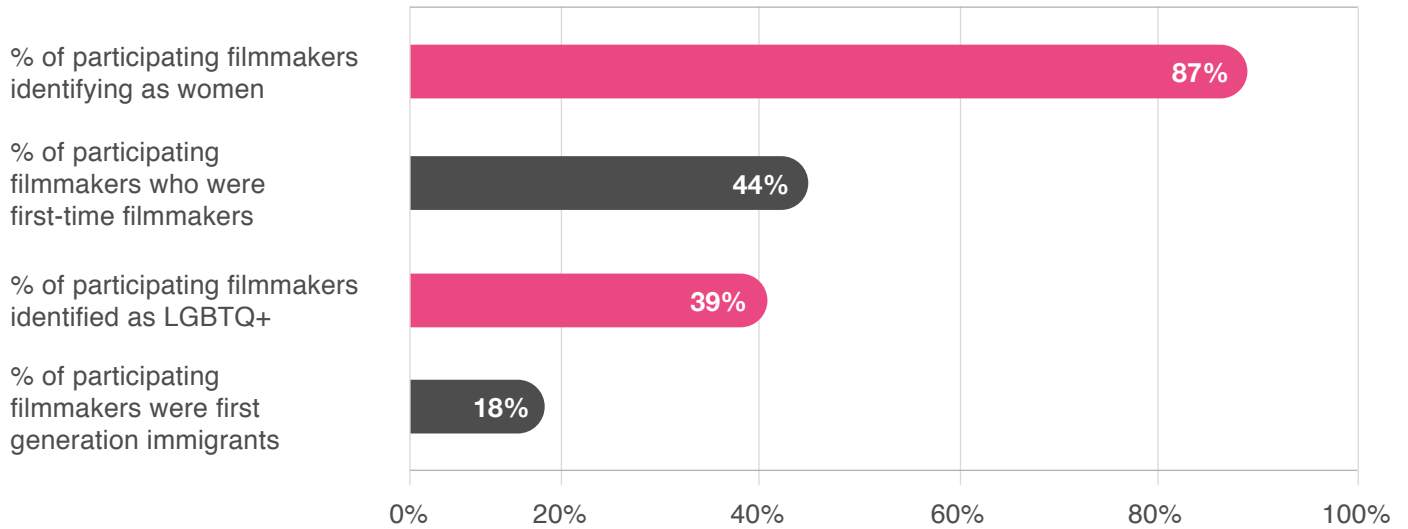
Q&A session with the 7 winning filmmakers and 2 of our jury members during our live festival event on March 11th.



Participating filmmakers during our private networking event on March 14th.

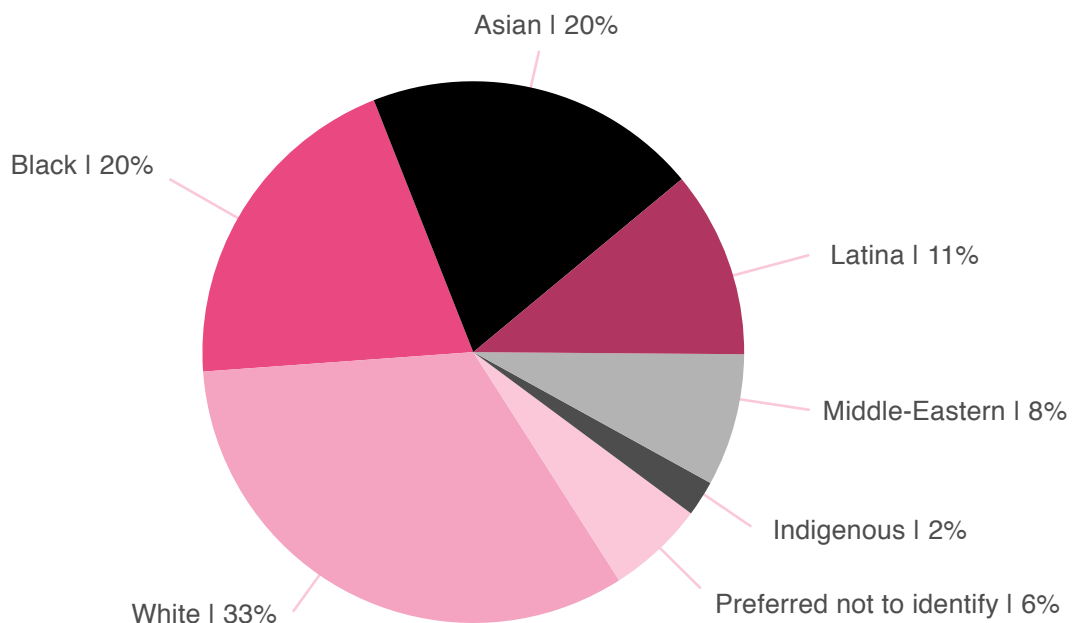
Who are we serving?

Among the filmmakers who submitted films to our festival:



They were **34** years old on average

In terms of ethnicity, it was complicated to provide categories with global relevance. Concepts around race and ethnicity vary greatly amongst cultures, regions, and even countries. We decided to offer broad categories and to allow respondents to self-identify as well. Here are the results:





Our impact in stories...

Monica Wise Robles is a Colombian-American documentary filmmaker and video journalist based in Mexico City. In 2021, **she won Best Social Change Documentary Short in our WVN Film Festival** for her short documentary about Chiapan activist, [Lupita](#). We were able to provide extra visibility for her film by screening it and holding a Q&A with her at the **65th UN Women Commission on the Status of Women**. She decided to use part of her cash prize from the festival to launch **an outreach campaign** to show her documentary in the highlands of Chiapas to **youth who are unfamiliar with their own history**.



“Winning the Leslie J. Sacks Best Documentary Feature Award was one of the huge highlights in our launch of SISTERS RISING out into the world. We were honored by the recognition, aided by the award money which we rolled back into the outreach and marketing of our documentary, and personally touched by the warm and engaging reception of our film that the WVN Film Festival created. The whole experience was wonderful and affirming. Thank you for such a meaningful experience.”

— Willow O'Feral, Director of Sisters Rising, Winner of the Leslie J. Sacks Best Documentary Feature Award at the 2021 Women's Voices Now Film Festival

We are looking for sponsors who believe in the power of women's voices. If that sounds like you, we have several exciting virtual and in-person opportunities to create meaningful partnerships together! Reach out to sponsorships@womensvoicesnow.org for more information.

If you are an individual and would like to support our festival, you can do so [here!](#)

Thank you for your support.

We are grateful for our 2021 Film Festival sponsors!

OUT.LI.ER



The Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation

GIRLS' VOICES NOW

Building Pathways

GIRLS' VOICES NOW

The Need

In Hollywood, there is a dire lack of representation in the film industry. In 2020, out of the top 200 films released in the United States, women made up only:

20.5%
of directors

25.9%
of writers

5%
of cinematographers

Women of color were particularly underrepresented. In 2021, they made up only:

5.9%
of directors

5.9%
of writers

(no data available for
BIWOC cinematographers)



To change these statistics and to see better representation, we need to invest, in and support, both current and future women filmmakers.

Simultaneously, in spite of outperforming boys academically, girls' confidence levels **drop by 30%** between ages 8 and 14. This significant decrease can seriously impede their desire and courage to speak up or share their stories and experiences. The confidence gender gap that begins at puberty often carries over into adulthood. To hear more from women, we need to empower girls to remain self-confident as they navigate adolescence and become adults.



“As a filmmaker and educator, being a part of Girls’ Voices Now has facilitated life long change for me. I am deeply inspired by the young filmmakers that emerge from this program and it is a dream to be part of this community of filmmakers. Programs like Girls’ Voices Now are what actually creates equity in the film world. I have so much love and appreciation for this program that truly changes lives.”

— Carla Belinda Orendorff, Girls’ Voices Now Media Chaperone
2019-2021

Our Approach — About Girls’ Voices Now

Our Girls’ Voices Now program empowers girls, ages 14-18, from under-resourced communities of the greater Los Angeles area to find, develop, and use their voices for social-change through filmmaking.

In the long term, Girls’ Voices Now contributes to a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive film and media industry and society.

Girls’ Voices Now teaches video filmmaking, leadership, and critical thinking skills during a five-week, free summer training and year-round enrichment activities. It is composed of several components:

- ◆ A five-week summer training serving 15-20 new participants each year, during which they create their first short documentary.
- ◆ A premiere public screening in October during which participants get to present their films to a live audience, including a Q&A, where friends and family members have the opportunity to celebrate their girl’s achievements.
- ◆ Since 2020, a year-round alumnae program is open to all current and past participants to further their personal, academic, and professional development. To date, we are serving approximately 67 alumnae.



Through Girls' Voices Now, we:

- ◆ Empower the **next generation of filmmakers and changemakers** through **personal and professional** development.
- ◆ Build pathways for crucial, **underrepresented voices to access** the film and the entertainment industries.
- ◆ Produce **relevant, powerful** short films with strong **educational value** for all ages.

“Girls' Voices Now has given me the resources and connections to truly be able to pursue what I once saw as unattainable.”

— Marisela, 2019 Girls' Voices Now Alumna and 2021 Girls' Voices Now Program Intern

Check out our [Girls' Voices Now reel](#) for more information!



GIRLS' VOICES NOW *Building Pathways*

Summer Program

The summer training took place between July 5th-August 6th, 2021, was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and served 17 direct participants.

During these five weeks, participants benefited from a comprehensive curriculum combining technical training with leadership and critical thinking skills, hands-on workshops, presentations from guest speakers, and self-care activities.

To teach and supervise them, we recruited a total of seven temporary staff members to carry out the program: a Lead Instructor, an Instructor's Assistant (both of these roles were filled by previous 2020 Girls' Voices Now staff), an Intern Program Coordinator, and 5 Media Chaperones (one chaperone per production team).

— Meet Our Girls' Voices Now Team! —



Brooke Sebold
Lead Instructor



Alexandra Velasco
Assistant Instructor



Viktoria I.V. King
Media Chaperone



Sierra Padilla
Media Chaperone



Nikoleta Vujnovic
Media Chaperone



Emily Karlsson
Media Chaperone



Carla Belinda Orendorff
Media Chaperone



Marisela Lopez
Intern

Participants worked in teams to produce 5 films in total.

Daily programming followed a regular structure: we began with an opening circle and ended with a closing circle. Other key components included: a guest speaker or panel, a self-care workshop, a filmmaking lesson, and additional time to connect. In the fourth and fifth weeks, participants spent a significant amount of time with their team members to complete their documentary films.

Topics that were covered throughout our program included:

- ◆ Filmmaking — framing, composition, interviewing, social-change films and documentaries, storytelling, pre and post-production, video shooting, and editing
- ◆ Social-change — using film for advocacy, discussions of various social impact issues, and developing critical thinking skills
- ◆ Self-care/empowerment — we address self-esteem and building confidence in a holistic way that includes discussions around feminism and societal norms, and exercises, such as meditation and movement workshops.

Participants also develop their leadership, collaboration, and public speaking skill throughout the program.

In addition, participants heard from 16 different guest speakers, including:

- ◆ **Rayka Zehtabchi**, Oscar-winning Director (*Period. End of Sentence*)
- ◆ **Kimberly Nao**, Fritz B. Burns Endowed Chair of Education and Director of Instructional Leadership at Mount St. Mary's University
- ◆ **Emerald Archer**, Director of the Center for the Advancement of Women at Mt. Saint Mary's University
- ◆ Women's rights activists
- ◆ Several female producers, cinematographers, writers, editors, and film critics.

View the Films Created by Our Participants!

In addition to writing and directing their first short film within just 5 weeks, our Girls' Voices Now participants created a social-change campaign for their film. At Women's Voices Now, we use film to create social change, and that's exactly what we're teaching them to do: Share your story and point of view through a film **and** give live audience members and online viewers concrete calls to action to continue making an impact.

In 2021, because our program was held virtually, participants created screening guides with pre- and post-screening questions to facilitate a conversation about their film's topic.

Check out the five short films created by our participants in 2021, and their screening guides below.



How do we reclaim our bodies and grow to be comfortable in them? **YOUR BODY IS YOURS** delves into society's current standards of beauty and explores the coexistence of body autonomy and positivity.

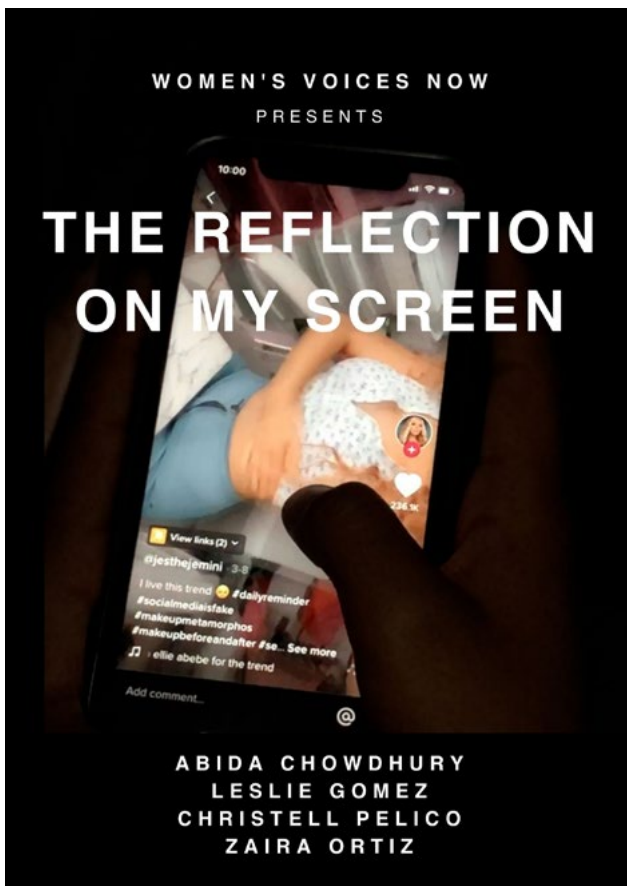
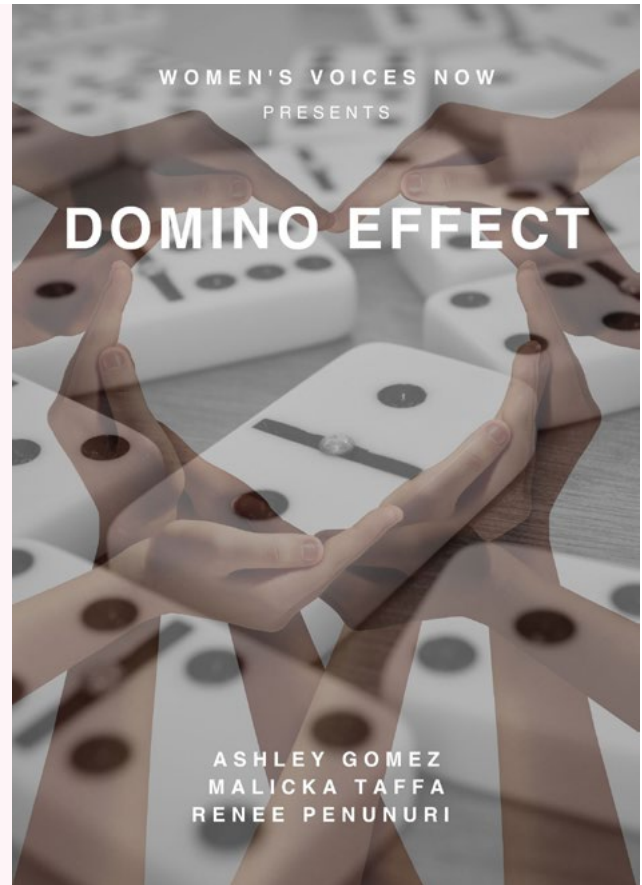
Filmmakers: Yara Cruz (16), Jaqueline Mendez (15), Sydney Johnson (16), Alyn Mayoral (14)

[Pre-and post-screening resources](#) as part of the social-change campaign

DOMINO EFFECT tells the story of three young filmmakers who set out to break the conformities women of color are forced to follow, and to highlight how these have negatively impacted mental health over decades.

Filmmakers: Malicka Taffa (14), Ashley Gomez Bahena (17), Renee-Alexis Penunuri (16)

[Pre-and post-screening resources](#) as part of the social-change campaign



THE REFLECTION ON MY SCREEN is a documentary film highlighting the negative effects of social media and how beauty standards can be damaging to young girls and women alike.

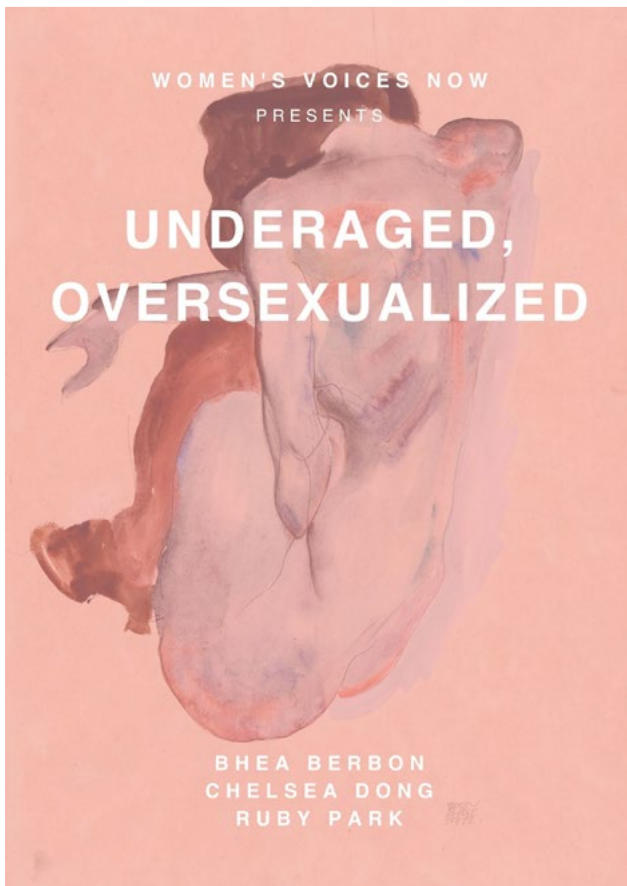
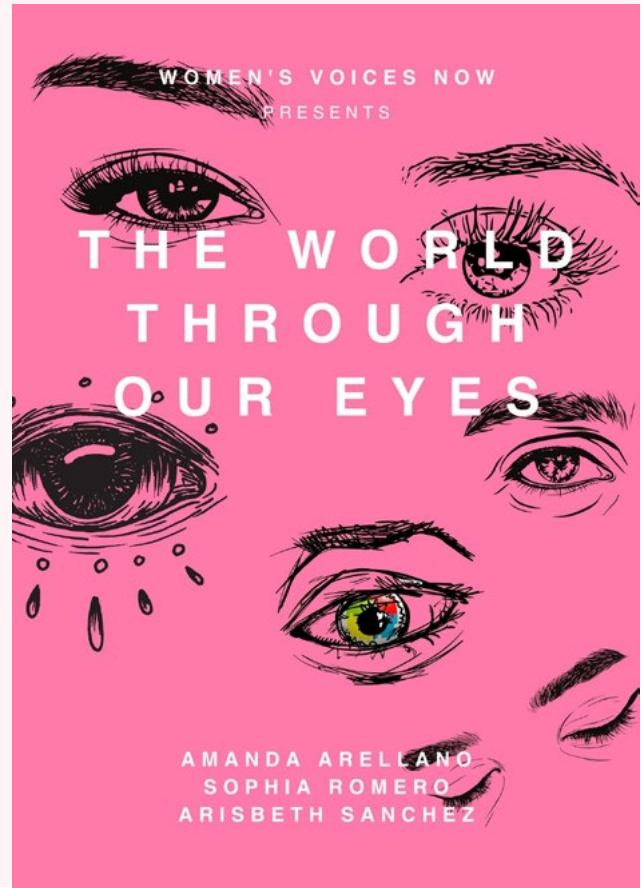
Filmmakers: Abida Chowdhury (15), Leslie Gomez (17), Christell Pelico (17), Zaira Ortiz (15)

[Pre-and post-screening resources](#) as part of the social-change campaign

Three young women discover how their identities are obscured by society's standards. **THE WORLD THROUGH OUR EYES** defines the systems of oppression through the lens of a culture web, which expresses their separate identities as young women of color.

Filmmakers: Sophia Romero (16), Amanda Arellano (16), Arisbeth Sanchez (15)

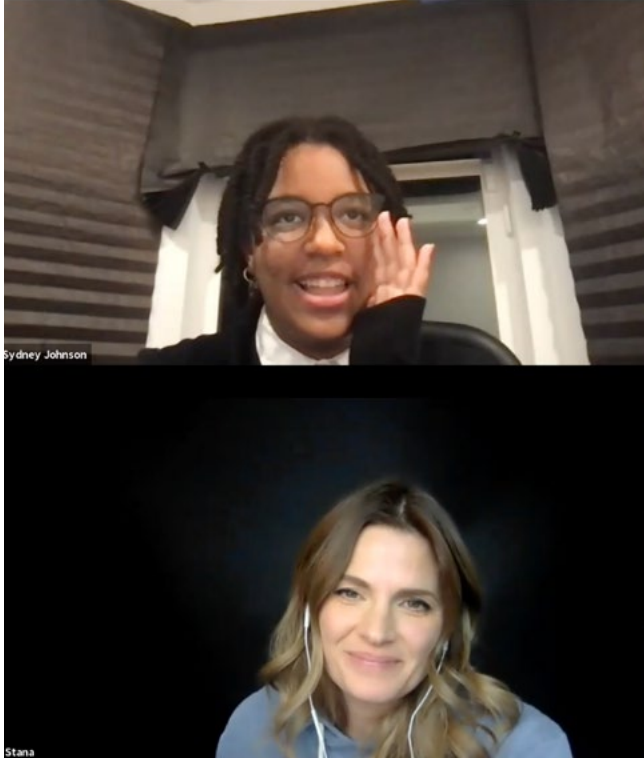
[Pre-and post-screening resources](#) as part of the social-change campaign



UNDERAGED, OVERSEXUALIZED is a documentary about a group of teenagers who open up and reveal their own personal stories of unwanted catcalling and grooming from their childhoods.

Filmmakers: Bhea Berbon (15), Chelsea Dong (15), Ruby Park (16)

[Pre-and post-screening resources](#) as part of the social-change campaign



Actress and 2021 Girls' Voices Now Keynote Speaker Stana Katic being interviewed by our beneficiary Sydney.

Fall Public Premiere Screening Event

The program culminated with the virtual premiere screening of their films on October 14th, 2021.

Our keynote speaker, Actress Stana Katic, shared her experience navigating the film industry as a first-generation Canadian and coming from a community that did not see this field as a safe or stable career path. Our participants played a central role during the entire event: They interviewed the keynote speaker and presented their films. After the screening of the 5 short documentary films, they also took part in a Q&A session during which they talked about their experience in the program, their film's issue(s) focus, and the social-change campaign associated with their films. 731 tickets were reserved for this event.

Year-round Programming

Additional workshops, presentations, and activities are offered to all alumnae during the school year to support their personal, academic, and professional development. Keeping in touch with past participants and offering additional engagement opportunities to support their confidence and maintain their motivation is an essential part of our program's values and objectives.

In 2021, we organized or co-facilitated 6 additional events and workshops, open to all past Girls' Voices Now participants:

- ♦ A virtual conversation with award-winning producer Ana Menendez - March 6th, 2021
- ♦ A virtual workshop with filmmakers Sara Seligman and award-winning writer, director and producer, Lorena Lourenco, on how to start a career in filmmaking and to leverage film festivals, including learning how to submit their Girls' Voices Now film into a youth festival - May 23rd, 2021

- ◆ An invitation to the premiere of the feature film, *Sankofa*, followed by a conversation moderated by Award-Winning Director, Ava DuVernay, at and in partnership with the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures - October 2nd, 2021
- ◆ An in-person screening of the 2021 GVN films (open only to the GVN participants and up to two guests of their choice, due to then-current health precautions) - October 7th, 2021
- ◆ A financial literacy workshop, in partnership with Union Bank, covering basic financial literacy skills (creating a budget, saving money, building credit, etc.) - November 18th, 2021
- ◆ The first in-person holiday celebration, gathering alumnae from all years (2018 through 2021) to strengthen community-building amongst participants across years. This event was held outdoors, at Barnsdall Park in Hollywood, CA, due to then-current health precautions - December 5th, 2021



Some of our beneficiaries at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures.



Our first in-person holiday party at Barnsdall Park.

Who Are We Serving?

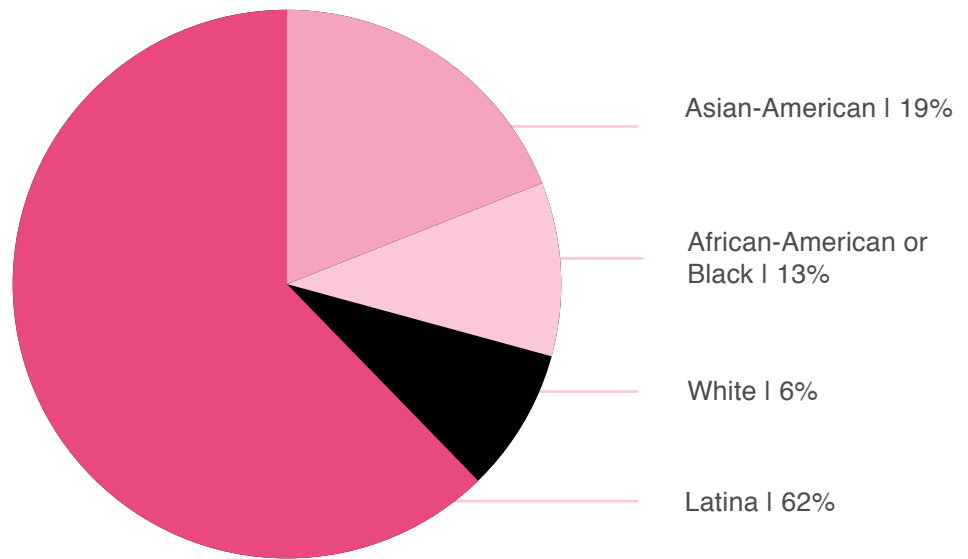
We use multiple channels to promote and recruit participants to apply to our Girls' Voices Now program. These include:

- ◆ Our network of youth non-profit partners
- ◆ Our network of Title I schools in the Greater Los Angeles Area
- ◆ Past participants
- ◆ Our social media channels and newsletter

We strive to remove as many barriers that eligible candidates might be facing as possible. For this reason, participation is entirely free and participants receive a \$500 stipend. We also cover transportation costs on a need-basis. In 2021, since the program was held virtually and

the films were shot on iPhones, we ensured that all selected participants had access to an iPhone, a laptop, and noise-canceling headphones. We worked with an in-kind sponsor to loan this equipment for the duration of the summer program to participants who needed it.

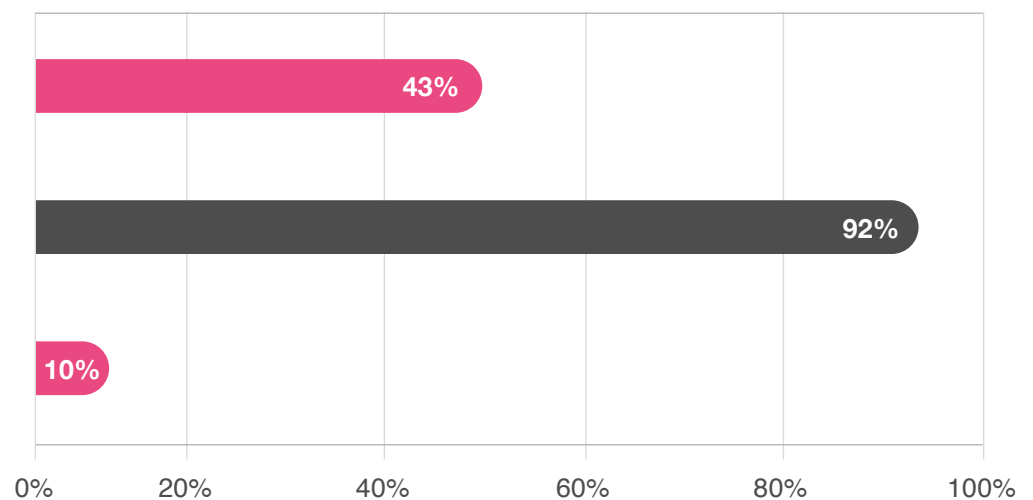
In 2020, 62% of our direct beneficiaries identified as Latina, 19% as Asian-American, 13% as African-American or Black, and 6% as White.



% of participants that identified as LGBTQI+

% of participants that qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch at their school

% of participants that had experienced homelessness



Our Impact

Through our online application, and a series of pre- and post-program surveys, we have developed a thorough evaluation methodology to collect information and gather feedback at different

stages of the Girls' Voices Now program. We still ask for and receive feedback from participants from the inaugural 2018 Girls' Voices Now cohort!



“This was the safest, most welcoming, and most loving space I have ever been in. I felt completely free to be myself in this supportive and non judgmental space. I was able to open up, cry, laugh/smile, speak up, and so much more.”

— Abida, 2021 participant

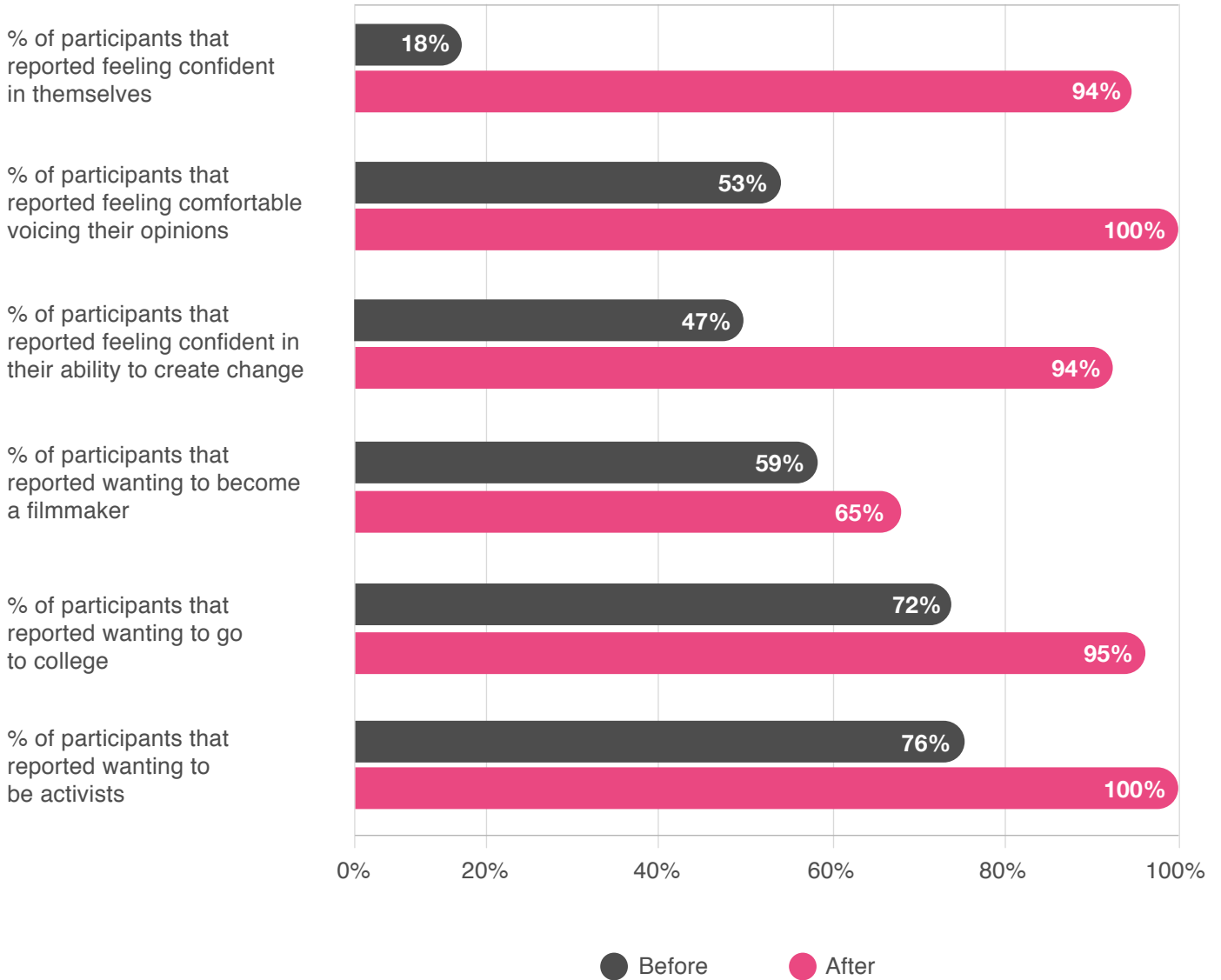
One year after taking part in Girls' Voices Now, we ask participants to reflect on how Girls' Voices Now might have helped them feel more confident, become activists in their communities,

or feel like they have more control over their academic and professional goals. This is what Abida shared with us:

“Girls' Voices Now helped me get more comfortable in public speaking because we had to share our thoughts and ideas often. It also helped me improve in leading a group. Since then, I've become involved in activism in a few ways, including through the Women Empowerment Club and [the] Black Student Union at my school. We were able to successfully install free menstrual products in the school's restrooms.”

— Anonymous 2021 participant

Below are some of the key metrics that participants are asked to self-assess before and right after taking part in the 5-week summer training component of Girls' Voices Now:



Before our participants took part in our 5-week summer training program, the majority of them lacked confidence in themselves and in their ability to create change. **However, following the program, 94% of them felt confident in themselves and in their ability to create change, and 100% of them felt confident**

in voicing their opinions. The majority of our participants had a desire to become a filmmaker, attend college, and be an activist before the program. However, participation in the program still made a significant impact, increasing this desire across all of those categories.



“Something I will take away for years is that you can have the shakiest, smallest voice but you’re still speaking up. In a way, just like you can be marginalized and privileged at the same time in life. I also learned that you can use your passion to work harder towards your goals.”

— Malicka, 2021 participant

As of 2021, we served

67

girls and their families

overseen the production of

17

youth-made films

and reached over

1,151,000

viewers

Special Announcement

2021 was a very special year because one of our Girls' Voices Now films won a Daytime Emmy! Our 2018 short film, [Under The Scarf](#), won the prestigious prize in July of last year. We want to

thank our distribution partner HereTV for leading the Emmy campaign, and for their ongoing support of Girls' Voices Now.

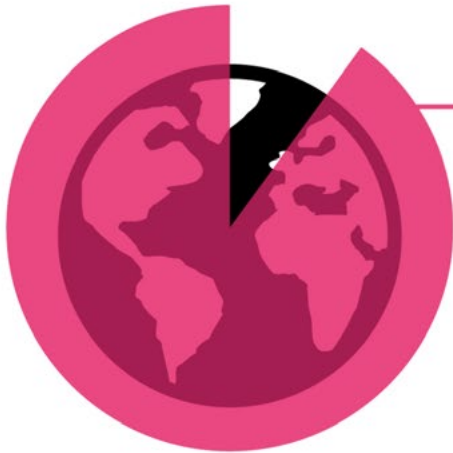


Our four young filmmakers (from left to right): Mehrin Ashraf, Michelle Leon, Cheyenne Williams, and Ana Antuna, upon receiving their Emmy awards.



VOICES FOR CHANGE
A FILM COLLECTION
ADVOCATING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

FILM COLLECTION



90% of the world
holds negative biases
against women

Data Source: Gender Social Norms Index 2020, United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

The Need

Close to **90%** of the world's population holds negative biases against women, especially regarding political representation, economic opportunities, and physical integrity. Instead of challenging these prejudices, mainstream films and TV shows tend to perpetuate gender-based stereotypes and the objectification of women and girls:

- ◆ In 2018, the share of female-speaking characters across the 100 top fictional movies at the U.S. box office was only 33.1%. It has barely increased since 2007 (29.9%).
- ◆ Only 11 movies featured a female, 45-years-of-age or older, in a leading or a co-leading role, only 4 of them were women of color.
- ◆ Among girls and women represented on screen, "13-20 year-old females were just as likely as 21-39 year-old females to be shown in sexy attire with some nudity, and to be referenced as attractive."

Our Approach – About Voices for Change

With our free film collection, Voices for Change, we provide a platform for authentic and diverse stories by women, about women, for all. It is a living and always growing collection of women's and girls' stories from around the world.

Through the power of social-change films, Women's Voices Now aims to challenge gender-based stereotypes, share more authentic, relatable content, and to promote and advance girls' and women's rights. Our films are available to stream, for free, for individuals and organizations alike.

To date, our Film Collection comprises:

202 films ————— **67** countries ————— **44** languages

in the documentary, narrative, and experimental categories (both features and shorts).

We encourage our audiences to follow our empathy-to-action model by organizing screening events in their own communities, and facilitating conversations about the critical women’s issues and social activism opportunities highlighted in our films.

The Film Collection’s goals are to:

Raise awareness on specific issues pertaining to girls’ and women’s rights around the world

Challenge stereotypical representations of women and girls

Facilitate discussions in community settings

...thus contributing to promotion and advancement of girls’ and women’s rights.

Through the film collection, we have two main ways of reaching audiences, online and in-person, and have developed dedicated strategies for both settings.

Reaching Online Viewers

In 2021, we also set a goal to triple the number of Voices for Change online viewers, across all of our platforms (website, YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, and Instagram), by the end of 2023. To reach this goal, we have worked with the consulting agency, OnPrem, on a pro-bono project. We are extremely grateful to the dedicated team of consultants at OnPrem!

With their help, we identified the following actions to undertake:

- ◆ Update our website to activate data collection tools
- ◆ Enhance user experience and interface on the Film Collection’s website pages by:

Updating and inputting consistent back-end tagging of films with SEO considerations	Implementing efficient search tools	Improving user-experience of the platform
---	-------------------------------------	---

- ◆ Design and implement marketing and communication strategies focused on increasing visibility and access within target audiences

We started implementing all the actions listed above and hired a digital strategist to oversee their successful execution in the fall of 2021. With his help, we also took full advantage of the free Google Ad grants to advertise our Film Collection, locally and globally, and to design strategic, targeted ad campaigns on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.

With these steps alone, we have already seen the traffic to our Voices for Change **more than double!**

In **2021**, on our Vimeo platform alone, our films were watched for a total of **1,122 hours** (or 46 days, 18 hours, 11 minutes, 10 seconds).

Most of our viewers came from the following 5 countries:



and our collection reached viewers in **187 countries** in 2021 alone. The city with the most unique viewers was Cairo, Egypt.

Since 2011, we have reached **5,570,000+ online viewers** through our Film Collection (on YouTube, Vimeo and our website). Online viewers come from **186** countries. Between 2011 and 2021, most of our online viewers were located in the United States, Egypt, Kenya, United Kingdom, and Turkey.

Reaching in-person audience members

Since 2011, our Film Collection has been our most powerful tool to put our mission statement into practice: using film to advance women's and girls' rights.

Our films are available for free for individuals, organizations, and schools to stream and use. We also help these parties to identify relevant films for their audience(s) and assist with

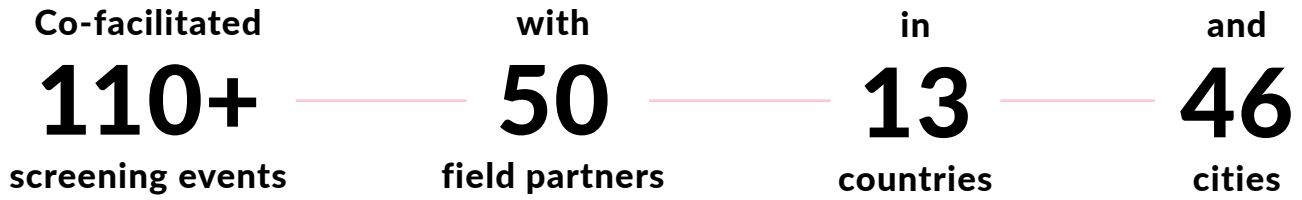
programming when needed (offer post-screening talking points, encourage them to include an expert, mediator, the filmmaker, or affected party to guide a conversation, sometimes facilitating connection between the experts and screening parties).



“What makes Womens’ Voices Now [film collection] stand out from similar collections is that the content is free and is not focused on a specific geographic region. Most importantly, the range of films available does not exclusively portray women and girls as victims without agency. Instead, a lot of the content shows how women are taking action themselves to bring change forward, making the audience feel empowered and inspired.”

— Benedikt Hieschler, Peacebuilding Expert at PATRIR & Women's Voices Now Partner, Germany & Romania

As of 2021, we have:



In 2021, most of our efforts went to increasing the Film Collection’s online reach. Combined with the challenges of organizing in-person events due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, our outreach for on-the-ground partners was limited.

However, we worked with one organization based in South Africa:

Denise Roodt, founder of the Media Workshop, organized a screening series for her journalism and film high school students as part of a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about gender-based violence in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The hybrid event took place online and in-person. The total number of online attendees was 250, with an additional 20 in-person participants. The participants were mostly disadvantaged young adults (18-35) from the Xhosa community.

The event consisted of screening two short films: *In Search of America*, *Inshallah* (Pakistan) and *Handful of Ash* (Iraqi Kurdistan). Following the films, Women’s Voices Now Executive Director, Heidi Basch-Harod, moderated a panel discussion with Women’s Voices Now Advisory Board Member, Roopa Jeevaji (a leading actress in the first film), and Journalist and Women’s Rights Activist, Shanga Karim. The panel focused on the unique power of film to combat gender-

based violence, on the importance of consuming stories that show women’s perspectives and experiences of life, and challenging the notion that the way women are treated is immutable.

After the panel ended, the event continued with a heated, in-person conversation amongst Denise’s students that was moderated by a former student. The conversation focused on female genital mutilation (which is the focus of *Handful of Ash*) and male circumcision, a very common practice by the Xhosa people of South Africa.



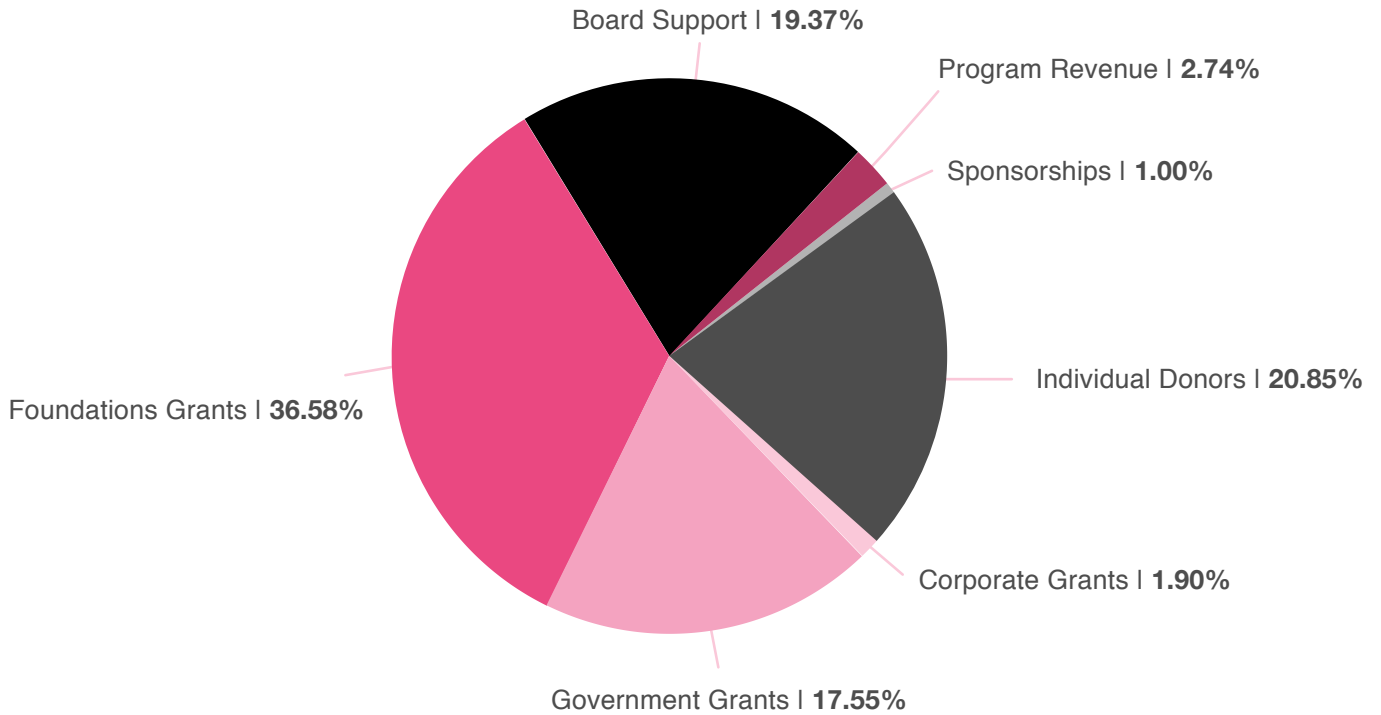
Denise Roodt’s students following their conversation about female genital mutilation.

WOMEN'S VOICES NOW FINANCES

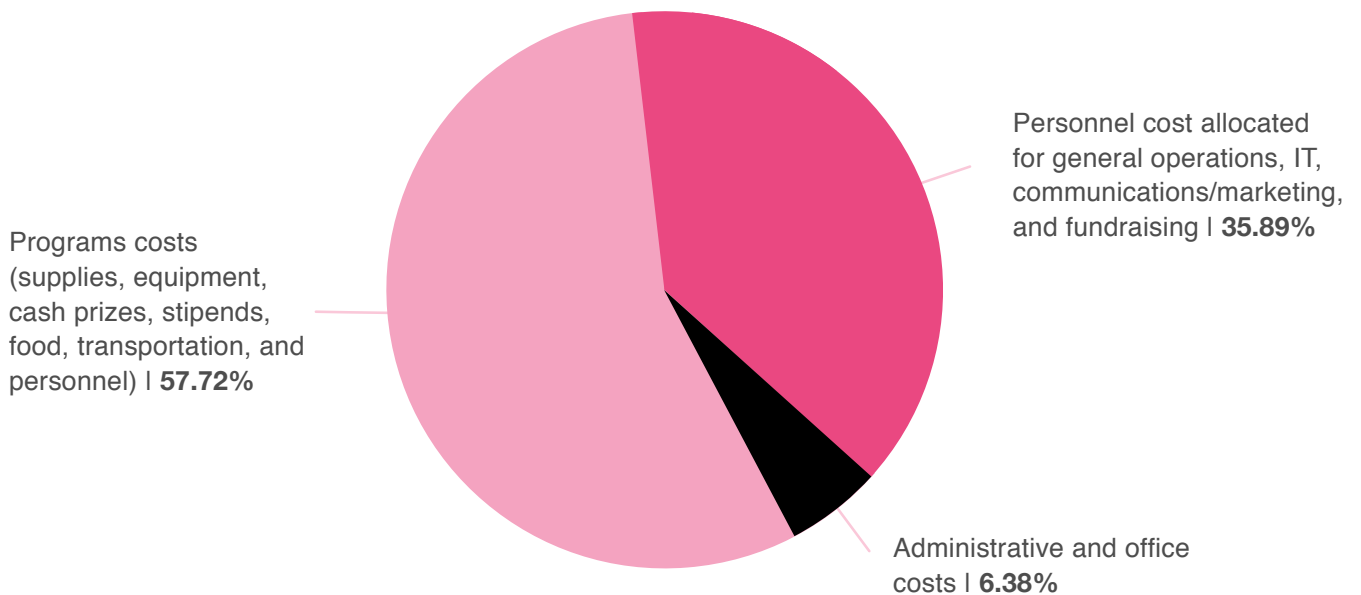
Our Finances

In 2021, our operating budget was **\$243,138.45**. Here is a breakdown of our revenue sources and how our expenses were allocated:

Revenue



Expenses



THANK YOU!

Our organization and programs could not run without the dedicated support of our amazing Women's Voices Now community!

Volunteers


We want to thank our wonderful volunteers, who hail from all parts of the world and help us with various projects, from data analysis to film previewing, to CRM programs implementation and graphic design! Your work has a tremendous impact on our operations and efficiency.

Donors

Our donors are the backbone of our organization, and their generosity is key to our success and motivation! A big thank you to our 2021 donors!

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