

Before You Tie The Knot: Essential Conversations for Filmmakers and Partners
A panel discussion on the relationship between filmmaker, organizations,
distributors and funders.

Featuring Don Young and Cristine Dewey.

Moderated by Sahar Driver.

Brower Center, Berkeley, CA

October 25th, 2017

00:00:22 Sahar Driver: Hi, everyone. Thanks for coming. My name is Sahar, and I'm an impact and engagement strategist, and I realize not a lot of people know what that is, in conversations I've had even just today [laughs], and that is simply someone that you would call, if you've created a documentary or a film about a social issue or problem, I'm who you would call to help map out the terrain and a campaign plan for how to put that story and that film to use in service of the movement that it's a part of. And that can look a whole lotta different ways, but that's essentially what I do. And when David asked me to do this presentation, I was trying to think about what would be most useful as a conversation to have together, and in the last, I would say, three or four years, I'm noticing a real increase in the amount of organizations, whether they're local, national NGOs, international NGOs, nationally networked groups, even funders that are interested in using story to advance their work. And when I started working at Active Voice, which is a nonprofit that I worked at for seven years, that are leaders in using film to advance social change, back then when I started working there and I would do phone calls with organizations about using film to advance their work, the conversation was always trying to get them to see the possibilities.

00:01:58 SD: I don't have that problem anymore in 2017. Now, everyone is eager to use film, but the landscape has changed so much, and because there are so many people who are invested in wanting to use film, I'm noticing that's leading to a lot of confusion and challenges and what those relationships and partnerships can look like. So that's kinda the conversation I wanted to have today. So I guess one of the reasons why I think so many filmmakers are using film more frequently than they were before is because they're also seeing these organizations as valuable allies in a variety of different ways. One, they can be experts, provide expertise on the issues that their films are about. They can provide access, distribution partners and provide access to really valuable audiences that you wanna get your film in front of. They can also be really valuable in terms of introducing you to different film subjects that you might feature in your film, so that's one of the reasons why filmmakers are really interested. Advocates

are also pretty interested in using film because it really helps it illustrate the issues they're working on, and also why the work that they're doing is so important to advance and address some of those problems and issues. I hope you're reading all this as quickly as I'm going through it. [laughs] [laughter]

03:37:00 SD: So when David invited me, I was thinking about all these different challenges, and reached out to my former boss and now friend and sometimes collaborator, Ellen Schneider, who I know has been doing a ton of research. She worked at the Active Voice lab and is the founder of the Active Voice lab. She's been doing a lot of research in these tricky relationships and dynamics that can emerge when partnerships are forming around a film, and I've been getting cocktails with her for years now, crying over a whiskey about like a partner situation that has gone amuck, and she's been like writing notes and really excited about the stories because she's trying to understand what is leading to some of these hiccups and challenges, and she's also been trying to create a framework for how to support healthy conversations that can lead to really effective and successful partnerships. So I wanted to run through a series of quotes that are gonna be really familiar to you. [showing quotes on projection screen] Right, we've all heard something like this before [laughs]. There are all quotes that she's heard different people in her research, different stakeholders say. [inaudible question] No, but there's an e-mail that we're gonna be passing around. You should send a recommendation to do that. This is real, you know? Oh, I'm going a little fast? No, I'm sorry, I've read these a million times. [laughs]

06:15:00 SD: So Ellen and the lab culled a lot of those reflections and lessons from the whole ecosystem of stakeholders that are involved in creating a film or working with a film or distributing a film, and the ecosystem of change model is one that the lab uses to illustrate where a film might fit into a movement, and all the different folks that might have a stake in using it. This new tool that Ellen and the lab have been creating is based off of something called the PRENUPS, what funders and creatives should talk about before tying the knot. How many people have heard of this or have used it in their work already? Yeah, it's a extremely useful resource. In fact, I was in the Mission one day. I ran into a friend of mine who's a filmmaker, and we were just chatting on the street randomly, and he right in that conversation realized that I worked at Active Voice – this was like seven years ago – and he was like, oh, my God, and he [laughs] reached into his bag and he pulled out the PRENUPS, which he had printed out and he was carrying with him in his briefcase [laughs], which I thought was really funny. But anyway, it was a McArthur-funded project that really helped to talk about the awkward but really necessary conversations that need to happen between filmmakers and funders, all the things to be thinking about and how to navigate through them.

07:42:00 SD: So now Ellen is working on expanding that to include all kinds of different stakeholders and partners on a project, so not just funders, but everyone, and so today I'm gonna be drawing on the research that the lab has been doing into this, to create a framework for us to really talk about some of those awkward and challenging moments in relationship building around the film. It's organized into four types of conversations that should be happening around the film. One, the first thing that you want to be talking about is the mission or the motive of entering into that partnership, right? So why do these collection of people need to come together, what are the values that they are bringing into that conversation, what are they trying to accomplish from their respective positions? Once you've had these conversations and responded to these questions, if there's alignment, if there's synergy, or at least enough complementary between those missions and motives for getting involved, only then might you enter into a conversation about method, which is the next type of conversation that is important to have. And that's essentially like what are the activities that are part of this conversation, how are we gonna work together, how are we gonna make decisions about different aspects of our work together and our collaboration, who's gonna be responsible for which aspects of this work together, what's the role gonna look like, all of the things that go into how you do what you do. That's the next, really kind of thinking through what are all the aspects of that.

09:40:00 SD: The next thing, which no one ever wants to talk about, and it's perhaps the most difficult conversation, is the conversation about money, and I think the reason that that's challenging, as everyone in this room knows, is because making films is emotional. It's personal. Activists are often feeling the same way. The work that they do is really emotional and really personal, and so when it comes to talking about money, that can be really challenging and tricky and hard, and so whereas you might have really nuanced and detailed conversations about your mission and your values, and about the method and all the architecture of the work that you're gonna do together, you might not get as specific and grounded and particular about the money conversation, and that's really important. And there're a lot of aspects, things to be considering in that conversation, such as who holds the rights to a film and what investor models are we using, how is the filmmaker gonna get reimbursed for their work, all of those things need to be part of the conversation. And finally mobility, which is essentially just to say that filmmaking, it's not like your traditional communications work, where you have a map or a script and it's straight and set and that's it. Oftentimes the story might shift and change with different dynamics that are coming and going. The landscape might shift pretty dramatically. I was just saying earlier that when I was working on a campaign last year, just before the elections we

had this beautiful plan [laughs] for what we were gonna do, and then the unexpected happened. We actually didn't believe that Trump was gonna get elected, but that shifted everything for us, and suddenly all of our partners were in a totally different mode and focused on completely different things that they mapped out for their year ahead, and that caused huge delays on our timeline. Some partners dropping out because the film subject was no longer a part of their priorities, new stakeholders came in, but then now we're at the beginning of the partnership cultivation process, and that takes a lot of time to get the trust built and all that. So the mobility conversation is one, you can't plan for everything, and it's not even helpful to be super exhaustive about it, but to acknowledge that things might change, and to consider what things might change ahead of time is at least a useful bookmark for a conversation to kinda get started, so that's what the mobility framework is for.

12:16:00 SD: So I am not gonna be talking at you this whole time. We've devised a really cool – I hope it's cool – framework for this conversation. We're gonna basically role play three different scenarios. These scenarios will sound familiar to you. We've made up films, so any films that you hear up here that sound like your or sound like ones that you know of is completely coincidental [laughs]. Any mention of a partner or a funder or a person that you hear, again, completely made up. None of this is real. This is lightly scripted. None of us are actors, so [laughter] be really nice to us [laughs]. We're gonna be probably reading a lot of it. And I've planted some filmmakers in the audience that don't have a ton of prep, but they do have a little bit of prep, they've read the script ahead of time, so they're gonna come up and for each scenario, we'll have a new filmmaker. And we'll read it, and then I really want this to be, I like this room as intimate as it is because I do want this to feel like a conversation, a community conversation. Everyone in this room is an expert on awkward conversations [laughs]. We've all been in them, we've all felt uncomfortable, we've all not known how to say a certain thing, so I really hope you will help make and enliven this conversation by bringing your own experiences and your expertise to this conversation, because there's someone else in this room that's been there also. We've invited two stellar guests to help with this conversation.

14:00:00 SD: Don Young is Director of Programs for the Center for Asian American Media. I'm sure many of you know him. He oversees programming and public media from funding to production to broadcast, basically from soup to nuts, all aspects of a film, and so from that perspective he really brings a wealth of experience and knowledge, working with the entire ecosystem of players involved in making a film production happen, making a film campaign happen. So we're really excited to have him here. Thank you, Don, for being [applause] here. And Cristine Platt Dewey is the

Managing Director of International Films at ro*co, and ro*co, if you don't know already, I assume that most of you know, has thirteen Oscar-nominated titles to its name, and Cristine runs the international division but also helped found the productions division and the educational division, and the reason I mention that is because Cristine also brings a bird's eye view of various different aspects of the distribution landscape, but in particular we're really lucky to have Cristine because she's a real ally to filmmakers, and that's not always common. It's difficult to be an ally to filmmakers in a landscape where production and distribution is shifting and changing so much, and there are market consequences for those changes, so to have someone here that has that insight and that perspective is really awesome. So thank you, Cristine, for being here [applause].

15:44:00 **SD:** I also want to acknowledge that not only is it brave to be up here and speaking and acting when [laughs] you're not an actor, but I'm also asking them to play roles of people and like to basically represent a perspective that they might not necessarily believe in [laughs]. So when you ask questions of them, if you could indicate if you'd like them to respond as the person that they are playing [laughter] [laughs], or if you want them to respond as themselves, 'cause that would be really helpful in terms of the conversation that we're having. So that I'm not the only one that's talking, I wanted to ask two questions to each of you before we begin. Don, how much acting have you done?

16:33:00 **Don Young:** Zero as of today.

16:37:00 **SD:** [laughs] And in the interests of the four Ms, mission, method, money, and mobility, what is your mission or motive for having accepted my invitation to join this conversation?

16:49:00 **DY:** I think mobility. Whenever we work with Ellen and Active Voice, I'm always very sort of inspired with how she's trying to think of models. She always is pointed about how to create models for healthy, effective, futuristic ecosystems. So candidly, there was a moment I wasn't sure I'd be right for this [laughs], when the performative aspect was raised, but then as we have sort of prepared for today's presentation, it's really got me thinking about where this all is at this point in time, and it's, for those of you who are new as filmmakers, it's a crazy time, and I think there isn't enough time and space to really take a step back and think strategically of how you can sort of, everybody's just run, run, run on how to benefit their project, but the framing and knowing where people are coming from at the moment is super valuable.

17:50:00 **SD:** Thanks, Don. And Cristine, same question, how much acting

experience do you have?

17:54:00 **Cristine Dewey:** I think the last experience was second grade, a librarian in a school play, so that's basically it.

18:03:00 **SD:** [laughs] And what is your mission or motive for accepting the offer?

18:05:00 **CD:** Well, I, you know, my mission actually was I felt like this would be an opportunity for me to learn as well. I mean, we've been through our conversations at ro*co that have gone awry for various reasons, and we think this conversation is really important because, as Don is saying, the market is changing so dramatically, and one of the implications of the market changes is the way rights are being treated as, it's very different, so now all of a sudden, we have this situation where we used to look at rights only in the international market, as an international distributor, and now Netflix and all the digital platforms have come on board and they are making us all take a second look and say, with films that we're partnering with, we really have to be involved earlier in the conversations, which means we might be working with both the filmmaker and the funder may still be involved in conversations, so it's becoming more important to us. So I expect to get a lot of information for myself out of this, too. Thank you.

19:09:00 **SD:** So I'm gonna invite up our first filmmaker guest, who's gonna role play with us, and her name is Paladi Samaseti. [applause] And then that mic is for you. Thanks, Paladi. Paladi is a graduate from UC Berkeley School of Journalism. She graduated a year ago, and her final thesis project is currently running in film festival rounds. It's called Escaping Agra. Will you tell us real quickly what the film's about?

19:56:00 **Paladi:** Sure. It's about a transgender Indian American who was taken to India under false pretenses and held hostage by their parents after their parents discovered their gender and sexual orientation, and their escape and journey back home to California.

20:14:00 **SD:** Thank you. Very exciting. So I'm going to read you the made-up story of the film we're gonna be workshopping, and a couple of distribution milestones, and then I will each identify the role that we're playing and we'll run through the script. So the filmmaker who made the story read a report about a community near her that is a food desert with a high number of malnourished newborns and children. She's shocked, so she reaches out to Food First, which is a nonprofit that's focused on food justice, so she can learn more. Through them, she meets members of the community

who are grappling with this issue, including one very active community leader, and through the course of filming, a developer swoops into the community with plans to build a new condominium complex with a grocery store and more, and she has four months before she's evicted. Then, in an ironic twist, she herself becomes pregnant. Finally her community will have access to healthy foods, but she's going to be pushed out and she won't see the benefits. Now she and the community must decide how, whether, and with what forces they can fight to stay in their homes. From food desert to developer's paradise, the film tells the story of the birth of a child and resistance movement. So she's been working on serialized Webisodes on gentrification, and she's got a one-hour cut that she's using for events, and she'll be doing community screenings, a limited theatrical with [inaudible], and she's considering self-distributing if Netflix won't accept her film. So Paladi, will you read the filmmaker realities?

21:59:00 Paladi: Sure. I am a recent film school graduate, which I am [laughter]. I have a pretty great, though short, history of verité, short form, and topical work. I am pretty comfortable with experimentation, and welcome all kinds of ideas for innovative new ways to get my work out there. Generally speaking, my projects so far have all focused to one degree or another on social issues. I'm kind of new to the business, but my work has been getting good attention of late, and I have been shooting on my own dime for a year now, but I just got a grant for 25K from a foundation that focuses on malnutrition and food justice issues. Did you know me before? [laughter] All or most of that is true.

22:49:00 SD: I didn't actually know Paladi before this morning [laughs]. Okay. Don, will you read the funder realities?

22:55:00 DY: Sure. I work at a foundation with a very focused food access security portfolio. I haven't funded media like this before and I took a risk on funding the project, but I love documentaries and I keep hearing about film impact. I saw Food Inc. and thought it was great, and I kinda promised my director that we might have similar success by funding this project. [laughs] That was smart. Yeah. The funder is beloved, right. So Food First is one of my grantees at the filmmaker interview.

23:33:00 SD: I'm gonna read the Food First partner realities. I'm the film's strategist, and have been working closely with the film's campaign partners. Food First is one of them, and they've been involved for a while now. They were happy to get pulled into this project and eager to use the film to highlight food insecurity issues that they were seeing in the community. They have contributed quite a bit of time and little bit of their own funding to the project. They introduced the filmmaker to their contacts

and allies in the area also. They see this as a fundraising and membership building opportunity. Cristine, can you read the distributor realities?

24:11:00 **CD:** Sure. I'm a boutique distributor that curates a small collection of documentaries to sell to the North American educational market and the international markets. I'm careful in selecting films that we think our buyer contacts will respond to. We're always under pressure to select films that we know will perform. We signed on early to distribute this film for both educational and international divisions, so we're making a big investment. We're successful in representing the North American educational rights to Kristy Jacobson's film *A Place at the Table*, and developed a database of contact that are interested in food security, so we think it's a good fit. On the international side, we're aware that Food Inc. did well internationally. We had success distributing Deborah Kuhns-Garcia's film *Future of Food*, so we also feel like we have the relationships in place to do well by the film. When we evaluate a film for our international division, we're always asking ourselves the question, would a commissioning editor program a similar story that takes place locally in their native language, and that's often the hurdle we're faced with when we go to pitch them a documentary. For educational distribution in North America, we want a six-month window where the film won't be available for purchase, so we can push community groups, libraries, and educational institutions to buy the premium-priced educational license with public performance rights. If the film becomes available for streaming before that, we see a drop-off in sales.

25:53:00 **SD:** Great. You guys ready for this? Are you excited? [laughter] All right. So, Paladi, you can....

26:05:00 **Paladi:** Okay. Thanks, everyone, for taking my calls. [DY laughs] I just wanted to update you where I'm at with the film. So the story is so incredible, what's happening, terrible but really relevant, and as you saw in the cut I sent you, my character Olivia, who's a justice activist, is getting evicted, so the plot is shifting a little bit. A developer is moving into the community and will be evicting many over the next two months, including my film's protagonist, and the good news is that I've been talking to [inaudible] and they think this film is really gonna help with the community's efforts to resist the evictions. [CD: Hmm.]

26:46:00 **DY:** Hmm. That's interesting. [laughter] And we really appreciate your update. But, and it sounds like you have a strong story that'll be helpful to this group, but I have to be honest, I'm concerned. The story you just told me isn't actually in the proposal you submitted, so how is it gonna help my organization advance our

portfolio? As you know, we don't focus on eviction. I need that food desert theme to go back it. And we just finished this big strategic planning process, of which your film, we're funding your film because of that, and what you're telling us is very different, so will it be possible for you to do the film you wanna make and the film that you submitted?

27:42:00 Paladi: Well, Don, the food justice issues are certainly still in there. It's just not the main or the only focus. But first, let me just tell you about the great relationship I'm forming with [inaudible]. We're [inaudible] a robust partnership in the community. We've got dozens of sneak preview screenings across the country to build buzz around the campaign, and free digital streaming locally to get people to show up at a resistance event.

28:08:00 CD: Oh, wait a minute, wait, whoa! You wanna do what? Hold up. [laughter] If you go forward with streaming the film for free, that will cannibalize our sales for public performance rights in North America, and you open the door for someone to pirate a copy, which could jeopardize not only our educational sales in North America, but also our international sales as well.

28:31:00 Paladi: Oh, well, maybe, I'm sure we can work something out. This is going to be so big. [laughter]

28:40:00 CD: Actually, I'm concerned it won't be internationally. Food justice is a current issue that has global relevance, but if you go at this more personal story and shift the emphasis from being a story about food insecurity to being a story about gentrification, it will be perceived as a more local American story. You'll be giving up some of your opportunities with international broadcasters who will prefer to program a story about a character from their own community. In Europe right now, the housing shortage caused by the refugee crisis is more relevant to their audience than a story about gentrification in America, and I'm sorry, but that's just the reality of what we're facing right now.

29:24:00 Paladi: Hmm.

29:26:00 DY: So I have an idea that hopefully will help this out. Why don't we meet with the grantee Food First and get their opinion on what they'd like to see change with the cut? And then you might wanna interview their executive director, 'cause that could give you more direction in terms of ensuring that the story gets told well. And then they can probably help you integrate all the themes that you suggested in the

proposal in a more robust way, so then I think they could probably help you shape the cut and get it closer to where it needs to be.

30:03:00 **SD:** Well, actually I spoke with them. We sent over the latest cut, and they're kinda put off, actually. They put in a lot of time and effort and a lot of money, if a lot of the characters have to do with their organization, but this cut doesn't really have to do. It's like the themes that they care about are so not in there that they're not really sure about using the film anymore. But maybe we can have them make a shorter version. You can make a shorter version that's just about the food themes, and they can use that. How's that?

30:43:00 **DY:** I think that's a great idea. [laughter] [inaudible] the shorter film and do engagement around that, and then if you could make sure it could go viral, that would be great. [laughter]

30:53:00 **CD:** Oh, viral, hold up. I don't know about going viral. If you're gonna do that shorter piece, you definitely need to have that hour cut for the international market, because the market for shorts in the, there is really no market for shorts internationally. Sorry. [laughter, applause]

31:17:00 **SD:** Paladi, you're a natural. How much acting experience do you have?

31:22:00 **Paladi:** Just like very, very little. In a classmate, a student film.

31:30:00 **SD:** Awesome. [laughs] All right, so, wow, so a situation where it crashes and burns. Don, where do you think the funder is coming from in this scenario?

31:42:00 **DY:** So the funder clearly had an agenda of wanting to fund a piece that would explicitly advance their mission, a tool that – I guess maybe stepping back, they're not interested in the story the filmmaker wants to tell, they're interested in exploring a tool that will help them advance their organizational mission.

32:08:00 **SD:** And where in the mission, method – can we go back to my slides real quick? Where in this chain do you feel like having had that conversation would have been helpful?

32:23:00: **DY:** The moment the story was gonna change. It's always good practice, just particularly with key funders, to always, to have an ongoing relationship with them and be updating them, good or bad. Nobody likes to be surprised with a project that

they, only they're gonna fund.

32:44:00 **SD:** And, Cristine, what would the distributor be most concerned about in this scenario?

32:50:00 **CD:** My distributor was most concerned about the issue of free screenings and free streamings and not being involved in that conversation. We've certainly worked with films where that's been able to happen, so it's not that we come to the table saying no. We would just need to be part of the conversation around what that would look like, so that we could strategize together around making sure that doesn't cannibalize other opportunities that we see for the film. And we really see that as a back and forth conversation. I mean, I'm not a hard-ass personality, but I was trying to come across as more of a hard ass in this scenario, but I think that what I was saying was absolutely right, those are the market realities we're dealing with, but the reality that we see is a lot of these films, you can do these different pieces if, as Don is saying, you're having the conversation at the right time, and we're involved in that conversation, because we view ourself as a resource based on our experience with other films, and we've seen other partnerships work for different films, and we feel like we have something to offer in that conversation, just based on our own experience. Not that we have all the answers; we certainly don't. We make a lot of mistakes along the way and so we've learned a lot from that experience, too. So it's just, yeah, it's just about being engaged.

34:14:00 **SD:** Sure. Sure. And, Paladi, did this scenario seem realistic to you? What jumped out for you in this situation?

34:24:00: **Paladi:** I mean, I think maybe there's a little bit of naïveté with the filmmaker, like where the filmmaker's coming from, but I feel empathy with the filmmaker in this situation, because stories evolve, like these things are really happening and they're important issues, and if she's there with her camera and it's happening to her protagonist, like she should be filming that. She definitely should've gotten in contact before presenting a rough cut with a completely different theme; she should've been connected with the other players. But I just feel like to not film that is like [inaudible] in the Forest, like doing his [inaudible] and then not covering the prostitution scandal, like he was there, it was happening, it was important, he had to include it in the story, so kind of like that.

35:17:00 **SD:** Absolutely. I wanted to open it up quickly to you all. Yeah, questions and things that struck you.

35:25:00 **Man (David?):** Hold on. We're gonna have you use the mic so everybody can hear. Thank you so much.

35:33:00 **Woman in audience:** I have sort of an awkward question really for the filmmaker. So where does the filmmaker decided that, if there's funding, then they're making a project that's suitable for the funding, and where do they make the decision, I'm a filmmaker, I'm gonna do whatever I want, and where is that balance, because when you first read out the scenario, I just thought that that's not the right film, you know.

36:10:00 **DY:** So I would always argue, even as a funder and distributor, the filmmaker should always make the film they're trying to make. It's impossible to make a film and put your heart and soul behind something you're not engaged in. But I think conversely, when – and we've been moving from funders to investors – when you view it as people, entities that are investing in your project, they have a stake in it. So I think it's not so much what you're doing is counter necessarily, but I think really building that relationship where they understand that you're not pivoting away from their investment, right, 'cause people, filmmakers will just use story as the reason by which people should sort of all of a sudden circle back, and these are relationships that you've established and when they invest in you, it's a two-way relationship, and you just wanna take into account how this might affect how they view your project.

37:22:00 **Man in audience:** Is it possible to respond as the real work you do? [SD: Sure.] Okay. Because I was wondering, I was thinking about how the plot changes. Does your work involve locating the plot changes within sort of a conceptual map of how this issue is part of this other larger issue?

37:43:00 **SD:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think each film, so the first film that Paladi was making was addressing a particular set of issues, and that means that the movement that it's a part of is different than the next film that it makes. Doesn't mean there aren't intersections, but what the final product of the film is gonna be is going to really animate what its strengths are and what it can actually do out in the world, so absolutely. Yeah.

38:27:00 **Woman in audience:** Hi. I have great empathy for the filmmaker that finds an amazing story while on assignment to doing something else. It happens to me often. And I wondered, you follow your passion because if there is a story on, let's say, a revolution that nobody else has, and all the TV crews are gonna be late to the game

and you're there, then what's the ethical responsibility, 'cause you're there on assignment for a specific and you communicate, and they say, we need this now anyway, is there a outlet for you since you're there on somebody else's budget, is there a outlet for you to film on the side what you need to do while still fulfilling your obligation to your investors and then obligation to you as a filmmaker.

39:20:00 **SD:** I mean, I think that's really important. You know, the film subjects are also partners in the film. I think that sometimes gets overlooked, but accountabilities, I mean, not meaning anyone in here, but being accountable to the communities that are being featured in your film is also really important, and I think the mobility conversation becomes really important, so like what are the variables that, like having had the conversation about mission and motives for everyone's participation helps to ground everyone on the film team, including the film subjects, on like what is it that is bringing us all together, why do we each care to be here, and when the concept of the film or the mission and story shifts and changes, then what the campaign is gonna be also shifts and changes around that, then that needs to be – and instantly. I mean, I've gotten into [inaudible] before, when I was working with a film similarly not very long ago, where the partner was super, super invested in the project. The members of the organization were featured in the film, they had put money into it, they had hired me directly to work and develop their organizational strategy around the film. They were just like soup to nuts super involved, and then it became pretty clear that there wasn't gonna be a national broadcast on the primary feed, which made it difficult to create and develop the one night only momentum that they were hoping for and envisioning. It also became clear it wasn't gonna be a culture change film. That's like kind of a trending concept, but like it didn't have a Hollywood buzz and heavyweights, but still they were involved, they were excited about it, and they had been involved from the beginning. Then about a year into the project, when the film was ready to go, it turns out that we bring in a distribution team that has a really strong ethos of ensuring that, supporting filmmakers and making sure that no film gets given away for free. And so at that point, a lot of conversations, obviously. The good thing about it is that we were being communicative the whole time. There was a lot of flexibility among all of the partners, partners and all the different members of the team, so we worked it out, but I will be honest, it was really awkward after all of that investment of this partner, for me to go to them and be like, so how much are you willing to pay? [laughs] You know, it was like, uhhh, that's uncomfortable, but we did it. So I don't know if that answers your question, but I do think that having conversations about where the missions are aligned and why everyone is at that table, and then kind of imagining and thinking through, to the extent that it's possible, how we're gonna work together and what are the various shifts and changes that might occur along the way. Now a shift in

story line is a really big one, but like Don was saying, immediately having that conversation and seeing if there are others that you can pull in to help support that aspect of the work.

42:30:00 **Woman in audience:** [inaudible] This is like an ethical question. You really have [inaudible], and you're honoring your [inaudible] during the day, and then you're shooting what you know needs to be shot at night 'cause you need to get it done, is there a ethical line?

42:53:00 **SD:** What do other filmmakers in the room think? That's a question that anyone here can have....

42:59:00 **David:** We have Morgan wanting to say something, so hold on.

43:02:00 **Morgan:** Yeah. I think my question or comment sort of ties into what you're saying about whether it's ethical or not. I think for me, having worked on a number of different projects that have dealt with different funding source, defining whether you're work for hire at the very beginning, sort of defining that. Am I a work for hire? Is this really just to me about serving you, quote unquote, as a client? And if that is the case, then it's a slippery slope to be moonlighting on their dime, essentially. But, on the other hand, if you come into it and you're really up front right away in saying, look, this is my baby, I'm telling this story, I'm going to try to incorporate some of the things that you care about, but ultimately I'm gonna have the creative decision about how it's gonna be made, because my blood, sweat, and tears are in this film and you're never gonna be able to compensate me for how much work I'm actually going to put into it. And I think that's the biggest thing as filmmakers, is that I feel like I'm always constantly educating people about how hard of work and how many years of, you know, blood, sweat, and tears we put into this to get to the point of expertise. So anyway, that's....

44:21:00 **SD:** I think that's really valuable. Have you been in that situation before, where you've introduced this conversation fairly early on? Is this like a practice for you?

44:31:00 **Morgan:** Yeah, I mean, I just try to get it clear up front, like am I serving your voice or am I serving my own voice, and you're helping me do that because we have some cross interest here. And I think that's just the slippery slope, is figuring that out up front, and every personality's different. Some people can't handle that up front, in your face, like let's figure this out now, and then some people want that clarity right

away. But I think your whole thing about communication is key.

45:06:00 **DY:** Yeah. I mean, the producer in me, to answer your question, stepping back, what is harder than making one film? Two films. So I think [laughter] if it's a convenient way to try to get your cake and eat it, it's not, I'm hard pressed to believe that both pieces will become better because you're doing that. And I think there's probably a fundamental question of that conversation of whether or not this will serve their purpose, it's an important question to ask first. But even when I was re-looking at this, there could be a way in which you reframe it, of, well, this will be an intimate journey of somebody working in this industry that will give people a relatable character through which to explore the issues. There're different ways of framing. You have to touch that earlier, 'cause the worst thing is, you don't [inaudible] and you have to unwind a funding deal. Like there's, I've seen that happen and that's gotta be, giving money back is the most painful thing. [laughter] And it's usually, there're usually lawyers involved.

46:09:00 **SD:** Okay. So I'd like to move on to the next scenario if everyone's comfortable with that. Thank you, Paladi. [applause] Okay, now I'd like to invite up to the panel Dawn Valadez. [applause] So many of you know Dawn Valadez as a filmmaker and for her work on *The Pushout*, but maybe you don't know that Dawn is also a social worker, fundraiser, and an impact strategist as well. Dawn, will you talk a little bit about *The Teacher In Me*, the film that you're working on right now?

46:54:00 **Dawn Valadez:** Sure. Well, I'm crazily doing two films at once, so what is more painful and more difficult to do. And they're similar, so *The Pushout* looks at young people who are being pushed out of our education system, following a few key stories, and *Teacher Like Me* is a project that I started, I'm gonna say five years ago but I'm not sure [laughs], that follows a group of students who were pushouts who decided to go to school and become teachers, and are all coming from low income and communities of color, and looking at our teacher crisis, essentially.

47:41:00 **SD:** Thank you for joining. What kind of acting experience do you have?

47:45:00 **DV:** Not much, but I did act in high school, and I grew up in Hollywood. [laughter] [SD: That counts [laughs].] Yeah. I don't know if that's good, or really bad.

48:00:00 **SD:** Okay. So this film is untitled. It's called *Untitled Music Biopic* [laughs]. This is a feature length doc that contrasts the lives and deaths of three great artists during one of the United States' most divided moments: music legends Prince,

David Bowie, and Tom Petty. Not just the story of three great musical artists – if anyone makes this film, I want a credit [laughs] [laughter] – but of a movement they were a part of, they spoke about, and with which they were struggling in their own unique ways to understand, some quietly, some pointedly. Their deaths reflected the mood and tenor of the moment they left, and the different audiences they each spoke to. In part of poetic exploration that contrasts their songs and lyrics against the backdrop of an emerging and complicated era, in part a biopic, in part a story about the people who went to their shows. Their music was the soundtrack to a generation. Their premature deaths are a signal to the next. Awesome, right? [laughter] I wanna see that movie [laughs]. Okay, distribution milestones: a festival premiere, there's gonna be educational distribution, and the filmmaker is doing theatrical and a PBS broadcast. Dawn, you wanna...?

49:24:00 **DV:** Sure. So my filmmaker realities are I'm a pretty seasoned filmmaker, having been making films for decades and when you think that one film takes decades.... Yeah. [laughter] Anyway, [laughs] actually most people in this community know me and I have some cachet, if I do say so myself, and that makes me feel really uncomfortable [laughs]. [laughter] This is a part, right? I'm used to making feature length documentaries about social issues that people really care about, and I'm excited because I'm hearing from my distributor that I'll be able to make a strong return on the most recent film I'm working on, and I [inaudible].

50:09:00 **CD:** So distributor realities: I am excited about this film. It's going to have broad appeal and celebrity buzz. It's great for business. We're seeing all the stars align, literally. [SD laughs] We have exclusive rights of the theatrical and we need to keep track of the film with strict limits on who can see it before then, so we're gonna be the clamp.

50:32:00 **SD:** I am the strategist, and I see a real opportunity for this film to advance the work of racial justice organizations that I work with. It's light enough to have broad appeal, and with a little bit of framing, I think it's gonna help connect disparate audiences and fans to the growing movement, so I'm building those relationships right now. There's lots of interest in doing star-studded sneak preview screenings to lift up the work and message of those organizations all across the country, but I don't do any distribution and I don't do marketing. I'm planning to work with the filmmaker, distribution, and PR team to ensure that the mission and social impact emphasis is integrated throughout all of their plans.

51:15:00 **DY:** So public media realities: We see this as an opportunity to engage younger viewers in public media and hopefully grab a bunch of them as new members.

We secured a mainstream corporate underwriter to help us. We tend to shy away from funding hard-hitting films about social issues. After all, a lot of our funding is public money.

51:40:00 **SD:** All right, Don. You wanna kick us off? [laughs]

51:45:00 **DY:** Okay, so public media. It's great to see you all. Thank you for agreeing to join us for our first face to face. Now that the film is done and your theatrical release is coming in a few weeks, we thought it would be helpful to get an update where everyone is at.

52:00:00 **DV:** Yeah, I'm like super excited about the progress we're making, and I have to tell you, Pink just confirmed that she's coming to New York City. [Yay!] So, it's her, Van Jones, and Misty Copeland, and they're all gonna co-present the film. And what other updates do we have?

52:21:00 **SD:** Well, it's super exciting. The New York City Black Lives Matter is gonna be a co-sponsor of the film, and all the proceeds for the event are gonna go to them, so we're really excited.

52:33:00 **DY:** Oh, I don't know if that's a good idea. [laughter] I'm personally a supporter of Black Lives Matter, but this isn't a news angle. This is cultural.

52:46:00 **SD:** I understand. But, you know, the vision for this campaign and the effort was really to bring new allies to the racial justice movement. That's kind of, that's the whole idea.

52:56:00 **DY:** Sure. We want new allies, but not these allies. We wanna bring, let's bring people together, not tear them apart.

53:05:00 **DV:** Oh. Well, you know, I like that big [inaudible] approach. We'll put our heads together and we'll come back to you with a plan that we think will work for everyone. Are there any other updates? Our partners are interested in community screenings, or...?

53:25:00 **SD:** Well, you know, all the partners that I've been cultivating are really excited. They wanna be involved. They're really gonna get this film out there. So we have interest all across the country in all the key cities that we talked about, but the thing is, as you know, most of them can't afford to pay, right. Like these are – it's not

Silicon Valley here.

53:48:00 **DV:** Well, why is that? I thought we talked about this.

53:52:00 **SD:** Yeah, they just, when you have people who are working tech or these other sectors, they do have a lot of funding, but this is a volunteer-run movement. You know, a lot of these organizations are volunteer-run, they don't have a lot of funding, so if we really want to have an impact, we can't expect them to pay.

54:14:00 **DV:** I understand that, but wait a second. Let me get this straight. We're gonna give away my film for free, and then in the case of our premiere, we're gonna give them whatever we make? I mean, you know I put my own money and time into this.

54:33:00 **CD:** Well, maybe, I'm gonna go off script here a little bit and say as the distributor, you know, we've worked with some films and been able to get foundation support to support free community screenings, so maybe there's an opportunity for us to tap into some foundation money so we're not looking at, where that screening campaign, which is really important for impact purposes, is underwritten as part of the distribution of the film.

55:00:00 **DV:** I mean, that's a great idea and I think you're probably right. We can probably work with some foundations who would help us do this, but I'm still, I really want the film to be in the hands of people who can use it. You know, that really is my primary goal, and at the same time, I wanna take care of myself [laughs] and try to make a career out of being a filmmaker. So what's the update on the theatrical, and maybe with the foundations and the theatrical, I can recoup some of my money...?

55:35:00 **CD:** Well, I'm excited to report we have twenty cities booked across the nation, but it's a situation where really that opening weekend, box office is really gonna drive the theater's willingness to schedule more, so we're really gonna wanna come up with a strategy, and maybe engage some of these community groups around getting people into the box offices, so that's something to talk about, the value of an impact campaign that's funded or underwritten by a foundation, and maybe there's an organization where we wanna go that direction, versus maybe having that same funding used to help to give tickets for a theatrical release, the first weekend of the theatrical release, so then we're driving those people to the theaters with free tickets and helping to support the theatrical release of the film and build upon that.

56:34:00 **DV:** That sounds great. That's sort of what Get Out did, right? I mean, that sounds like a great strategy. And you're gonna be doing the PR around this, right?

56:43:00 **SD:** I thought you were gonna hire a PR team.

56:47:00 **DV:** Hmm. Okay. Are you sure – wait, so wait. Are you gonna do the PR around that?

56:54:00 **CD:** No, we're more of a theatrical booker, so we don't do the PR. But it's important to the work we do. [laughter]

57:05:00 **SD:** Okay [laughs]. Nice, thank you, Dawn. [applause] And I wanna acknowledge the end, that was actual improv [laughs]. [laughter] All right. Dawn, how familiar does this scenario seem to you?

57:27:00 **DV:** I was really feeling like I was having a flashback. In my first film, I definitely went into it thinking I'm gonna get.... Yeah. And I'm used to, as a person who's come from the nonprofit sector, I'm used to like wearing every hat, doing everything, so making films felt very familiar to me in that way, but the PR and the marketing piece and the trying to get a distributor and all of that was really, really challenging. So, yeah, this seems familiar, and also I feel like as a more seasoned person, like I should not get into that situation again. And yet, you know, the field is changing, the way distribution happens is changing, the way people are learning about these films is changing, and it's a constantly moving thing. So I feel like, on the one hand, I should know better, and on the other hand, I can totally see walking into a situation like that again.

58:28:00 **SD:** Well, in your experience, what conversation needs to happen, and when, to avoid this kind of crash and burn scenario that we just saw?

58:38:00 **DV:** Yeah, it's so difficult, because part of it is with social issue films, I'm thinking in my experience where we got funding from foundations, we're getting funding from people who are concerned about the issues, so hopefully these conversations are happening actually before your film is completed, that you're having these conversations along, and that includes like having a broadcast, or even if you don't have a broadcast until you get a rough cut done or get it to fine cut, you at least have a sense of who is gonna be interested in broadcasting it, and maybe some of the money that you've brought in is from public television, so there's not necessarily a guarantee of like a first strand, but that there's some kind of support to get a public

television broadcast. So I think it happens in stages and it happens over time in thinking about things, and often I think the reality is that a lot of the really painful conversations happen at the end, because you don't know where your film is until you're done with the film. I mean, we're still editing *The Pushout*, you know.

59:51:00 **SD:** Don, what do you think about the scenario in terms of how familiar is this – I'm actually curious about two aspects of the conversation we just had. One, the funding question and the return of the filmmakers, but also the public media position on this particular film.

01:00:00 **DY:** So if you noticed, when there was a conversation about money, I was pretty quiet [laughs]. [laughter] And that is a reality in terms of public television, where, and I think as we see the emergence, before we were meeting, of Netflix and Amazon and these real mega-investors commissioning entities now, even entities like HBO and public television have really become less able to provide significant production resources. But that said, public television is a very interesting place to launch your film, but in terms of revenue, it's a terrible place presently. I don't think that's ever gonna be recovered, right. We had a filmmaker from China last week who came in and was like, I'm really trying to understand how do I get money from public television, right, and then I realized the question was more what can you get from public television that can be leveraged in benefit of the production, right. So I can get him a letter from PBS that would state that they're interested in airing the show, and he can leverage that to get international co-financing, so it's really sort of a delicate interplay in terms of what you can get to benefit you, but if you're looking for finances from public television, that's not perhaps the right place to start. I think as was mentioned, if you get a prime time show, you can garner national press. That's incredibly valuable, but that is not directly related to production funds or revenue. It's really sort of an entrée into other opportunities.

01:01:48: **DY:** And then other political part of the conversation absolutely is public television is in the midst of another cultural debate, right, so it has been since the NEA was under [inaudible], and it's been the better part of twenty-five years now with a film that was made here, you see, with [inaudible], right, so it started in almost this exact neighborhood twenty-five years ago. Those battles will continue, and unfortunately, as a member of public television, we view it as a more progressive element [inaudible] public television is the only entity in the culture where it sort of devolves backwards. You think culture should move forward, but in many ways public television was more progressive, so you just have to be a little bit more sophisticated about what you get and what you [inaudible]. It's a balancing act that I don't think had to happen twenty years

ago.

01:02:41 SD: Cristine, the new distribution realities, if you could speak both to the last scenario and this scenario. In each case, we're dealing with a really shifting landscape right now, and I'm really curious how it's influencing scenarios like this that you're seeing, what's changing.

01:03:02 CD: Sure. And I'm glad I get to talk about both scenarios, because I think the second scenario, the reality is it's not gonna be hard to get distribution for a film about Prince and Tom Petty. I mean, it's gonna happen, and I think the challenging piece of that scenario is this idea that we wanna build in an impact campaign that addresses those issues, so I think that's a project that you start really early with, and that is the focus of where you're putting your energy into figuring out what are the partners, 'cause you're gonna have a lot of interest from many different partners. I would imagine Netflix, you know, all of the big players are gonna be interested in a film like that. So then it becomes about the negotiations around who is gonna allow you to do what you wanna do and accomplish with the film, and that's where having, I think, a sales agent on board to help you with those conversations and help you sort through the opportunities can be really helpful, and a strategist who can really bring to the table what the possible impact opportunities are for the film. But the other scenario I think is more commonly the kinds of films we're working with, where they're not high profile films, they don't have the distribution runway just laid out for them like the second scenario.

01:04:21 CD: In that situation, it is the case that more recently Netflix, who was really a great source of revenue for documentaries, because they were not only doing, acquiring for their Netflix originals department and division but they were also doing a fairly robust acquisition of documentaries that are really great documentaries but don't have the big name director or the high profile issue going for them. So we were doing a lot of deals for international rights for documentaries, and in the last six months that shifted and they're no longer funding that budget to the degree that they used to, and they're moving a lot of that revenue into the originals side, because they're really more and more, and I'm sure you guys are all reading this, people are recognizing it's about they wanna own their content, they wanna take it on, they wanna have some involvement in the editorial piece in some cases, and they wanna own it, and that's what's important to them. So as a distributor, what we're doing now is we're looking at films, let's take the first scenario, where we are talking about a scenario where it's gonna be tricky for a Netflix to be interested in a story like that. If it's a story that rises to the level where it gets a Sundance release, that changes, of course, the picture dramatically,

because there's also these new kind of industry – it's not so new, but there are these kind of points where the platforms are all really coming together and competing against each other, and Sundance is one of those places, [inaudible] is another place, and that's creating some buzz in the marketplace for those films, and that's this many of the documentaries that are produced, and most of our films don't make it into those major festivals.

01:06:21 **CD:** So what we're doing then with our films is really talking to filmmakers about the territory, the traditional territory release strategy, public broadcasters are really still buying and that still can be a major source of revenue, but we're always gonna take it to Netflix and we're always gonna take it to Amazon, because those deals can be so lucrative. That's where a lot of the money is right now. But then we come back to you as the filmmaker and say, well, okay, what's more important to you? Because if you're gonna go to a Netflix where your film's gonna be released globally, it's gonna be accessible but they don't put any PR and marketing behind the international release of the film. So if it's important that the film be seen, you're probably better off going with a territory by territory distribution strategy through the public broadcasters, and we're just in the process of working out a coalition of broadcasters that have gotten interested in the idea of leveraging their power by acquiring films as a group rather than as individual broadcasters, and what's nice about that is we'll go into Sundance this year with that coalition assembled and look for a film, and in that case what we can say is the film will definitely be shown in all these countries, and here are the viewing statistics of all these broadcasters, and so you know, you have a sense of who's gonna be watching your film, and of course Netflix doesn't share that information, so....

01:08:02 **SD:** Yeah ,so I wanna open it up. There's obviously a lot of things to talk about in this scenario, different stakes in the issue. Basically one option is getting the film out there; another option's having it actually have an impact in particular communities and doing certain things, so what's jumping out at you guys in this scenario and what concerns you?

01:08:31 **Woman in audience:** I'm thinking a little bit awkwardly about this. I'm not a filmmaker, but [inaudible], and the thing that jumps out at me is as an industry, if documentaries are now shifting to this idea that, oh, we can make money, Netflix, for instance, as filmmakers, the question seems pertinent if you look at cinema in general and how broadly that's changed, if you're looking at the listings now of what's available, it's not very good, and it's being diminished. The more and more Marvel movies that come out and other movies of that ilk that have commerciality in mind, I think there's a

little bit of a concern for me, as a filmmaker and a viewer, that that doesn't happen to documentaries, that we don't now degrade what it is, the stories we wanna tell, and shift how we're gonna tell them so that they become a commercial venture. That would be my response.

01:09:41 **SD:** Well, we were just having this conversation about the importance of keeping small shops conversations and being nimble and flexible so that you can really meet exactly, like more niche so that you can really meet all the needs of the stakeholders who have different values and different missions than some of these larger big beasts, so I think there's been a lotta conversations about that as well. Other questions or comments?

01:10:14 **Woman in audience:** This is a question for Sahar, the real Sahar [laughter]. So you have that hypothetical about BLM being involved and how the filmmaker said, I'd like to see a big tents approach. Have you seen in your work that happen, where a filmmaker has gotten into bed early with a certain organization and other partners that want to jump on, or there's a conflict?

01:10:39 **SD:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think that that happens, and that's where the big tent approach can be challenging, because the bigger you get, sometimes the less focus the [inaudible] can be or the message can be, but those are conversations that you need to be having all along the way, right, and there are sometimes territorial issues where one organization, like, wow, you have all these other partners on this project, you know, we actually don't play nice with that partner, or we don't like their approach to this particular issue, and I don't wanna be associated with them. You know, like those kinds of things come up all the time, absolutely, and so being really clear about what the focus, so just because two people are seeing the same film does not mean that they are understanding the same campaign, so being really clear about what the objectives of the campaign are, like in this case, saying like, no, actually the whole point of this campaign is to get all of these disparate communities and fans of these artists to support the Black Lives Matter movement, like that's why I got involved as a strategist in this film, that's why all these other partners got involved, and now like we're supposed to like take a cultural approach perhaps or something. You know, like that's not exactly, those are different missions.

01:12:04 **Woman in audience:** I just wanna know how an independent filmmaker was able to work with the estates of Tom Petty, David Bowie, and Prince [laughter] and secure all the rights you would need, especially Prince, for the music and the footage.

01:12:17 **DV:** I guess this was a little magical thinking, honestly. No, but I have known people who have access to people you'd be surprised about. I mean, I know somebody who's making a film about Leonard Cohen, and that seems really difficult to do, but I think if you're determined and you've got an idea, you can find people, if you don't have the direct connections, you can find people to do that. I think that's one of the things I love about the independent filmmaker world, is that we're like visionaries and storytellers. If we think it can be done, then we're gonna get it done. It's kind of shocking. I don't know all three, but, you know [laughter].

01:12:58 **Woman in audience:** That was a good answer. I didn't expect [laughs]....

01:12:59 **DV:** Oh, I think it's a good question. I think those things are good questions, 'cause I think it's often the thing that stops people from following their dream of what they wanna do with their lives, right, is that you think – and it's good to, I'm not saying you shouldn't think about what the barriers are 'cause they exist, but.... I mean, making money as a documentary filmmaker, that is not my primary focus or goal, so I think when you ask that question about that, that's not my primary focus or goal, although I do wanna get paid for my work.

01:13:26 **SD:** Absolutely. And we need models that are making filmmaking sustainable.

01:13:30 **DV:** That's right. And not just paid at the end of the film, but actually while I'm in production.

01:13:35 **DY:** I mean, that, actually the musical genre, if you look at documentary last five years, there's been more, that's been an explosive genre, and I think there's a particular talent. I just saw, like on Showtime they had this George Michael documentary that had to be done with the estate. The bigger questions of music are rights, and you have to have the estate behind you to cut you a deal. But I think it's important to look at the trends going on, like who's gonna do an in-depth historical documentary anymore? Nobody's giving resources, foundations don't have any money, everybody's doing a verité character-driven piece because you can shoot. But I think stepping back, it's like what kind of films are not branded content that are compelling that you're gonna make a living off of? Good luck. It's very hard.

01:14:26 **Woman in audience:** The question it kinda brings to mind is later down the process, like how do you get to that point? I'm working on a documentary film on human eggs and the impact on women who provide [inaudible] other people's babies,

and I've tried every single funding angle I can, I've got an Emmy award-winning executive producer who wants to see my rough cut, but I can't even get the rough cut to the point where I can actually hand it to her in a way that I feel is going to be at the level that it should be in order to get to this person [laughs], and be taken seriously, so, I mean, how do you even get, as a first-time filmmaker, how do you even get to that point where not only do you have somebody's attention because of the subject matter but you keep their attention and then get the support?

01:15:14 **SD:** It's a really good question. The next scenario is probably gonna be interesting to you because we're gonna be talking about corporate underwriting [laughs], which is not necessarily an answer, but it's like because this is an issue, there are some people who are turning to looking at other innovative options, but.... Do you have a...?

01:15:35 **DY:** I would consider an executive producer who might have done a film on this subject. Well, not the exact subject, but in the subject area, right, so maybe in science or reproductive or however, and then they can sort of.... It's incredible in the last fifteen years, some films might have ten executive producers, some to fundraise, some content specialists, some understand how to put that kind of film together, and something tells me before you go, because then there are the editors and [inaudible].

01:16:11 **Woman in audience:** At one point you mentioned a foundation step in to sponsor the free tickets. Could sponsor [inaudible] also work there, and if yes, what other [inaudible]?

01:16:25 **CD:** We haven't done it with a corporation. We have presented the idea as a proposal. We're working on a film right now, In Pursuit of Silence, and it has as an executive producer an organization in the UK called Quiet Mark, and Quiet Mark is really mission driven around creating more quieter spaces in our communities, and they have relationships, long-developed relationships with BMW and Dyson and Miele and all these big brands that have worked to make quieter products. And so we're in the process of doing, we found a distributor in Germany for them and they're working with Quiet Mark, and we proposed a bunch of different scenarios where Quiet Mark could come in and help underwrite the cost of the release of the film in Germany, because it's a film that isn't necessarily a commercial film, and so it's been difficult to get traditional distributors on board. But they ultimately decided not to go that route where they were funding tickets that was presented to them, in favor of actually funding a base level of the release, and we decided to do that primarily because the distributor was more comfortable with that. You know, it meant that their costs were

covered. They had kind of their network of people that they knew they could go out to, and felt like they could get ticket sales moving, and the distributors, the piece that really was most missing for them was this piece to get the costs covered to start the whole process of the release.

01:18:02 **CD:** On our educational side, which works in the domestic market, we've had a number of films that we've worked with get foundation support, and the way that works is a foundation decides to give a grant, and usually this comes through the relationship with the filmmaker, and maybe an impact team that's involved in the film. At ro*co, we come in and help support that. We've been involved and can provide some information on how it's worked and how to put that kind of proposal together. And then the foundation has supported, they, you know, it's been a block grant usually of \$50,000, with the metric of getting it out to X number of schools around the country. And so then we report, ro*co reports back to the foundation, this is who's gotten this film, this is where we are on the process, so we're then taking on the responsibility of kind of doing the back end work, reporting back to the foundation. And that's worked really well, because a lot of the films that we end up working with, a lot of your films are issue-driven films where that educational, semi-theatrical market is really a sweet spot, and what a campaign like can do, when you can get the film out in a concentrated period of time, which is what a block grant allows you, it can help drive the marketing and other institutions become interested, because they're hearing that these institutions are showing the film and it creates some buzz. So it's a great strategy. So, yeah, I threw that idea out about buying tickets because we've proposed that and there's been interest in a couple of different areas, but we've actually never had somebody go through that process specifically.

01:19:50 **DV:** The only note I would make about corporate sponsorship is that if you are working towards getting onto public television, sometimes there are limitations to which corporations you can have. And I'm not sure if there's like some separation between the production dollars and distribution dollars, but generally you have to disclose all of that, including, and also individual donors as well, so there's definitely some tricky things around – and it sounds like your next scenario is around that.

01:20:20 **SD:** Well, I'm wondering, should we do the next scenario now? One final question. . . .

01:20:35 **Woman in audience:** I wanted to ask the real Cristine to comment on Netflix. You were commenting that the Netflix deal would be the lucrative deal, but then you wouldn't be able to have the international rollouts. Is that because Netflix is

closed to any kind of deals like that? Let's say it's a movie that's something about Greece. Would they be willing to take Greece out of the equation and have the filmmaker create a different kind of distribution scenario in Greece, or are they just closed to all of it?

01:21:17 **CD:** They will occasionally let you take a territory out. It's getting harder to negotiate that. They're just getting less flexible in those areas. But I think when you can make a compelling case and you do this, I think Netflix will sometimes be willing to do that. I would say it used to be, about a year and a half ago, we could get contracts structured so that Netflix would allow us to go out to public broadcasters, and the way that worked was initially we could go out to public broadcasters and do those deals, and Netflix was okay with that. That was about three, four years ago, and about a year and a half ago, they let us do it if we would agree that the broadcast had to be synced up, because what happened in response to that is the public broadcasters said, if we're gonna go out at the same time as Netflix, which is what Netflix was requiring it had to be, we have to be allowed to go out exactly the same time.

01:22:22 **DY:** Which filmmakers love.

01:22:24 **CD:** Which is great, because then you're getting the best of both worlds, right. You're getting the PR from the broadcasters, and you're getting.... Those deals are becoming harder, and then the other thing we've noticed is because, about the last couple of years it's been the case that U.S. sales agents are having a lot of those conversations with Netflix, and the international sales agents aren't always involved in those conversations. U.S. sales agents aren't always aware of the value of trying to negotiate that piece, that you can go out simultaneously and they do allow you to do that with their straight acquisitions. With their originals, it's kept more in-house, more difficult. But, yeah, when we're involved, we're always looking to negotiate that simultaneous release, and then let's get the film out as quickly as possible to make sure we can get as many of the public broadcasters on board as possible.

01:23:26 **SD:** Thank you, Dawn. [applause] So we're gonna do one more quick scenario and then we'll open it up for conversations about that scenario, or you can introduce any of your own scenarios in this final session, so we can workshop those as well and hear any of the hiccups you all are having. Before I do that, I wanna note that Maya is here from the Active Voice lab back there, and, Maya, if you could hand out those worksheets. There's a tool, it's still a work in progress, a sneak peek at the 4 Ms methodology, a framework that you all can use to think through some of the different tricky conversations that you might need to have in order to ensure a successful

partnership, taking into consideration all the various dynamics that might come up. It's, like I said, a work in progress, so if you have ideas for things that are missing from this or anything along those lines, we hope that you'll e-mail those ideas over so we can work together as a community to make it a stronger resource for everyone. So with that, I want to invite our third filmmaker – how is it going, everyone? Is this working for you? Yeah? [applause] Okay, good.

01:24:53 **David:** We need some more applause on that. Could we get a little more about that? [applause] Now, again, remember that this is being videotaped. It'll be on our Website. There'll be a transcript of this as well, so check back on our site.

01:25:08 **SD:** Okay. So our final filmmaker, brave soul, is Laura Van [inaudible] Taylor. Will you please come up? [applause] Hi, Laura. [Laura: Hi.] Laura is working on her first feature film. She's a new filmmaker, five years now in the making. You come from Corporate Creative Strategy and are now a filmmaker, and the film that you're working on is called I Am Maris: Portrait of a Young Yogi. Will you talk quickly a little bit about it?

01:25:38 **Laura:** Sure. It is a movie about a young woman, a teenager who suffered, still suffers from severe anxiety and depression and eventually a life-threatening eating disorder, and it's really a story of her recovery through yoga, and she's also an artist, a painter and a writer, so it's really actually quite a hopeful and helpful story. And Cristine at ro*co is actually executive producing it, which is wonderful, and my producer Ariana is here as well.

01:26:19 **SD:** So the third film. I actually gave this one a title. It's really good, you guys. It's called The Illustrator [laughter], and you're about to see why it's a super lame title, actually. Okay. This is a sixty-minute documentary that tells the story of a comic book illustrator, a Taiwanese stay at home dad who is second generation. He cares about two things, his art and his family. He recently did a 23 and Me DNA test and found out a major part of his bloodline is from a country, Oceania, that is now threatened by global warming. The notion of taking his son to go explore the region has taken hold of his imagination, and this may be their last chance. So they're traveling on a budget, and he's illustrating the whole time, a project that he plans to turn into a graphic novel about the love of a son and a father and their adventures, something he hopes to get published. All the while he speaks eloquently about the commodification of the art form. The distribution milestones for this film are that there's gonna be a festival premiere, or a number of them, iTunes and DOD, as well as community

screening. Would you kick us off with the filmmaker realities?

01:27:36 **Laura:** Sure. So this is my third film but my first documentary, and I am for the most part used to working on scripted indie films, mostly dramedies. [inaudible] The subject of this film I'm working on is a friend from high school. I saw on Facebook that my friend was planning a trip with his son, and I just knew it was gonna be a very fun and beautiful project to take on with them. So at this point, we have a fine cut of the film and I'm really eager to get it out there.

01:28:12 **CD:** Okay, distributor realities. I'm excited about this beautifully shot film. Think *The Eagle Huntress* meets *Fantasia* [laughter], but in the style of the artist's own work. It's going to do well in my art house circuit and internationally, a market my distribution company is really trying to grow right now. I can see this film appealing to international broadcasters who have travel channels, and it's also an innovative approach to what can be pitched as a story about global warming. I know the film is going to do well in the educational distribution market. Junior high school teachers are always looking for content to help students explore their identities and culture.

01:28:57 **SD:** The strategist realities. I got into the impact strategy arena in film because of my activism. I see film as a powerful tool for change, and that is my priority. I would be doing other work if I didn't believe in it. So I don't do distribution, promo, or marketing. Really I'm more of a researcher and a partnership person. I focus on policy, advocacy, and movement building in tangible ways. That's what inspires me the most.

01:29:21 **DY:** Corporate underwriter realities. I heard about this film when a fundraiser approached me at an event. My company has recently started to channel a bigger portion of my advertising budget to branding content in films and television. Stories help my brand to craft an identity that our target audiences like. I'm excited about this film because it is on brand in terms of showing that our outerwear company, *Cartegna*, is all about adventure and exploration [chuckles]. The father-son dynamic will be perfect for Father's Day and capturing the attention of the Boy Scouts, and I love this story, but I do want a new creative team for final cut. It needs to match other company branded pieces. And why a longer film? Short is best with corporate-supported concept.

01:30:15 **SD:** All right. So, Laura, will you kick us off?

01:30:19 **Laura:** I'm really happy to introduce all of you to our new impact

producer. We're so glad you agreed to join the team. I was so worried because of the funding applications about impact – which is true. I was [inaudible] this morning, this stuff came up for me, and I was like [inaudible]. [laughs] So I'm really glad to have you so you can help us figure it all out.

01:30:44 **SD:** Awesome. Yeah, it's great to meet everyone and to be working together. Thanks for bringing this call together, Laura. So I watched the film and did some preliminary research, and I see really good potential. In fact, I'm getting a lot of great feedback from feminists and Asian cultural organizations that this film is gonna be useful to talk about breaking stereotypes. I think I can build out a plan that will drive us home. One of the groups has a ton of ideas for the classroom curriculum as well, and would be able to weigh in so that they can integrate the film into programs about those issues that they support all across the country.

01:31:22 **Laura:** Oh. But really, the film is about so much more than that. It's really about love and family and facing the unknown. It's about following your dreams, and they're gonna make that curriculum for us? I mean, because we already have different plans for the curriculum, right? It's going to be great for junior high students who are creatively exploring their identity, and it should be fun. I mean, I'm a feminist, but I don't really see the feminist angle here, and – but we can talk about that in a separate call. [laughter] Let's hear from our fundraiser, who has updates. Whoever is in the café, could you please mute yourself? [laughter]

01:32:21 **DY:** Okay, fundraiser. Well, do you want the good news or the bad news first? [Laura: Uh, bad?] Most of the issue funders out there are focused on some crisis issues at the moment: health care, climate change, etc. It's good there may be interest and value in these other angles about stereotypes, but I fear it's not hard-hitting enough on any of them. For example, for the ones focused on climate change, your film doesn't go enough into it for them, for example, delving deeper into sea level rise. Also, they might not want one person to be the only character.

01:33:05 **Laura:** Okay [laughs]. What's the good news?

01:33:08 **DY:** Well, the good news is corporations are starting to see films as a great asset, and recently I got the attention of Cartegna, a high end outerwear company that wants to underwrite the campaign and production, so long as they can brand it. What do you think?

01:33:26 **Laura:** [inaudible] [laughter] Technical difficulties, just lettin' you know.

Okay. [inaudible] Where am I? Oh, okay, I like the idea, but the thing is, my friend, who the movie is about, I don't think that would really go over very well with him. I mean, the whole film is about talking about the purity of art.

01:34:09 **DY:** Well, they are willing to pay \$300,000 just to have the logo at the end.

01:34:14 **Laura:** Oh [laughs],well... [laughter]

01:34:21 **CD:** Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Whoa, sorry. I was on mute. Sorry you couldn't hear me. I have to say the logo at the end is a problem. You know, the European public broadcasters that we would go out and pitch the film to won't be willing to keep a logo on a film. In fact, they have us sign a form often, saying that there's no branded content in the film, and so if we decide to go that route, we're really giving up a lot of the international public broadcaster distribution of the film. And the theatrical distributors similarly have to be very careful about when they release a film that involves brand support, because it makes it difficult for them to position the film with film critics and film reviewers and their people who they want to get behind supporting the film.

01:35:22 **SD:** Thank you. That's the end, right? Yeah. [applause] Awesome. All right. Thank you, Laura. [Laura: [inaudible]] What's that? [Laura: I think you have a future in scriptwriting.] [laughs] So, Cristine, we already kinda started to talk about these kinds of scenarios. Anything else that you wanna say about this kind of scenario and what the distribution realities are of it?

01:35:48 **CD:** Yeah, I mean, I think it can work. It's just, as we're experiencing with this Quiet Mark film experience, it's about having the conversations with the brands and involving them and educating them around what the realities are in the distribution world, so they have a sense of what the limitations in terms of what we can do. And if you decide, for example, a brand can get behind supporting an opening weekend release of a film, which that could be a great way to get the film out there, well, maybe they underwrite a theatrical release of the film. So there are ways to do it. It's just, it's tough because that's a conversation you'd like to have when you have the interest from the brand, and you have a distributor on board, and so timing sometimes can be difficult because you've got the brand interest, and you're hoping they're gonna help you make the film and fund the film, which they did in the case of In Pursuit of Silence -- they came on board as an executive producer and put money into the film -- and then you're also hoping they're gonna help with the release. So that's the time when you'll definitely want to have a distributor on board helping you have those, or a sales agent

helping you have those conversations on board.

01:37:10 **CD:** And I feel like I should just take a minute and explain the difference between, I've been using these terms kind of back and forth, distributor versus sales agent. What I really mean by that is ro*co as a company takes on a film as a sales agent, but we also act as a distributor, because we're doing deals directly with broadcasters and directly with the platforms. So when we're going out with a film, we're going out to the international market and we will sell all rights to a distributor, so in that place we're more of a sales agent, but we will also go directly to, when we can't get those all rights, we'll go directly to the [SD: So helpful.] broadcasters.

01:37:47 **SD:** Awesome. Thank you. Don, can you help us think through and understand the realities of corporate underwriting and branded content, the differences between them, and what we're really dealing with here?

01:38:00 **DY:** So maybe the perspective is that the corporations always view the work as branded content, right. They believe that they're funding something that will extend their brand. And then, but the question for the filmmaker is whether you will be able to make the film you want or you're commissioned to make the film for them. We've seen a lot, at least where I work, and I think particularly in the Bay Area, there're a lot of filmmakers who are doing, lot of documentarians do branded content work, for Facebook, for Google, different corporations, but it's rare that the branded content, in my experience, that we see aligned with the films that they're working on. It's more a way to make a living. And in my position in public television, it's really hard to find that alignment where you have a corporation who will leave the content alone, and they will be excited about supporting your project, and where you can have the total liberty to tell the story without inserting their brand. I've not seen a lot of experiences by which an independent film has effectively partnered with a corporation. I'm sure they happen, but I think it's pretty rare.

01:39:28 **Abby Ginzberg:** I was really struck by, I was thinking about the recent Vietnam War series, and it was less about the branding on the TV broadcast and more about the branding in every Bank of America office that I went to. And that's where I feel like they really got some bang for their bucks, by being able to plaster, watch this, it's coming,, blah-blah-blah, and they probably did somewhere between four and six weeks of advance advertising for it. So it struck me that it actually – I mean, I'm sure they paid millions of dollars and I'm sure they didn't influence the final cut of that film, 'cause I can't imagine Ken giving anybody final cut [DY: Sure.]. So that's a unique situation [DY: Yeah.], so [inaudible] what the next film would be that you could get

Bank of America, so they'd be doing six weeks of pre-publicity for you. But it was a striking, I thought, experience.

01:40:23 **DY:** And it is hard, at least in the public television example. So Ken Burns is in a place of his own. You know, he also got, like with *The Emperor of All Maladies*, when he got that show on cancer, I think Merck was an underwriter, and he had a [inaudible], but that just goes to show that he deals with different rules. I think it's rare for an independent film to get corporate underwriting. I think it's more common for like ongoing series, like "Antiques Road Show," "American Experience," because they have that multiple play. I find it hard with corporate for single films, 'cause it's hard to demonstrate, at least on a broadcast or independent film, that you're gonna get the metrics that you want, unless you're going straight to YouTube or – like Netflix won't even allow that [inaudible] anymore, so it might be more for like new platforms like YouTube.

01:41:13 **SD:** I'm happy to take a question and then keep going. Yeah.

01:41:19 **Morgan:** I feel like I've heard a few companies out there sort of saying, you know, we'll throw money at something and we don't want any connection with us, but we just hope that there's some of the issues that we're concerned about that are just brought up in the process of making the project, but we don't want any logo or brand or association. We really want you to make the film you're gonna make, but we would say that we would love for there to be some discussions around something. And I think that's a slippery slope, because I think that a lot of us have gotten into this because we come at it from more of a journalistic approach, and maybe the recent journalism grads in this room might have like the latest and greatest kind of feedback on that, but there's so much infiltration of corporate money in journalism these days, I'm really curious about from your perspective, where those discussions go around money tainting projects and how people feel about that.

01:42:35 **SD:** Yeah. I'm happy to have anyone in the audience respond to that.

01:42:41 **David:** Dawn, do you wanna say something?

01:42:44 **Dawn Valadez, in audience:** Yeah, I mean, I know a couple films that I feel like did a good job of not kind of letting that happen. *Bag It* is one. I know she, *Bag It* is a film about plastic and not using plastic, and she got a couple of corporations, Patagonia is one of them because they use recycled bags. It's tricky. I'm like, who are you talking about, and I would love to know who those – 'cause most of the

corporations I know, even for the nonprofit sector, for NGOs, they wanna have their logo plastered all over our Website. You know, I do a lot of funding and fund development for NGOs and stuff, so I don't know. It's a challenging thing. I love the example of Bank of America. I don't know. There's definitely this movement in corporations to have some, you know, they have charitable giving and they have some social concerns, so – [Abby Ginzberg: [inaudible]] But they always are. It always is. If you're gonna get a corporation to support or underwrite something, they may have money that they have to spend, right, because they have a requirement to do that, but I think in general it's always gonna be for advertising.

01:44:06 **Man in audience:** I mean, I'm curious to know when do people feel like they're journalists and when do they feel like they're a documentarian, and when is that line – making a movie versus making a documentary, it seems like that genre is blurring a lot, and the world of quote unquote fake news, there's that whole thing, too. Like if documentaries start getting regularly branded with this idea of being fake, where does that leave us as storytellers that wanna tell quote unquote truthful stories? You know, it just brings up a lot of bizarre questions for me and motivational questions, and it brings up a lot for me.

01:45:02 **SD:** Yeah, and I think talking about our values going into these relationships is in general essential, I mean, one of the first things that needs to happen before any relationship is entered into, to put that on the table, but what happens on the broader landscape is a big question.

01:45:22 **Man in audience:** Sort of piggybacking off of your comment, it's sort of a blurry field right now, 'cause even if you look at The New York Times, what they're doing with 360 video, which is full transparency, you see the whole thing goin' down, but they're taking money from Samsung in order to produce those videos, and they're being exclusively shot on the Samsung 360 camera for a large majority of them. So you can say, all right, New York Times is probably not gonna write a good op-ed piece all exploding cell phones and Samsung, but in the same instance, does it really affect their journalistic integrity if they're taking financing for just camera equipment? You know, Samsung isn't saying, hey, you have to make a story about our amazing facilities in South Korea; they're saying, shoot anything with this, just we like the idea that you're using our gear and our equipment. So that could be a good way for filmmakers to consider underwriting stuff, if you don't wanna take money from anything that might have an influence on your subject matter, but camera gear, things like that, catering, free food, it's something that you can easily add to the end credits of your film, and I don't think PBS or any network is gonna say, hey, you took money from the burrito spot

down the street, you know. That's just my two cents on it, having done a documentary which is all about cell phone radiation and long-term health effects, which was a feature length film, we got a lot of offers from different companies that claim to have the solution, whether it was like a headset or like a different case you could put on your phone to reduce the radiation. In a lotta cases we'd take these meetings with these companies to hear them out, but at the end of the day, you lose credibility, so we had to decide, okay, do we want more money for special effects, or do we want greater credibility. I think at the end of the day, credibility wins for journalism. For documentaries, though, if you're aiming to get Oscar nominations, you need to have a lotta money involved, and, in fact, nowadays with the Oscars, you need to not only show in theaters in L.A. and New York, but you need to get a review in The New York Times or The L.A. Times, so ultimately it comes down to New York Times.

01:47:34 SD: I wanna also, as David's walking to the next question, but just also, Laura, it strikes me, I don't want to presume what your position was at Corporate Creative Strategy, but this is a space that you also understand, so I'm curious what you've been thinking about with respect to this scenario and conversation.

01:47:52 Laura: It's funny, 'cause you're right, I was thinking about, I think that way anyway. There's always some angle you can take, and we're all always blaming ourselves, our products, so I don't know. I agree that you have to, you don't wanna look like you're selling something, 'cause that would be like sort of a definite, this, like any time you see an ad or anything on, you're scrolling through something and you start watching this little video and then at the end they say, and we'll solve this for you with this, then you know like, okay, no, you just [inaudible] thing. But it's interesting. I'm gonna ask real Cristine if she would have the same response, because actually – we haven't even talked about this yet so we're gonna have a real conversation here [inaudible]. In my film, my subject, Maris – and the film's already all shot, so it's not, the brander would not have any influence in this way – Maris is always wearing Lululemon yoga clothes. Maris is also a Lululemon ambassador. They have discovered her through her blog and they love her and, you know. So would they be a possible funder for the film, or would it have the same sort of problems that we're talking about.

01:49:10 CD: Well, this is the perfect time for us to start having this conversation [laughter], because I think there are opportunities with this film because a big part of the strategy behind this film is really getting it out in schools and colleges and universities, and the semi-theatrical community screening component's gonna be so important for the distribution of the film that I think there are ways to bring Lululemon into that that could be exciting for them, and also speak to our goals in getting the film

out. And so maybe they, you know, it goes back to that idea, if we did decide we were gonna go the theatrical route with the film and we wanted to get them involved in that, in helping us connect to, both in maybe buying tickets for the opening weekend, but also Lululemon has celebrity contacts, they have other resources that we might be able to work with them to use on behalf of the film. And I think this film is a film that does potentially have that – we talked about this, right – there are celebrities out there who have been very vocal on this issue who could very well wanna get involved in the film, so, no, I don't see, unlike this scenario, unless Lululemon was talking about putting their logo on the film....

01:50:32 **Laura:** Right, when she walks by a Lululemon [inaudible].

01:50:34 **CD:** [laughs] I know. I mean, you know, because they'd come on board, we would maybe wanna create this boundary and say, no, their funding hasn't supported the production, that was entirely [Laura: Right.] done by you and the private funding we've gotten on board so far, and then Lululemon comes on board to support the outreach campaign. [DY: The marketing campaign.] And the marketing, yeah.

01:51:00 **Laura:** And I think, so thinking with my branding corporate hat on, if I were Lululemon and looking at my film, I would have to know what, every company has a very clear mission statement and a very clear this is our brand and this is what we represent, and you just really have to match those things together, and I don't know what Lululemon's is, but I assume that there is something about inspiring, you know, the very best you and, you know, which is what this movie does. [CD: Right.]

01:51:27 **SD:** Okay, so we have twenty or thirty minutes. I wanna take the next question, but quickly just to say what I hope is becoming really clear in all of the scenarios is that there're all kinds of different stakeholders that get involved in film production or in the film process for all kinds of different reasons, and to be having the conversations about the how and the why, like what the mission and the motive is for their participation, how you're gonna collaborate, what that looks like, what the money question is and what might change along the way is really vital because of all the variety that we're seeing in all these scenarios. And these are just three, but you can imagine there's like a plethora of other situations as well. So I would love to take the question and also any other questions that you have that don't even have anything to do with these scenarios. We have about twenty-five minutes left.

01:52:22 **Woman in audience:** Thank you. Can you hear me? [SD: Yeah, I can hear you.] Oh. It seems like all of these documentary films, they're all different niches and

there's different niche markets, and I was wondering if you could talk a little more about colleges, libraries, universities, educational markets for short documentary films. I have a specific one on Hungary in the '20s and '30s and it's a reverse migration story, original footage, and I've had some local distribution and there seems to be certain niches, but how do you, what's the best strategy for getting your film out there in these niche markets?

01:53:10 **CD:** So how long is the film? [Woman in audience: Thirty minutes.] Thirty minutes. Thirty minutes, I think that's, at least for international release, that's still a tough length. We're still being advised that broadcasters want an hour, or and some, and feature occasionally, but really a thirty-minute film becomes a little more difficult to program. I've just been really interested in that same issue, because we took a thirteen-minute film out to the market two years ago, a film called Body Team 12, it was nominated for an Academy Award in the shorts category, and we did make a couple sales, but the market doesn't yet exist. I think there are opportunities like, I've heard, and I haven't done all my research on this, but there's a company out there, a distributor that is just working on shorts. Does anybody know the name of that company? If you come see me afterwards, I wrote it down. I don't remember it off the top of my head, but I can get that to you. Do you know it?

01:54:21 Audience member: [inaudible] [CD: Canopy.] Abby Ginzberg: That's not it. Just say something for her?

01:54:31 **Abby Ginzberg:** I mean, I think that what, she wasn't really asking about broadcasting in foreign countries. You were asking about [Woman in audience: Here.] distribution in America. [Woman in audience: Yeah.] I think you should actually have a conversation with Canopy. It's a, without going into the details, they are now the streaming service for all sort of educational programming that's going on on college campuses today, and if they get interested in your film and are willing to do a little bit of promotion around it, because your film is very specific, it just might work for everybody who teaches Eastern European history and blah-blah-blah. So I think a really good piece of advice for you is to get you to Canopy, and I can give you a name of somebody there.

01:55:16 **SD:** Don, what are you thinking? I'm seeing you move around; I'm dying to know what you're thinking [laughs].

01:55:23 **DY:** Well, a lot of stuff is swirling. It is, you know, sort of thinking back, there are so many opportunities in filmmaking, but it really behooves you to get

support on the producing side, on the sales side, just get a sense of what, test the waters in terms of what your film could do, because I think, I was fixating on the comment you made earlier about journalism, right. So it's like back with the earlier Iraq war, there was a slew of investigative films about journalism, and ironically now with – I'm not trying to be political, but there's so little investigative journalism filmmaking at a time when we actually need that, right, and there's so many cultural pieces now, but I think it's really important to figure out what is the core kind of support, like who's gonna support your film, whether it's corporate support, which I have very little faith in, but grants, I think people really need to learn in this day and age to, we've noticed crowdfunding has kind of replaced educational in our space, but really, donors, individual donors, who is your like family of supporters and engage them early on, really get people to like get you enough to produce your film, but I think it's really important to get that key – I just think there's a lot of mythology to filmmaking, and so people fixate, as we were talking about before, they fixate on a Netflix sale, a Sundance premiere, and so much time is wasted on really scaffolding the right strategy for your film. And you always leave that opportunity for the sky is the limit, but you need to be the expert on what people wanna do with your film, and I think that's fundamentally important right now.

01:57:17 **DY:** Because I think that point about Netflix, you know, like two years ago they were acquiring so many films, like so it wasn't just they were putting more money towards acquisition, but they would give a lot of films thirty to fifty to a hundred thousand dollars, and then now I read the other day, they're trying to premiere a new feature, documentaries included, every ten days next year, but it is all about original vision, new memberships, whole new concept going. So you just have to know like who's going, two years, three years off – it takes so long to make a film, so you should be the expert on who's gonna support it.

01:57:57 **Woman in audience:** So I think the scenario you played out on comics is something similar to my film, which is all about racism and stereotyping with a backdrop of comics and comic book creators, so bang on, so I think you should come on board. [laughter] A couple of comments. First of all, I am also on the jury of UNAFF, which is United Nations Association Film Festival, and when I was on the jury and we used to see a film, we were specifically asked to look at the credits and if there're any logos there, and then we had to research as a jury member as to why that logo was there and what was the interest of that particular corporation there. So I don't know about other film festivals, but UNAFF in particular wanted to see what the logo was. And there was one particular film, I can't recall the name, it was about some eye doctors who went to Africa to cure cataracts, and all throughout the film, they were wearing

these jackets with logos of a particular company, so initially that film was rejected and then later with research, we found out that it was just a partner of organization and it was in the best interests of the film, we did kind of, got it back. So that is one thing to look out for when you are looking at film festivals; they are watching the credits.

01:59:23 **Woman in audience:** My question specifically is around Netflix and Amazon. Now, it's my understanding that independent filmmakers, it's difficult for us to approach them directly. They only deal with the sales agent. So could you just lay out the scenario, if somebody wants to reach out to these big organizations, besides having the Sundance premiere, which ninety-nine percent of us will not have, what's the way to reach out? Can you lay out a scenario for us, please?

01:59:57 **CD:** You're right. Netflix is requiring that everybody work through an aggregator, and there're lots of different aggregators out there that work with Netflix. There're sales agents like ro*co, but there're also, Premiere Digital down in L.A. has a relationship, there are lots of companies that do. When you go down that path with a company, I would just caution you to ask what is their approach in terms of how they pitch a film to Netflix. So some of them, they just have a spreadsheet and every film that they have on that they've gotten a feed, a pitch to Netflix, they put on the spreadsheet, and they send that to Netflix and they go through the spreadsheet and look at what they wanna see and what they don't, and make decisions. So it's a little bit more of they have a conduit for you. They're not doing an actual custom pitch of your film. Other companies will do more of that custom pitch and it's more relationship-based, and that's how we work. So the downside of that is we're pitching just a small number of films to them, films that we've curated. But you can go to a Premiere Digital or some of these other companies and they can pitch your film for you. Distribber [sounds like] is another one that does that, and then, yeah, Orchard, I think also.

02:01:22 **SD:** Yeah, we have another ten minutes or so before we were gonna wrap up.

02:01:35 **Man in audience:** Just wanna thank you for this. I'm a new member of the Berkeley Film Foundation, just been around for a few months now, and thank you, everybody. So I'm sort of getting started in this industry, although I do really feel like I know what I'm doing as far as the making of the film part of it, but I'm so glad that in the later end of this, people are starting to ask more of the unknowns, which is like what you do after you get the film made. Feel like there's a lot of dragons that need to be slayed, and when you're a do-it-yourself filmmaker, you can only take on so many dragons at once, and so in order to not get overwhelmed, you do what you can. But

that said, ambitious as we are, what can you tell someone who hasn't even been through the beginning to end process of making the film but also having the experience under their belt of having it get out there to the public, what can you tell that person as far as strategies to have in mind so to be able to deal with those unknown dragons that are going to be coming my way. So that's just a question for anyone, and I know that there's seasoned filmmakers in the audience, so I would love to hear from anyone who has any comments about that. I'm trying to acquire as much information as I can.

02:03:08 **Man in audience:** In regards to Morgan's question about journalism, though, I'll just tell him what I just learned a couple days ago. I was at a master class with IDA at ITVS in San Francisco, and they had a master class with Dawn Porter that I attended, and she has a film on Netflix right now about abortion, called Trapped, and I was really impressed by Dawn and I was glad to attend that. But she posed this question as well, do you consider yourself an artsy-fartsy filmmaker who just wants to examine a character or beautiful [inaudible] at Monterey Bay, as opposed to a journalist, and some of the group hesitated because we don't consider ourselves journalists, and I'm one of those that hesitated, but I asked her specifically, I told her that I hesitated 'causes I'm not a journalist, but she said that legally standing, you have more legal rights if you claim yourself as a journalist, as opposed to just being an artsy-fartsy filmmaker that just has a story to tell, and that there is some wisdom in that strategy, so I'm just leaving that on the table for what it's worth. But back to my question, I would just love to get some guidance and counsel for someone who's just getting started.

02:04:29 **SD:** Yeah. You kind of have a whole ecosystem lens. You have a thought?

02:04:34 **DY:** I'm a big believer in mentoring. Do people favors, and then [inaudible] people [inaudible]. Even you see here the great community of folks who really try to find people who've done it before.

02:04:49 **SD:** I do intakes with folks, a full hour to just hear what they're doing, what they're struggling with, and just offer up an overarching lens of where I might fit in. I imagine that other people in their own realms that do distribution or whatever would also have a call and just really try to understand what it is that you're trying to accomplish with your film and your campaign, like is it just to get it out there broadly, do you have like a particular idea in mind, and like working that through in some meetings or calls. I think a lot of people are, my experience has been most people are willing to have those conversations to get a sense, and once you start to do that, you'll be a little more oriented.

02:05:34 **CD:** And I would go back to some of your comments about, you know, I think it's critically important to really figure out who the audience is for your film, and as you're going through and making the film, one of the strategies around doing that is to put out, even if it's just a basic Website, put up a Website for the film that's there when you start, so that as you're going through the process, you're collecting, you have a form to collect people's contact information so you get a sense of who's responding, who's hearing about it, who's interested, so a kind of nuts and bolts to start gathering your data, and then I second the idea of mentors.

02:06:29 **Laura:** I was just gonna say one little thing, if that's okay. I'm not an expert; I'm a brand new filmmaker, so maybe I can relate to you in that way. I just decided – and there was somebody else, I think it was you with the embryo, or the egg, yeah – I was just gonna make it, like I was just gonna do it. I did a whole Field of Dreams thing; I was like, make it and they will come, so just like, which I know is hard. [Woman in audience: [inaudible]] Yeah [laughs]. And then make it as good as I could make it, make it exactly what I want, and then share it with as many people as possible, and like somehow that worked. [laughs]

02:07:08 **Man in audience:** [inaudible] a lot of distributors around the world and you can apply, and they offer [inaudible] or sales agent, and you can be part of a system that takes one year or three months, depending on what process you're on in the film, and it's amazing because it's really intense and they give you a lot of amazing tools to be able to release your film right away after [inaudible], so I may recommend a couple of them to you. [Man who asked question: I would love that.]

02:07:44 **Man who asked question:** [inaudible...] [moving on to next question]

02:08:08 **Woman in audience:** Okay. My question is, thank you so much, this is great, and I loved your unique approach to presenting the information. [SD: Collaborative.] Yeah, like filmmaking. So my question was, I'm pretty new to the documentary film world, just like about three years, and a lot of it has to do with fundraising, I found out. So I guess one of my questions is for when you're approaching funders who are not the traditional grantors, like Cal Humanities or PBS, ITVS, how do you pitch the value of film and different ways they can use it, and I know production funding is very different from outreach and marketing funding. Is there an example of a successful corporate kind of sponsorship that's not like a grant, or maybe not a foundation, that has contributed to production of a film. So, sorry, sort of a two-part question.

02:09:29 **SD:** Yeah. Well, I'll answer from the perspective of issue, and then I'm gonna ask Don to respond however you want. But from the perspective of funders that care about different social issues, I have experienced that a lot of these funders are starting to take an interest in films that might advance their portfolios in different ways, as we saw in the first scenario. And oftentimes, like at one point the Hartley Film Foundation had me on as their in-house strategist, where I would, for a lot of the films that were in production, I would write out scenarios and strategies for if the film was going in the direction of what you have in mind, here are some tangible ways you might use it to advance a particular set of objectives that might align with different issue funders. And that's not why I'm creating those, it's just to like help ground the filmmakers in what their stories might do, but I noticed a lot of the filmmakers started using my strategies to fundraise with issue-based funders. Or you can do that with a completed film as well; if a film is done, there is a particular strength that it has if it's about a social issue, and identifying what that is and writing out a strategy for how it might be used and who might watch it, and where that might line up with what an issue-based funder might care about, becomes a really powerful thing. So I have seen a lot of those strategies help to concretize and help people understand and imagine the practical uses of a film to advance a portfolio. I don't know. What are you thinking?

02:11:06 **DY:** So the first part of the question, know what the funder's interests are. You always try to understand, if you're a grantor, if they have priorities, but really, fundraising is like exercise, you just gotta keep practicing and get good at it, and you can't – I guess the way to put it is you can't, can you over-fundraise? I don't think so. [laughter] I don't think you ever.... It's something you have to do to get through that. I don't think there are too many people who are naturally good at fundraising. If they had contacts, they come from rich families, but you get good at it, and it also reflects how good you are at communicating what your film is about, right, and the feedback if they don't like it, that will help you hone that message, and it also informs you in terms of the film you wanna make. The corporate part, I think, what I've heard anecdotally – we don't do a lot of corporate – is it's always helpful if you have somebody in that corporation who can help champion your progress. That's very hard to do cold solicitations to corporations. I think it's a lot easier when somebody there understands you, your relationship, who can help you advance the interest.

02:12:31 **Man in audience:** I'm surprised nobody mentioned something called Amazon Video On Direct and I was wondering if anybody has experience, because what you read from various filmmakers is either they're totally pros or totally cons, rarely in the middle, and from what I understand, there is not of course much revenue into it, but it's when you choose exposure over revenue. Just for those who haven't tried

that, they're pretty picky about being very professional and having all the captions made, but this is something, I'm sorry, you say that we don't [inaudible], but any filmmaker can do on their own, so I was wondering if there is any feedback from you guys, the panel, or from other filmmakers in the room about it.

02:13:16 **CD:** Yeah. I would jump in on that and say plenty. I was just having a conversation this morning with a colleague about Amazon Video On Direct, and we do put ourselves up on Amazon Video On Direct after we've done other things with it. So we don't wanna go out first. We window, and that's one of the last windows that we'll tackle, is putting it up on Amazon Video On Direct. And the interesting thing about Amazon Video On Direct is you can put your daughter's preschool graduation up there if you wanted [laughs]. I mean, it is putting it in the giant, big, huge collection of content. [Man in audience: [inaudible]] Right. So I think you have to ask yourself the question, is this worth doing, do I have the capability to drive people to Amazon Video On Direct to watch the film. [Man in audience: [inaudible]] And for prime, it does, right. Right.

02:14:13 **Man in audience:** Yeah, it's very similar to this gentleman's question, too, just about self-distribution, and are you guys scared of self-distribution [CD: Yeah [laughs].], because see a lot of fresh faces out here, and thinking about pre-nups, a lot of millennials are not getting married, so are they gonna release these films themselves and [inaudible].

02:14:32 **CD:** Yeah, I mean, I appreciate the fact that you asked that question, because I think we've been talking about that. In the context, Amazon has come out and they've named four festivals, Tribeca, South by Southwest, Sundance, and what's the last one, Toronto, and if your film gets into any of those festivals, they're willing to give you a deal for \$75,000 to put your film up on their service as part of their festival selects, and that just started at Toronto. I haven't seen all the details, so I don't know if it's exclusive, but it does prevent you from – [Woman in audience: [inaudible]] – okay, for two years. So that potentially could mean, yeah, there's not a need for a sales agent. I think it really comes down to what your goals are for the film. If you wanna really robust strategy where you want somebody on board who's gonna be able to not only talk to Amazon but really go out there and actively pitch your film and see what the best deal on the table is and help you sort through that, I think a sales agent is always gonna be able to come in with that expertise and help in that area. But I think there are pathways being developed that don't require a sales agent. Distribber out of L.A. is now setting up a service where you can go to them and they can get your film pitched to Netflix and on all the individual platforms, and it's a very transactional process, right,

but it's not going out there to the markets. We go out there to the markets, meet with the public broadcasters, have longstanding relationships, so it really comes down to where do you see the niche for your film. Maybe your film isn't a film that's gonna appeal to global public broadcasters, but you really see the value of the film being in digital distribution, you have a ready audience that you've already aggregated, then I would say, no, you don't need a sales agent to help you do that. There are companies out there that could help you do that. And it also depends, and I think you have to be realistic about this question, how much do you wanna get into the distribution business versus be a filmmaker, because some filmmakers are like, I don't wanna have anything to do with that, I wanna work forward on my next film, I've already got my project in the hopper, so is it work that you would wanna be engaged in.

02:17:06 **Man in audience:** Just a quick cautionary note: There's a lot of, there are a number of unscrupulous sales agents and distributors, or at least they call themselves that, and they're more interested in just getting a big lump sum of money from you up front before they actually deliver anything, and they want you to cover all their expenses, and they still to this day, they still send me e-mails asking to open the door. So, anyway, I wanted to throw that out there because a lot of people get taken advantage of.

02:17:49 **Dawn Valadez:** Well, I wanted to respond, there are other hybrid models, too. So, for instance, my first film was distributed by New Day Films, which is a co-op, and so as a member-owner, it's self-distribution as well as being part of a larger cooperative. So there can be places – I think self-distribution as a first time independent filmmaker is really difficult if you wanna make other films. Like if you wanna spend all your time doing all of it yourself, that's great, and that's pretty much all you'll do. But if you wanna be able to work on other things and also maybe have broadened who gets to see your film, things like New Day Films could be, it's really amazing, and it's the educational market. And then the other thing I wanted to say was about Amazon. You know, we actually are [inaudible] on iTunes and Amazon, but not until seven years of a pretty long tale of it being at film festivals and being at conferences and being in educational distribution, and, I mean, I'm still making money on that, so it's a lot of time, but I did that through another distributor. There's a number of different ways of doing it and people are writing about this stuff.

02:19:21 **SD:** Yeah. And there are different strategies, right, like if the focus of the strategy you're developing is getting the film out there or getting money or having an impact, you need to scaffold all those on top of one another. Those are each different strategies, and how they all match up matters. If you release your film too early, or with

an audience that is gonna get a message about your film out there in a way that is gonna shut down other audiences you care about, I mean, these are all things and conversations we need to be having and thinking about.

02:19:55 **Man in audience:** One other thing I would say about self-distribution is obviously it's a lotta work, but you do get to keep a hundred percent of the sales that you do make, and there's opportunities to sell some educational rights and then hold onto theatrical rights, obviously. I think everyone knows about that, too. I'm relatively new to the filmmaking world. I helped produce a couple of documentaries that kind of cover the intersection between climate and national security, and recently our production company has formed into an NGO, a nonprofit, and I'm wondering if you guys, a) just had any experience in dealing with production companies that have shifted into the nonprofit space, and if you think that's a good idea from a funding perspective, and then the second part of that question, for a group like us who's interested in a specific theme and making films that are either episodic, and could be a series, or short films that kinda touch on a similar theme, we wanna find partners and funders who are interested in all of our films and funding us not necessarily in perpetuity, but for years at a time. I was just wondering if anyone had any thoughts on that – or not necessarily film by film. I guess years at a time would be obviously very generous, but more so multiple films at a time as opposed to case by case.

02:21:19 **CD:** You know, I'm not gonna be able to speak to that really, because we're not generally involved. I think the idea of a nonprofit production company is really intriguing, and I think you're already set up to take on support from individual donors, so if you're doing a series or a group of films on a certain subject, it may be a really interesting model where you have corporate funders, even, or personal, private funders who come in and fund your production company, and they're not necessarily attached to a specific project, so it doesn't create some of those awkward relationships, but they're working with you because they're behind the mission of the group of films you're making.

02:22:09 **SD:** You work [inaudible] Generation? [Man in audience: No, I don't. It's called American [inaudible].] I'm just curious, David and Abby, just like you, Berkeley Film Foundation just funded Movement Generation that created this series on gentrification, so I'm curious if you all have any insights.

02:22:30 **David Bergad:** I'll let Abby speak, and for those of you who don't know, Abby is our board president and I'm very honored to have her here. This is Abby Ginzberg, everybody [applause].

02:22:40 Abby Ginzberg: You know, that's not what occurs to me in answer to his question. [SD: Okay.] So what people are referring to is a Web series that we just funded this year for the first time, which was called, I think it's called The North Pole, and it was done by some local people and as Sahar says, it's on gentrification. And I would say it was sort of an experiment for us to see sort of where it goes and how it does, and maybe we would be more open to the notion of funding a series of smaller films. That was a series of Webisodes. But there is a model that a friend of mine actually did out of Austin, Texas. His name is David Modigliani, and I would say Google – do you know him? [SD: I know him. He's great. [laughs]] He's great, and he has managed this sort of methodology of funding. David's doing something else now, but I would – Modigliani like the painter, and I would seriously just start Googling him, look him up, see what he's done, and they found a way of doing meaningful social justice work for progressive corporations, I think is a way to say it, and then occasionally they were able to move to do their own thing funded by a progressive corporation that they had already worked with. But by cultivating people who had money to invest in video production, they ended up, I think, really being able to do a lot of very creative work that the rest of us have never figured out how to sustain ourselves quite as well, so he's my recommendation to you. And just a last thought, which is if you're in the climate change space, I mean, the guy who always comes to mind for me is Tom St[inaudible]. I don't know how you get to him, but he's got more money than God, and he's local. So maybe, if you feel like you're on the same wavelength as he is, try to find a way in to meet him, because he's somebody who could fund you from now for the next forty years, if he liked what you were doing. He could fund all of us for the next forty years [laughs].

02:24:51 David Bergad: And like I had said, The North Pole, this Webisode that we just funded, is going to screen on Sunday at the New Parkway, so if you're interested, come see it and then you can meet the filmmakers. We went out on a limb, we all feel really good about it, and it's already gotten traction, it's going to film festivals, and a lot of people are just loving it.

02:25:10 SD: So, David, we have fifteen minutes before we were gonna end. Are we good to keep going? [David: Yeah, absolutely. I paid; we can stay.] Okay. [laughter]

02:25:36 Man in audience: Also new in filmmaking, with the opportunity of being able to pitch a film in a forum, and one of the exciting things was to see all these festival people coming and being very excited, but also sales agents coming and pushing

themselves in different ways, and in trying to choose a sales agent, I was wondering if, Cristine, you can give us some advice in terms of when someone, for instance, proposes a minimum guarantee that you're not really happy with and they're really pushing themselves, what are some of the things that you can do in order to make a good decision?

02:26:25 **CD:** About a sales agent. [Man in audience: Yeah.] Well, I think you wanna do your basic homework and find out what other projects they've worked on, et cetera, and make sure their sweet spot is what your film is about, but I think, honestly I think it comes down to you making a personal decision about whether you feel this is somebody you can work with. I think there are sales agents out there, and you wanna do your homework about who has a good reputation in the industry and who doesn't. There are sales agents out there that really do have all the contacts and all the connections, but they're really not gonna be available to you in terms of be in communication on a regular basis, and so you wanna ask questions about how often would we plan to speak, and I would recommend setting up a structured call time with your sales agent on a monthly basis, or every two weeks, whatever the situation requires, because I think it's important to stay in contact because you have information you bring about your film that sometimes can help the sales agent add to the pitches they're making. I think if your end goal is you have that project that's gonna get into Sundance and that you're expecting to have lots of offers comes in, there are a couple really good sales agents that have worked in that way, but I would still get on the phone and have a conversation with them and make sure you're comfortable. It's also an opportunity for me to mention that ro*co is now moving into the sales agent role. We've historically been a sales agent for the international market, but because of the changes we're all talking about where global deals are really more and more becoming something that gets put in front of a project early on, we're moving into that space for a small number of projects. And I think you always wanna ask what the commission is. I'm a little confused about what you meant by an MG, because [Man in audience: Minimum guarantee.], right. Most sales agents really work on a commission basis, so if they're coming to you and asking you to put money up front, that's not typically how it works. Generally, you sign on a sales agent, they work on a commission basis, and you're not paying them anything up front, the good ones.

02:28:51 **Woman in audience:** I wanted to talk about the issue of funding that I talked about earlier, uncomfortable conversation but I'm getting good at it. I've had a number of opportunities where I've had a person that was sort of a venture capitalist, one on one, or a potential investor one on one, and pitched my idea or pitched my film, told them about why the issue is important and so on, and then they said, well, how

much do you need, and I never know what to say at that point. [laughter] Well, obviously, with fifty thousand I could do this, but with a hundred and seventy thousand, I could do that. So, I mean, that's not what I said, but, I mean, what is the answer to that question?

02:29:32 Abby Ginzberg: Okay, so I finished a film, someone came to me and said, what will it cost for you to finish the film, and I said, two hundred thousand dollars, and in that two hundred thousand dollars there was not a dime for me or my co-producer, because I was so scared, I was so desperate to finish the film, we had not been paid so I was like, so what's the difference whether we've been paid or not, blah-blah, I mean, I'm not sure that it would have made any difference if I'd said three hundred thousand dollars, you know what I mean, and so by icing ourselves out of that – I mean, you have to have an answer, but it has to include you, because it's like I have rued that day ever since because I couldn't go back to these people later and say, you know what, [inaudible] [laughter] [Woman in audience: Right.]. But if I had said, the cost of finishing this film is three hundred thousand dollars, my co-producer and I would have seen fifty thousand for [inaudible]. To date, we've seen about ten cents.

02:30:28 SD: Yeah. I wanna underscore that, because I was on a panel a year ago with a few foundations that was all about sustainability in the field, and something that all the funders on the panel were saying is if you don't write in a line to pay yourself, we won't pay you [laughter], right, but if you do, we actually probably will or might, because they also, especially the funders that are in the business of funding films, want to see the sustainability of the space, but there's so much shyness around the money question that people aren't willing to do that, and it's really important. I think we need to advocate – not we; I think of myself as a part of the filmmaking community but I'm not a filmmaker – but, yeah, filmmakers need to be advocating for ourselves.

02:31:12 Woman in audience: So the correct answer is three hundred thousand dollars. [laughter]

02:31:17 Abby Ginzberg: Well, budget and don't exclude yourself, and be prepared, just to go on one more sentence, if you are a really out there fundraiser, and I did it right on the film before, I have to say – somebody else asked me, what will it cost for you to finish this film, and I said, four hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and I got that money. So, I mean, don't be shy. It doesn't pay to say fifty thousand if it's really gonna cost two hundred and fifty to finish it.

02:31:43 SD: And they wanna see it finished.

02:31:46 Abby Ginzberg: They wanna see it finished. They truly do, so it's like think clearly about what is it really gonna cost that includes you getting paid, and that is the answer to the question.

02:31:54 DY: Yeah. And how you answer that question demonstrates how prepared you are to everything. Are you ready to finish your film? Are you prepared for the journey that's ahead and are they gonna be investing confidently. We often see, and the biggest mistake young filmmakers make is I can do this for twenty-two thousand dollars. I mean, like you're not insured, you don't have rights, you have no sense of what music will cost, you're not working with an editor. There's no chance I believe you're gonna do that film. Sometimes we get proven wrong, but the odds are such that if they've done their homework, they're gonna be in a much better position to do it.

02:32:34 CD: Yeah, be prepared after you give that answer to e-mail the budget, the itemized budget in a day or two after you give that answer ,so you wanna go in with that kinda filled out. [DY: Yeah.]

02:32:46 DY: But never go to a fundraising meeting if you don't know your budget.

02:32:51 Man in audience: Just have a quick question, if you have any film festival strategies. I know the [inaudible] that you should be able to get in to get the \$75,000, I'm aware of that; I'm just talking about personal, from your experience, advice about how to go about it, like a strategy for it.

02:33:07 CD: For festivals. [Man in audience: Festivals, yeah.] You know, ro*co has historically not worked with festivals. When we take on a film, either the filmmaker decides they wanna keep that piece, or we refer them to other companies. There're a couple of other companies that do festival rights. What we do have is a list of our top festivals that I could share with you if you give me your information, and I think it helps if you have, what we have done for our filmmakers is for select festivals, we'll send a note saying that we're on board to distribute the film because that information can help. If they know, a festival knows that this film's gonna go wider than just my festival, that adds to the strength of your application. I'm trying to think, it's Jeffrey Winter at Film Collaborative who does festival work, and there's another, I'm trying to think of the other name, but anyway, if you wanna e-mail me, I can send that to you. [Man in audience: Thank you.]

02:34:14 **SD:** One more comment about the funds. Just in case, for filmmakers that aren't used to creating budgets, there are templates online that you can look up. There's, I think Impact Partners has created one. If you go onto the Doc Society, formerly Britt Doc, if you go to their Website they have a whole resource list, and I think in that resource list is also a budget template, and they're just starters, but it gives you a sense of all the different lines to really think it through realistically.

02:34:35 **David Bergad:** Can we just see a show of hands of first time filmmakers in the room? Okay. All right.

02:34:52 **Woman in audience:** Just following up on the question about budget, how do you determine how much to pay yourself, like what is your salary?

02:35:01 **SD:** Broad range.

02:35:03 **Man in audience:** Don't undervalue yourself. Other filmmakers appreciate it.

02:35:11 **Laura:** [inaudible] when I had [inaudible] budget after I made a film, and I did look at what would I have to pay someone that I would want to hire to do this. [inaudible] I'd have to pay a cinematographer this much a day, and then try to remember how many days I spent.

02:35:29 **SD:** I mean, literally it's like breaking down your hours, like how much time are you spending on it, and then thinking about how much would I want to be getting paid hourly. You can do it that way. There are all kinds of different ways to think it through, but, yeah, absolutely, maybe starting there.

03:35:59 **Woman in audience:** So, yeah, first time filmmaker, and I am [inaudible] where [inaudible] story is going. The film is about the transition from [inaudible] to solar energy, and there are organizations, like environmental organizations [inaudible] streaming it in different cities and all of that. Now, I haven't really started talking to them about the money part of it, but I'm thinking it's going to go this way, and I'm wondering that's, when you mentioned foundations, now I think how much longer do I have to wait for that particular kind of money coming in.

03:36:39: **CD:** Yeah. I mean, I think [Woman in audience: I'm still looking at solar companies.], right. [Woman in audience: The kind of company that might be interested in....] Yeah. So I think that for you to get foundation support behind supporting an

organizational campaign, that is a long process. You know, it's gonna be six months to kind of get that in place. So maybe there's a different strategy for that kind of, maybe you have this organizational support. It depends on what your other distribution piece is. It's hard to comment without knowing what else you've got planned, but if you're already in the place where you have a theatrical distributor on board, and maybe that organizational support can be driven to supporting a theatrical release of the film. We worked with a film, Peter Rader's film, *Awake: The Life of Yogananda*, they had a remarkable theatrical release in the U.S. Think it grossed one point four million dollars for a documentary, and they did that because they had relationships with yoga studios, and they got yoga studios to adopt screenings. They had a theatrical booker on board, and then the yoga studios would adopt screenings, and people would go out and show up with their community and watch the film. So, you know, I think -- [Woman in audience: [inaudible]] They were all, it was a traditional theatrical distribution, so people would show up and buy box office tickets to the release, to the film. But there was this massive effort put into organizing this campaign to really get people out to the theaters that was really successful.

02:38:31 Abby Ginzberg: One other thought: You wanna think about some kind of split that seems fair. They wouldn't be holding the screening if you didn't do the film. On the other hand, you wouldn't have any bodies in the theater if they weren't getting them out there for you. So you have to think about, I mean, you deserve some portion of the box office, but they may be doing a lot of the legwork.

02:38:53 Woman in audience: So, first of all, this is great. Thank you very much for doing it. And I guess my question is mostly for Cristina [sic], but for others, so your examples, which were really very helpful, were really all about when your film is done or close to. So I guess the question is, how soon is soon enough? Because certainly when writing proposals and all the grant applications, everybody wants to know what's your distribution plan, what's your impact plan. The reality is, if you're past development and beginning production or somewhere in between, impact might be the same in a couple of years, but distribution is certainly gonna be completely different. And yet, listening to you, especially if you have a film that has international possibilities, which mine does, it seems like, and also the way you've talked about working it, that it could be very helpful having a conversation with you, but just in general, because things are gonna change so much, if you could talk sort of about a trajectory and any examples about working with people early on. And also for you as well.

02:40:07 CD: Yes. So we do that in a couple ways. One, we will take on a film just

to raise co-production pre-sale money from the international market, so we're doing that with a project called King BiBi, about BiBi Netanyahu right now, and what we're doing is just going out to our community of buyers and seeing if they'll come on board as co-producers. So in that case, we made the decision to get involved after we'd seen a treatment and a clip, and we were persuaded on the basis of the story that we thought we could be helpful. And then in this new role that we're taking on as sales agent, we're also doing a little bit, and we're doing this for Laura's film, of executive producing, where we're coming on board and we're saying, we really wanna get fully behind the project. We're executive producing, meaning raising some money, and then also, I should take a moment to talk about how it works for us to get on board as a global sales agent, because there's sort of an inherent conflict of interest in that we're talking about being a global sales agent when we have a U.S. educational distribution division. And in the case of Laura's film, which clearly that's gonna be a big market for her film, the way it works is we will take the film out to the global market and see what kinds of opportunities come out of that, and then we'll have a conversation with Laura about what makes the most sense, and it may be that we get that stellar Netflix originals deal that means our educational division isn't gonna end up with the film, but that's all very transparent. Those conversations are transparent. So that, it's another example of when we get involved early. And then, but most of the films we end up working with, we have to see a rough cut to really make a decision about whether we think we can get on board as the international distributor. But I would encourage you to touch base, and we're tracking projects, and it sounds like there's an international angle to the story we'd wanna know about. Yeah.

02:42:22 **SD:** I'm gonna answer that question and also have a like wrap-up moment, because we're almost done, and then just pass on to each of you like what do you wanna leave everyone here with, and I guess what I'll leave in this respect is that it's all about relationship building, whether you're building a relationship with a funder or with a partner, and like what that goal is. That's what this whole methodology and framework is all about, is like really being transparent and open about those conversations. And so I think if you're still making your film, being in conversation with the funders that you think are gonna care about it, or if you're hoping to do a campaign with your film and you have a sense of what it can do out there, beginning to cultivate those relationships really early, so that you're aware of what like the issues are and how the landscape is shifting. Having that be a live and iterative process will behoove you, and like I think magic starts to happen, you know, like relationships form and activities start to solidify, money comes in, so maybe that's what I'll leave you all with in that respect. Don, what do you wanna leave 'em with?

02:43:27 **DY:** Well, I think continuously trying to think through how people will wanna become champions of your film, and that spark of excitement that you have to tell the story, but what are the triggers for people to want to join your team, and really champion your cause. Very few successful filmmakers work in a vacuum. You have to, the people skills and that convincing, it's irreplaceable.

02:44:03 **CD:** Yeah, and I would add, we haven't touched on this entirely, that a vibrant festival strategy, especially for young filmmakers, can be really important for distribution, not just for the distribution of one film, but if you're out and you get to travel with your film out into the world, and you're meeting the commissioning editors and you're talking to the community of buyers directly, which we really encourage you do, because as you develop your reputation as filmmakers with them, it makes our job easier. But I think it's really important for career building to be out on the festival circuit and have the opportunity to form some of those relationships. There are some exciting things happening with co-production between, on U.S. projects out of Europe right now.

02:44:52 **SD:** And can we have a big clap for every filmmaker that came up except Laura? [applause] [laughs] Yeah, thanks for hanging in there with us. Do you have any last words? [Laura leaves stage] Guess not [laughs]. Okay. [laughter] All right, thank you all so much for coming. I hope this is useful. Yeah. [applause]

[end of recording at 02:45:32]