

AN INITIATIVE OF



DOCUMENTARY POWER
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MAKING SOCIAL CHANGE WITH DOCUMENTARIES:

What Works, Why and How?:

A Case Study



AND SHE COULD BE NEXT

“I believe that film is one of the pieces of how movement work happens – in helping to shape people’s imaginations about what’s possible.

Tracy Sturdivant
Impact Producer
And She Could Be Next

Going Beyond the Community Screening:
Engaging New Communities, Movements
and Partners Through Documentaries

SPRING 2024



PERSPECTIVE
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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

As both an outcome and a set of activities, making social impact through documentary storytelling has changed enormously over the past decade. It isn't an understatement to say that the entire environment in which filmmakers and impact producers create has seen fundamental change over the last few years, due to major disruptions made by rising social movements and the arrival of new funding powers, distributors, and engagement platforms. At such a juncture, an initiative from the Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI) raises the following key questions: What does social impact in documentary entail today? What are the current challenges? What lessons and models of the past are being brought forward and which ones are being overlooked? What does success look like in this work and how do we define it?

This case study centers this pursuit by engaging with the film **AND SHE COULD BE NEXT**, selected by an advisory committee of eight leading filmmakers and impact producers, as providing a useful perspective into the features, lessons, and experiences of impact work within documentary film today. In addition to documenting the features of an exemplary impact campaign, this case study offers a set of best practices, tools, resources, and essential norms and activities for other filmmakers and those engaged or interested in the field of documentary impact to learn from. This case study is based on conversations with key members of the film and impact campaign team around their experiences working on this impact campaign.

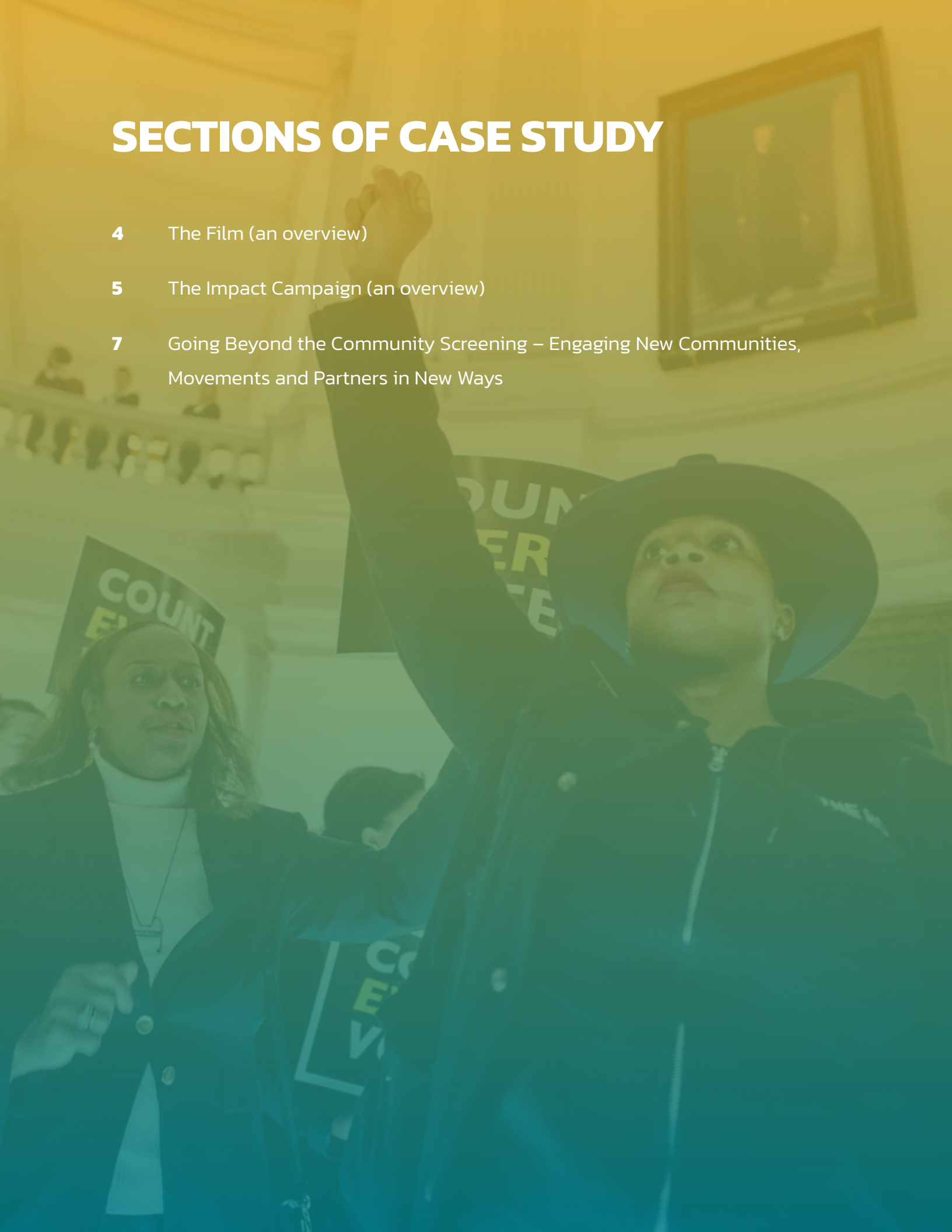
This report is one of five case studies published by the Documentary Power Research Institute at the Center for Media & Social Impact. For more information on other case studies, resources and reports being produced by this research please visit:

<https://cmsimpact.org/program/documentary-power-research-institute/>

* Following several successful existing working groups across the documentary ecology, this study began by establishing a collaborative working group of eight people. This group was created to help shape the design of its core questions; provide insights and valuable guidance in designing the study (including in identifying selection criteria and recommendations for the interview population); inform the analysis process (including in the identification of the most meaningful and significant findings for the field); and support in socializing and leading the broader campaign for adoption and understanding yielded by this work. As part of the larger documentary study in which this research sits, this group met at core junctures in the research program to shape the design and implementation of this work and to select this case study. More information on this advisory group can be found here: <https://cmsimpact.org/documentary-power-research-institute-team/>

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THE FILM



The Film: *And She Could Be Next*

AND SHE COULD BE NEXT is a two-part documentary that tells the story of a defiant movement led by women of color as they fight for a truly reflective democracy and transform politics from the ground up. The series, POV's first broadcast miniseries, follows candidates and organizers across the country, asking whether democracy itself can be preserved—and made stronger—by those most marginalized. The two-part series features history-makers including Rashiba Tlaib and Stacey Abrams.






Photo credit: *And She Could Be Next*






THE IMPACT CAMPAIGN





Key impact goals (as identified at Good Pitch)

-  Leave no doubt that America needs a truly representative electorate that reflects those who've been marginalized for too long.
-  Build intersectional, interfaith and intergenerational power.
-  Show what changes when women of color lead.

Operationalized impact goals (after the impact campaign was designed)

-  Inspire the new American majority to connect and to step into their own power through civic actions. This involved partnering with state and local organizations to amplify and elevate them to the film's audiences and platforms.
-  Shift narratives around women of color leadership. This involved pitching different leaders – both women of color who showed up in the film and other women of color leaders across the country – to news outlets.
-  Spotlight and support women of color organizers.

Key objectives of impact campaign

-  **Spark Civic Engagement**
Increase voters from New American Majority; fight voter suppression; connect disengaged Americans to a political home.
-  **Foster Leadership**
Uplift women of color leaders across all sectors.
-  **Build an Intersectional Movement**
Spotlight and build the capacity of grassroots organizations doing the work.
-  **Shift Culture**
Amplify national conversation about the political power of the New American Majority to win elections (This includes immigrants, Black, Latinx, Muslim, Native American, AAPI, Youth & Labor).



Timings (estimates)

- 2016 – idea for film and planning for film begins
- Finished filming in 2018 (with follow-ups in 2019 – including with Bushra Amiwala and checking in with Rashida Tlaib after she took office)
- Reached out to Pop Culture Collaborative and other affiliated organizations for support, resources, and “out of the box” thinking around impact
- Film team connected with Tracy Sturdivant (and The League) for support
- Participated in Good Pitch 2019 (pitch for resources)
- Created impact campaign and objectives during Good Pitch 2019
- October 2019 – Discover sessions in LA and in New York
- June 2020 – film release and impact campaign/engagement launch. The impact campaign continued to the 2020 election and onward through the key runoff elections in January 2021.

***Important context (Covid-19 pandemic upended the campaign):**

Despite the successes of this film and impact campaign, it's essential to note that the impact campaign began and persevered through the most daunting moments of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which upended many of the plans and lives of the organizers from its very inception. This meant that many of the design approaches, strategies, events, and outcomes were the result of constant pivoting and adapting to difficult and far from ideal circumstances. The filmmakers recalled that if the COVID-19 pandemic hadn't occurred this impact campaign would likely have featured more in-person screening events, for instance, and would likely have looked much different. Ultimately, the pandemic shaped what did – and could – happen in the campaign in every aspect of the work. And so every success, challenge and lesson offered in this campaign should be understood with this foundational reality in mind, as there is as much to be learned from how the campaign evolved and responded to the challenges of the time as there is to learn from what it actually achieved.



GOING BEYOND THE COMMUNITY SCREENING

Engaging New Communities, Movements and Partners in New Ways



Credit: *And She Could Be Next*

Description: State Senator Nikema Williams, Ai-jen Poo, and descendants of Dorothy Bolden march to the polls during the 2018 midterm elections in Georgia.

Several filmmakers and impact producers engaged by this research noted an urgent need for the documentary industry to understand that traditional documentary audiences are not always the audiences that need to be mobilized for collective change and movement building: the field needs to widen its tent. The experiences and lessons of the impact team around the film *AND SHE COULD BE NEXT* stand to provide several important and urgently needed considerations and strategies around this challenge.



KEY IMPERATIVES IN IMPACT CAMPAIGN DESIGN

1

At the earliest stages of design and planning, think about what sort of impact would feel successful and think about whether your current approach, resources, and team members at the table are best positioned to ensure the longevity of the film and its impact.

2

Have honest conversations with supporting organizations and partners early-on about their capacities and which areas they feel they could use more support.

3

Bring people on impact team with speciality and deep experience doing civic engagement work (even if they haven't worked with documentaries before).

4

Consider cross partnerships and corporate outreach (going beyond typical funders) as a vital yet underutilized opportunity in documentary impact.

5

Use the platforms that get you in front of your audience – engage with your audience through the tools they are already using or have access to for engagement (including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, or streaming platforms). Don't leave this for distributors alone or for connecting with the "traditional" doc folks.

6

Leverage platforms of community leaders and data to help grow your audience in digital spaces.

7

Use place-based strategies, even in online campaigns.

8

Pitch stories focused on the leaders of the film to news outlets.

9

Incentivize participation in the issue of the film and impact campaign.

10

Pay participants for their thought leadership and participation.

11

Consider rooting your strategy in communities and movements in order to overcome instances of distributor censorship or political sensitivities.

12

Share resources that can help small community/family engagements to overcome barriers and that can help allied movements and organizations long after the impact campaign and screening season closes.



At the earliest stages of design and planning, think about what sort of impact would feel successful and think about whether your current approach, resources, and team members at the table are best positioned to ensure the longevity of the film and its impact.

During the earliest stages of the filming and impact planning process, the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT filmmakers and producer teams decided that it would be in the long-term interest of the film for it to focus not solely on political leaders but also on the organizers who facilitate and sustain political engagement and civic organizing. This early decision informed all subsequent stages of the impact design process – from the protagonists who are featured in the film, to the speakers and organizations who engaged in screening events, to the art work they used to feature the film, to the partners, goals and strategies of their screening/engagement efforts.

Jyoti Sarda, one of the lead producers of the film and its impact campaign, said that this decision to focus on the organizers was intentional and vital as they built a wide (and lasting) coalition of engaged audiences and partners around the film.



One of the things that evolved for us, and this is I think part of the process, is we were making a movie about elected officials, but we realized somewhere in there that what was powerful and maybe more long lasting was to focus on these organizers who make it possible. And so we decided to focus on the women of color organizers who were around the elective. And so that was front and center. We really felt it was important *(Original interview, Jyoti Sarda, 2 Feb 2023).*



With a background in advertising and senior-level studio marketing experience, Jyoti brought a unique perspective and relatively rare expertise to documentary impact planning sessions and she encouraged the team to think early-on about strategies of audience engagement in new ways.

One early design decision that Jyoti recalled as being helpful was to have honest conversations with supporting organizations about their capacities and strengths. This allowed the film team to gain an early and clear picture of where they had the strongest expertise and capacity, along with where they needed to bring in new partners to help them.

During this early stage of the film work, the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team connected with Pop Culture Collaborative – a philanthropic resource and funder organization dedicated to supporting pop culture creators in their pursuit of social change goals – and other affiliated organizations and partners for resources and discussions around their hopes and ideas for the film and its impact. As part of this process the producer/directors of the film (Grace and Marjan) and Jyoti learned about the work of Tracy Sturdivant and her organization called ‘The League’.



Tracy, who has worked in the impact space for many years, created *The League* as a team of culture changers, including strategists, organizers, storytellers, advocates, idea amplifiers, creators, analysts, digital professionals, and pollinators across Hollywood, brands and social movements who are all working toward positive change. The organization attests to working “at the sweet spot where culture and democracy collide.” And given the film’s focus on organizing and other goals, it quickly became clear to Grace, Marjan, Jyoti, and the rest of the film team that *The League* brought a level of capacity and expertise to their team that aligned perfectly with its goals of reaching new audiences and working toward longer term impact. Jyoti said that *The League* especially supported the team in thinking beyond the traditional screening and purely educational settings model of the documentary field.

For instance, one of the immediate contributions *The League* team brought to the collaboration was the line: “there’s an organizer in all of us.” This galvanizing phrase helped organize the team with a common framework and idea going forward.

The luminaries are always, of course, our elected officials. They were like our actors, if you will, they’re well known, but the organizers are the unseen heroes. We wanted to use the power of the seen heroes to lift up the unseen heroes. And then *The League* came up with [the phrase] ‘there’s an organizer in all of us,’ which to me is a very empowering line... we were trying to make the [film and its impact work] about personal power and using your voice and staying engaged and voting and all of that. So once they came and presented that line, it kind of shaped a lot of stuff that we did. And it really drove its way down all the way throughout our materials... Once settled on that, it really helped guide choices that we made. So it wasn’t necessarily about an organized group, but any group – whether you’re sitting around your kitchen table or doing whatever: you’re an organizer. You are an organizer and we want to inspire you to do whatever it is you think needs to be done out there in the world (Original interview, Jyoti, 2 Feb 2023).

Just like in organizing efforts, the process by which the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team arrived at its decision to feature organizers in their work came about through a process of expanding the tent of people, organizations, and backgrounds who were invited to contribute to early design conversations and decisions around the film and its impact strategy.

As part of this, they intentionally brought **people onto the impact team who had speciality and deep experience doing civic engagement work and advocacy issue based campaigning, even if they hadn't worked with documentaries before.** A driving motive for this decision that Jyoti and Tracy emphasized was about **supporting equitable and respectful engagement, and valuing these skills as a speciality.** In reflecting on the work that was done around the film AND SHE COULD BE NEXT, Tracy recalled the importance of impact teams thinking critically about how a film and its impact activities can shift beyond audiences simply watching a screen and can help move people instead:



We like to say that we are 'not your mama's impact producers' team, because we're coming at this from a civic engagement perspective. [We asked] what does it mean really to engage communities around leading a civic lifestyle and wanting that to be the driver? (Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022)



Cross partnerships and corporate outreach (going beyond typical funders) is an underutilized opportunity in documentary:

While some filmmakers and impact producers are uneasy about the prospect of corporate outreach within impact work, other impact teams have started embracing their potential as transformative allies in engagement campaigns.

Tracy says that she created *The League* to help documentaries like AND SHE COULD BE NEXT and other important works to "go beyond traditional movement tactics and look at other spaces that are actually creating and driving culture" (Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022). Embracing the potential of corporate partnership and alliances that aren't traditional in public media or in the documentary space is one of the ways that Tracy says the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team, along with the work of *The League*, are "disrupting" the field of impact work in the United States by illustrating "another way" that impact work and coalition building can be done with film.

Exemplified through the impact activities around AND SHE COULD BE NEXT, Tracy said that the corporate partnership model has also been effective in both gaining resources to support on-the-ground engagement work, gain greater visibility and prominence, and widen the communities who would see a film – so that it can engage audiences that might not necessarily watch a PBS airing, for instance.

While some companies, like a major beauty company label, expressed interest early-on but ultimately pulled-out of their relationship because of political concerns around the film, the impact team was able to build several other key corporate partnerships. One such corporate partnership included a collaboration with a major computer technology company, which gave them campaign printers to give to organizers in the core states of their campaign so they could print out voter registration, on the promise that they didn't reveal the name of their company publicly.



It is just an example of how thinking about cross sector partnerships is an opportunity I think that documentaries, the doc folks underestimate
(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).



Drawing on her decades of experience doing social justice oriented impact work, this point is arguably best made by Tracy's explanation of the four different games happening within impact work and how non-traditional tactics can help inspire civic imagination and change hearts on the issues you want to make progress on. She describes the first as being the "air game," which is traditional strategic communications (including commercials and television advertisement promotions). The second is "the ground game," which is the door-to-door work of trying to get people to care about a specific issue or campaign or candidate. The third is the "inside game," which is the behind the scenes work that happens in influential circles (like the policy making beltway) and folks making deals. And then, fourth, is the "heart game" – and this is the area where social impact work around documentaries have so much to contribute:



There's a fourth game and we call it the heart game, and that is where utilizing tactics that are connected to helping to shape the culture is the work that helps to move issues along. If you think about gay marriage, you can name all the issues, right, that you could be doing all the policy work that you want, but if the culture doesn't catch up to it, then it's not going to happen...I feel like all of my life is trying to prepare the world for a woman president. The culture says if it's ready. So what's the work that we have to do to help shift hearts and minds for that work to happen? *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022)*



Tracy says that one key non-traditional player – and strategy – in their effort to change culture is corporate sponsors, because they can help provide the money and platforms that impact teams need to go beyond local screenings and engage the people they need to reach to change hearts and minds.



I believe that film is one of the pieces of how movement work happens – in helping to shape people's imaginations about what's possible... There are many people who work in the corporate sector or the entertainment sector who want to do good. They just don't know which groups or who or how or what *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).*



Treat every digital opportunity like an event

Central to the impact strategy of the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team was approaching digital engagements – screenings, Q/As, social media campaigns, virtual panels, etc. – as events with unique opportunities and audiences, rather than add-ons to in-person efforts. This meant thinking about what digital audiences and participants needed and what services they could provide to them – rather than thinking about catering food and beverages, for instance, they thought about how the film could be experienced in “digital spaces” and how they could provide mini-videos for organizations to share. Jyoti described their approach this way:

[We treated] everything as an event, even if it was happening digitally. It was well produced, we had known hosts and we promoted it. We advertised it online and ahead of time. So we drew audiences. I mean this is everything that normal content providers do, but we did it as well. So we posted edited pieces, made them available on our YouTube channel, so people could do catch-up viewing, and then we also advertised and promoted that. So it was sort of a circle. And I know if you're, let's say hosting a late night show, you do the same thing. A lot of people just find you with the bits; they don't [watch] the whole event ... It's not like there's nothing special about it when it comes to documentary impact campaigns; it's just utilizing the same tactics that other content providers use *(Original interview, Jyoti, 2 Feb 2023).*

One of the most valuable opportunities presented by digital events is the ability to reach new audiences, something that the documentary field has long struggled with. And Jyoti said that a desire to reach new audiences was also central to their impact strategy.

I'm not saying you can replace in-person discussion – I mean those are invaluable. But there is a role to be played in getting the word-out and making sure you draw in new audiences. There are communities that exist online, they're not shaped by boundaries, they're shaped by values. You don't want to miss out on those things or those audiences by just focusing on what you can do physically. So I think you have to do both *(Original interview, Jyoti, 2 Feb 2023).*



Use the platforms that get you in front of your audience and activate the communities and movements you want to engage

Another lesson from their work around AND SHE COULD BE NEXT included the finding that impact producers should consider **using the platforms that get you in front of your audience – and engage with your audience through the tools they are already using or have access to for engagement (including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and other streaming platforms)**. The AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team said that impact teams should not leave this for the distributor to manage alone and to not be content with connecting with the “traditional” doc folks

The ultimate challenge for many engagement strategies is figuring out how to expand the typical audience for documentary film. And this means embracing platforms like Instagram, and using them as core engagement strategies, rather than dissemination tools. It means training filmmakers and producers in digital engagement strategies and skills, and to really commit to engaging audiences that don’t frequent film festivals or donate to documentary and public broadcasting organizations. It not only means not relying on traditional documentary organizers and broadcasters to reach your audience, but understanding that their audience is probably not reflective of your audience, or least not a fair representation of all of your audience. As Tracy put it:

“And so we knew that part of the audience for AND SHE COULD BE NEXT was young women of color, who we wanted to see this film and to see themselves in it. So we spent a significant amount of money building an Instagram profile, which is very different from building a Facebook community. Yes, the women with the pink hats definitely want to be engaged in this conversation. They have a film, but there’s also a different kind of conversation to have with young people. And with the filmmakers, we ran them through a whole audience profile, mapping and exercise. To get really clear: These are not the people who are part of the [traditional documentary community]... And if you’re trying to really make an impact then that’s a whole different audience with a whole different set of tactics *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022)*.”

One tactic that served effective for Tracy and her team’s impact efforts around a different film, which focused on gun violence, was to mobilize a “cadre of micro influencer moms” to spread and engage in content around the film on Mother’s Day.

“So, what are the other non-traditional ways that we can promote content that aren’t the traditional ways of promoting documentary films (Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).”

At the core of such non-traditional strategies is aligning engagement strategies with the audiences you want to mobilize or change – and while this might sound simple enough, Tracy and Jyoti acknowledged that it can mean disrupting the status quo of documentary-centered engagement work. On a tactical level, this meant circulating graphics, sample tweets and posts, and photos as part of social media kits that went beyond the film itself and could be circulated with movements, allied organizations, influencers, and any interested partner.

Copy and paste, or copy, paste and edit the language below to share on Twitter.

SAMPLE TWEET

Watch live with me June 29 & 30! We could all use some inspiration and @shecouldbenext has it. We are the ones we've been waiting for, and it's time to #StepIntoPower. [andshecouldbenext.com/movement](https://bit.ly/ascbn-trailer) [#AndSheCouldBeNextPBS](https://bit.ly/ascbn-trailer) <https://bit.ly/ascbn-trailer>

SAMPLE TWEET

It's time to #StepIntoPower. The women of @SheCouldBeNext are changing politics from the ground up! Watch live with me June 29 & 30. [andshecouldbenext.com/movement](https://bit.ly/ascbn-trailer) [#AndSheCouldBeNextPBS](https://bit.ly/ascbn-trailer) <https://bit.ly/ascbn-trailer>

Share & Tag @SheCouldBeNext

Download a graphic and invite your followers to tune in on June 29 & 30!
#AndSheCouldBeNextPBS



Figures 1 and 2. Examples of social media kit products circulated by the And She Could Be Next impact team – including sample tweets and a link to a Google Drive folder of social media-ready graphics for interested partners to use.

Another way that the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team engaged younger audiences was by going beyond the “free screening” model and incentivizing participation through celebrity and community leader-focused events that they knew diverse groups of young people would be interested in. This included events centered around partnerships with local groups, and events with Ava DuVernay, Alicia Garza, Alicia Keys, and other high-profile leaders and figures who were civically active and who allowed the film to reach solely beyond political personalities and circles. To help motivate greater participation, the team set-up creative incentives; for instance, in one event if people texted over a thousand people then they could join a highly coveted private event with Alicia Keys.



So we utilize those types of incentives both to raise the visibility and importance of this issue, which the film beautifully covered, and we tied it into ways that engage people to participate in the civic process. And so being able to have this film as an organizing tool was definitely beneficial during one of the most politically charged elections of our lifetime
(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).



Rooting your strategy in communities and movements can help to overcome instances of distributor censorship and political/corporate sensitivities

Since many documentaries center on important social justice issues there are frequently conflicts of interest and political sensitivities that arise during times of distribution, the experiences of the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT impact team suggest that it can – at times – be effective to respond to these moments by making the film’s content louder, not quieter.

Given that some of the women in the film were running for reelection, some local broadcast affiliates didn’t want to air the film until after the election or until after moments that they thought were too politically heated. Other broadcasters wanted to air the film late at night, when fewer people would be watching, in order to help avoid controversy and perceptions that they were preferencing the candidates featured in the film over others.

But rather than simply going-along with broadcaster anxieties, the impact team around AND SHE COULD BE NEXT leaned into their discomfort and used it to create more public support and awareness of the film.



A lot of that was driven by politics at the end of the day. And so there were some periods of time, where we're like, 'Let's burn it all down' ... But then [we asked], "How do we utilize this to our advantage?" It's like, "Here's the film that Georgia Public Broadcasting doesn't want you to see." And we created local narratives around that. So one of the things that we did was we got a group of micro influencers, people on social media who got followings of 10,000 or more to be a part of helping us to promote the film and to get people to watch; and these are folks who weren't necessarily political, but who had large followings and had a base or audience of people who they could have a conversation about like why election is so important *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).*

Similarly, when corporate partners and brands didn't feel comfortable coming out to fully support the film, they provided them with other pathways. The film came out around the time of the death of George Floyd Jr., who was murdered by police in Minneapolis. With protests calling for racial justice spreading around the country, some corporate partners were hesitant about being seen as too politically active.

I would say that trying to get brands to sign onto something that was about elevating the voices of people of color might have been an easier sell had we not been in the midst of this racial reckoning where the brand world was trying to figure out which end was up and how to align, so [I would tell a potential corporate sponsor] I've got this film. It's got Stacey Abrams in it, it's got Rashida Tlaib. ...[And then they might say] We'll give you some stuff but don't tell anybody we gave it to you – that kind of thing *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).*

Rather than ending the conversation, the impact team pushed corporate sponsors to contribute what they could – especially when the impact team knew that the film's audience/community aligned with the corporate brand community – and this is how they were able to get one printing company to give them free printers, for instance, which made a meaningful difference in supporting organizing activities.

Leverage platforms of community leaders and data to help grow your audience in digital spaces

A great example of the potential of leveraging the existing platforms of main protagonists can be found in the impact work around *AND SHE COULD BE NEXT*. By centering and lifting the platforms of the women activists at the heart of the film, the film and impact team were not just meeting distribution goals they were supporting a central idea of the film: to make women of color leaders more visible in public discourse and receive more recognition so that they can inspire more people to follow their lead.

“So there were two intentions. One, we wanted people to make the leadership, the political leadership of women of color visible. And that was not only the elected or women who were running for elective office in the film, but also the women of color organizers, who are the folks who do this work day in and day out in communities. And to make them visible. And then the other component of that was [the line] that ‘there is an organizer in all of us,’ which ended up being one of the rallying cries, so whether or not she’s the person who’s organizing [activities] in your church or the PTA. There is an organizer in all of us .. and we need everyone to organize. Everyone needs to be organizing everywhere. And the film was such a great representation of that, of women stepping off the sidelines (Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).”

Alongside their robust digital strategy was the use of data to help better understand their audience and build an interested audience composition to help them grow their engagement profile to far greater levels than they would have achieved through traditional film promotion activities alone.

“We got some good celebrity Instagram posts, and we were able to grow the following on our Instagram account leading into the premiere. That was sort of earned [media], if you will. And then we took the people who attended and we did a little bit of an audience composition... [we] tried to use what was coming in organically and made an audience profile... And then we kept remarketing to people who expressed an interest in events. So in the end, we had some pretty significant reach in numbers to an audience that we could not have reached organically (Original interview, Jyoti, 2 Feb 2023).”



The team used quantitative and qualitative measures to determine the effectiveness of their impact strategies, which were generally guided by three overarching goals: (1) The first goal was to inspire the new American majority to connect and to step into their own power through civic actions. (This involved partnering with state and local organizations to amplify and elevate them to the film's audiences and platforms). (2) The second goal was to shift narratives around women of color leadership (this involved pitching different leaders – both women of color who showed up in the film and other women of color leaders across the country – to news outlets). (3) And then the third was to spotlight and support women of color organizers.

These three principles formed the guiding principal for Tracy and her team. And so when they were faced with the unanticipated COVID-19, which made many offline engagements impossible and forced them to change their approach – from 'let's go to these states to organize people' to 'let's go online and develop a robust digital strategy' – her team turned back to these three principles to determine their next steps.

Consider place-based strategies, even in online campaigns

While the AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team had to pivot to online strategies in response to COVID-19 restrictions, they maintained a place-based strategy:

Looking at women of color across sectors was an opportunity for us to help elevate, right, and amplify this narrative around the power of women of color leadership. And so many of the tactics ... [were] around really trying to shape the issue environment for folks in media to grab hold on to. And so some of the tactics that we utilized were in service to that. But they also involved looking at how the amplification of the power and the importance of women of color political leadership and our votes matter, and focusing in on a handful of states that were subjects of the film and leaning into amplifying the work that was happening or the things that made voter engagement really important in those states *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).*

As part of their online, but place-based efforts, Tracy and her team led a series called "All Eyes On _____". This included All Eyes On Georgia, All Eyes On Michigan, All Eyes On the AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) community, etc.

“Again, looking at demographic and geographic places where we amplified the voices of leaders, women of color leaders, who were representatives of those respective communities to be in conversation about what was at stake and what was important. And we did a series of that content that maintained a place-based focus, demographic focused throughout the arc of the impact campaign (Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).”

Pitch stories focused on leaders of the film to news outlets

Another effective strategy for several filmmakers was the traditional but still vital strategy of pitching to news outlets. The impact and film teams for AND SHE COULD BE NEXT constantly pitched stories focused on the leaders and protagonists of the film – and the movement they represented – to news outlets. Rather than waiting for news coverage to happen, they made an effort to make the connections that would generate this coverage.

“I would say that many of the women of color in the film were excited about being elevated. We did a significant amount of pitching of some of those women activists to outlets like *The Times* and *The Post*... and they became a part of this groundswell of stories that happened in 2020 around women of color and the power of the votes of people of color. And so, again, one would go, “Well, what does that have to do with this film?” Well, it’s the film living its values. And I would say that we were very fortunate to have a group of filmmakers who understood the assignment (Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).”

Tracy pointed out that traditional screenings can be important, but that they hardly scratch the surface of engagement activities that impact teams should be using to engage communities in conversations about the content of a film. And ensuring that you can feed stories into the current political moment and social conversations is one essential tool in this pursuit.

Yes, traditional screenings are important. And also there are other ways to engage communities in conversations. So our ability to take aspects of the film and to elevate it during rapid response opportunities. Like right now, we would be combing through sound bites that had anything to do about choice in this moment and making sure that we're amplifying those across our social media platforms of which we had several and grew those communities exponentially by utilizing that strategy and tactic to be a part of the conversation, not just trying to talk about a film that was filmed in 2018 and 2020 which was like a lifetime ago, right, as it were *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).*

Pay participants for their thought leadership and participation

The AND SHE COULD BE NEXT impact strategy was built around a shared principle that 'community participants should be paid for their participation and collaboration'; a practice that is not as common-place as it could be in documentary impact work. This is a practice that Tracy says should be part of the ethos of doing impact work. At the very least, paying honorariums to participants who share their energy and thought leadership is vital, says Tracy.

In reflecting on conversations she had around the film AND SHE COULD BE NEXT, Tracy recalled how community leadership is often sought to help film teams think about how to best approach the sensitivities of their film engagements – so that the participants in the film and their engagement campaigns are not retraumatized when events bring up painful issues, and so that they feel supported. Tracy emphasized that this kind of work and care is essential, but that asking community members and leaders to spend energy doing this type of preparatory work and planning for free, for instance, would be against the entire 'wellness' principle of the engagements in the first place:

So there is a level of sensitivity, right, that needs to happen with all of the events that we've done, both in brainstorming ideas. We call them genius banks, connected to the different issue areas. To think with us, we pay them an honorarium. Anyone that we had participate ... we just got to pay people for their thought leadership and for their time. So that is definitely part of the ethos. You have to have money to do that, but it's part of the ethos of how we do business, which is also how we get people to want to participate with us. All the influencers who we paid for our ALL EYES ON experiences, we paid them for posting content. That's how they make their money. So, if I use the labor of people of color, we're going to pay them *(Original interview, Tracy, 3 May 2022).*

Share resources that can help small community/family engagements to overcome barriers and that can help allied movements and organizations long after the impact campaign and screening season closes

The team also provided considerable effort to developing and sharing resources that they felt could be helpful in facilitating community and family-level engagements that might be organized by individuals or organizations with an interest in the film. Jyoti said that they tried to support these types of engagements by helping people to overcome anticipated barriers.



You try to remove the obstacles. So if somebody wants to play it on their TV screen in their living room and have 10 people and a home party, we're going to enable that [by providing] a turn-key discussion guide *(Original interview, Jyoti, 2 Feb 2023).*



The AND SHE COULD BE NEXT team provided several different FAQs and resource guides on their website and circulated additional resources online and through social channels.

The importance of sharing resources with interested audiences was also an emphasis for the film and impact team near the end of their impact campaign and screening season, as they looked for ways to support the longevity of the organizing work and partner organizations who were engaged through the campaign. To do this, they shared extra resources, footage, and media packages, for instance, to allied organizations and gave them permission to use the materials in the work.



There were tons of outtakes, things that didn't make it [into the final cut of the film], that we thought were important for organizing. So in the last year, in 2022, the last bit of our campaign, we took some money – because we didn't spend all of it – and we picked some organizations that are reflected in the film, and we gave them a sort of unencumbered stipend. And then we also took a lot of clips that we thought were really interesting and illustrative, and content that we thought could be useful to other people, and we organized them, tagged them, put them online on our site, and then kind of pushed them out to the organizations.... We basically said, this is yours. If you want it, use it in whatever way you see fit *(Original interview, Jyoti, 2 Feb 2023).*





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Funding Support Provided by:
Perspective Fund