

## *Why Videocamp exists*

We began Videocamp because we're sure about one thing: the power of film. We believe in democratising access to a medium which can shape ideas and change minds, giving people access to culture and knowledge.

Over a century has passed since a 50 second film of a moving train sent audiences in Paris running and screaming in fear (they thought a train was hurtling towards them - or so the story goes). But the too-real magic of cinema remains. Every time we sit down to watch a film, expectant and in the dark, we prepare to be taken out of our lives and overwhelmed by new reality for ninety minutes. In fact, I've often thought that walking out of the cinema door after watching a really good film feels like leaving a spaceship.

For this reason, films have long played a part in the movements that have changed the world (and, conversely, censorship has been the hallmark of so many repressive regimes). *Blackfish* has led to the near collapse of SeaWorld and an end to their cruel "Shamu show". Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* precipitated the creation of Shelter, the UK homelessness and housing charity. *A Short Film About Killing* led to the end of the death penalty in Poland. And *A Girl in the River* prompted changes in honour killing laws in Pakistan. As we speak, Jennifer Brea's beautiful *Unrest* is leading the #MillionsMissing movement of people all over the world with ME.

Our thinking was this: if film is so powerful, isn't enabling access to film - to information and to culture - a radical, important act in and of itself? What is the use of empowering storytelling if most people - the people who need it the most - can't access it?

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We began at home. In Brazil, only 10% of cities and towns have a cinema. Even in these towns, they're often not affordable to many living there. And, for the most part, those cinemas wouldn't be showing social impact films. We wanted to come up with an alternative.

We created a catalogue of social impact films, which anyone can screen for free - as long as they gather at least 5 people to watch. Technology means that we can get films to people anywhere - and that people can hold screenings anywhere - on a sheet in a town square, on the wall in a school sports halls and on TVs in front rooms. But technology alone doesn't mean democratised access. Many people are not tech-savvy and need guidance. That's why we have someone on the phone answering calls and helping people set up their screenings. This support continues after the screening: we provide materials for discussion, so that once the film ends, communities can

discuss the issue at hand with prompts and facts. Unsurprisingly, of the people who set up our screenings, just over 40% are educators.

So far we've enabled 19,000 screenings in over 90 countries. And this *is* leading to change: our film *Beginning of Life*, which argues for the importance of early childhood development, was screened at the UN and at a screening organised by the first lady of Ceara, one of the poorest states in Brazil, to over 1000 public sector employees.

In addition, Videocamp can work as a film promotional tool, helping a film create a more democratic distribution strategy from its launch. It helps to activate networks, it mobilizes, it makes everyone find out about the film.

The inaugural Videocamp Film Fund, which had the theme 'dialogue', awarded \$310,000 to an independent woman-led production, despite competition from Brazil's most established production companies. Her film *Eleições* ('Elections') uses allegory to comment on Brazil's current political situation and the power of youth movements. It will be released in September this year, a month ahead of Brazil's most contested General Election in a decade.

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For the Videocamp Film Fund's second year, we've chosen the theme 'inclusive education'.

It's not a buzzword, and we knew we'd be asked what the phrase meant. So ... what does 'inclusive education' mean? That children with disabilities should not be segregated from children without disabilities at school. Around the world, 1 billion people - or 1 in 7 of us - have a disability. Studies suggest that there are anywhere between 93 million and 150 million children with disabilities globally, and around half of these children are out of school. Evidence shows that being educated together and living together benefits all children - not only those with disabilities - and that the benefits are not only academic, but emotional too.

We're not looking for a film that simply documents the experiences of children with disabilities or explains how to practise inclusive education. The winning film could be about aliens or it could be entirely abstract. We're searching for a film that will fight for the *principle* of inclusion: the belief that diverse communities are better communities, that our difference is a strength, not something to be afraid of.

This year, as we put inclusivity explicitly at the heart of the Videocamp Film Fund, we've gone global and bigger than before, offering \$400,000 and opening applications to filmmakers all over the world.

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Recently there has been a change in Hollywood. There has been a new visibility and a new momentum around inclusion and diversity - perhaps it began with *Twelve Years a Slave*, and then #OscarsSoWhite. It has taken us to sold out Black Panther screenings across the world, Frances McDormand's 'inclusion rider' shout out at the Oscars, and #TimesUp - an unprecedented instance of pragmatic solidarity between precarious workers and Hollywood stars.

After all, what is inclusion? Making Hollywood inclusive means race and gender diversity. Discussions of 'diversity' should also include people with disabilities - who are often overlooked by these campaigns. It means representation on screen - but it also means diversity behind the camera, in the studios, and crucially, more diverse fingers holding the purse strings. It means equal access to the final product, the films themselves - why all of us in the film industry are here, at the end of the day.

For us, this takes us back to why we started Videocamp. Inclusion in film must also mean enabling access to powerful storytelling - to information and culture. To the hard won right to communicate and create freely.