



The Island President

LESSON PLAN 1: Global Climate Change And The Ethics Of Industry

Introduction

Group screening of **The Island President** in an educational environment will ignite interest, inspire debate, and prompt further investigation into a variety of topical issues and academic disciplines. This guide was created to empower educators worldwide to maximize the educational value of a classroom or seminar screening and to supplement post-viewing group discussion, further research, and active engagement.

The curriculum was developed for use in middle and high school classrooms, and is aligned with key national standards in language arts, social studies, and science. The guide includes two lesson plans geared toward personal and local discovery, critical thinking, and interpersonal activity.



A complete educational edition DVD is available for purchase at www.firstrunfeatures.com/islandpresident_educational

This 2-DVD package includes two additional lesson plans and three additional video modules, in addition to the complete film and university curriculum.





Film Synopsis

The Island President tells the story of President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives, a man confronting a problem greater than any other world leader has ever faced – the literal survival of his country and everyone in it.

After leading a twenty-year, pro-democracy movement against the brutal regime of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom – surviving repeated imprisonments and torture – Nasheed became president at 41, only to encounter a far more implacable adversary than a dictator: the ocean. Considered the lowest lying country in the world, a rise of a mere three meters in sea level would inundate the Maldives, rendering the country practically unlivable. Unless dramatic changes are made by the larger countries of the world, the Maldives, like a modern Atlantis, will disappear under the waves.

As much as its plight is one-of-a-kind, the Maldives itself is a country like no other. A Shangri-la of breathtakingly beautiful turquoise reefs, beaches, and palm trees, the Maldives is composed of 1200 coral islands off of the Indian sub-continent, of which 200 are inhabited. Arrayed across 400 miles of open sea like necklace-shaped constellations, the Maldives is one of the most geographically dispersed nations on earth.

Democracy came to the Maldives, a Sunni Muslim country, in 2008, in a

way that was uncannily similar to the recent Middle Eastern populist revolts against autocrats in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere. What made the Maldives movement different from the ones that have followed it is the existence of a clear opposition party, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), which had in its co-founder, Nasheed, a popular and charismatic leader ready to usher his country into democracy. Educated in Sri Lanka and England, Nasheed proved to be an unusually shrewd and sophisticated politician who grasped that the only way he could stand up to the catastrophic issues of climate change facing his country would be to take the Maldives cause to the world stage.

The Island President captures Nasheed's first year of office, a time when he influences the direction of international events in a way that few leaders have ever done, even in countries many times the size of the Maldives. Nasheed's story culminates in his trip to the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, where the film provides a rare glimpse of the political horse-trading that goes on at such a top-level global assembly. Nasheed is unusually candid about revealing his strategies, leveraging the Maldives' underdog position, harnessing the power of media, and overcoming deadlocks through an appeal to unity with other developing nations. Despite his country's dire situation, Nasheed remains cool, pragmatic, and flexible,

willing to compromise and try again another day. When all hope fades for any kind of written accord to be signed, Nasheed makes a stirring speech, which salvages an agreement. While many have judged the Copenhagen Climate Summit as a failure, it marked the first time in history that China, India, and the United States agreed to reduce carbon emissions.

In this age of political consultants and talking points, it is almost unheard of nowadays for filmmakers to get the astonishing degree of access that director Jon Shenk and his filmmaking team secured from Nasheed in **The Island President**. An award-winning cinematographer as well as a director, Shenk suffuses **The Island President** with the unearthly beauty of the Maldives. Seen from the sky, set against the haunting music of Radiohead, the coral islands seem unreal, more like glowing iridescent creatures than geographic areas. The parallel is apt, as the Maldives are like an endangered species – unless strong actions are taken, this magical country could become extinct.

How To Use This Guide

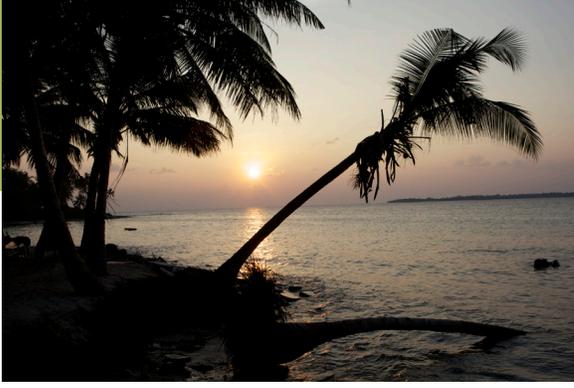
The questions, activities, and resources provided in this guide are meant as suggestions only; educators are encouraged to explore their own means of presenting and following up this material. Much of the content of this guide is designed to inspire critical thinking, compelling debate, and further research into topics that are both critically important and practically controversial; its content is therefore conceptual and (often) ambiguous by nature. Please use discretion in selecting guide content appropriate to your educational setting and objectives.

Each lesson plan consists of a core procedure that is designed to work within one to two 50-minute high school classroom periods. There are also optional extension activities, discussion questions, and research prompts at the end of each procedure to deepen the learning. Relevant subject areas and learning objectives have been highlighted at the start of each lesson.

This entire educational edition package has been developed in alignment with national educational standards in English, Social Studies, and Environmental Science. Educational standards released by the following organizations were reviewed and implemented in preparation of this guide.

- **Common Core: Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects**
- **National Council for the Social Studies**
- **National Research Council (National Science Education Standards)**

Watching the film modules in advance of classroom screening is advisable. Please remember to browse some of the questions and exercises in this guide in advance of screening as well. If the film screening is meant to supplement an ongoing topic of classroom study, be sure to identify the points of interest and information that fit your needs most. Please remember all prompts can be adapted into individual writing activities, homework assignments, small group discussions, or classroom seminars, as desired.



Key Concepts/ Buzzwords:

Maldives
 Mohamed Nasheed
 Copenhagen Climate Summit (2009)
 Democracy/Democratization
 Human Rights
 Peaceful Demonstration
 Global Warming/Climate Change
 Grassroots Campaign
 Atmospheric Carbon Concentration
 Greenhouse Gases
 Emissions Reduction
 Diplomacy
 Global Politics
 Developed Nations Vs.
 Developing Nations
 International Cooperation
 Globalization
 Public Relations
 Political Strategy
 International Media/Press
 Disaster Prevention
 Environmental Leadership
 Biographical Documentary
 Topical Documentary
 Malé
 Divehi
 Archipelago

Recommended Subject Areas

Environmental Science (Ecology, Meteorology)
 Social Science (Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology)
 Government
 Media Literacy/Media Studies
 Economics
 Current Events
 World Cultures/History (Asian Studies)
 Language Arts
 Ethics

OVERVIEW**Audience**

High School (9–12 grade),
Community College,
Youth Development Organizations

Time

90 minutes + assignments

Subject Areas

Social Studies, Climate Change,
Environmental Science, Biology,
Chemistry, Sociology, Ethics,
Current Events, Meteorology

Purpose Of The Lesson

The Island President documents the story of one national government's reaction to the impending threats of climate change. The Maldivian fight for its survival in the face of a rising sea level is a profound microcosm of the global situation. This lesson examines the factors behind global climate change, its detrimental ecological and cultural effects, and the means by which it can be mitigated, on both local and international levels.

Objectives:**Students will:**

- Examine what is meant by the term *climate change* and what it has in common with *global warming*

Analyze the debate surrounding climate change, consider their feelings about the issue, and discuss why they think there is such a strong reaction to this issue on both sides of the divide
- Understand the link between climate change, political advocacy, and the international political process
- Research the impact of climate change in their community
- Calculate their personal carbon footprint and develop a strategy to decrease their individual and collective carbon footprint over the course of one month

Skills

Discussion and group brainstorm, analyzing media content and interpreting media messages, small group collaboration, research, strategic planning, expository writing, oral presentation

Resources:

- **The Island President** film modules:
 - » Film Module 1 “Climate Politics Strategy Meeting” (2:37 minutes)
 - » Film Module 2 “Underwater Cabinet Meeting” (1:12 minutes)
- Student Handouts:
 - » Student Handout A: Man vs. Nature
 - » Student Handout B: Film Synopsis
- LCD projector or DVD player
- Pens and writing paper
- Whiteboard/blackboard and markers/ chalk
- Computers with internet access
- Assorted art supplies and/or desktop publishing software

Standards

Common Core: Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

• **Writing Standards 6–12**

6. (9–10, 11–12) Use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

• **Speaking and Listening Standards 6–12**

5. (9–10, 11–12) Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

10. CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

An understanding of civic ideals and practices is critical to full participation in society and is an essential component of education for citizenship. This theme enables students to learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizens of a democracy, and to appreciate the importance of active citizenship.

National Science Education Standards

Science in Personal and Social Perspectives

Environmental quality

- 12FSPSP4.2 Materials from human societies affect both physical and chemical cycles of the earth.
- 12FSPSP4.3 Many factors influence environmental quality. Factors that students might investigate include population growth, resource use, population distribution, overconsumption, the capacity of technology to solve problems, poverty, the role of economic, political, and religious views, and the different ways humans view the earth.

PROCEDURES

Pre-Screening Activity 1: Is It Getting Hot In Here?

Time: 30 minutes

You will need: pens/pencils, paper, *Student Handout A: Man vs. Nature*, LCD projector or DVD player

Goal: Students will examine what is meant by the term climate change and what it has in common with global warming. They will then analyze the debate surrounding climate change, consider their feelings about the issue, and discuss why they think there is such a strong reaction to this issue on both sides of the divide.

PART 1: WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

- Instruct students to write the words *climate change* the middle of a blank piece of paper.
- Using the style of a crossword puzzle, write all the words they can think of that relate to the issue of climate change, making sure that each word or phrase shares at least one letter with the words “climate change.”
- Let students know that they can also build on the letters from their own words to expand their brainstorming results.
- Invite the students to share their results with the class and record a collective vocabulary of words that relate to climate change on the white/black board.

NOTE: As an alternative, students can work in small groups, each using a large sheet of kraft paper for their brainstorming.

- Using these words as a guide, develop a working definition of climate change.

PART 2: CLIMATE CHANGE VS GLOBAL WARMING

- There is a lot of debate about the changes that are happening to our planet, but sometimes people use the terms global warming and climate change interchangeably. Ask students to consider their definition for climate change and the ways they think it is the same or different than global warming.
- After the discussion, provide them with this definition of the two terms from the Environmental Protection Agency website:
 - » *Global warming* refers to the recent and ongoing rise in global average temperature near Earth’s surface. It is caused mostly by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Global warming is causing climate patterns to change. However, global warming itself represents only one aspect of climate change.
 - » *Climate change* refers to any significant change in the measures of climate lasting for an extended period of time. In other words, climate change includes major changes in temperature, precipitation, or wind patterns (among other effects) that occur over several decades or longer.

PART 3: WHAT'S ALL THE DEBATE ABOUT?

- Divide the class into pairs and distribute *Student Handout A: Man vs. Nature*.
- Instruct each pair to read the summary of the climate change debate and briefly discuss their understanding of the debate and why people might choose to support either side.

“The climate change debate, as it is discussed in the mainstream media, appears to be divided into two major sides. One side argues that the current global warming is caused by human factors, while the other side insists it is occurring because of natural forces. In the latter argument, two natural causes that dominate the conversation are solar changes and changes to the Earth’s orbit.”

“Hundreds of scientists around the world have conducted research that show human activities contribute the most to today’s climate change. We are changing the Earth’s atmosphere by emitting huge amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, most of which comes from the burning of fossil fuels. Other human activities include agriculture and changes in land-use patterns. They all work to tip the Earth’s energy balance by trapping more heat.”

“Even scientists who think human activity is the main cause of climate change don’t deny that natural changes will cause temperature fluctuations on Earth. However, their argument is that in the current cycle of climate change, the impact caused by man is far greater. But there’s no indication that the two sides of the climate change debate will reach any common ground in the near future on what scientific evidence is showing, or what policy decisions should be adopted.”

“The Brookings Institute released a report in April on the public opinion on climate change in the United States and Canada. In a survey of 2,130 people, the report found that there is a progressive decrease in the number of people who think there is ‘solid evidence of global warming’ and an increase in the number who think there is no solid evidence. In the fall of 2008, 17 percent of people did not believe in global warming. In the fall of 2010, that number had increased to 26 percent. Even though the number of climate change believers has decreased, the majority of people still believed that the Earth is undergoing global warming and most of them (61 percent of Americans and 57 percent of Canadians) felt it was a ‘very serious’ problem.”

Excerpted from:

The Climate Change Debate: Man vs. Nature

Anuradha K. Herath, *Astrobiology Magazine*

Date: 05 October 2011 via www.livescience.com

PROCEDURES

Pre-Screening Activity 2: Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

Distribute *Student Handout B: Film Synopsis*. Once the students have reviewed the summary explain that they will watch two brief excerpts from the film. Use the following prompts to guide discussion:

- What do you expect to learn by watching this film? What expectations do you have of the story?
- What is the difference between a narrative and documentary film?
- Have you ever seen a documentary film? If so, what was it about? Do you have a favorite documentary? What do you like about it?
- Who is a world leader (past or present) or political figure that you admire? What about his/her leadership do you like? What questions would you ask of him/her if given the opportunity?
- What do you know about the archipelago nation of the Maldives?
 - » Online Resource: The Maldives–BBC Country Profile and Map:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12651486>
- What do you know about the 2009 Climate Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark?
 - » Online Resources: UN Overview of the Summit and the Secretary General's Summary:
<http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/lang/en/pages/2009summit>

SCREENING GUIDE:

Time: 10 minutes

You will need: Module 1: “Climate Politics Strategy Meeting”, Module 2: “Underwater Cabinet Meeting,” pens/pencils, paper, LCD projector or DVD player

- Instruct students to take notes while watching the video module and record quotes that illustrate the debate about global warming and its impact on the Maldives.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY

Time: 50 minutes

You will need: pens/pencils, white/black board, computers with internet access

Goal: Students will participate in a guided discussion about **The Island President** and research the impact that climate change is having around the world as well as in their community. They will calculate their carbon footprint and develop a strategy to decrease their individual and collective carbon footprint over the course of one month.

PART 1: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the quotes and notes that the students recorded while watching the film modules and continue the discussion using the following prompts:

- What surprised you most when watching these film modules? Is there any part of the film that stood out for you?
- Mark Lynas, an Oxford environmental researcher states, “All this time that we’ve spent talking and all of these meetings we’ve had in Copenhagen and everywhere else, the temperature’s rising. And I think people forget that.” (Film Module 1: “Climate Politics Strategy Meeting”)
 - » Why do you think the filmmakers chose to include this line by Mr. Lynas? What is rhetorically impactful about the premise of this statement? What is the fallacy of the argument?
 - » The removal of carbon from the atmosphere is one climate change solution that is touched on in this conversation. What methods and technologies currently exist that facilitate this process? Do you believe government investment in climate change mitigation should be devoted to the removal of harmful greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, or a combination of both? Based on your research, which strategy would likely be more efficient?
- Lynas also states, “If the Maldives can do it in 10 years, 100 percent, why is the rest of the world desperately trying to avoid doing 10 percent over 30 years?” (Film Module 1)
 - » What do you think the answer to this question is? Why do so many governments resist committing their nations to a reduction in carbon emissions? What are the political disincentives, if any? Do you agree with Nasheed that many governments simply refuse to believe the science?
- President Mohamed Nasheed: “We need to get India, China, and Brazil.” (Film Module 1)
 - » Why does Nasheed target these three nations in his plans to recruit support for atmospheric carbon reduction worldwide? What challenges do you expect most small nation governments face in pursuing negotiations with large, industrialized nations?
- How would you describe Nasheed’s underwater cabinet meeting (Film Module 2: “Underwater Cabinet Meeting”) and its symbolic or metaphorical significance? What objective do you think Nasheed had in mind? How successful do you think the Nasheed administration was in its first two years of bringing global attention to the Maldives’ unique situation? Do you believe a visual “stunt” such as this can have a more resonant impact on others’ perspectives than mere words? Why or why not?
- What role does the visual news media play in affecting social change, or influencing public opinion on an issue? How can it be manipulated?

Additional Discussion Questions:

- President Mohamed Nasheed: *“Maldives is a frontline state. We know that Maldives becoming carbon neutral is not going to stop us from annihilation. But at least we can die knowing that we’ve done the right thing.”*
 - » How do you feel about this quote from President Nasheed? Do you agree that transitioning to carbon neutrality is “the right thing” morally? How effective do you consider this argument to be? Do you believe that appealing to others’ sense of moral obligation is the best way to achieve foreign support?
- President Mohamed Nasheed also said, *“Well, it’s a human right. We cannot not talk about our existence as a country. We’ve been there for the last 3000 years. We have a culture, we have a language, we have a civilization.”*
 - » Compare this argument to the one above. Do you believe that rhetorically framing the situation in this way has more or less of an impact? Why? Do you believe that cultural preservation is a human right? Are there other ancient world cultures that are under threat of extinction? What factors imperil them, if not rising sea levels?

PART 2: “WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE JUST MIGHT RUIN”

- Divide the class into pairs or small groups and instruct them to review the Huffington Post article and slideshow, “What Climate Change Just Might Ruin.” Online Resource: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/05/arctic-ice-melt-sea-level-rise_n_1942666.html#slide=1224006
- Ask each group to identify the impact of climate change on everyday life in different areas of the world, including their own.
- Have them identify 2–3 ways that they expect their own lifestyles/habits to be affected by climate change as well as 2–3 ways they expect their school or community will be affected over time. They should discuss the following as a group:
 - » Which of the following do you expect will be affected by climate change and how do you think your life might change as a result?
 - Your favorite foods or beverages
 - Your means of transportation
 - Your medical care
 - Your entertainment
 - Your means of communication

PART 3: WHAT SIZE IS MY CARBON FOOTPRINT?

- Instruct the groups to use the *Zero Footprint Youth Calculator* to calculate their individual carbon footprints. Then, have the students estimate what their group's collective carbon footprint might be.
- Ask the groups to discuss their results and identify:
 - » The top three contributors to their carbon footprint
 - » What they are currently doing that helps to limit their carbon emissions
- Using the *Green Schools Initiative* resources as a guide, instruct each group to develop a plan of action to reduce their collective carbon footprint
- To track their progress, each group should create a chart illustrating their current carbon footprint and their goal to shrink their footprint over the course of one month. Each member of the group should update their chart each week and compare their results at the end.

NOTE: The Cool School Challenge also offers suggestions on how to expand the activity to include the whole school.

Online Resources:**Zero Footprint Youth Calculator:**

<http://calc.zerofootprint.net/youth/>

A Student's Guide to Climate Change (EPA):

<http://epa.gov/climatechange/kids/index.html>

Green Schools Initiative:

<http://greenschools.net/article.php?id=271>

Cool Schools Challenge (National Wildlife Federation):

<http://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Become-an-Eco-School/Cool-School-Challenge.aspx>



ACTIVITIES

Teachers may select one or more of the following options:

Explore A Local Ecosystem

- As a class, select a specific ecosystem in your region (or elsewhere). If it's sufficiently accessible, consider visiting as a group.
- Identify its ecological and geological characteristics. What type of plant life inhabits it? What type of animal life? How would you describe its current climate? To what extent are its immediate atmosphere and natural water resources influenced or manipulated by human civilization? What are some distinct ecological effects you anticipate if the average annual temperature of that specific region were to rise by 5 degrees Fahrenheit? 15 degrees Fahrenheit?
- Alternatively, divide into small groups and assign each an ecosystem. Each group will research the specific effects of atmospheric warming on their designated ecosystem and share their findings with the class.
- Some ideas for region types: deserts, forests, coastal, coral reefs, rainforests, lakes/rivers, glacial, etc. Some sample effects: bird migration, species extinction, decline in agricultural yield, disease perpetuation, ice melt, ocean acidification, storm pattern changes, etc.

Start A Climate Change Awareness Campaign

- Divide the class into groups of 3–5 students and instruct each group to select an aspect of the climate change issue to explore for this activity.
- Have each group research their topic and develop an awareness campaign to share with their school community. Suggestions include:
 - » Contact a climate change NGO about partnership opportunities
 - » Conduct a fundraiser on behalf of a climate change NGO
 - » Create a class website devoted to exhibiting the students' climate change studies and projects
 - » Start a print awareness campaign around campus (posters, stickers, etc.)
 - » Host an awareness and/or charity event for families, other classes, or the local community

Improve Your School's Water Conservation

Begin a water conservation initiative on your campus.

- Have students work in groups to calculate their collective water footprints using the online resources listed below
- This can be a multi-day activity that involves raising awareness about the importance and impact of water conservation by creating a multimedia campaign using social networks, posters, blogging, or creating a video PSA.
- It can also be executed as a one-day activity targeted to water conservation in the school community.
- Have each group identify an area where water is being wasted or misused and create posters to raise awareness including posting signs in bathrooms or at drinking fountains.
- Online Resources:
 - » **USGS Drip Calculator:**
<http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/sc4.html>
This calculator helps estimate how many gallons per day and per year are wasted from a leaky faucet. A simple concept, but it all adds up! Students will need to know how many drips per minute and how many leaky faucets they have.
 - » **Water Footprint Calculator for Kids:**
<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/water-footprint-calculator/>
Nearly 95 percent of your water footprint is hidden in the food you eat, energy you use, products you buy, and services you rely on, in addition to the water you drink, bathe, and flush with. Estimate how much water you use with this online calculator.
 - » **WaterFootprint.org**
<http://www.waterfootprint.org/?page=files/YourWaterFootprint>
You can use this quick or extended calculator to look at your personal water footprint, or at the global, national, or corporate water footprints of other entities.

THE ISLAND PRESIDENT

STUDENT HANDOUT A: MAN VS. NATURE

“The climate change debate, as it is discussed in the mainstream media, appears to be divided into two major sides. One side argues that the current global warming is caused by human factors, while the other side insists it is occurring because of natural forces. In the latter argument, two natural causes that dominate the conversation are solar changes and changes to the Earth’s orbit.”

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STUDENT HANDOUT B: FILM SYNOPSIS

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Study Guide Credits

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To purchase the complete Educational Edition Package visit:

www.firstrunfeatures.com/islandpresident_educational.html

Community Classroom

Community Classroom brings innovative media resources to educators in high schools, colleges, and other youth-serving organizations. In tandem with ITVS's national community engagement program Community Cinema, Community Classroom provides educators with access to high quality video content and standards aligned curriculum that supports development of critical thinking and writing skills, media literacy, media creation, and opportunities to engage with local service organizations and take action on today's most compelling social issues.

ITVS

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning independently produced documentaries and dramas on public television and cable, innovative new media projects on the internet, and the Emmy® Award-winning series Independent Lens on PBS. ITVS receives core funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

Diverse Muslim Voices

Diverse Muslim Voices builds awareness and understanding in the U.S. of the range of Muslim societies and cultures. Advancing the mission of ITVS's Global Perspectives Project, a two-way exchange of independent documentaries, the multiyear project elevates stories about Muslim cultures through multiplatform promotion and distribution and ignites citizen engagement through live events and educational programs. The initiative is funded by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art

AfterImage Public Media

AfterImage Public Media is a non-profit company established to produce and distribute educational media that creatively address social, political, historical and cultural subjects. The company produces documentary film and television projects and community engagement programs that raise awareness about matters in the public interest.