



MEDIA IMPACT FUNDERS

2017 Media Impact Festival Case Study: *ACORN and the Firestorm* facebook.com/ACORNandtheFirestorm/

Film synopsis:

ACORN and the Firestorm documents the controversies surrounding ACORN, America's largest grassroots community organizing group, which became a major player in the 2008 presidential election. Big businesses, Republicans and right-wing activists took issue with the group, firing accusations of voter fraud and government waste at the left-leaning organization. The conservative opposition found unexpected allies in a pair of amateur journalists who posed as a pimp and prostitute hoping to expose ACORN via hidden camera. The ensuing political drama spawned the now-omnipresent Breitbart Media, and served as a prescient foreshadowing of today's political climate.

Production team:

Reuben Atlas and Sam Pollard, Co-Directors/Co-Producers

Funders:

ITVS, NBPC, Sundance Institute, IDA Pare Lorentz Grant, Gucci Tribeca Fund, Jewish Communal Fund

Issues addressed in film:

The primary issues addressed in the film are poverty, racism, inequality and the effect of political divisions in the country on our democracy. The film explores those concerns by looking at voter participation, minimum wage, affordable housing, fair lending and the ideological divisions between the left and right. The film also deals with the interconnected issues of how to build civic organizations that can bring together racial minorities with the white working class and the role of the media to tell the truth and better understand issues that affect the white working class.

Target audience:

Since the film explores large American themes at the intersections of race and class, democracy and the media, it speaks to a broad American audience.

Impact goals:

In collaboration with a network of educational, advocacy, labor, faith and media partners, the impact campaign aims to reach and mobilize a politically, geographically and economically diverse audience.

Impact strategy:

The campaign plans to partner with labor, community organizing, faith-based, women's, civil rights, housing and community development groups. Partner organizations and potential partner organizations include: AFL-CIO, SEIU, AARP, Center for Community Change, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, DefineAmerican.com,

Demos, The Economic Policy Institute, Habitat for Humanity, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, NetRoots Nation, NAACP, MoveOn.org, National Low Income Housing Network, NeighborWorks Network, and Planned Parenthood.

The campaign plans to publicize the film by partnering with journalists and scholars to reach public policy groups such as Demos, and readers of magazines and newspapers that publish in print as well online such as *The American Prospect* and *The Nation*, as well as TV, radio programs and digital-only publications. Outreach efforts will extend to conservative groups such as the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, The Hudson Institute, The Heritage Foundation, Tea Party and BigGovernment.com.

Nonpartisan groups such as NoLabels.org will organize conferences and policy debates around the film, encouraging community discussion around organizing, in addition to providing a forum for examining political divides on a more meaningful level than the typical discourse played out in the mainstream media. The campaign aims to connect with a bipartisan array of groups that deal with the issues addressed in the film, such as corporate power, poverty, and inequality, race, class, democracy, and voter turnout.

Working together with these groups as well as former ACORN members, many of whom are now involved in "post-ACORN" groups, the campaign will develop a strategy for house party screenings across the country that are hosted by local speakers from each organization throughout the United States. The team will work with PBS and other cable networks to produce a special outreach campaign before the televised screening date to attract the widest possible audience.

Impact so far: The film has screened at a number of festivals, but the impact campaign is still in its early stages, and geared around a PBS broadcast scheduled for summer 2018, so there is not much to report at this time.