

# MEDIA IMPACT FUNDERS

## 2017 Media Impact Festival Case Study: *Edith + Eddie* [editheddie.com](http://editheddie.com)

### Film synopsis:

In this short film, Edith and Eddie, ages 96 and 95, are America's oldest interracial newlyweds. Their love story is disrupted by a family feud that threatens to tear the couple apart. *Edith + Eddie* is a film about an individual's freedom to live and love as he or she wishes irrespective of age, race or class, and shows the devastating consequences resulting from the removal of that human right.

### Production Team:

- Laura Checkoway, Director/Producer/Editor
- Thomas Lee Wright, Producer
- Karina Rotenstein, Co-Producer
- P. Corwin Lamm, Co-Producer/Editor
- Neil Barrett, Cinematographer
- John Larson, Cinematographer
- Cher, Executive Producer
- Steve James, Executive Producer
- Gordon Quinn, Executive Producer
- Betsy Steinberg, Executive Producer

### Funders:

*Edith + Eddie* is financed by the filmmakers, with additional funding for distribution and community engagement provided by a grant from AFI Impact Lab and in-kind services from Kartemquin Films.

### Issues addressed in film:

The film addresses elder rights, elder abuse, guardianship abuse, aging, end-of-life issues, legal reform, race and interracial marriage, family, spirituality and faith. The issues listed above emerge naturally through the depiction of the idyllic relationship between Edith and Eddie and its sudden, wrenching end.

### Target audience:

The film highlights family, legal, and health care issues that affect 80 million elderly American citizens. It aims to reach general viewers who may have family members who need to make decisions about late-life care options. The film also aims to reach key stakeholders who can enact reform of guardianship law—including lawyers, judges, state representatives, advocates for the elderly, and former legal guardians.

**Impact goals:**

The overarching goals of the campaign are to ultimately reduce the rate of guardianship abuse by reforming laws in every state to prevent elder abuse, and to inspire people to make family late-life plans. Achieving these goals will involve inciting new conversations on both personal and policy levels; working to build coalitions among the lawyers, judges, politicians, advocates and regional organizations working on this issue; and improving data collection about how money is controlled by guardians in each state.

**Impact strategy:**

The impact strategy involves the following steps:

- Developing relationships with partners working to enact reform and pass a legal guardianship decision-making standard at federal and state court level;
- Forming partnerships with organizations including the Uniform Law Commission; National Center on Elder Abuse; the National Organization to Stop Guardian Abuse; Alive Inside Foundation; Boomers Against Elder Abuse; Coalition for Elder & Dependent Adult Rights; Americans Against Abusive Probate Guardianship; National Institutes of Health; and American Public Health Association, Aging and Public Health Section;
- Creating resources to be hosted on the film's website, including a family decision-making screening kit and an easily digestible guide for audiences on how to advocate for guardianship reform and address the issue with their own families;
- Working with partner organizations to host screening and discussion events. For example, the campaign will work with the Uniform Law Commission, which has been drafting legislation regarding guardianship, to host screenings and discussions of *Edith + Eddie* as they encourage legislatures to amend guardianship laws based on newly revised model legislation. The campaign will integrate ULC's Enactment Kit—detailing how individuals can advocate to change their state's guardianship laws— into the screening kit;
- Planning Capitol Hill screenings and discussions in response to the recently passed S.178 Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act and other legislation affecting federal elder justice initiatives;
- Producing short educational videos featuring interviews with experts and advocates including a video featuring Executive Producer Cher speaking about the film, guardianship, and elder abuse;
- Promoting research data on current guardianship abuse rates.

**Impact so far:**

*Edith + Eddie* has screened at more than 25 festivals across the globe and won numerous awards, becoming eligible for the Academy Awards. The film recently earned a nomination for the 2018 Cinema Eye Honors for Outstanding Achievement in Nonfiction Short Filmmaking, as well a nomination for Best Short from the 2017 IDA Documentary Awards.

Since its world premiere in March 2017 at the True/False Film Fest, *Edith + Eddie* has also earned the Audience Award for Best Short at the Montclair Film Festival; a Jury Honorable Mention at the Sheffield Doc/Fest; the Jury Award for Best Documentary at the Palm Springs

International Film Festival; the Flickers' Youth Film Jury Award for Best Documentary at the Rhode Island International Film Festival; the Jury Award for Best Documentary Short at the Nevada City Film Festival; the Jury Award for Best Documentary Short at the Hamptons International Film Festival; and the Jury Award for Outstanding Documentary Short at the Tallgrass Film Festival.

Viewers have indicated that film inspired them to start conversations with their own families about their plans for late-life care. One viewer at AFI DOCS said, "*Edith + Eddie* left me a different person."

After the initial run of festival screenings, the hope is to screen extensively in nontheatrical settings and at conferences within the network of organizations who provide eldercare and social services, with some sponsorships that allow the team to offer multiple free community screenings and discussions. The team is currently in discussions with television broadcasters to acquire the film. Al Jazeera English has offered to broadcast the film in December 2017 on their Emmy and Peabody Award winning documentary strand "Witness," which reaches a global audience of more than 220 million households in more than 100 countries.

From November 13-27, 2017, *Edith + Eddie* was available to stream on NBCNews.com, following its dual screenings at the Meet the Press Film Festival with AFI. The screenings were followed by Q&As with both Chuck Todd, NBC News political director and moderator of "Meet the Press" and Kristen Welker, NBC News White House correspondent.

*Edith + Eddie* has received favorable reviews from the *The Hollywood Reporter*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Times*, *Vox Magazine*, *NonFics.com*, *Now Toronto*, the *Columbia Daily Tribune*, and *Shooting People*, among others. Legendary singer, actress and activist Cher signed on to become an executive producer and shared her affinity for the project in the press.

The film has been promoted by the National Association to Stop Guardianship Abuse, including being featured on their website as a resource under their documentaries section. They have agreed to help promote the film in their newsletters and on social media and have been a resource in guiding the filmmakers toward further research and partnership opportunities.

The Michigan Elder Justice Initiative has requested to include the film in a two-day training for legal services lawyers who provide free legal assistance to low income elders and victims of elder abuse, including an intensive training for our 10 new attorneys who are funded by the Victims of Crime Act to serve elder abuse victims across the state. A second screening has also been arranged for training staff of the state long-term care ombudsman program, which oversees 20 advocates statewide who advocate for individuals in nursing homes and licensed assisted living facilities.