



MEDIA IMPACT FUNDERS

2017 Media Impact Festival case study: *I AM EVIDENCE* iamevidencethemovie.com

Film synopsis:

I AM EVIDENCE exposes the alarming number of untested rape kits in the United States through a character-driven narrative, bringing much-needed attention to the disturbing pattern of how the criminal justice system has historically treated sexual assault survivors.

Why is there a rape kit backlog? What can we do to fix the problem? This film explores these questions through survivors' experiences as they trace the fates of their kits and re-engage in the criminal justice process. *I AM EVIDENCE* illuminates how the system has impeded justice while also highlighting those who are leading the charge to work through the backlog and pursue long-awaited justice in these cases.

This film seeks to send a clear message to survivors that they matter, that we as a nation will do everything possible to bring them down a path to healing and justice, and that their perpetrators will be held accountable for their crimes.

Production team:

- Mariska Hargitay, Producer
- Trish Adlesic, Co-Director and Producer
- Geeta Gandbhir, Co-Director and Supervising Editor
- Tony Hardmon, Cinematographer
- Virdiana Lieberman, Editor
- Maile M. Zambuto, Executive Producer
- Luran and Myrna Bromley, Executive Producers
- Sukey Novogratz, Executive Producer
- Regina K. Scully, Executive Producer
- Marc Levin, Executive Producer
- Pamela Schein Murphy and Marc Murphy, Associate Producers
- Lorraine Kirke, Associate Producer

Funders:

Artemis Rising, The Fledgling Fund, HBO, Rudin Foundation, Fork Films, individual donors

Issues addressed in film:

Every two minutes, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. Victims who report the assault are subjected to invasive and exhaustive examinations of their entire bodies for DNA evidence left behind by the attacker. This process, which can take four to six hours to complete, preserves evidence in a rape kit. Jurisdictions across the country have begun to witness the benefits of testing every kit. When tested, rape kit evidence can identify an unknown assailant, link crimes together, identify serial offenders, affirm the survivor's account of the attack,

discredit the suspect and exonerate the innocent. Many communities' rape kit testing efforts are taking violent offenders off the streets and improving public safety.

Target audience:

Working with national organizations and local coalitions, the *I AM EVIDENCE* team is working to engage the general public, advocates, policymakers, criminal justice professionals and survivors of sexual assault in the movement to end the untested rape kit backlog.

Impact goals:

The goals of the campaign are to empower survivors, activists, civic leaders, community members, and experts at the local, state and national levels to:

- Increase public awareness of how rape culture and bias work together to negatively impact our criminal justice system's response to sexual assault;
- Mobilize the public to help change laws and policies at the local, state and national levels;
- Inspire lawmakers at all levels of government to support legislation mandating the testing and tracking of rape kits;
- Change the way the criminal justice system responds to sexual assault;
- Build a national infrastructure of coalitions and strategic partnerships to advance reforms across the country; and
- Shift cultural perceptions and reactions to survivors and their experiences.

Impact strategy:

The *I AM EVIDENCE* campaign is a central component of a four-year strategy developed by the Joyful Heart Foundation, a national organization dedicated to transforming society's response to sexual assault. The partnerships that Joyful Heart Foundation has with legislators, law enforcement, stakeholders and survivors across the country uniquely position the team to lead a national campaign together to end the rape kit backlog. Working in partnership with national, state and local organizations, the *I AM EVIDENCE* campaign team is hosting screenings and discussions of the film to educate and engage communities about the backlog and what they can do to help end it.

The campaign is multi-faceted and includes HBO watch parties, legislative screenings with key policymakers committed to reform and law enforcement trainings and webinars, as well as community and educational screenings to inspire grassroots actions at the local, state and federal levels.

Partner organizations include Futures Without Violence, The United State of Women, It's On Us, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women, Natasha's Justice Project, Deeds Not Words, the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault, Peace Over Violence, the International Association of Forensic Nurses, DNA Saves, the Rape Abuse Incest National Network (RAINN), and the National Center for Victims of Crime (NVCV).

The film will be a key tool in a robust community based strategy and action campaign in key states targeted for their potential for legislative victories this election cycle. The campaign is also

working to bring the film to states that hold a moderate chance for reform, either because of previous attempts to pass legislation, existing assets and committed partners on the ground or other interested stakeholders.

The Joyful Heart Foundation, as the lead social impact partner, has created a community screening guide to support grassroots partners who wish to host a screening or event.

Additionally, in partnership with the International Association of Forensic Nurses, Joyful Heart has developed a supplemental guide specific to health care professionals who wish to host a screening and discussion. In time, they hope to create a similar targeted supplemental guide for law enforcement and advocates as well.

In order to inspire the general public to join the movement to end the backlog, the film's website includes advocacy opportunities (i.e.—write to your governor, state legislators, Congress or president) as well as the opportunity to attend or host a screening of the film, engage on social media to raise awareness, and learn more about the issue in a particular state.

Impact so far:

I AM EVIDENCE premiered at the 2017 Tribeca Film Festival, and has since been followed by a robust film festival and community screening roll-out, including screenings with key national partners in 18 states, Washington D.C, and Canada. The campaign began with a brain trust comprising a select group of partner organizations working on sexual violence prevention, race relations, and criminal justice reform, resulting in partnerships with 23 organizations to date.

In 2017, *I AM EVIDENCE* won the Audience Award for Best Documentary Film at the Provincetown International Film Festival and the Traverse City Film Festival, the Rabinowitz Award for Social Justice at the Hamptons International Film Festival, and the Special Jury Award for Impact in Filmmaking at the Hawaii International Film Festival. The film will premiere on HBO in spring 2018.