



MEDIA IMPACT FUNDERS

2017 Media Impact Festival: *The Force*
theforcefilm.com

Film synopsis:

The Force presents a cinema vérité look deep inside the long-troubled Oakland Police Department as it struggles to confront federal demands for reform; a popular uprising following events in Ferguson, Missouri; and an explosive scandal. In 2014, after more than a decade of federal monitoring for misconduct and civil rights abuses, the Oakland Police Department hires Chief Sean Whent—a young, clear-eyed idealist—in hopes of bridging an historically tense divide between its officers and the community they serve. Whent’s intentions and calls for transparency are immediately met with enthusiasm, but as his tenure begins, the realities of his department’s scandal-plagued past coincide with fresh accusations of brutality and harassment. With fly-on-the-wall intimacy, we see a department trapped in transition, desperate to shed its corrupt image but also challenged by an increasingly organized and urgent Black Lives Matter movement erupting right outside its doorstep.

Production team:

- Peter Nicks, Director/Producer/Cinematographer
- Linda Davis, Producer
- Lawrence Lerew, Editor/Producer/Sound Recordist
- John Else, Executive Producer

Funders:

ITVS, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Cinereach, Catapult Film Fund, California Humanities, Kapor Center for Social Impact, Kendeda Foundation, San Francisco Film Society, The Filmmaker Fund, Gucci Tribeca Documentary Fund, Sundance Documentary Fund, Sundance/CNN, Nancy Blachman and David desJardins, Threshold Foundation, The Fledgling Fund.

Issues addressed in film:

The film examines the conflict points between community and police as they relate to use of force, community safety, reform, accountability and trust. Tensions between police and communities are high across the country. Scandals and officer-involved shootings are constantly in the news. Despite a growing public distrust of law enforcement, the current administration wants to end federal oversight of state and local law enforcement.

This film is a unique document that will allow both members of law enforcement and members of the community to witness the type of rare but vital dialogue that can move the needle and build greater trust and understanding between the community and the police.

Target audience:

The core target audience consists of community members and law enforcement personnel in cities with complicated and/or strained community-police relationships. Currently, the team is

focused on an audience of thought leaders and organizations who will see the film as a catalyst for productive conversations between police, community and issue stakeholders. These “high touch” individuals and institutions will help us develop a larger, scaled outreach effort that will target the general audience of millions of viewers that will watch the film in theatrical release, on PBS, or on Netflix.

Impact goals:

The overarching goal is to work toward creating a healthy public safety system that allows community members and law enforcement to work well together, trust each other, and ensure the safety and equitable treatment of all involved. Working toward this goal includes incorporating *The Force* into police academies and academic institutions across the country and developing policies and legislation created with buy-in from law enforcement, community members, and activists that strengthen trust between police and community.

Impact strategy:

The first phase of the outreach campaign will include:

- Employing targeted outreach to national and local stakeholders to facilitate long-term partnerships;
- Inviting police officers, community groups, police departments, and reform activists to theatrical screenings;
- Working with educational curriculum developers to design educational materials.
- Hosting Q&As and other events with the filmmaker, documentary participants and experts, for communities as well as specific audiences such as police academies, high schools, universities, local and national legislators and community organizations that address issues of police/community trust, police accountability, community safety and social justice;
- Videotaping and editing selected panel discussions or conversations that will be distributed across social media and through partner networks. (A model for this can be viewed at civilconversationsproject.org); and
- Using insight from partner organizations, targeting local and national legislators working on police reform and accountability and encouraging policy-makers to adopt film as a tool to push for reform.

The second phase of the outreach planning will focus on actions that individuals can take after viewing the film between the September 2017 theatrical release, the PBS broadcast in January 2018 and the global distribution on Netflix in February 2018. Partner organizations will help define what ideal action steps might be for the general public after watching the film. Through these partnerships the team will develop a digital toolkit that allows people to engage and act in different ways.

Impact so far:

The team is currently developing a plan with MacArthur Fellow Jennifer Eberhardt to study the impact of the film on the public consciousness. The first phase of outreach is focused on these “high touch” individuals and institutions who will help develop larger, scaled outreach effort targeted toward the millions of viewers who will watch the film in theatrical release, on PBS, and on Netflix. The team is in talks with the Oakland Mayor’s Office and U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee’s

office about the policy implications of the film and how these key stakeholders might want to be involved with the film. On a national level, the team is working with PICO Network/LIVE Free to bring community members to theaters. The team is also participating in trainings for clergy and activists around building trust through reform and healing relationships between law enforcement and community members.

Understanding that each city has its own nuanced dynamics, so team members have reached out to community stakeholders in the cities where the film will be released theatrically. Early screenings with community stakeholders allow the team to gather feedback on the film and connect with the right organizations and community members. For example, in Philadelphia, they are partnering with the Mayor's Office to have conversations and workshops around reform. In Washington, DC, they are in talks with The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights to host an early screening with community stakeholders and possibly host a free screening of the film for DC residents. Other organizations that have taken an interest in the film are the Los Angeles Police Foundation, Color of Change, National Network for Safe Communities and the NAACP.

The team is working with community organizations to send out information about the film in their newsletters and providing them with social media assets to use online. David Kennedy of the National Network for Safe Communities, Academy Award-winning actor Mahershala Ali, Philadelphia Deputy Mayor Nina Ahmad, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, and civil rights attorney John Burris are some of the influencers who have seen this film. The team has also been in communication with Isaac Tobis from U.S. Rep. Dave Reichert's office (which we visited during the Lab) about hosting a screening of the film for the Law Enforcement Caucus on Capitol Hill.

The Force started its festival run at Sundance Film Festival, where it won the prize for Best Director and completed its festival run at AFI DOCS. The film has been acquired by Kino Lorber and premiered in theaters in September 2017, with showings in selected theaters across the country in October, and airing on PBS in January 2018.

The film has received extensive press coverage, including KQED Arts, *San Jose Mercury*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, *the Guardian*, Pop Matters, Moveable Feast, Park City TV, *Rolling Stone*, *the New York Times*, *the Los Angeles Times*, and more.