

climate

A PROGRAM OF EXPOSURE LABS

WINTER 2021/2022

CONTRIBUTORS
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Sam Adler

Samantha is focused on formulating social impact strategies through the power of film as Exposure Labs' Climate Senior Program Manager. As a passionate storyteller, she's interested in the intersection of climate change and human rights. Most recently, she's worked for Yale's Program for Climate Change Communication promoting research around a multifaceted approach to climate change social research. She has also worked as a journalist for Alliance Earth, writing and reporting on environmental issues, including an assignment in Botswana's Kalahari Desert. Prior, Samantha acted as the Global Communications Manager at Girl Rising. Projects included constructing a communications strategy with the White House in relation to the First Lady's Let Girls Learn initiative. Samantha holds a BA in Journalism and Cinema Studies from New York University and is based in San Diego with her many plants and fluffy cat.

MG Hall

MG Hall is the Climate Impact Coordinator for Exposure Labs, working on our Climate Team to support programs like Climate Story Lab, Film In The Field, and partnerships with various environmental justice groups, while also serving as the community manager for our films *Chasing Coral* and *Chasing Ice*. She studied Ecology in undergrad and supported/conducted research on climate change's impact on aquatic ecosystems, but realized in her last year that her real love was science communication, which led her to the world of film, impact, and climate. MG was born and raised in Alabama and has a special interest in engaging the South in the climate movement, as well as lifting up those who have historically been left out of the conversation with education and resources to advocate for themselves and their homes.



Lindsay Crowder

Lindsay is the Climate Program Director at Exposure Labs, overseeing the development of our climate work. From running national campaign offices for a handful of progressive organizations to developing dozens of digital & field campaigns for a variety of clients, Lindsay centers her work in building community & transformational change. Most recently, she worked as National Organizing Director for the Peoples Climate Movement, building program work that demands bold climate action centered in racial and economic justice through mass mobilization, coalition building and movement alignment. She is based in Detroit, Michigan.

introduction

Since the release of our 2020 Climate Report, our climate work continues to build on our impact and serve the climate movement by meeting the needs of the field and leveraging the power of storytelling to reach new and existing audiences and drive meaningful action. Over the course of 2021, our work continued to adapt to the ongoing implications of COVID-19, support long-term impact through relationship and movement building, and center a meaningful commitment to equity and justice in all that we do.



our foundation

Mission, Vision, Values



Our Mission

Stories for a better future.

We believe that stories are the most powerful catalyst to build empathy, shape culture, foster social justice movements, and shift systems. From inception to impact, we develop and share stories to address big societal challenges, and to inspire hope and action for collective solutions.



Vision

We envision a world where transformative stories can help heal our relationship with the planet and with each other, and create an equitable and sustainable future for all.



Values

Equity & Sustainability

We believe a regenerative world must be fair and just for all people and the planet, and the path forward requires an intersectional approach to address systemic and institutional injustices.

Integrity

We do what we believe is the right thing, even when it's not easy. We don't shy away from hard questions or systemic challenges, and maintain the open-mindedness needed to challenge our own beliefs. We seek out perspectives that differ from our own, approach the world with curiosity, and embrace the inherent nuance that comes with big ideas.

Creativity

We embrace big ideas, imagination, and creative thinking in all of our work, seeking out new and innovative ways to tell stories, uplift social movements, and connect with communities and audiences around the world.

Inclusion

We lead with love and compassion to build social bridges that unite us, focusing on what we have in common over what sets us apart. We recognize that just like in nature, diversity brings strength and resilience, and we seek an inclusive future where ALL people are involved in the decisions that affect them.

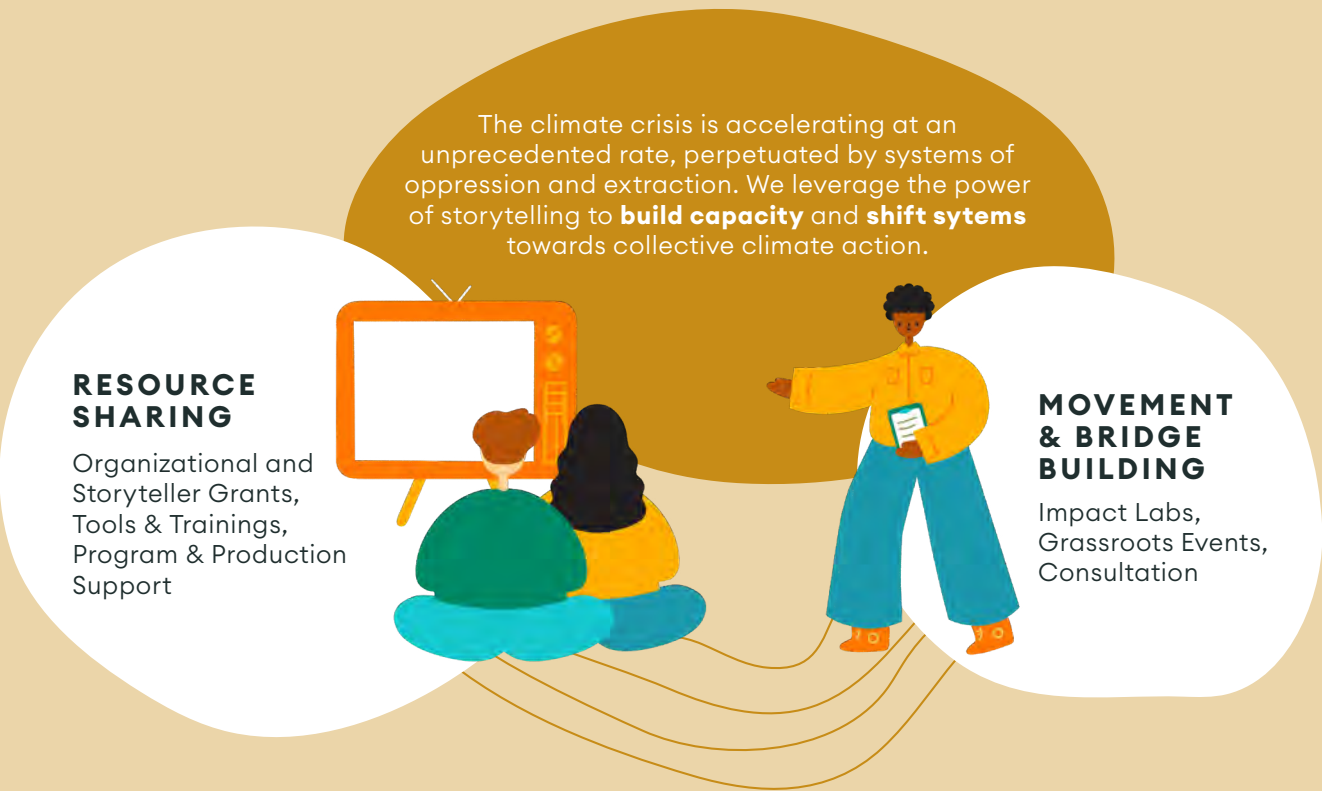


Climate Program Theory of Change & Points of Unity



Theory of Change

The climate crisis is accelerating at an unprecedented rate, perpetuated by systems of oppression and extraction. We believe that the transformational power of storytelling is one of the greatest tools we have to accelerate climate action at scale. Our work serves as a pathway for climate storytellers, organizers, and the broader storytelling ecosystem; moving away from centering ourselves, to disrupting unjust power structures, and ensuring that both organizers and storytellers have the resources, access, and capacity to do the work.



SHIFTING RELATIONSHIPS, RESOURCES, PRACTICES, POLICIES, AND POWER DYNAMICS TO BENEFIT COMMUNITIES MOST IMPACTED



TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE BY DISMANTLING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION AND BUILDING COLLECTIVE POWER TOWARDS CLIMATE ACTION

We build bridges, foster collaboration, and seek to be a trusted hub and thought partner for climate storytellers and organizers, recognizing our privilege and power, bringing innovation and opportunity to the overall ecosystem, and ensuring that we are contributing to an equitable, intersectional, and multidisciplinary approach to addressing the climate crisis through the power of storytelling.

We started socializing our Theory of Change in this format to align with *The Social Dilemma* team and bring structural cohesion across Exposure Labs.



Points of Unity

Points of Unity are our shared values, beliefs, methods, and means. They guide our climate work, reflect who we are and what we believe in, and inform our decision making. Our process was inspired by the great work of our friends at AORTA.

We ground our work and ourselves by listening.

We are committed to intentional relationship building, both new and long-term, to nurture a network of individuals, organizations, storytellers, and other stakeholders co-collaborating in building an ecosystem of solutions to the climate crisis. We appreciate that this involves constant work at the individual, organizational, and structural level.

We follow the **Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing** in all that we do.

We encourage our team, our partners, and all relationships to show up with their whole selves.

We nurture intergenerational practices, we value intimacy, depth, and trust, and we believe care for self, others, and community is crucial to a more sustainable world.

We stand in alliance with struggles that uphold collective liberation and cooperation and recognize that those struggles can be intersectional. We believe that individuals, organizations, and ecosystems can be transformed.

We assume our own power and privilege and maintain our humility.

We believe in the importance of leadership and prioritize the development of leaders among youth, communities most impacted by the climate crisis, and intentionally targeted communities in all levels of our work.

We spend our time building bridges rather than closing doors.

We value resource sharing and are committed to contributing to a fair and just ecosystem by directly linking resources and capacity building with the communities that need them most.

We move at the speed of trust and honor that there is always enough time for the right work.



Group Agreements

Group Agreements are intended to clarify our role in community spaces and meetings and allow room for holistic participation. Depending on the group, meeting, and overall purpose, these agreements can be built on and adapted for meaningful use.

Make space, take space // Be mindful of how you use your time, your power, and privilege.

Be brave // Lean into tensions that can lead to growth, learning, and clarity.

Approach questions and thinking with curiosity and disrupt harm without apology.

Throw glitter, not shade // Share your truth using “yes/and” & “I” and treat others with care.

Focus on the behavior, not the person // Aim for accountability.

Be present // Your attention is a gift, what you pay attention to grows.

our program

Our work over this past year is a clear reflection of our Theory of Change and Points of Unity. It also clearly aligns with the Mission, Vision, and Values that we formalized for all of Exposure Labs. Aside from this distinct alignment, we are also building capacity across the movement and fostering deep relationships to grow this work with intention and care. Organizers, storytellers, and other stakeholders received grants, tools, training, consultation, and grew new partnerships as a result of our work. Our impact surveys, reporting, and case study development directly showcase the additive ways that our work has made a difference to our partners and the climate storytelling ecosystem at large. Some highlights below.



In commitment to our existing relationships and to building capacity for climate storytelling in the US South, we planned a Climate Story Lab US-South the week of April 26, 2021. We secured partnerships with regional stakeholders [New Orleans Film Society](#) and the [Southeast Climate and Energy Network](#) and accepted 7 storytelling projects from the South to workshop during the Lab. We designed programming and brought in local organizers, scientists, community leaders, funders and more to explore different themes, including intersectionality, power, impact, and equitable funding models.

Climate Story Lab US-South selected projects include:

- *Fenceline* (Feature Documentary)
- *Hollow Tree* (Feature Documentary)
- *JORDAN* (Short Narrative)
- *Neverglades* (360 Degree Cyclorama)
- *Razing Liberty Square* (Feature Documentary)
- *Regeneration of Land and Culture* (Short Documentary)
- *UNTITLED: A Black Family Origin Story about the Legacy of Racism and Promise based in New Orleans, LA* (Feature Documentary)

[More information about each project can be found here](#) and the Climate Story Lab US-South [case study video and report can be found here](#). We will remain in consultation and collaboration with the project teams and partners for this Lab going forward. We've also been in consultation and collaboration with some of the global Climate Story Lab planning teams - including Climate Story Lab Africa and Amazonia - and are planning to engage with Doc Society around the long-term strategic planning for this work.

Why the US South?

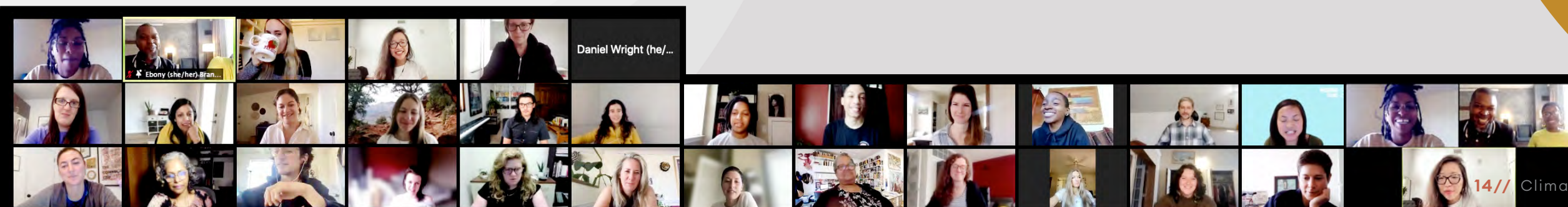
The Southern region of the United States is one of the most vulnerable areas in the country impacted by climate change. The South is also plagued by extractive storytelling practices and viewed through a very narrow lens perpetuated by mainstream media. Women, BIPOC, and low-income communities are often at the forefront of the climate emergency, yet rarely at the forefront of storytelling, as either makers or protagonists. There is a critical opportunity to support sustainable infrastructure for Southerners to determine who the story is about, who is telling the story, how it's being told, and how it gets shared.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD

“What can I say? I knew this Lab would be informative but I had no idea that it would be so spiritually inspired!!! The panelists you curated for our spotlight were phenomenal!! Thank you for all of your tireless work to bring us all together. I know that this week will be transformational!! Your remarkably concientios and compassionate work is dearly appreciated!” - Ann Bennett, Climate Story Lab US-South, producer of *Razing Liberty Square*

“It was a privilege and an honor to listen, collaborate with, and learn from so many talented people across the South. I’m so grateful to Brooke for looping me into this endeavor, and beyond excited to continue to work with and support the incredible Exposure Labs Climate Team!! We appreciate all that you guys do for filmmakers & changemakers around the country. It’s these kinds of experiences (and broader community) that give me so much hope and optimism for the future.” - Annie Martin, Climate Story Lab US-South, Impact Producer for *Regeneration of Land and Culture*



b. Film in the Field

Building off of learnings from our impact work with *Chasing Ice* and *Chasing Coral* and consolidating feedback and interest across the field, we launched Film in the Field as a pilot program in partnership with the [Southeast Climate & Energy Network \(SCEN\)](#). Our goal was to test a scalable, equitable model that supports the use of climate storytelling, beyond our own films, to mobilize new & existing audiences, drive climate action and create lasting change. Over the summer of 2020, we formed a Peer Review Committee with 3 representatives from the SCEN network and 3 team members from Exposure Labs to collectively build out a Request for Proposal using films and resources drawn from Exposure Labs' [Film in the Field Library](#). We matched the SCEN network to launch the RFP with a \$50,000 total granting pool, and network members were invited to apply beginning September 22, 2020. Since the launch, we have granted 7 grassroots organizations with funding and resources to use film as a tool for their organizing. [The full list of projects and grantees can be found here](#), and some highlights are included below.

- [People's Justice Council](#) brought together Alabamian community members, faith leaders, and community organizers for a screening of *Uniontown*.

- [ReThink Energy Florida](#), a youth-led organization, brought together 2 screenings of *Chasing Ice* for intergenerational audiences in Florida.
- [Sustaining Way & South Carolina Interfaith Power & Light](#) organized 2 screenings of *The Human Element* to frame local climate impacts and community-led solutions.
- [Kentucky Interfaith Power & Light](#) created a 2-part series: "Facing Winter: Exploring the Human Impact on Nature," with screenings of *Chasing Ice*, *Chasing Coral*, and *The Human Element*; and "Engaging Spring: We Got This!" with screenings of *Current Revolution*, *Uniontown*, and *Water Warriors*.
- [GASP](#) has hosted 2 screenings of *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code* to audiences in Birmingham, Alabama along with a conversation with the Director, Judith Helfand.
- [Care About Climate](#) launched their project with a screening of *Water Warriors* and panel discussion in the Kendeda Building at Georgia Tech.
- [Georgia Interfaith Power & Light](#) - events to take place in 2022

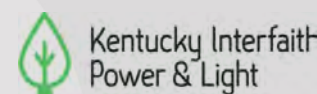
Several of the recent grantees are still planning their events to be completed by Spring 2022, so we continue to gather impact and debrief with hosts in preparation of an in-depth impact report and case study video. This Request for Proposal and partnership with the Southeast Climate & Energy Network kicks off our long-term commitment and effort to use climate storytelling to grow the climate movement and to create additive models for both storytellers and organizers to do the work. In February 2022, we formed a new Peer Review Committee of equal parts SCEN and launched phase 2 of this project. Grantees and projects will be announced in May 2022!



FILM IN THE field

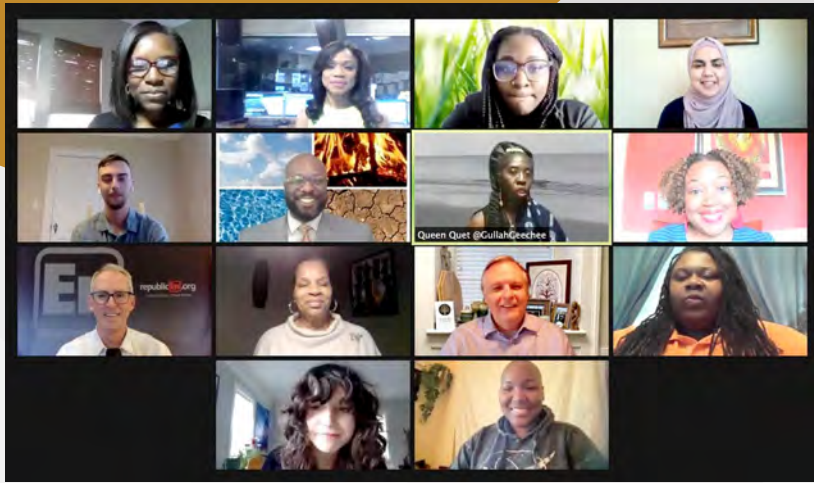
REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD

"There seemed to be a great turnout overall and response at the end. The speakers and moderator added a professional feel and brought a great amount of empathy. Attendees who completed surveys commented they became more aware about how this has affected frontline communities. Others became more educated on air quality and water issues and how policy and local government are intertwined." - Kali Llano, Film in the Field grantee from Sustaining Way, screening *The Human Element*



REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD

“Whether participants had something positive or negative to say about the film, you could tell that everyone was moved by the documentary and encouraged to take further action. And we also asked in our post survey what events/volunteering/podcasts our participants have found since the event and nearly every response had some sort of environmentally focused answer such as being trained to be a water monitor or listening to How To Save a Planet. Whether they were already an activist or not, I believe this event encouraged people to start making change and doing everything they can to further educate themselves and help heal this planet.” - Jordan Hansel, Film in the Field grantee of ReThink Energy Florida, screening *Chasing Ice*



Update: Members of the SCEN network were inspired by the use of film as an organizing tool through this RFP and invited us to collaborate on a federal grant presented by NOAA for their Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) Program. We were awarded the grant in early August and will be partnering with several SCEN member organizations to host workshops paired with NOAA/RISA teams + communities in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama to inform scientists directly on the impacts of climate change in their communities. Films from our library will be screened as part of the events and local videographers will capture the workshops and learnings.



C. Can You Hear Us?

In September 2020, we hired the team at Young Entertainment Activists (YEA) as impact producers for the “Can You Hear Us?” campaign launched in conjunction with the release of *I Am Greta* on Hulu. We have transitioned the campaign to the team at YEA and we will continue to play an advisory role as needed.

Can You Hear Us? is an impact campaign igniting regenerative local climate action that is intergenerational, accessible and intersectional. Through educational programming and interactive Take Action materials, Can You Hear Us? amplifies frontline grassroots organizations and decentralizes Greta Thunberg’s overexposure, prioritizing community-led efforts advancing co-generation in the climate space through systemic and relational organizing. The team at YEA created various resources such as a customizable Action Plan Quiz, a Climate Literacy Dictionary, a map of 350+ Local Organizations and downloadable guides for Youth Organizing and Intergenerational conversations. In doing so, the campaign has developed a diverse coalition of 60+ partners, including long-term relationships with Center for Cultural Power, Encore.org, NRDC, One Up Action, Helen Keller National Center, National Society of High School Scholars, NYU Los Angeles, and EarthJustice. In collaboration with its Norwegian extension and several global partners, the campaign has overseen 40+ community screenings, bringing together approximately 2,490 viewers in Thailand, Finland, Sweden and Spain.

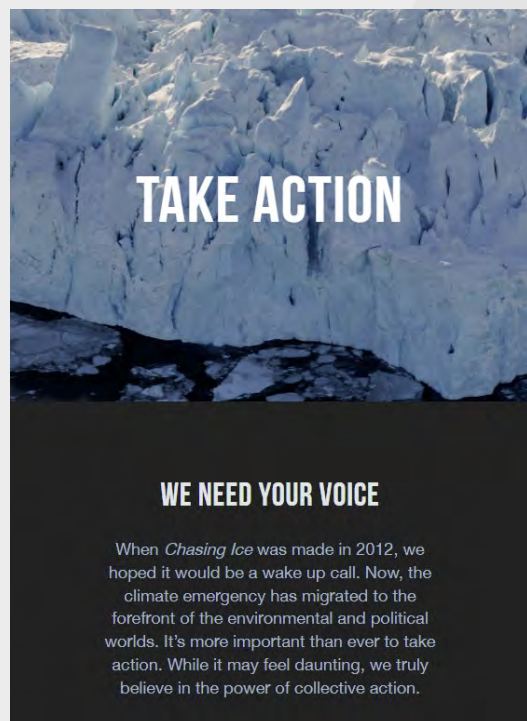
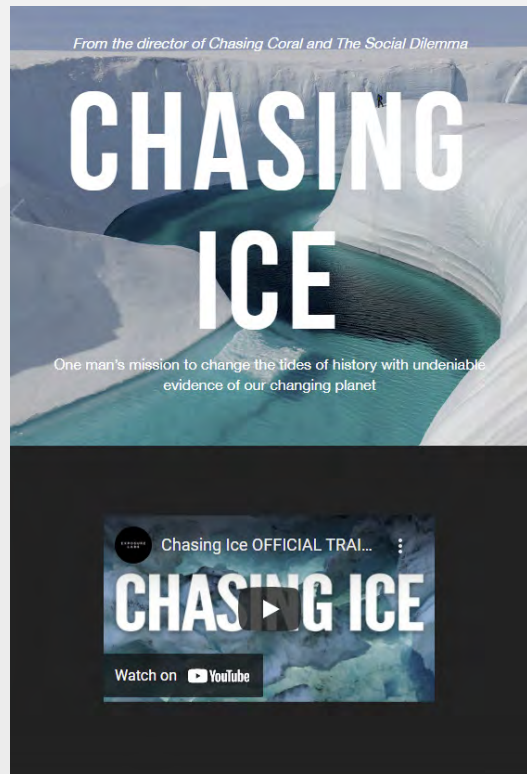


CAN YOU HEAR US? CAMPAIGN

60+ partners
40+ screenings
2,490 viewers*

* Viewers in Thailand, Finland, Sweden and Spain.

d. Chasing Ice & Chasing Coral



Over the past year, *Chasing Coral*'s campaign, now in its 4th year, has transitioned to an “autopilot” stage. While continuing to foster community through inbox management and facilitating screenings around the globe, our social media platforms have evolved to serve as megaphones for active campaigns in the climate arena, with a focus on amplifying voices of frontline and marginalized communities and organizers. We also finished updating chasingcoral.com to house more up-to-date resources and calls to action for our audience, making the film and the ocean conservation movement more accessible. Moving forward, we hope to use the platform and our following to boost both grassroots and global efforts, and act as a connector for folks and organizations working together to save our oceans and planet.

Similarly to *Chasing Coral*, our work with *Chasing Ice* has also transitioned into an “auto-pilot” stage. We continue to monitor screenings, oversee inbox management, and respond to any additional requests regarding the film, with [an updated website of resources and calls to action](#), too! As we move into the tenth anniversary year of its release, we are noticing an ongoing interest in the visual evidence of climate change represented in the film from our community screenings with Film in the Field partners to the larger *Chasing Ice* community. We are also entertaining the idea of a re-release with additional footage for the ten year anniversary.

e. 1-on-1s

In the spirit of collaboration, community, and mutual learning, the Exposure Labs team reserves time each week for conversations with filmmakers and impact producers on feedback, potential collaborations, connections and questions on specific areas of our expertise. [1-on-1s](#) are available to anyone currently working in the film and/or impact space. They were designed with the following values in mind:

1. **Service-oriented:** Exposure Labs is in a position where we can leverage our experience and expertise in service of the broader community without expecting anything in return.
2. **Inclusive:** We want to democratize access to industry professionals and expertise by eliminating a gatekeeper. Anyone can sign up for 1-on-1s and speak to someone on our team based on their interests and needs, rather than an internally-set criteria.
3. **Optional:** We recognize this still takes capacity. ELABS team members can opt into the program and choose how much time they make available for 1-on-1s.

We developed this offering as part of the overall climate programming, but have moved it to operations as we have expanded it to include Exposure Labs team members across all programs. We’ve had over 100 conversations to date, with about a third of those conversations related to climate. We will incorporate feedback and learnings as part of our end-of-year impact reporting.

“

We believe deeply in the power of storytelling to change the world – and also that we can learn and grow together as a community at any stage of a project or career.

f. Movement Building

In honor of our values and our ongoing commitment to ensure that we are contributing to an equitable, intersectional, and multidisciplinary approach to addressing the climate crisis, our team has invested time and resources into movement-building opportunities to grow the work, build capacity, and inform our role and relevance across the field. Throughout 2020 and 2021, we participated in numerous movement moments, including Climate Advocacy Lab's Equity and Justice Peer Learning Circle, Netroots Nation '20, The Southeast Climate & Energy Network convenings, Climate Story Labs Berlin and Africa, and more. Closing out 2021, we also participated in some exciting opportunities including an intergenerational conversation on the climate crisis hosted by YEA, Good Pitch Local Detroit, Netroots Nation '21, the Southeast Climate & Energy Network member convening, the Conference of Youth 16 preceding COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, and the New Orleans Film Festival. [Full list here](#)



insights & lessons learned

Over the course of the year, we have continued to integrate, clarify and execute our climate work despite unforeseen obstacles, particularly the ongoing implications of COVID-19. Alongside these obstacles, we spent a significant amount of time strategizing as a team, meeting and debriefing with our partners, and being intentional about our work. Through these conversations and reflections, we've identified the following insights and learnings.



COVID-19

The entire world is adapting to the ongoing implications and challenges of COVID-19, and our work and industry endured significant change. Early on in the pandemic, we pivoted our Earth Day programming as a virtual offering (see our [Earth Day Watch Party report](#)). We also formed an internal virtual screenings working group to assess best practices and learnings, which allowed us to be well prepared to adapt our programming to a virtual world in time for the release of our Film in the Field RFP in September 2020. We've found that the virtual screening option makes our work more accessible in many ways and much less resource intensive. Organizers are able to reach audiences far beyond their immediate locality and the resources typically used for in person events can be redistributed to build capacity as needed. We'd like to acknowledge and thank the disability community for the creativity, learnings, and planning guidance that goes into remote events – we learned so much and recognize that they have been leading and doing this work for lifetimes.

Organizational Infrastructure

As mentioned, we went through an internal process to build out our Mission, Vision, Values, and Culture as an organization, and then further carried that work to our climate program. Given the pace of the work and varying capacity across teams, we have been in a constant dance of moving but not wanting to get too far ahead of the work happening at the organizational level to ensure that we stay aligned with the larger

vision of Exposure Labs. We've clearly felt and confirmed the need for an organization wide vision to carry out our best work across programs and campaigns.

Film as a Tool for Organizing

We are still consolidating learnings from our Film in the Field pilot, but several initial reflections around the use of film as an organizing tool have come through to date. First, we recognize that the use of film as a tool is not entirely accessible. A few challenges we encountered included navigating distribution terms, ensuring access to streaming platforms and/or Zoom, having available resources for planning and connecting the dots to relevant issues. Second, we offered an open RFP because timing and capacity are vastly different for every organization. With virtual screenings often taking at least 4-6 weeks to plan and organizational strategic plans usually being set 2-3 years in advance or determined by a legislative cycle, we had to be mindful of the offering pulling at capacity for our partners. We will move forward with a time bound RFP for the next round, however, to ensure predictability in planning and impact reporting. Finally, we tested our assumptions on what films would be used by who in the US South. From phase one of this pilot, we learned that the majority of our grantees for the RFP were faith-based groups, the majority of groups used film to engage new audiences, and we were surprised that *Chasing Ice* was one of the most screened films across the library.

Impact as a Goal for Storytelling

Through our 1-on-1s program pilot and organizing around Climate Story Lab US-South, we've learned the hardships and burdens that many storytellers face when approaching impact as a goal for storytelling. Many storytellers are not resourced with experience and/or funding to equitably execute impact campaigns in their work. As we advocate and make more space for this type of work, we must also be intentional about making the work accessible and approachable for the larger ecosystem – not just the slight few who are resourced to do it.

Impact Best Practices

Across much of our work, we've been asked about impact best practices, our approach to impact and more. We are in the process of establishing an organizational theory of change that will inform ELABS best practices, but some themes that have come up across our climate team include:

- Elements of an impact campaign
 - Vision/Goal/Theory of Change
 - Partnerships/Mapping
 - Audience/Engagement/Messaging/Trusted Messengers
 - Outcomes/Call to Action/Connecting the Dots to Local Issues
 - Timing/Impact
 - Evaluation/Learnings
- Best practices for climate/environmental impact campaigns
 - Research/Mapping - develop a clear analysis of the issue and landscape, who are the stakeholders, who is affected, what needs to change

- Listen to the needs of the field
- Envision reciprocity with your partners / build capacity
- Let partners/organizers lead - they know what their audiences need

Relationship and Trust Building

As all of this work was built out through a global pandemic, one advantage was the forced opportunity to slow down and build deeper relationships with each other. We spent a lot of time growing as a newly-formed climate team through team calls, Zoom retreats, and more, which allowed us to be really clear about our vision, direction, and trust in each other to do the work. We also prioritized reciprocity and community building with our partners at the Southeast Climate & Energy Network and New Orleans Film Society by attending events and festivals, speaking at their convenings, joining happy hours and working groups and more to create meaningful relationships built on trust and mutuality. Additionally, both SCEN & NOFS will continue to build capacity for climate storytelling in the region.

Points of Unity and Decision Making

As mentioned above, we put a lot of time, care, and intention into our overall program, which resulted in a very clear framework for decision making and direction. This clarity allows us to be more efficient with our time, resources, and offerings, giving a greater purpose to our work and an overall heightened sense of wellbeing.

acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank our partners, collaborators, our Exposure Labs team, our leadership circle, and the generous support of our sponsors. See [full list here](#).



Exposure Labs is the film production and impact studio behind *Chasing Ice*, *Chasing Coral*, and *The Social Dilemma*. We believe that stories are the most powerful catalyst to build empathy, shape culture, foster social justice movements, and shift systems. From inception to impact, we develop and share stories to address big societal challenges, and to inspire hope and action for collective solutions.

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