

MORAL MOVIES

FILM SERIES

North Carolina is “more than a local story. It offers a case study of what may be the direction of American politics for years, perhaps decades, to come.”

– Bill Moyers

From drastic cuts to unemployment assistance, to the loosening of environmental regulations and new suppressive measures that restrict the right to vote – a barrage of harsh policies have passed in North Carolina in the last two years. The legislative onslaught has sparked an unprecedented level of civic engagement, in particular, the Moral Monday demonstrations, which gained national attention as hundreds of people were arrested Monday after Monday in protests at the state capitol building.

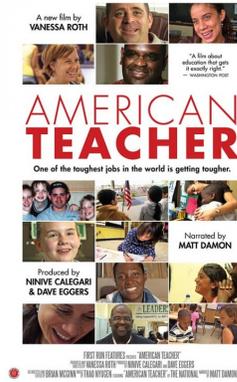
The political shift in North Carolina has not occurred in isolation. States across the country have become the front lines of major policy battles while the federal government is increasingly gridlocked. As the sea change occurred in North Carolina, Working Films was uniquely positioned to respond. In doing so, we have piloted an innovative and effective way of using documentary films across a state, which we are now beginning to replicate elsewhere.

Moral Movies

Inspired by the Moral Monday movement, Working Films initiated partnerships with state and local organizations across North Carolina to launch *Moral Movies*. For four months, from April through July 2014, Working Films partnered with the North Carolina NAACP, Democracy North Carolina, the North Carolina AFL-CIO, the NC Justice Center, the Tar Heel Alliance for Classroom Teachers and twenty-three local organizations to bring four documentary films to nine cities across North Carolina to spark dialogue and action to advance social and economic justice. Four feature documentary films were screened once a month in 9 cities across North Carolina while the spring legislative session took place. The series offered residents opportunities to become informed and to act on the pressing issues at hand in the state.



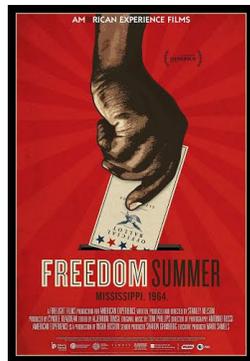
Films featured in Moral Movies included:



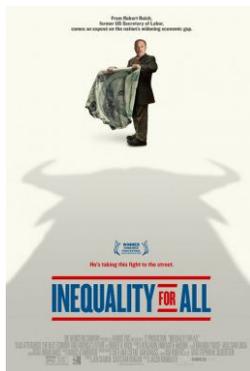
American Teacher tells the collective story by and about those closest to the issues in our educational system—the 3.2 million teachers who spend every day in classrooms across the country.



American Winter follows eight families struggling in the wake of America's Great Recession; revealing the devastating human impact of rising economic inequality, a shrinking social safety net, and the fracturing of the American Dream.



Freedom Summer documents 1964's Freedom Summer. More than 700 student volunteers from around the country joined organizers and local African Americans in a historic effort to shatter the foundations of white supremacy in what was one of the nation's most viciously racist, segregated states.



Inequality for All looks at how the widening income gap is dismantling the middle class and democracy. Covers economic inequality, money in politics, and democracy.

Events took place in every region of the state: Wilmington, Greenville, Raleigh, Charlotte, Asheville, Greensboro, Fayetteville, Durham and Winston Salem. In each location, Working Films and state-level partner organizations teamed up with one or more local groups to co-host events, tailoring the program to the communities where events were taking place, and connecting audiences to efforts with which they could become involved. Each month, the statewide partner organization acted as the main host for all of the screenings. We worked together to develop unified messaging and ‘take actions’ that could be applied across the state so that audiences at each screening could participate in common efforts. They also sent a representative from their organization to each screening to help connect the issues on screen to those playing out in North Carolina and offer ways for get involved.

Partner organizations provided ample opportunities for audiences to get involved - from reaching out to legislators with postcards written by audience members, to volunteering to assist with voter education in light of new restrictions, such as a voter ID law and changes in early voting time periods. Audiences were also able to sign up to subscribe to news from organizations in order to continue supporting their efforts.

Local host organizations included Scholars for NC’s Future, Forsyth County Association of Educators, The Ministers Conference of Winston Salem, Fayetteville NAACP, Fayetteville N.O.W, Cumberland County Progressives, Fayetteville A. Philip Randolph Institute, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fayetteville, Fayetteville Cumberland Black Leadership Caucus, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1208, The Mountain People’s Assembly, The Pitt County NAACP, Action NC, The Raleigh-Apex NAACP, The Raleigh-Apex NAACP Youth, The Durham People’s Alliance, The Beloved Community Center, The Fund for Democratic Communities, The Black Arts Alliance, The NHC NAACP, Move to Amend – Charlotte, and NCAE Charlotte. Below are some highlights from local organization hosts.

The following are testimonies from some of our state and local partners about their experience participating in Moral Movies:

*Storytelling is one of the best dialectic ways for people to learn, connect and develop relationships. Having access to documentaries and being able to show them in local communities is a real gift. **Omisade Burney-Scott, Democracy North Carolina***

*There was discussion about the films after screenings and a real desire to show the films again – to have more opportunity to work with it. We really think about each Moral Movie as part of a process and not just an event. **Lynn Shoemaker, Tar Heel Alliance for Classroom Teachers***

*It was really nice to have support from Working Films in terms of logistical work. It was pretty seamless. We pulled off so many events in such a short amount of time. As someone who works statewide, I really appreciate the help building partnerships with local groups. Working Films facilitated those partnerships and now there is a lot of opportunity to deepen the connections in the future when we come out to those areas. **Amber Moodie-Dyer, NC Justice Center***

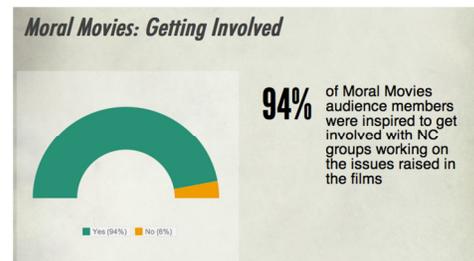
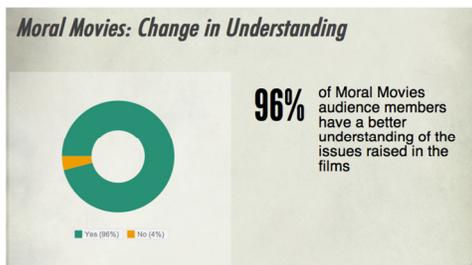
*The movies and the packaging of the series is a smart way to tap into a conversation some people were already having. The series raised the profile of, and engaged communities in critical issues facing the state. The framework of moral movies offered deeper understanding and a personal way to connect to the topics at hand. For example, it's not a film about income inequality; it's about immorality of inequality. Not about public education, but the immorality of underfunding public education. We need to continue looking for films that advance that framework. **Jeremey Sprinkle, North Carolina AFL-CIO***

*Everyone was moved by the film and most were of an age to remember what they were doing during those challenging days. Lots of sharing – and vows from the audience to not let us move backwards as a state and a country. **Elaine Lite, Mountain People's Assembly***

*Moral Movies was very helpful in bringing awareness to the community of the "Forward Together, Not One Step Back" Moral Monday movement, and offering ways to take a stand against the extremism taking place in the state. **Calvin Henderson, Pitt County NAACP***

*The fact that people stuck through most of the panel in the dark (the power went out!), I think is a testament of how engaged they were/are for conversation about the Freedom Summer, the injustices today, and the intersectional resistance that is going on. **Alyzza May, Fund for Democratic Communities***

Moral Movies audiences were surveyed via tear sheets at each event. The majority of attendees responded that they gained a better understanding of the topics raised in the films, and that they were more likely to get involved with the hosting organizations as a result of attending.



Moral Movies received broad press coverage, and was actively promoted by allied organizations to get the word out about the series. Links to press and a collection of social media generated by the Moral Movies series can be found on Storify (<https://storify.com/workingfilms/moral-movies>).

Working Films is eager to build on the Moral Movies series and are continuing to resource partner organizations leading the charge for change in North Carolina and beyond.