

W WOMEN'S
VOICES
NOW

2024
IMPACT REPORT

**“WOMEN ARE THE
CATALYSTS AND
THEIR VOICES ARE
THE MEDIUM”**

**-Leslie J. Sacks (1952-2013),
Founder of Women's Voices Now**



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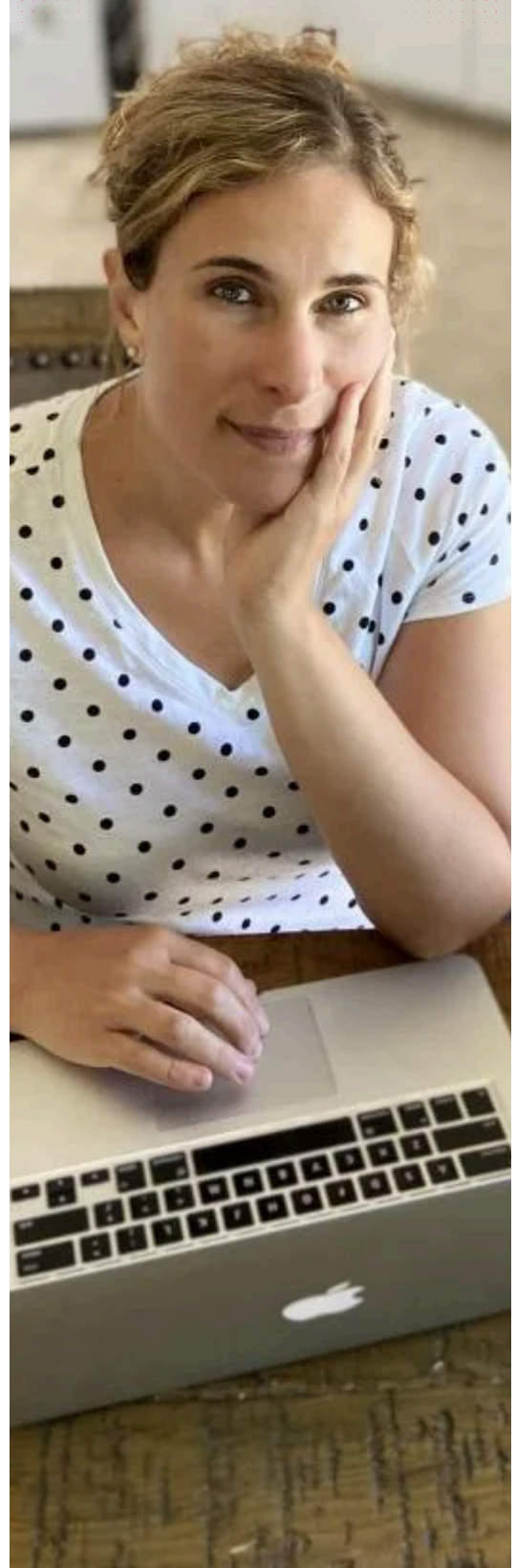
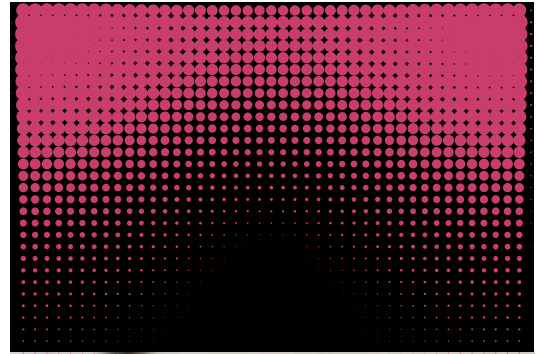
A Letter From Our Executive Director

DEAR WVN COMMUNITY,

Taking a moment to reflect on 2024 proved more challenging than I anticipated. I know that you share with me a sense of the rapid passage of time, and being caught off guard when we pause to recognize where we are in space and time. The end of 2024 came so quickly that I can hardly believe that it is time to write this letter!

For the nonprofit world, we are still very much in a post-pandemic reality where priorities and opportunities continue to shift and fluctuate and, increasingly, global conflict and politics influence many of our day-to-day lives. Thus, when I reflect on 2024 at Women's Voices Now, two main themes come to mind: Building resilience and doing more with less. I am grateful to share that we exceeded in both realms.

In the noble pursuit of our mission to use film to drive social change that advances girls' and women's rights, globally, we have both the challenge **and** the advantage of utilizing the most cutting edge technologies to expand our reach and deepen our impact. In addition to delivering on all three of our programs, through the use of AI tools and our robust digital media growth strategy, we reached over 8 million viewers in 195+ countries with content from our Voices for Change Film Collection and our 10th Annual Film Festival. We earned an Emmy nomination for one of our 2023 Girls' Voices Now films, "The Beauty in Being Different", and welcomed 10 new girls to our youth program, who produced three beautiful films on addressing homelessness and mental health in Los Angeles; the pitfalls of fast fashion; and the challenges women must overcome when the world around them criticizes their personal and professional pursuits.



This year also saw staff turnover and downsizing, which all turned out for the best. As always, I am grateful to our small and mighty team who put heart into this work; our dedicated Board of Directors; our champion Advisory Board; and the tens of volunteers who are ready for action when called upon. I am reminded of one of my favorite quotes by Margaret Mead, renowned American anthropologist known for her work on gender roles, and her contributions to understanding cultural diversity:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

While the Women's Voices Now audience and beneficiaries grow each year, it continues to be a small group of dedicated people who make it all possible. You are one of them. I warmly and eagerly invite you to peruse this inspiring impact report, to feel proud of all that you helped us to achieve.

WITH BEST WISHES AND
GRATITUDE,



HEIDI BASCH-HAROD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WOMEN'S VOICES NOW

**"THE EDUCATION
AND EMPOWERMENT
OF WOMEN
THROUGHOUT THE
WORLD CANNOT
FAIL TO RESULT IN A
MORE CARING,
TOLERANT, JUST
AND PEACEFUL LIFE
FOR ALL."**

-Aung San Suu Kyi

Our Impact At A Glance

SINCE 2011 OUR WOMEN'S VOICES
NOW FILM FESTIVAL HAS:

RECEIVED
1,382
FILM
SUBMISSIONS

FROM
97
COUNTRIES

AWARDED OVER
143k
IN CASH PRIZES

GARNERED
AUDIENCE FROM
195+
COUNTRIES

SINCE 2018 GIRLS' VOICES NOW HAS:

SERVED
104 GIRLS
FROM UNDER-
RESOURCED
COMMUNITIES

PRODUCED
28
YOUTH-MADE
SHORT FILMS

THAT HAVE
BEEN SELECTED
IN **145** FILM
FESTIVALS,
NOMINATED
FOR **2** EMMYS
(AND WON **1**!)

SEEN
BY OVER
4.3M
VIEWERS

SINCE 2016 OUR VOICES FOR CHANGE
FILM COLLECTION HAS:

340+
FILMS (IN 50
DIFFERENT
LANGUAGES)

SEEN BY
30M+
ONLINE
VIEWERS

CO-FACILITATED
157
IN-PERSON
SCREENING
EVENTS

WITH PARTNERS ON
6
CONTINENTS

Our Mission

Women's Voices Now uses film to drive social change that advances women's and girls' rights globally.

Our History

Women's Voices Now (WVN) is a Los Angeles based non-profit organization using film to drive social change that advances girls' and women's rights globally. In 2010, Women's Voices Now Founder, Leslie J. Sacks, recognized the urgency of advancing women's rights and launched one of the first online film festivals. We continue carrying out his vision and our mission through our three core programs, which support, produce, and promote social-change films that focus on women and girls, and those who are making them:

- **WOMEN'S VOICES NOW FILM FESTIVAL**

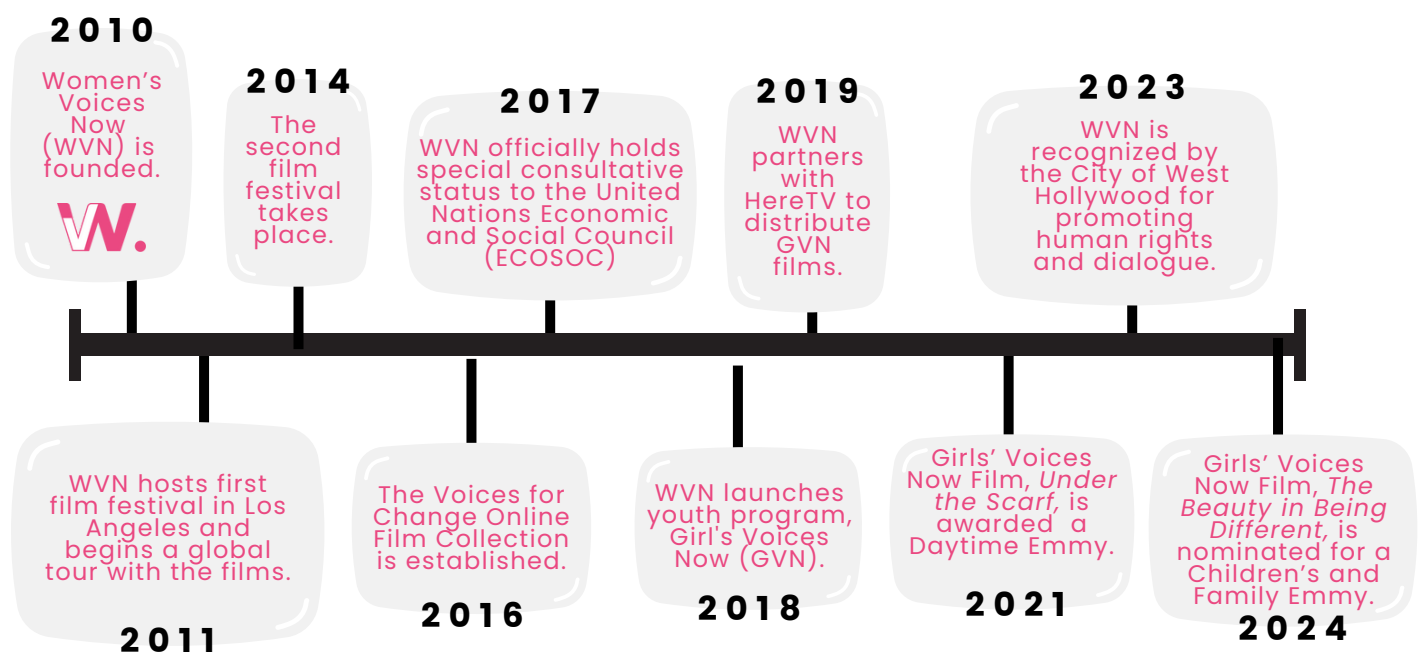
Our annual women's rights documentary film festival supports emerging documentary filmmakers by providing cash prizes, awards, visibility, and connections to film industry professionals.

- **GIRLS' VOICES NOW**

Our youth development program empowers girls 14-22 from under-resourced communities of Los Angeles to find, develop, and use their voices for social change through filmmaking.

- **VOICES FOR CHANGE**

Our free online collection features 340 films in 50 different languages about gender equality to raise awareness of the struggles and triumphs of women and girls around the globe, inviting audience members to contribute to social change. We partner with local organizations to co-facilitate in-person screening events and promote the films through online marketing campaigns.



Our Impact

WOMEN'S VOICES NOW FILM FESTIVAL

Our annual Women's Voices Now Film Festival is an international women's rights documentary film festival that seeks to address the lack of authentic representation of women in film. Women make up half of the population but comprise only **23%** of directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top films ([2024 Celluloid Ceiling Report](#)). Stereotypes about women's skills and ambition and male-dominated networks remain a powerful barrier to entry.

Our independent film festival is also designed to get us thinking about the rights and roles of women and girls around the globe. We seek films that will inspire and spark thoughtful conversations about how practices, habits, and attitudes around and toward women and girls hinder or promote them.

In the long term, our goal is to contribute to a more inclusive film industry by creating more opportunities for emerging women filmmakers. To support this vision, our festival goals are to:

- Provide a platform for women filmmakers telling essential, authentic stories.
- Generate resources that support women filmmakers, including cash prizes and visibility.
- Connect women filmmakers with each other and with film industry professionals.

Filmmakers are invited to submit their films in the following categories: documentary short, documentary feature, creative documentary (short & feature), emerging filmmaker (short & feature), human rights documentary, and student short documentary. **In 2024, we awarded a total of \$13,000 in cash prizes across categories.** We received submissions from August through December and kicked off the film festival in March during Women's History Month, running through April. All competing films were available, on demand, for the entire run of the festival.

The 2024 Women's Voices Now Film Festival included a Kick-Off event with a keynote address in the human rights space, an industry chat on emerging AI technologies and their impact on the future of filmmaking, a live online awards ceremony, and an in-person screening event in Los Angeles of the Grand Prize winner.



SINCE 2011 WE HAVE:

- Received **1,382 film submissions** from **97 countries**
- Awarded **\$143,500 in cash prizes**
- Gathered **online audience members** from **195+ countries**

CHECK OUT
OUR TRAILER
FOR MORE
INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
FESTIVAL!



WATCH NOW

2024 FILM FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

2024 THEME: "THE UNINTENDED
CONSEQUENCES OF OUR PROGRESS"

117

SUBMISSIONS

38

COUNTRIES

13k

IN CASH PRIZES

AMONG THE FILMMAKERS WHO SUBMITTED FILMS:

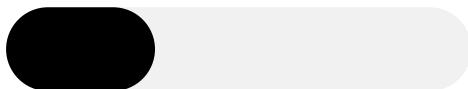
88% WOMEN



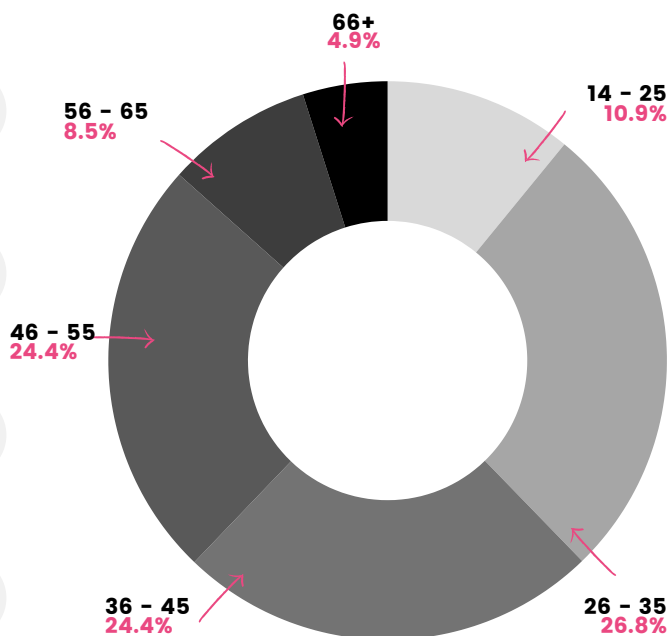
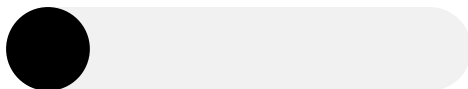
50% FIRST-TIME FILMMAKERS



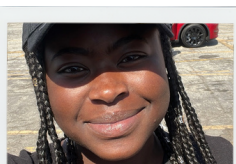
32% LGBTQ+



16% FIRST GENERATION

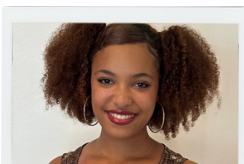


OUR 2024 JURY:



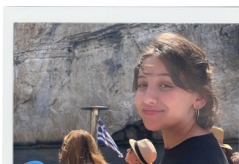
**MALICKA
TAFFA**

Youth Documentary



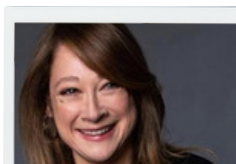
**JARRA
JALLOW**

Youth Documentary



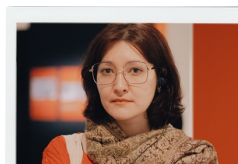
**MAYA
SHTANGRUD**

Youth Documentary



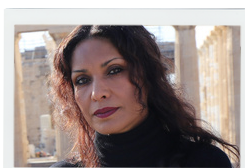
**ELIZABETH
WEITZMAN**

Documentary Shorts



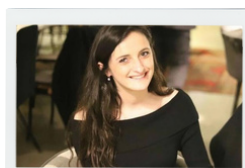
**SHAROFAT
ARABOVA**

Documentary Shorts



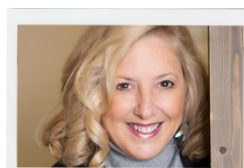
**LEENA
ALAM**

Documentary Shorts



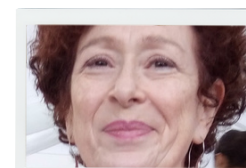
**VJOSA
ÇERKINI**

Documentary Feature



**CINDY L
ABEL**

Documentary Feature



**ROSSLYN
HYAMS**

Documentary Feature

OUR 2024 WINNERS:



***Colliding Forces* (United Kingdom)**

By Eliza Schroeder

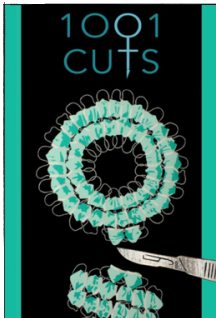
Leslie J. Sacks Best
Documentary Feature



***Women of Valor* (Israel)**

By Anna Somershaf

Lantos Foundation Best
Human Rights
Documentary



***1001cuts* (USA)**

By Sarah M Temkin

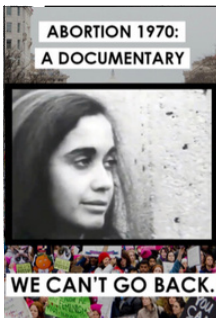
Best Documentary Short



***Finding Venus* (New Zealand)**

By Mandi Lynn

Best Emerging Short
Documentary Filmmaker



Abortion and Women's Rights 1970 (USA)

By Catha Maslow, Jane
Pincus, Mary Summers &
Karen Weinstein

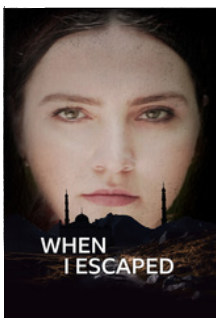
Best Creative Short
Documentary



***Resisterhood* (USA)**

By Cheryl Jacobs Crim

Best Emerging Feature
Documentary Filmmaker



***When I Escaped* (United Kingdom/ Dagestan)**

By Zlata Onufrieva

Best Creative Feature
Documentary



***Baby Blues* (Ireland)**

By Sophie Lynch and
Alannah McQuaid

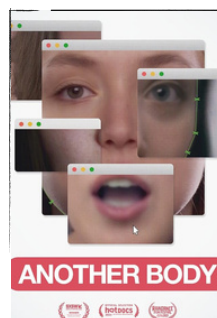
Best Youth Documentary



***Black Mambas* (Germany)**

By Lena Karbe

Honorable Mention



***Another Body* (USA)**

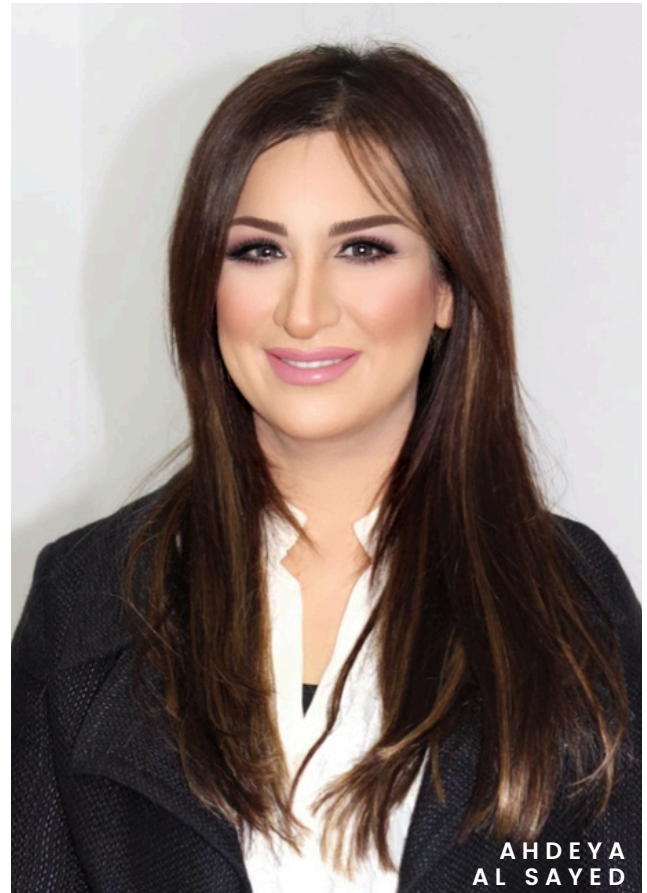
By Sophie Compton &
Reuben Hamlyn

Honorable Mention

WOMEN MAKING WAVES AWARD

The Women Making Waves Award recognizes women in the media industry who shift and challenge our perception of women in real life, paving the way for others in her footsteps, to the benefit of all. We announced the 2024 Women Making Waves Award Recipient during our Film Festival Awards Ceremony.

This year's award went to Ahdeya Al Sayed. To receive the award, Ahdeya joined the Women's Voices Now Film Festival's virtual Award Ceremony live. ***"I'm honored to receive the Women Making Waves Award, and I would like to dedicate it to every woman who has stood up and defended someone in another country who could not say what she wanted to say, and to the filmmakers who also have conveyed messages about women and the injustices being done."*** She also participated in an exclusive Q&A session with our Executive Director, Heidi Basch-Harod, on the backlash against women's rights, particularly in Arabic-speaking countries, and what we can do about it through the power of film.



Ahdeya Al Sayed, former President of the Bahrain Journalists Association, is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the *Times of Bahrain*. She was the first female to be elected to chair the Bahrain Journalists Association since its establishment in the year 2000. During her presidency, Ahdeya campaigned for higher administrative posts for women in the field of the press and media. She won the 2019 Female Arab Journalist of the Year Award, from the London Arabia Organization; the theme of the event focused on ending honor killings.

She currently writes for several regional newspapers and has been the most active female journalist in the Arabian Gulf region advocating for peace, advocating bringing an end to extremism and terrorism to create a more stable and secure Middle East, where all peoples and religions coexist in peace. She's appeared on *BBC*, *Sky News Arabiya*, *Al Hadath*, *MBC*, *124*, and *France 24*, defending her belief in peace, women's empowerment, and highlighting how women should not be sidelined in the political arena.

Ahdeya also worked as a media advisor for Bahrain's government, and served as a spokesperson for Bahrain's parliamentary and municipal elections in 2006. She is a founding member of the Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society and was its spokesperson.

2024 FILM FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHT:

In 2024 we hosted our second annual, in-person Leslie J. Sacks Grand Prize Screening. The winning film, ***Colliding Forces: Mothers in Ballet***, enchantingly tells the story of five principal ballerinas, from around the world, intimately portraying how they navigate the competing and conflicting demands of their profession and motherhood. Director **Eliza Schroder** (UK) welcomed guests via Zoom. **Misty Copeland**, who made history as the first African-American Female Principal Dancer with the prestigious American Ballet Theatre, also joined us for an exclusive virtual interview! The event gathered 74 audience members. As a result of this event, Eliza and Misty are working on ways to collaborate.



TESTIMONIES:

"I am so grateful to have been a part of this festival. I hope it grows by leaps and bounds. My film has won 15 awards and this is the first one that has a cash prize which shows that WVN respects the filmmakers. That is HUGE!!! It is a wonderful festival. Thank you!"

-Cheryl Jacobs "C.J." Crim (USA), *Resisterhood*, winner of the 2024 Best Emerging Feature Documentary Filmmaker Award

"I feel absolutely honoured and excited to be selected for the Women's Voices Now Film Festival. Being a woman, throughout my career I was eager to give platform to other women whose voices wouldn't be heard otherwise."

-Zlata Onufrieva (UK/Dagestan), *When I Escaped*, winner of the 2024 Best Creative Documentary Award

"As a female filmmaker hailing from a small city where opportunities seem scarce, the gratitude I feel for being recognized at this level is truly overwhelming. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the 2024 Women's Voices Now Film Festival who have paved the way for recognition and empowerment in our industry."

-Zainab Younas (Pakistan), *From Rocks to Gold*, Selected Film

GIRLS' VOICES NOW

Girls' Voices Now (GVN) is our Los Angeles-based youth development program that empowers girls ages 14-22 from under-resourced communities of Los Angeles to find, develop, and use their voice for social change through filmmaking.

No matter what professional field our alumnae end up working in, GVN strives to provide all participants with solid tools, skills, and confidence to be successful in reaching their personal and professional goals. Our program serves primarily youth from low to extremely low-income backgrounds, who come from underrepresented minority groups, and who have had a lack of exposure or access to the film and creative industries overall. To ensure accessibility, GVN is entirely free and participants receive a \$500 stipend.

During the five-week summer training, girls work in teams to create their first short documentary film, and learn how the medium of film can be used to affect social change. By combining technical and critical thinking skills with social-emotional learning, GVN equips them with the know-how to navigate challenges, express themselves confidently, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The curriculum spans a spectrum of skills crucial to filmmaking, ensuring participants gain proficiency in research methodologies, interviews, screenwriting, composition, photography, animation, video shooting, lighting, sound recording, and editing.

The Girls' Voices Now films are screened during the premiere screening event in Los Angeles, in youth film festivals around the country, and additional screenings organized by film focused non-profit, youth focused non-profit, or women's rights focused non-profits. We also support participants organizing additional screenings in their communities, and facilitate screening in middle and high schools locally. In addition, Girls' Voices Now films are distributed by our partner HereTV.

Beyond the summer, GVN continues to provide personal and professional development through our year-round programming and by integrating our GVN alumnae into our broader Women's Voices Now programming. Monthly gatherings are set up to host alumnae for workshops or discussions facilitated by an expert guest speaker on a range of topics. Our past program has included professional speakers on mental health, self-care and resilience, financial wellness, and reproductive and menstrual health. We also work with industry professionals to continue skills development on filmmaking related subjects.

SINCE 2018
WE HAVE:

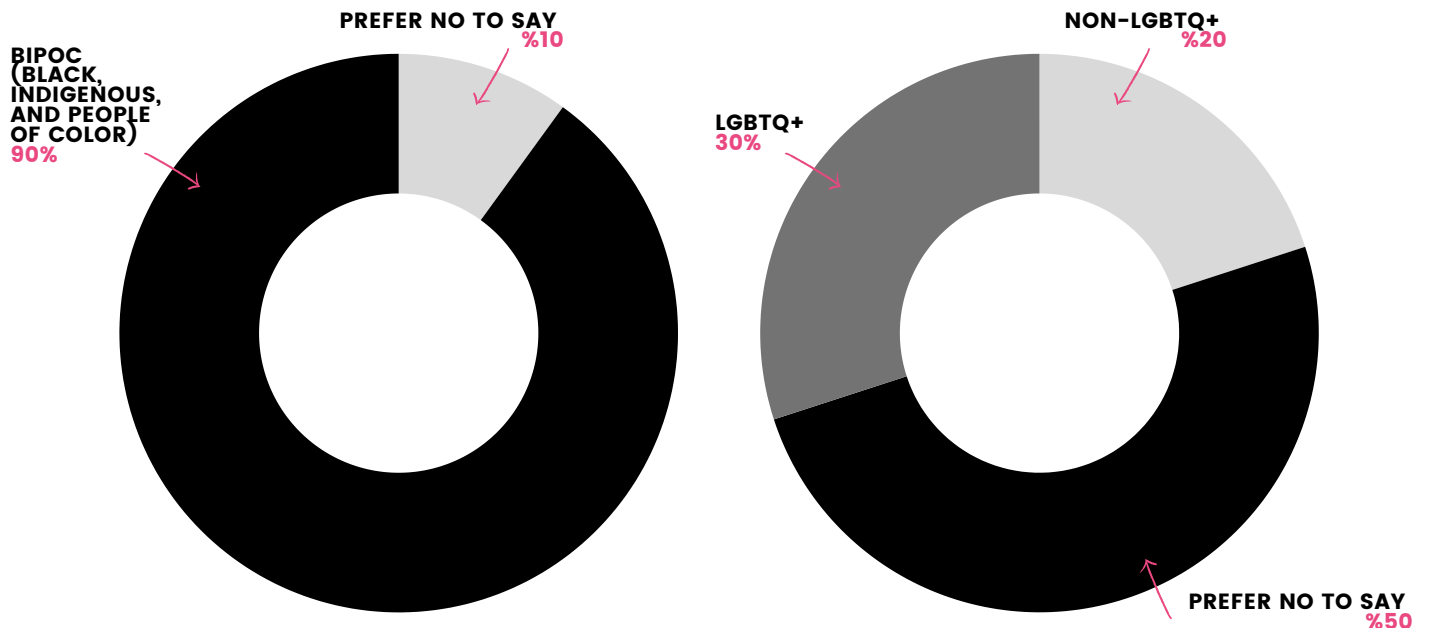
- Served **104 girls** from under-resourced communities in Los Angeles
- Produced **28 youth-made short films** which have been selected and awarded in **145 film festivals** and seen by **4.3 million viewers**
- Seen our youth-made films be nominated for, and win, a **Daytime Emmy** and nominated for a **Children's and Family Emmy**. Emmy!



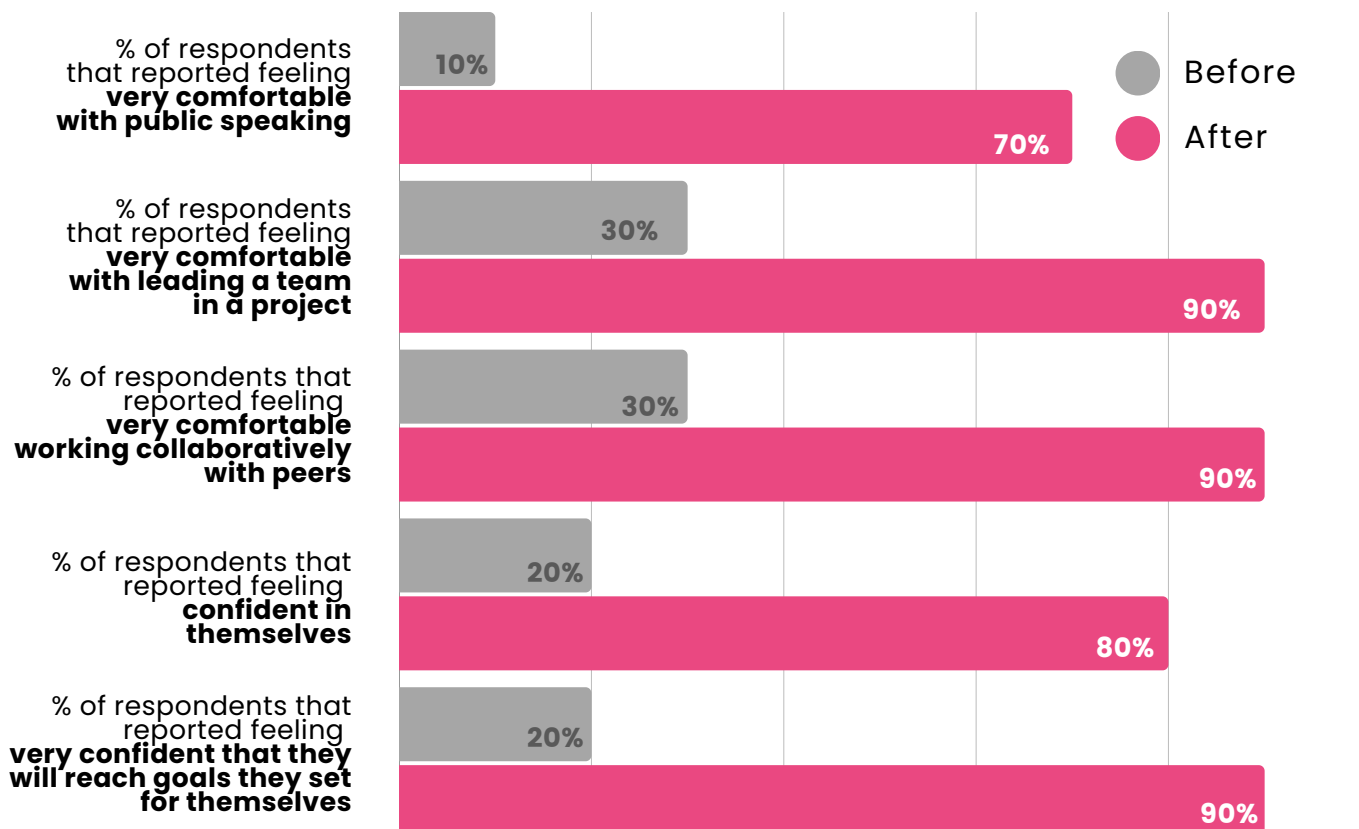
WATCH NOW

2024 PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

AMONG THE 2024 SUMMER PARTICIPANTS:



By tracking changes in participants' perspectives on voicing opinions and their perceived ability to create change, we gauge the transformative impact of the program over time. A few findings from the 2024 cohort as a result of participating in Girls' Voices Now:



2024 GIRLS' VOICES NOW FILMS:



All You Need Is Less

Adira Blades, Angelica Guillen, Erin Dela Cruz

"All You Need Is Less" is a documentary film that unravels fast fashion's hidden costs, from the factory floor to the For You page. Consumers don't take into consideration the effects that trends have on the world, targeting mainly women who are more susceptible to fashion trends because of underlying societal issues. Everything comes at a price. The future of fashion is in our hands.



Where Home Never Was

Rain Herbert, Aline Argeta, Arielle Busby

"Where Home Never Was" chronicles the lived experiences of Arielle Busby and her mother, whose lives are upended by homelessness. As mother and daughter confront the systemic barriers and personal challenges of homelessness, their story unfolds with raw honesty and emotional depth.



Words I Can't Forget

Anabella Trujillo, Yaretzi Pineda, Catalina Kennedy, Izzy Medina

"Words I Can't Forget" follows multiple women's experiences of being criticized on social media and in their own communities, and how this affects their personal and professional aspirations. Throughout the film, women reflect on their personal stories and take solace in the stories of others.

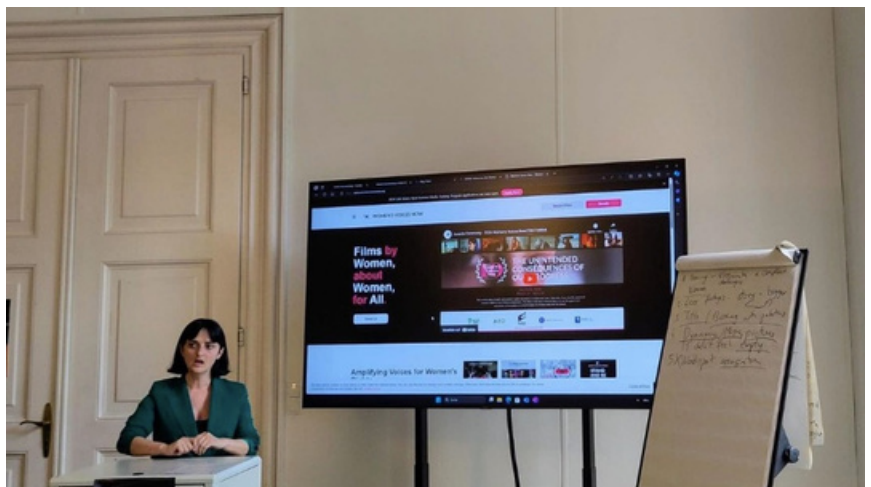
GVN INTERNATIONAL

This year, we brought on European Liaison, Vjosa Cerkini, who began holding individual workshops across Europe and Africa. Modeled after our Girls' Voices Now program, these workshops offer participants a valuable opportunity to learn how to select a research topic, followed by guided mentorship through the key steps of the filmmaking process including how to use a camera, report confidently in front of the camera, and understand the different types of shots needed to create compelling visuals. Participants also watch a selection of Girls' Voices Now films for examples of how they can develop and expand their own ideas.

Through these workshops, we added 26 international GVN participants in Austria, Kosovo, Poland, and Nigeria to our network, and our European Liaison continues to mentor these participants.

"In the most recent workshop with Vjosa and the girls, the main focus was on creating documentaries, storytelling techniques, and the effective use of the camera. We discussed how the most powerful stories emerge from authenticity and how visual narration plays a crucial role in establishing an emotional connection with the audience."

—**Fatlinda** (Kosovo), GVN International Participant



2024 SPOTLIGHT:

In 2024, *The Beauty in Being Different*, a film produced in the 2023 GVN program, was nominated for a Children's and Family Emmy Award! The film centers on three girls sharing their stories about not fitting the mold due to their feelings of inadequacy stemming from the harmful effects of beauty standards and how they overcome it.

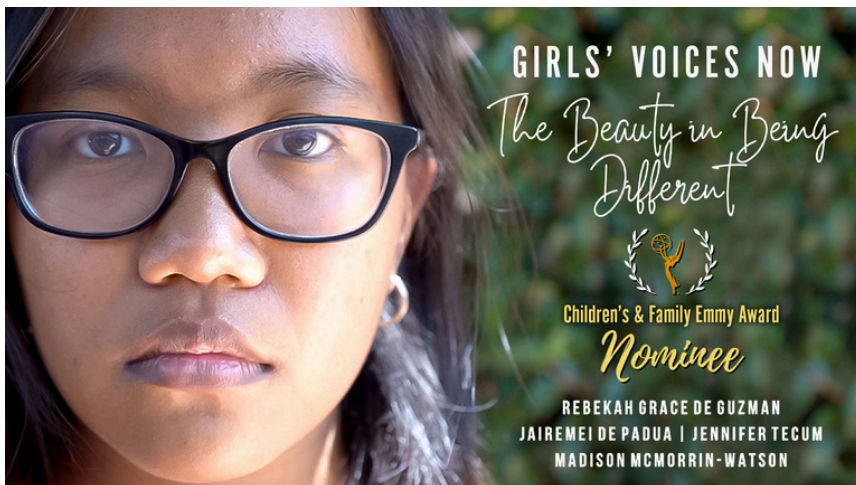
TESTIMONIES:

"This program has helped me find my voice and be confident in my voice. I learned how to be comfortable when talking to all these new people that the program introduced us to. I think this program taught me how to talk about difficult topics when it's something that I feel strongly about."

—Erin, GVN Alumna

"This program helped me feel more confident in my public speaking skills and working in a group. This program help realize that my creative opinion matters and that working in a group on a creative project allows for a better outcome. "

—Anabella, GVN Alumna



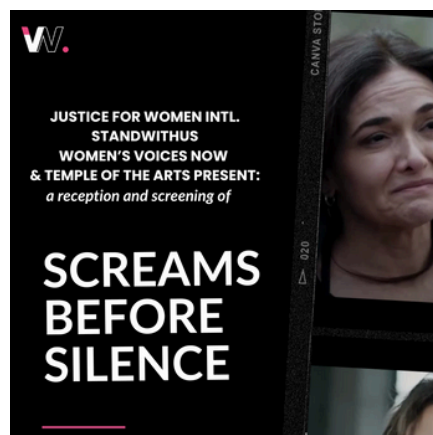
VOICES FOR CHANGE FILM COLLECTION

Our free Film Collection, Voices for Change, raises awareness of the struggles and triumphs of women and girls around the globe. The collection provides a platform for authentic and diverse stories by women, about women, for all. Each film in the living, growing collection includes calls to action and additional educational resources for viewers.

We promote this content through a dual strategy that reaches online viewers through digital marketing campaigns and in-person audiences by co-facilitating screening events across the globe. We encourage our audiences to follow our empathy-to-action model by organizing screening events in their communities and facilitating conversations about the critical women's issues and social activism opportunities highlighted in our films. Our films are available to stream, for free, for individuals and organizations alike.

2024 SPOTLIGHT:

Through strategic marketing, our digital footprint increased exponentially in 2024—our **YouTube channel** grew from 111K to **326K subscribers** at its peak, yielding **8.2M viewers**, compared to 2.2M in 2023!



OUR FREE FILM COLLECTION:

- Includes **340+** films from **71** countries in **50** different languages
- Attracted over **8.2M** online viewers in 2024 alone!
- Offered our first paid **Film Collection** internship in 2024!

AS OF 2024,
WE HAVE:

CO-FACILITATED
157
SCREENING EVENTS

WITH PARTNERS ON
6
CONTINENTS

TESTIMONIES:

"The Women's Voices Now film collection echoes the voices of many women who cannot speak up. The films are also an ice-breaker for women to start conversation with are normally hard to start.

Most young women and girls opened up about facing verbal abuse after viewing films from the Voices for Change collection. They expressed being cat-called in the streets, and being verbally abused when they didn't respond to the cat-calling. They also expressed that the law does not take such matters seriously, which leads to the harassment continuing because the perpetrators are never punished. They suggested that more laws that protect women from social injustice be implemented."

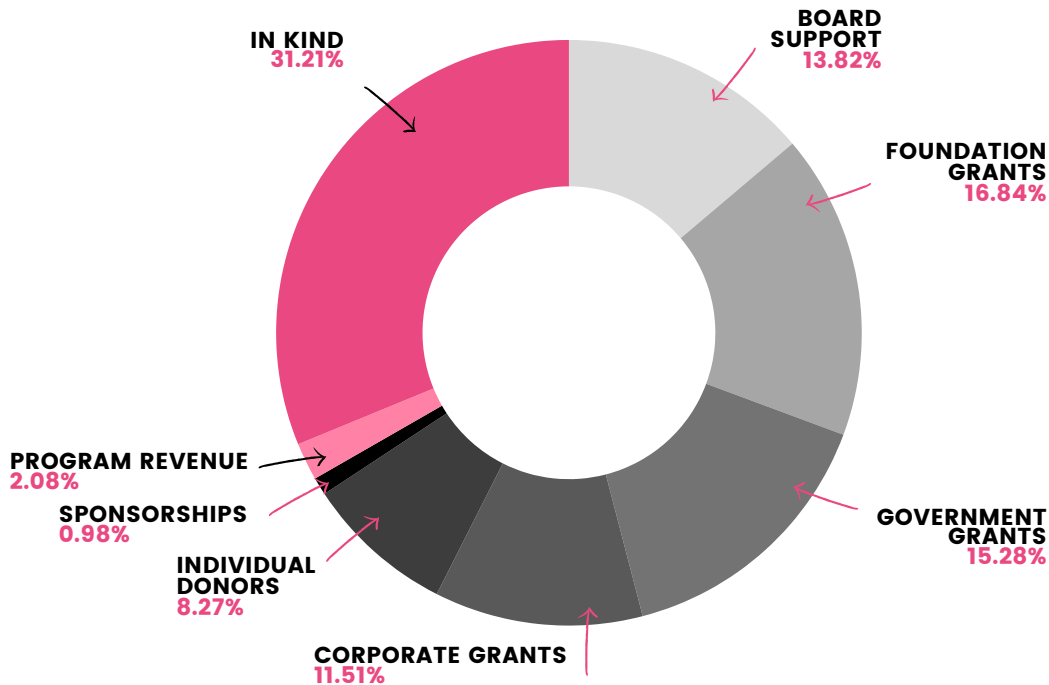
—**Tafadzwa Chovuchovu**, International Images Film Festival for Women (IIFF), Zimbabwe



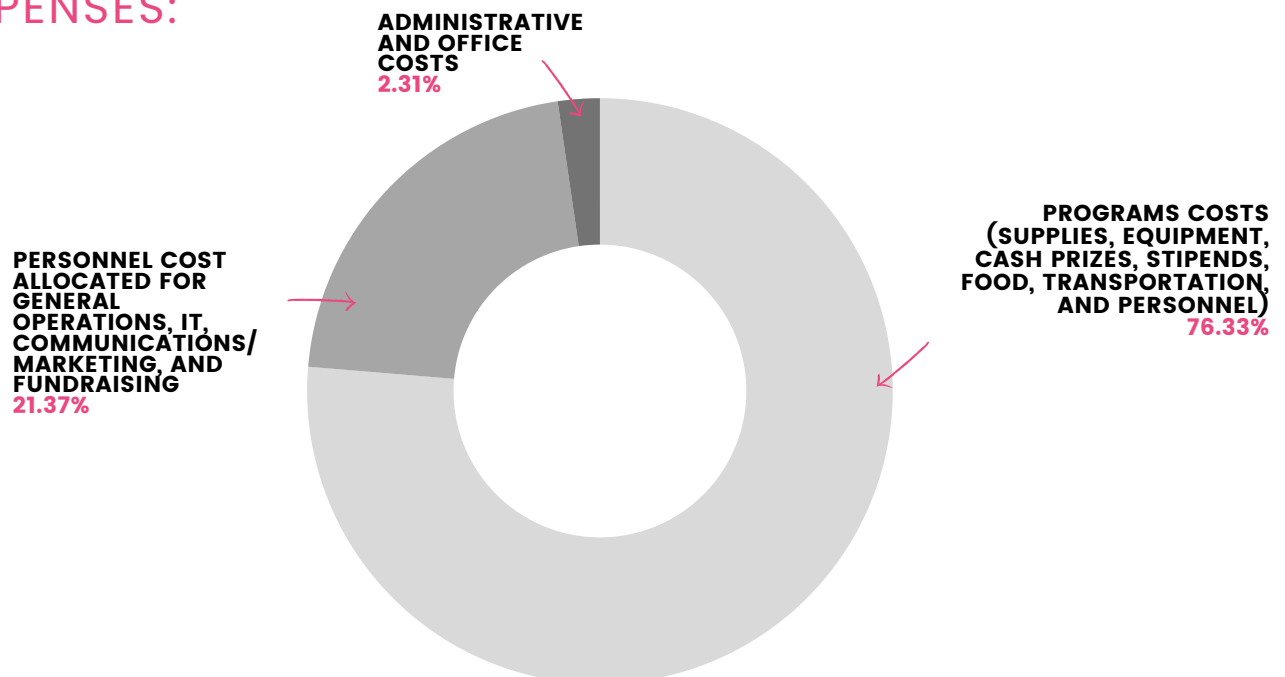
Our Finances

In 2024, our operating budget was **\$601,611.79**. Here is a breakdown of our revenue and how our expenses were allocated:

REVENUE:



EXPENSES:



Thank You!

Our organization and programs could not run without the dedicated support of our amazing Women's Voices Now community!

VOLUNTEERS

Assist us with various projects, from data analysis to film previewing, to CRM programs implementation and graphic design! Your work has a tremendous impact on our operations and efficiency.

DONORS

Our donors are the backbone of our organization, and their generosity is key to our success and motivation! A big thank you to our 2024 donors!



Cindy Abel
Michael Ackerman



Jacob Acosta



Micheal Alvear
Nancy Andreas



Mea Argentieri
Lorna Auerbach

Britnie Banks

Leslie Barron



Maria Basch
Martin Basch

Kimberly Bash

Erin Beber

Jasmine Beltran



Ann Benefiel
Jennifer Berges

Ami Berlin

Christine Paula Love Bernasor

Tania Biddle



Caron Bielski



Tali Bielski

Michelle Blumenfeld

Linda Blumenthal

Bernie Borgida

Laney Brabson

Rod Bran



Barb Brass



Gina Brouman-Sacks
Rebecca Campbell

CM Cavalenes Jarvis



Snehal Chitalia

Emily Cline

Francine Coeytaux

Stephanie Cohen



Tobias Cole

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