



**W.** WOMEN'S  
VOICES  
NOW

**2025**  
IMPACT REPORT

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

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



## Table of Contents

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP               | 2  |
| IMPACT AT A GLANCE                   | 3  |
| OUR IMPACT                           | 4  |
| WOMEN'S VOICES<br>NOW FILM FESTIVAL  | 4  |
| GIRLS' VOICES NOW                    | 9  |
| VOICES FOR CHANGE<br>FILM COLLECTION | 15 |
| FINANCES                             | 16 |
| THANK YOUS                           | 17 |



# A Letter From Our Executive Director



DEAR WVN COMMUNITY,

Each time I receive the assignment to write this letter from the Executive Director for our annual impact report, a profound sense of humility and gratitude floods through me. It signifies that Women's Voices Now has successfully completed another year of ensuring that women's voices are heard and amplified in a rapidly changing world. Despite ongoing global struggles with gender equality and rising challenges, I have wonderful news to share with you.

Since 2020, as the world shut down and many hard-won metrics of progress for women and girls began to backslide, the demand for Women's Voices Now increased exponentially. You may be thinking: Doesn't that paint a grim picture?

**Actually, no—and I want to explain why.**

At Women's Voices Now, we are in the business of amplifying voices that call for change and dignity, elevating those who show incredible resilience in the face of adversity. The films we produce, showcase, and distribute act as a mirror to society, asking: Is this the world we want to live in? And if not, what are we willing to do to change it? The common thread through all of our media is that girls and women continue to be at the forefront of making the world a better place for all.

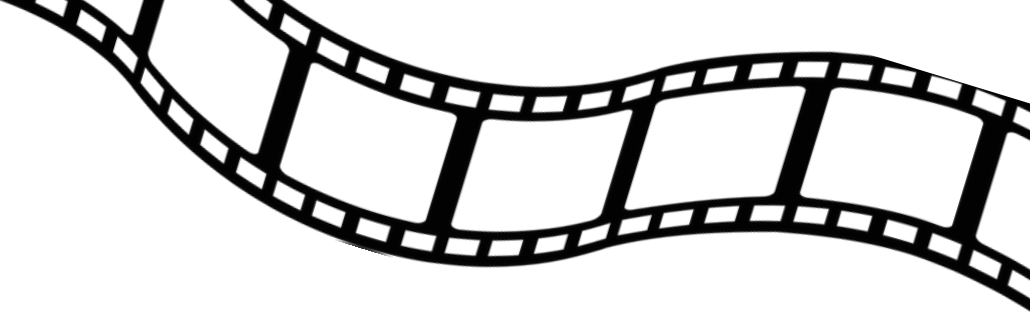
The pages of this impact report will show you what I am trying to tell. I want to draw your attention to **Bonnie and Vjosa's letters on pages 9 and 13**. They represent our Girls' Voices Now Program Staff, who are building a better future one girl and one story at a time, literally around the world. I also want to celebrate that from 2024 to 2025, our online and in-person audience increased from 8 million to 13.5 million viewers. With your support, we continue to grow. While the world may seem exceptionally tumultuous, our work keeps us enveloped in hope.

With continued gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Basch-Harod".

HEIDI BASCH-HAROD  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
WOMEN'S VOICES NOW

# Our Impact At A Glance



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

RECEIVED  
**1,500**  
FILM  
SUBMISSIONS

FROM  
**105**  
COUNTRIES

AWARDED OVER  
**\$156k**  
IN CASH PRIZES

GARNERED  
AUDIENCE FROM  
**195+**  
COUNTRIES

SINCE 2018 GIRLS' VOICES NOW HAS:

SERVED  
**116 GIRLS**  
FROM UNDER-  
RESOURCED  
COMMUNITIES

PRODUCED  
**31**  
YOUTH-MADE  
SHORT FILMS

SELECTED IN  
**167** FILM  
FESTIVALS,  
NOMINATED  
FOR **3** EMMYS  
(AND WON **1**!)

SEEN  
BY OVER  
**4.6M**  
VIEWERS

SINCE 2016 OUR VOICES FOR CHANGE  
FILM COLLECTION HAS:

**360+**  
FILMS (IN 50  
DIFFERENT  
LANGUAGES)

SEEN BY  
**50M+**  
ONLINE  
VIEWERS

CO-FACILITATED  
**175**  
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 Impact

## WOMEN'S VOICES NOW FILM FESTIVAL

### 2025 FILM FESTIVAL: HIGHLIGHTS



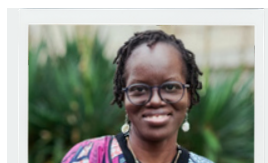
2025 THEME:  
"WOMEN: IN ALL THEIR SHAPES AND FORMS"

**85**  
SUBMISSIONS

**33**  
COUNTRIES

**\$13k**  
IN CASH PRIZES

### OUR 2025 JURY:



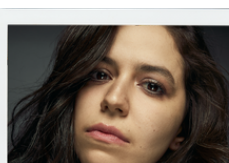
**PASCALE  
APPORA-GNEKIND**

**FRANCE**



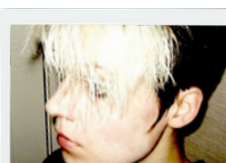
**YASMIN  
EFTEKHAR**

**ENGLAND**



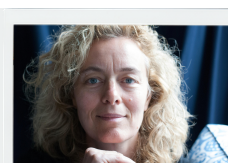
**MAHA  
EL BOUKHARI**

**MOROCCO**



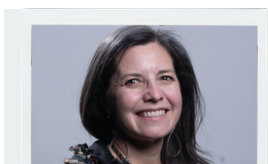
**NINA  
GIELEN**

**UNITED STATES**



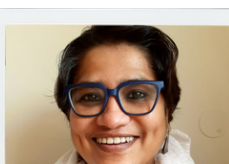
**SARAH  
GROSS**

**GERMANY**



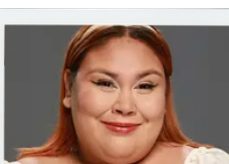
**KENDRA  
HODGSON**

**UNITED STATES**



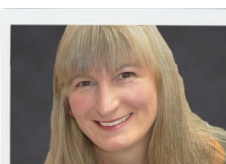
**PALOUMI  
PAL**

**INDIA**



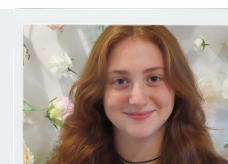
**RACHEL  
ROBLES**

**UNITED STATES**



**LAURA  
SIVIS**

**AUSTRALIA**



**EVA  
WEITZMAN-STANGEL**

**UNITES STATES**

# 2025 FILM FESTIVAL: FILMMAKERS

## OUR 2025 FILMMAKERS:

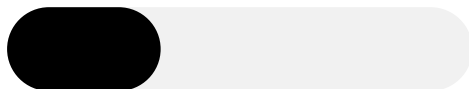
**87% WOMEN**



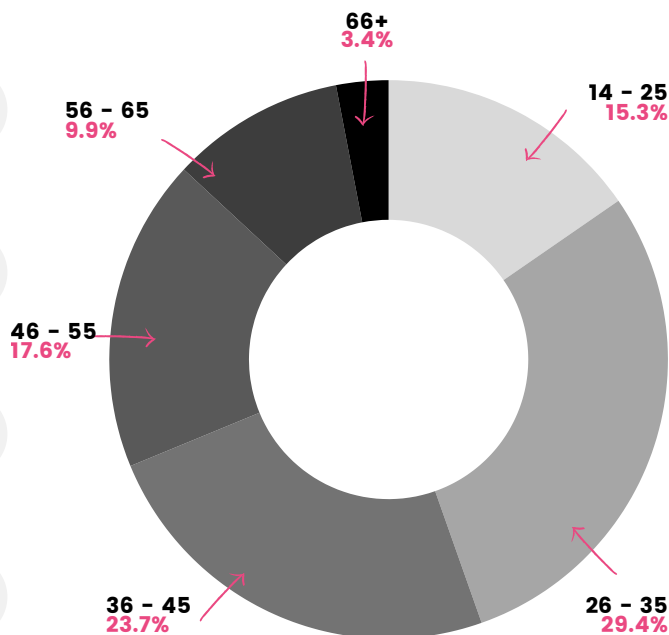
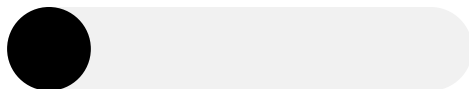
**50% FIRST-TIME FILMMAKERS**



**33% LGBTQ+**



**16% FIRST GENERATION**



## HEAR FROM OUR FILMMAKERS:

*"It was an incredible honor and privilege to have my film Angels of Sinjar included in the Women's Voices Now Film Festival. The festival's mission—amplifying the voices of courageous, creative women and fostering spaces for dialogue and connection beyond the screen—is profoundly meaningful. Women's Voices Now not only brings vital, often overlooked stories to light, but also cultivates a powerful sense of community. I am truly grateful to have been a part of it."*

**-Hanna Polak (Poland), Angels of Sinjar, winner of the 2025 Leslie J. Sacks Grand Prize**

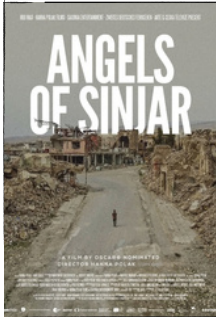
*"I love everything this film festival stands for on raising awareness of the challenges women face around the world. I feel so honored that a film I helped bring to life, "Standing With Moms", will now be a part of this beautiful festival and platform!"*

**-Radha Mehta (United States), Standing with Moms, winner of the 2025 Best Documentary-Short Award**

*"I am grateful to be a part of the festival, because it gives a voice to the Chinese women who have suffered so much injustice but don't often realize that the world is ready to listen to their stories."*

**-Wei Du (China), Daughters of Putien, 2025 Selected Film**

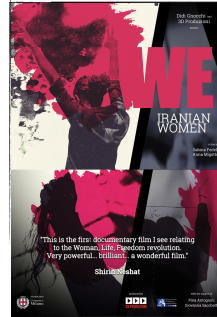
## OUR 2025 WINNERS:



### **Angels of Sinjar (Poland/Iraq)**

By Hanna Polak

Leslie J. Sacks Best  
Documentary Feature



### **We Iranian Woman (Italy/Iran)**

By Anna Migotto and  
Sabina Fedeli

Tom Lantos Best Human  
Rights Documentary



### **Standing with Moms (USA)**

By Radha Mehta

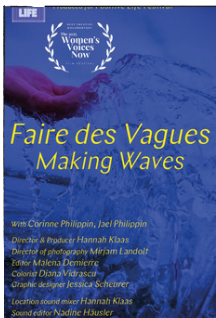
Best Documentary Short



### **Chalk Back (USA)**

By Kylie Procita

Best Emerging Short  
Documentary Filmmaker



### **Making Waves (Switzerland)**

By Hannah Klaas

Best Creative Short  
Documentary



### **Bangla Surf Girls (Canada/Bangladesh)**

By Elizabeth Costa

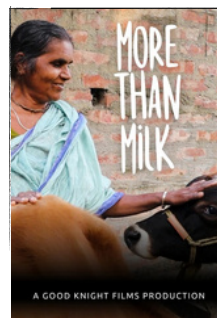
Best Emerging Feature  
Documentary Filmmaker



### **Urban Amazons (Switzerland)**

By Thais Odermatt

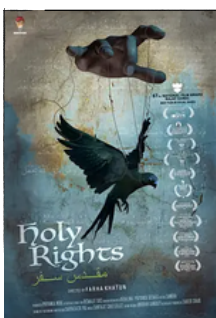
Best Creative Feature  
Documentary



### **More Than Milk (Australia/India)**

By Abigail Rain Knight

Best Youth Documentary



### **Holy Rights (India)**

By Farha Khatun

Jury Mention



### **DAGA (Senegal)**

By Fama Ndiaye

Jury Mention

## 2025 FILM FESTIVAL: GROWTH

In 2025, **the Women's Voices Now Film Festival grew from 192 attendees in 2024 to nearly 2,400**, a twelvefold increase that reflects both growing demand for women's rights storytelling and the impact of strategic reinvestment.

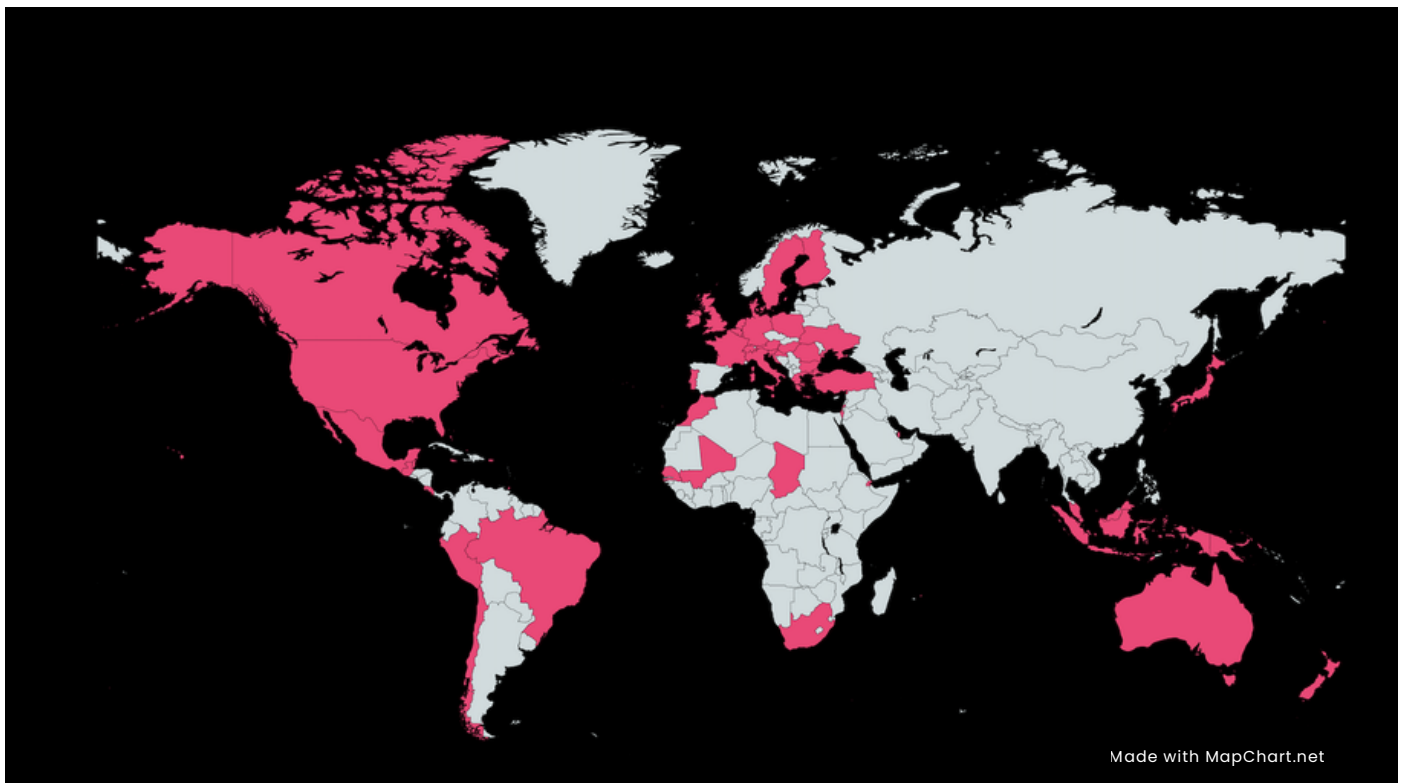
Rather than treating ticket revenue as simply earned income, WVN reinvested ticket sales directly into digital advertising and audience outreach. This approach allowed us to expand visibility for the festival and the filmmakers, reach new audiences, and create a cycle in which each ticket sold helped generate greater awareness and participation.

The results demonstrate that audiences are actively seeking stories that center women's experiences, resilience, and leadership. By investing in thoughtful outreach, WVN connected filmmakers' work with thousands of viewers who may not otherwise have encountered these powerful films.

This growth represents more than increased attendance. It also signals a growing global audience committed to engaging with stories that inform, inspire empathy, and advance the conversation around women's rights. With continued support, WVN will keep expanding the reach of these critical voices and the impact they create.

## 2025 FILM FESTIVAL: REACH

Our audience continues to expand, reaching viewers across the globe through virtual festival access and digital engagement. The map below highlights our top 2025 viewership countries, illustrating the worldwide demand for women's rights storytelling and the growing global community engaging with these films. It also highlights where we need to do more outreach to audiences, particularly in Asia, and the Middle East/North Africa region.



## 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 heard from the 2025 Women Making Waves Award Recipient during our Film Festival Awards Ceremony.

This year's award went to Princess Sarah Culberson. She received the award during the Women's Voices Now Film Festival's virtual, live Awards Ceremony.

***"Receiving the Women Making Waves Award is an incredible honor and a powerful reminder of the impact we can create through perseverance, collaboration, and uplifting one another. I am deeply inspired by Women's Voices Now and the extraordinary women who continue to create ripples of change in their communities, driving progress and hope."***

While accepting the award, Culberson discussed her work on leadership, empowerment, and creating belonging through Sierra Leone Rising.

Princess Sarah Culberson is an African princess who discovered her royal heritage from Sierra Leone in her late twenties. She is the host of the "Modern Royalty" podcast, where she delves into the lives and insights of individuals who are redefining what it means to be royalty in today's world. Her journey has captivated audiences worldwide, garnering features on CNN, GMA, and BBC, among other prominent media outlets. Her compelling story is the inspiration behind her co-authored book, *A Princess Found*, which Disney has acquired to adapt into a major motion picture.

With over 15 years of experience in education, Princess Sarah has been invited to speak globally at NASA, Wells Fargo, Princeton University, and many others. Her expertise has led her to roles including president and co-founder of Sierra Leone Rising, a nonprofit organization, and a businesswoman in the entertainment industry, with her work reaching global audiences. Sierra Leone Rising supports initiatives such as keeping young girls in school, constructing wells for clean drinking water, and promoting cultural understanding through coding. Her contributions have been recognized with the Trumpet Impact Award, highlighting her efforts to foster a culture of belonging on a large scale.



# GIRLS' VOICES NOW

This past year with Girls' Voices Now has reminded me, again and again, why this work matters so deeply. Our program may begin with filmmaking, but it quickly becomes something much more. It becomes a place where girls are given the space to discover themselves and the voice they carry within them. Through storytelling, they begin to understand that their experiences and perspectives matter.

I'd love to share a story with you that shows you the impact of this program.

Please meet Ximena:

Ximena joined our program curious and simply looking for something meaningful to do before moving to Mexico to live with her father permanently. During the program she created a film called *Unheard Voices*, documenting the impact of ICE raids on families in our community. Through making that film, something ignited in her. She discovered the power of using a camera not just to document the world around her, but to stand up for her community and film stories that deserve to be seen. Today her path looks very different. She is no longer planning to relocate and has applied to several universities, including UCLA and USC, to pursue film.

Another student, Alayna, came to us after dropping out of high school the year prior. She was searching for direction and unsure of what her future might hold. Through Girls' Voices Now, she discovered a love for storytelling and filmmaking she had never considered before. Along the way she found the motivation to return to school and went on to finish high school early.

Witnessing the transformation of girls like Ximena and Alayna inspired us to expand the program even further. In 2026 we will launch *Beyond the Lens*, a mentorship initiative that connects our girls with women working across the film and television industry. Our goal is not only to support them as storytellers, but to help them see real pathways forward as directors, producers, editors, journalists, and leaders in the creative world.

Our girls are not lacking stories or resilience. What they often need is a place where their voices are welcomed, nurtured, and taken seriously. Girls' Voices Now creates exactly that.

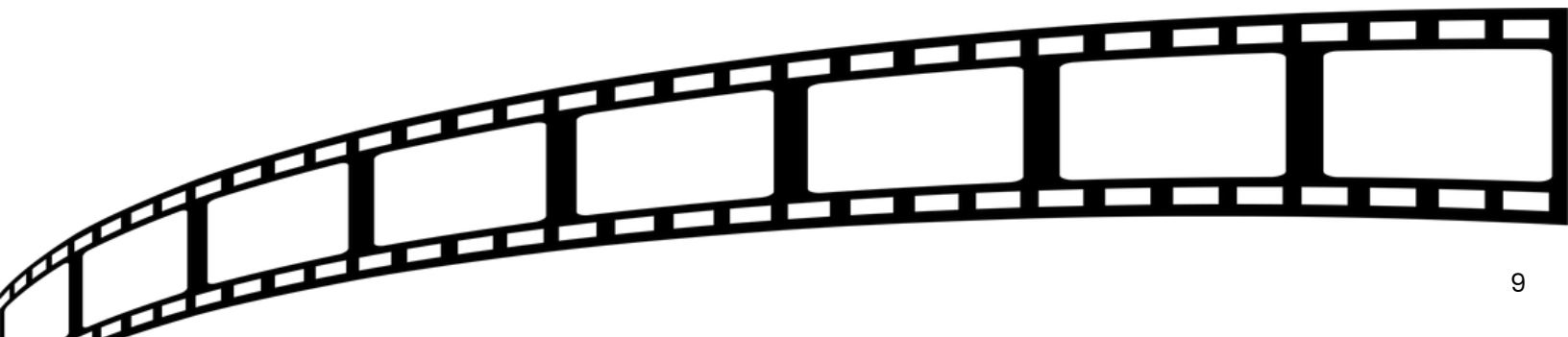
With love.

Bonnie Ayala

Program Manager, Girls' Voices Now

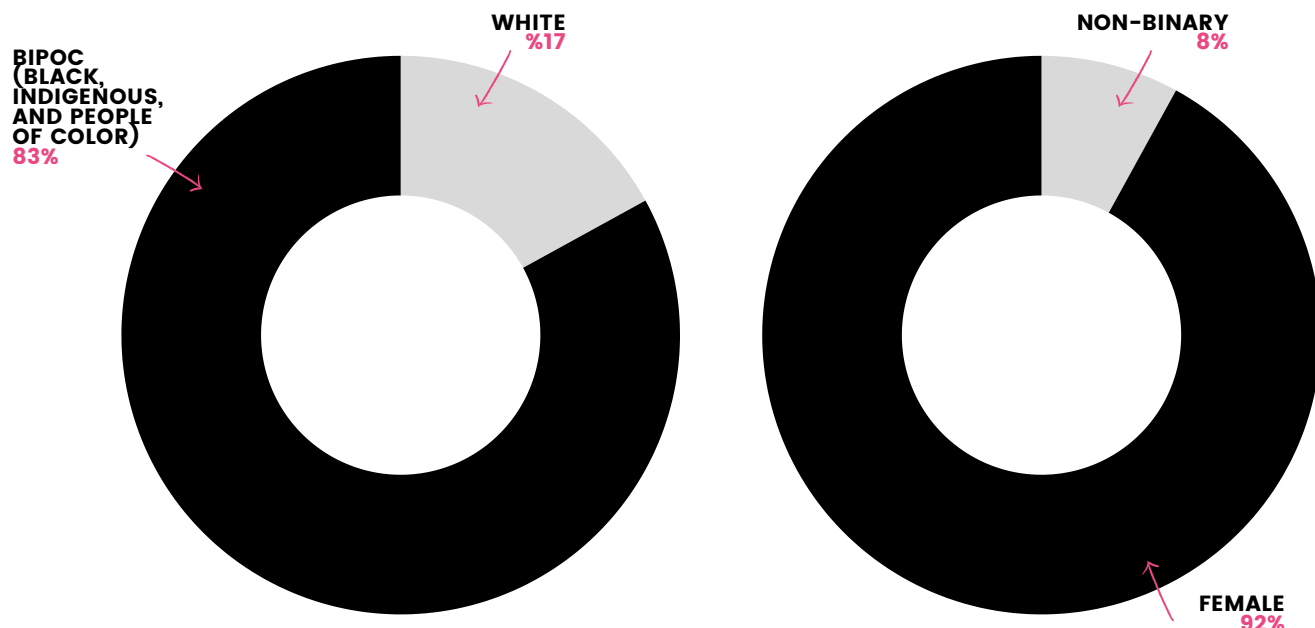


**Bonnie Ayala - GVN Program Manager**

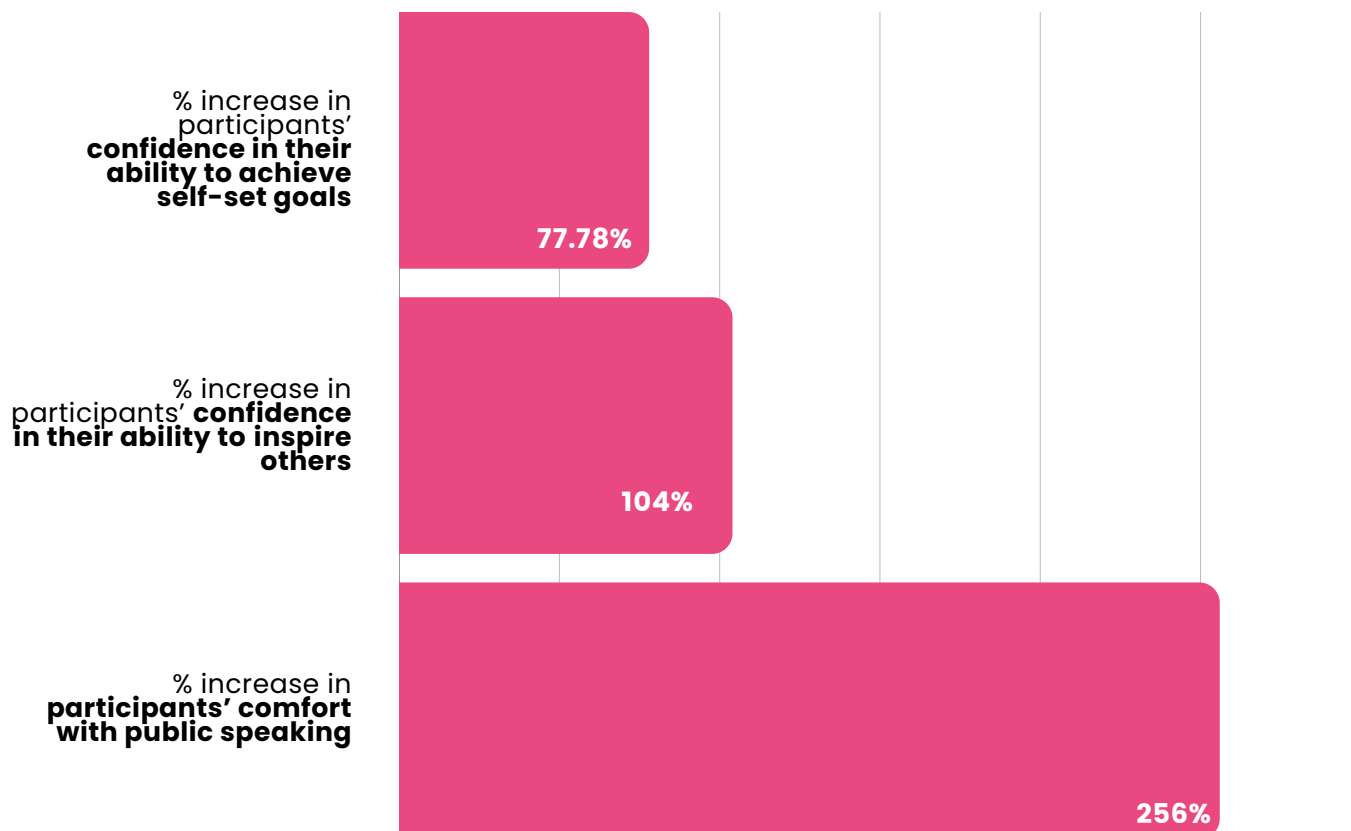


# 2025 PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

AMONG THE 2025 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 2025 cohort as a result of participating in Girls' Voices Now:



## 2025 GIRLS' VOICES NOW FILMS:



### Unheard Voices

Alayna Torres (17), Ximena Brizuela (17), Mailie Estupinan Medel (17), Jaia Nicole (16)

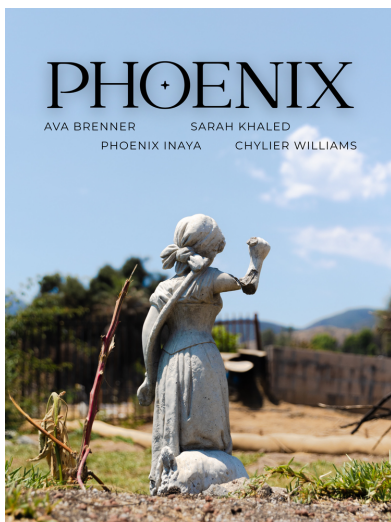
In the heart of Los Angeles, people are disappearing. Through the eyes of local shopkeepers, politicians, and journalists, *Unheard Voices* captures the stories of those affected by the ongoing ICE raids. The film gives voice to the silenced and shines a light on a community fighting to navigate a tumultuous political period in our country's history, and to maintain their humanity.



### Expecting Young

Dalia Olshansky (14), Naomi Nuno (16), Kasey Cameron Jusay (16), Violet Santiago (16)

*Expecting Young* is a powerful short documentary following Bonnie Ayala, a makeup artist and storyteller, who became a mother at age 13. One of many identities, being a young mom does not define her; instead, Bonnie's strength, resilience, and multifaceted life challenges stereotypes and illuminates a hopeful, human story of transformation and empowerment.



### PHOENIX

Sarah Khaled (18), Phoenix Inaya (14), Chylier Williams (15), Ava Brenner (16)

In January 2025 the Palisades and Eaton fires destroyed more than 16,000 structures, displaced thousands of households, and claimed at least 29 lives in the Greater Los Angeles area. *Phoenix* is a short documentary highlighting the contributions and the experiences of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women who fought in those fires, bringing awareness to the heroic efforts of these unknown women.

## 2025 GROWTH:

After hiring our 2025 GVN intern as a Program Assistant, we significantly increased our film festival submission efforts for GVN films. This added capacity has allowed more GVN films to be submitted to festivals nationally and internationally, expanding visibility and opportunities for the young filmmakers behind them!

## TESTIMONIES:

*"I came into Girls' Voices Now thinking I would simply learn how to make films, but what I truly found was my voice. I have always been hesitant to speak up for what I believe in, especially when my views might be controversial or spark disagreement. I've never been comfortable with conflict or awkwardness, but through this experience, I've learned that stepping into those uncomfortable moments is sometimes exactly what's needed to make a difference.*

—Ava, 2025 GVN Alumna

*"What I liked best about the program was the voice that it gave me and the door it just opened for me. Learning about film and about careers was amazing. I realized that I could too make it and go in the industry one day."*

—Ximena, 2025 GVN Alumna



# GVN INTERNATIONAL

This past year, my work with Girls' Voices Now has been deeply rooted in empowering women and girls who have lived through conflict and displacement to reclaim their narratives. Through targeted workshops and mentorship programs, I have worked to create vital spaces for education, resilience, and fearless storytelling.

A major pillar of GVN International in 2025 involved hosting comprehensive workshops in Germany centered on the critical themes of "Women in War" and "War and Women." These sessions tackled the complex realities women face in conflict zones and highlighted the urgent need for their perspectives in global media. Coupled with this, there was in-depth, practical training on navigating today's fractured information landscape, equipping participants with the tools to critically identify misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.



**Vjosa Çerkini – European Liaison**

Expanding GVN International's reach to those most immediately affected by recent global crises, we also held dedicated workshops for Afghan and Ukrainian girls, virtually. These sessions were designed not only to build media capacity and technical skills but to provide a supportive, empowering community for young women navigating the challenges of displacement and violence.

The commitment to one-on-one mentorship also reached across borders this year, allowing us to support emerging storytellers directly in their home countries. I had the privilege of mentoring three remarkable young women in filmmaking: Lea Hoxhaj in Kosovo, Zosia Maruzewska in Poland, and Jalila Joda in Nigeria. Guiding these filmmakers as they develop their craft and document their local realities reinforces the universal power of storytelling to bridge global divides.

Building on the momentum of these workshops and individual mentorships, and recognizing the urgent need for specialized training, in 2026 we plan to continue hosting workshops in conflict zones like in Ukraine. "Filming in Wartime" is a new curriculum that will be highly focused and practical and serve to train participants in rigorous risk assessment, digital and physical security protocols, and trauma-informed interviewing techniques. Ultimately, this program is designed to equip the next generation of female filmmakers and journalists with the specialized, on-the-ground skills needed to document the truth safely, ethically, and effectively in the world's most challenging environments.

The resilience and talent of the young women I encountered in 2025 are a constant source of inspiration. As GVN International looks to the future, we remain fiercely dedicated to expanding these programs and continuing to amplify the voices that the world needs to hear most.

With best wishes,

Vjosa Çerkini  
European Liaison, Women's Voices Now

## GVN INTERNATIONAL

GVN International expanded youth voice and creative agency through storytelling, resilience, and media literacy workshops with young women across Europe. In Germany, award-winning filmmaker and educator, Vjosa Çerkini, led a workshop with 30 women and girls from migration backgrounds exploring everyday sexism, narrative ownership, and how to recognize misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Participants used visual storytelling exercises to reclaim and share their perspectives, and two participants chose to continue developing their stories through year-long mentorship to create their first films.

In a separate workshop with Afghan girls from conflict-affected communities, participants reflected on how storytelling can transform personal experience into collective advocacy, highlighting the power of narrative to foster connection and resilience.

Building on this momentum, Vjosa now mentors three emerging filmmakers from Kosovo, Poland, and Nigeria as they develop independent film projects rooted in their own lived experiences and aspirations. Together, these efforts reflect growing confidence, creative skill, and leadership among young storytellers, reinforcing Women's Voices Now's commitment to equipping youth to use film as a tool for representation, connection, and social change.



## TESTIMONY:

*"The experience was truly unique. We learned how to identify disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation, but also to better understand misogyny and sexism. Most importantly, we learned how to raise our voices and be representatives for people with migration backgrounds in Chemnitz. We are so excited to continue with the mentorship program next year!"*

**—Jin and Vin Fakhir Farkan (Germany),**  
GVN International Participants

# VOICES FOR CHANGE FILM COLLECTION

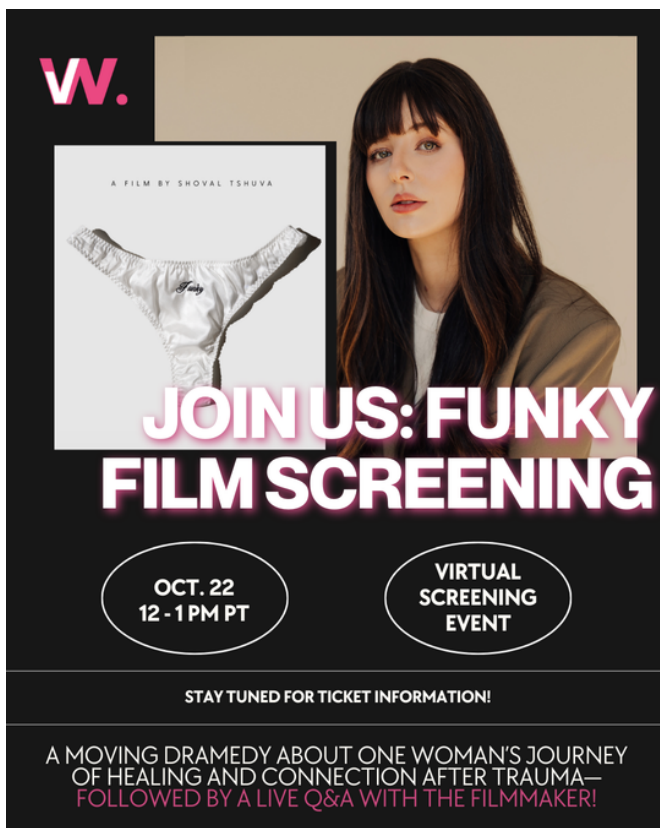
## 2025 SPOTLIGHT:

Through strategic marketing and expanded digital outreach, our film collection reached 13.5 million viewers worldwide in 2025, up from 8.2 million in 2024. This growth reflects the global demand for women's rights storytelling and the power of digital platforms to amplify underrepresented voices.

## TESTIMONIES:

*"The film, just a few minutes long, evoked such strong feelings that my heart was racing for the next hour... I really, really appreciate [the filmmaker's] bravery to show this side of her experience and to do so publicly. Her bravery has given me the courage to open up myself and to not only give a place for my feelings, but not to feel so alone in them, or think I'm the only one who had that confusion or thoughts. It was the first time I ever discussed this aspect, and I feel so much better for it. Thank you so much for your bravery and artistic skill, Shoval!"*

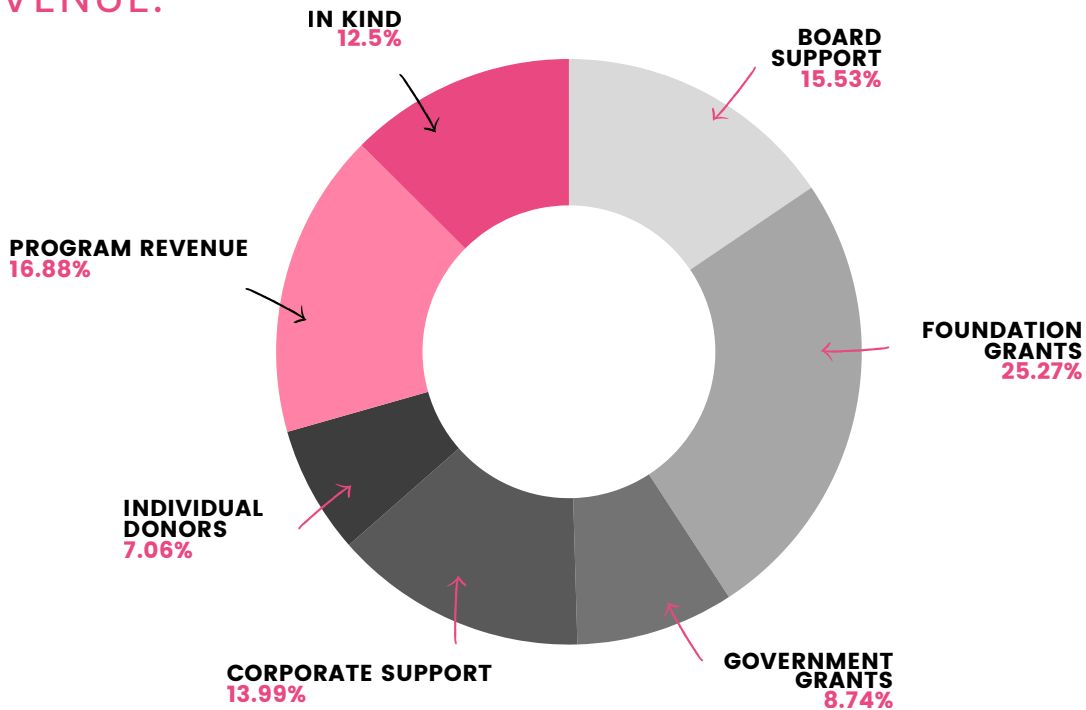
—**Anonymous**, Film Collection Screening Participant, (Israel)



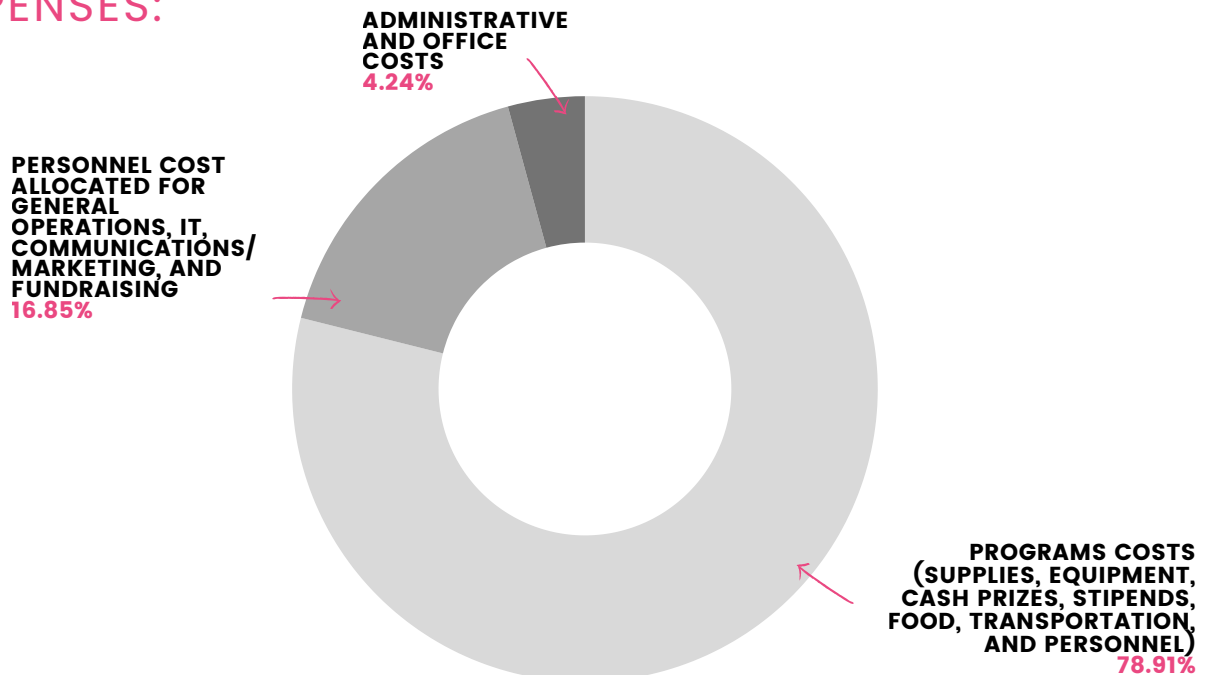
# Our Finances

In 2025, our operating budget was **\$599,590.65**. 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

Our volunteers assist us with various projects, from data analysis to film previewing, to event support and strategic planning! 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 2025 donors!

 Cindy Abel

 Sheri Abel

 Jacob Acosta

Anonymous

 Carolyn Allard

 Micheal Alvear

Nancy Andreas

Lisa Andrews-Garcia

 Mea Argentieri

Jennifer Ayres

Sandra Bacchi

William Baker

 Maria & Martin Basch

Kym Bash

Erin Beber

 Ann Benefiel

 Caron Bielski

 Tali Bielski

Bernie Borgida

 Barbara Brass

 Gina Brouman-Sacks

Anonymous

Graziela Camacho

 Cachet Campbell

Eileen Caravello

 Snehal Chitalia

Stephanie Cohen

 Tobias Cole

Raymond Cormier

Ellie Cotlar

Lis Cox

Margo Cox

Beverly Craig

Anonymous

Priscilla Cucalon

 Donna Daigle

Catherine De Spain

Anonymous

Mercy Dennis

Roxana Djalili Fontaine

Jacki & Murray Drechsler

Joe Enten

Maryam Farahzadi

Margery Farrar

Graham FitzGerald

Linda Foreman

Steven Friedman

 Steven Geddes

Moe Gelbart

David Gesseck

Tina Gittelson

Megan Giudice

Anonymous

Judith Greenspan

Chani Grin

Alexandra Gruskos

Sasha Haro

Amira Harod



= BOARD MEMBER



= ARTIST IN  
RESIDENCE DONOR



= CREW MEMBER/  
MONTHLY DONOR

SUBSCRIBE  
TO OUR  
NEWSLETTER



DONATE TO  
SUPPORT  
WOMEN'S  
RIGHTS AND  
CONTRIBUTE  
TO GLOBAL  
GENDER  
EQUALITY



FOLLOW US  
ON SOCIAL  
MEDIA



Eitan Harod



Becky Hellwig

Anonymous

Alex Iles



Sandra Jean Irvin

Victoria Izzo

Lauren Johnson

Elizabeth H. Johnson

Deanna Kangas



Esther Katzman



Timothy J. Kedzierski

James Kweisi

John Landau

Yaffa Lev

Imogene Lim

Rae Luskin

Anonymous

John Margerum



Diana Means

Thessy Mehrain

Isabella Micali Drossos

David Milbern

Robin & Marc Mittleman



Atalanti Moquette



Nelly Munthe



Candice Nakagawa

Foojan Nezhadian

Camille Nicolas



Filipe Noguiera

Virgil G. Nolde, Jr.

Regina O'Melveny

John Oakes

Monika Olmos

Zlata Onufrieva

Anonymous

Jeffrey Pachulo

George Papadoyannis

Jessica Peres

Michelle Quackenbush

Karin Raguin

Lea Reis

Stephanie Rose

Rachel Roth

Jeanne Saks

Ann Samuelson

Brent Sandrock

Brooke Sebold

Anonymous

Andrew Silber

Russ and Melinda Skoller

Georgii Speakman

Sandra Stafford

Michelle Strawser

Marcia T. Kass

Madeline Taylor

Caroline Toren

Anonymous



Laura Vansant

Magda Verdickt

John Vilardo



Kristie Wallis



Maggie & Mal Ward

Sasha Weinstein

Al Weinstein

Elizabeth Weitzman

Sherry Wicker



## SPONSORS & PARTNERS

We are incredibly grateful to all the foundations, public institutions, and corporations who trust in our work and help to make our programs possible! With your partnership, we are able to carry out our mission!



AERIE REAL  
FOUNDATION™

THE CHARITY  
CHARITY  
FOUNDATION

Wayfarer  
FOUNDATION  
STRIVING FOR UNITY



Los Angeles  
County  
Arts &  
Culture



C.R.  
STEVENSON  
FAMILY  
FOUNDATION



The Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation



GEFFEN  
PLAYHOUSE



Here TV

LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
JUSTICE  
CARE AND  
OPPORTUNITIES  
DEPARTMENT



VW  
VISIONARY  
WOMEN

THE ROSALINDE AND ARTHUR  
GILBERT FOUNDATION



Mount  
Saint Mary's  
University  
LOS ANGELES  
100  
UNSTOPPABLE  
YEARS

Juneau  
Pro-Choice  
Coalition

The M&T Charitable Foundation

ANONYMOUS

