



As distributors of films about diversity and race in America, California Newsreel aims to encourage and support the work of emerging producers, in particular producers and filmmakers of color. If you would benefit from advice or suggestions from a distributor in educational media *before* you do substantial work on your film, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Feel free to submit a copy of your treatment or work-in-progress if you think it might be appropriate for California Newsreel distribution. If we feel that we could successfully distribute your film, or if we have useful feedback for you, we will be in touch. Send rough cuts, fine cuts or finished films (background materials are also helpful) in video or DVD format to:

Cornelius Moore, Acquisitions Director  
California Newsreel  
44 Gough Street, Suite 303  
San Francisco CA 94103  
415-284-7800 Ext. 305 or CM@newsreel.org



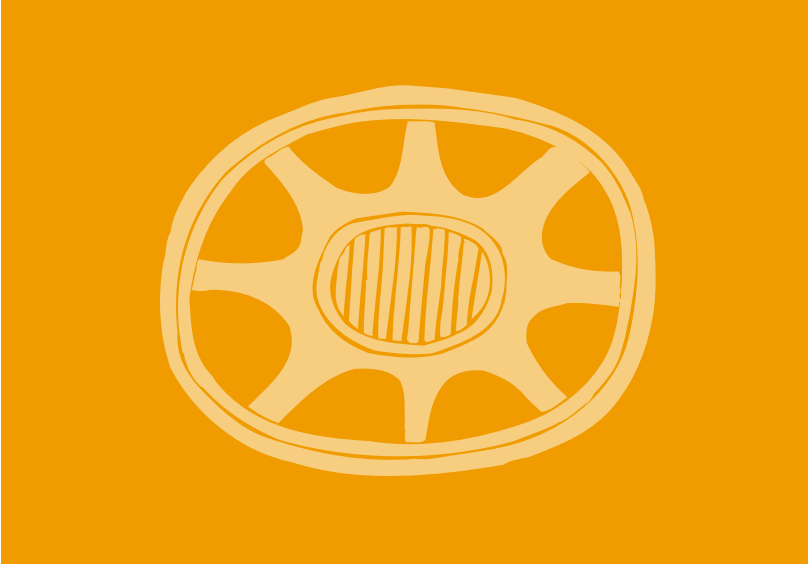
\*Please note, California Newsreel does not fund films or conduct financial development activities. Here are some ways to research funding and support for your film:

<input type="checkbox"/> National Black Programming Consortium	<a href="http://www.nbpc.tv/funding.php">www.nbpc.tv/funding.php</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Creative Capital	<a href="http://www.creative-capital.org">www.creative-capital.org</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Open Society Youth Initiative	<a href="http://www.soros.org/youth">www.soros.org/youth</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Funding Exchange	<a href="http://www.fex.org">www.fex.org</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> ITVS Diversity Development Fund	<a href="http://www.itvs.org/producers/funding.html">www.itvs.org/producers/funding.html</a>



# Before You Shoot:

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW  
ABOUT EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTION



For more information about California Newsreel and our film collections, please visit us at  
[www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)



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# Before You Shoot:

What you should know about educational distribution

You want to make a film that not only delights and informs viewers but one that will reach its intended audience with impact. By helping you understand the inside world of educational distribution, California Newsreel can assist you in getting your film widely viewed.

Many film producers underestimate the impact of distribution to educational markets—colleges, universities, high schools, public libraries, and community organizations—yet it represents a \$2 billion-a-year industry of professionals with demands for high quality films. Educators use these films in classrooms as a part of curriculum annually, and in teacher training and staff development. Social justice advocates also use these films to deliver their message and help drive organizing campaigns. Inspired by a campaign or guided by informed and passionate teachers or professors, these viewers engage a film with focus. They are more likely to interact with other viewers and write about the film and its subject matter.

As your educational film distributor, California Newsreel can help you to maximize the “mind share” of your film—as well as the market share. Ultimately, the number of viewers for one film in educational distribution can vastly outstrip that of a national broadcast or limited theatrical release. Scholars and activists have come to rely on Newsreel to deliver thoughtful, complex, high quality material each year. By aligning our promotion work with the academic calendar, we reach educators at the beginning of the school year with new fall mailings.



www.newsreel.org



Don't be blinded by the “bling” of one-night screenings in film festivals and on TV—before you make plans to distribute your film on home video, or sign away video on demand rights, think about educational distribution. Before You Shoot, consider the following 5 tips from California Newsreel to maximize your film’s potential for educational distribution:

- 1

Produce a film for educational distribution that is **less than one hour in length**. For classrooms and organizing campaigns, a tight 35-minute film is far better than a fuzzy 70-minute film. Most broadcasters require a program under an hour as well. If you need a longer film for film festivals, consider cutting a second version.
- 2

Keep in mind not only which areas of curriculum you feel *should* be taught, but rather what is currently being taught and how your film will be able to **enhance, complement or expand upon the teaching of a particular subject**. Think also about how your subject might be taught across disciplines. If it’s appropriate for history, sociology, and international relations, consider which concepts the film might animate for each discipline and how you can make these concepts even clearer.
- 3

**Conduct thorough research on your subject matter** to determine if your topic has been covered in a film and if it has, know how your film would be different. Take advantage of listservs and online discussions, check with grant making organizations, and investigate distributor web sites such as the International Movie Database at [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) and the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) Distributor List at [www.namac.org](http://www.namac.org).
- 4

Investigate **what film topics would be most useful** to educators in your field of interest. Speak with professors or advisors in any disciplines and as well as social movements that you think might be relevant. These experts might make powerful arguments as a presence in your film, contribute to study guides or write-ups, provide supportive “blurbs” for promotional materials, or even write reviews of your finished film. Involving scholars and constituents early on is a win-win situation.
- 5

Think about producing **a study guide or facilitator’s guide along with the film**. These supplements can help your film reach audiences who are unfamiliar with your subject yet interested in learning more. You can work with your distributor to produce a guide that might include any of the following: film synopsis, biography of historical subjects, timeline of events, context of social or artistic movements, discussion questions, list of gains won by a given constituency, glossary or key words, web resources, bibliography, list of related advocacy organizations, or interactive games.



Effective strategies for educational films very often appeal to film festival curators and television programmers as well:



Emphasize a character or characters on a mission; audiences care about characters not just issues. A character can be inanimate when it is personified or made to feel like it wants to “live” and be relevant (i.e. a school, community, or even a law).



Answer a central question, this creates dramatic tension. Will the town lose its mill? Will the sweatshop-free industry be able to compete? What will happen to Spurlock after 30 days of McDonald’s food?



For any distribution strategy, only use music or footage that you have cleared the rights for unless it falls under the FAIR USE doctrine. Visit [www.centerforsocialmedia.org](http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org) for more information on fair use.



Throughout the production process, take high quality photographic stills that reveal your characters or campaign. These images will be invaluable in promoting your film. Archival images can be used for this purpose as well, if rights for use have been cleared.



If made for TV, a film is generally 26 minutes or 56 minutes, give or take a minute or so for various program strands. For films in a festival “shorts” program, shorter is always better. They can program ten 3 minute films or one 30 minute film.