

# I Cannot Be a Bystander



A documentary film by Jennifer A Reinish  
Produced by Jennifer A Reinish and Abbie Nissenson

**LOGLINE:** Drawing powerful connections between the experiences of Holocaust survivors and the climate of hate today, *I Cannot Be a Bystander* offers an antidote: empowering each of us to become an upstander.

**“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”**     - Mother Teresa

What if *you* hold the key to turning the tide on hate and division? *I Cannot Be a Bystander* is more than just a documentary. It is a timely and inspiring guide that activates the power that is within each of us to confront today's rising prejudice, protect democracy, and forge a safer, more inclusive future. It reveals that we each hold the solutions, and it maps out the concrete steps to become upstanders.

Featuring powerful testimonies from leaders, experts, scholars, and young people, *I Cannot Be a Bystander* amplifies a diverse chorus of courageous voices, who empower us to create change. This 90-minute film, in three acts, helps illuminate how even the most reticent among us can make a tangible difference, from simple acts of kindness to boldly standing against intolerance.



### **ACT I: "Past is Prologue"**

From our neighborhoods to the highest seats of government, hate is on the rise – and history warns where this will lead. Act I opens with Holocaust survivors remembering life under the Nazi regime, their stories eerily paralleled onscreen with today's imagery (Charlottesville, January 6th, and more). We meet the principal characters whose individual stories are woven throughout the film: one hundred year-old Erika, recalling her childhood in Nazi Germany; Representative Nikema Williams, protégé of the late John Lewis, recounting the racism she grew up with; a former far-right extremist, detailing their descent into hate; and an immigrant facing dehumanization and profiling. Collectively, their visceral stories relay the immediate threat, asking a singularly powerful question: What can be done?

### **ACT II: "The Fire Within"**

This act showcases the transformative power of activism and civic engagement. The film reveals how the lived experiences of our upstanders fueled their commitment to creating change. Through their compelling examples of participation and allyship, we see how to inoculate our communities against hate and how individual efforts fortify our democracy. These tales of resilience inspire us to recognize our own power: hate is overcome by speaking out and standing up. But how, precisely?

### **ACT III: "We Are the Change"**

The final act transforms intention into tangible impact and provides a roadmap for action. Whether you're an introvert or extrovert, a novice or seasoned activist, with ample or limited time, everyone can become an upstander. Memorable animation highlights practical steps, from speaking against divisive language and writing letters, to the quiet yet profound act of voting. *I Cannot Be a Bystander* is a powerful call to action, equipping viewers with the conviction that none of us can afford to be bystanders in this moment.

## Director's Vision / About the Film

For years, I have documented the stories of Holocaust survivors in my community, making two previous films about their experiences. It was with this history in mind that I watched a vocal and public rise in antisemitism. On December 2, 2022, after Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff posted a tweet about antisemitism and hate, I responded with a message of my own. Shortly after, another poster replied: “You belong in an oven.” I was frozen in place. Once I processed that hateful message, I knew I had to do something. I decided to make a film.



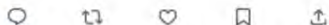
Douglas Emhoff  
@SecondGentleman

I'm in pain right now. Perpetuating lies, such as the denial of the Holocaust, and praising fascist murderers, is dangerous and fans the flames of antisemitism and hate. We all have an obligation to condemn these vile acts. We must not stay silent.

9:03 AM · 12/2/22 from Earth

8,494 Reposts 280 Quotes

48.6K Likes 83 Bookmarks



12/2/22  
As a Jewish woman who has filmed and documented local holocaust survivors' stories for over a decade, I am just sick and also scared. Scared for how this hurts so many that I care about and scared for where it might lead.

My initial thought was to interview Holocaust survivors about the parallels between the rise of the Nazis and today, hoping their urgent warnings would compel people to act. What I did not expect was that every survivor I spoke with insisted on a broader scope. They highlighted *all* the hate we are witnessing today—against LGBTQ+, AAPI, Black, Muslim, and immigrant communities—and insisted that every form of prejudice be confronted. It was a powerful lesson: antisemitism may be where the hate begins, but hatred of other marginalized groups invariably follows.

This realization transformed the project into a feature film that weaves together the testimonies of survivors with a wide spectrum of voices, from leading scholars and civic leaders to young people.



As a former teacher, I have seen how open and inclusive students can be, and their voices in this film provide hope for a future in which we are seen for who we are, not for the labels used to define us.



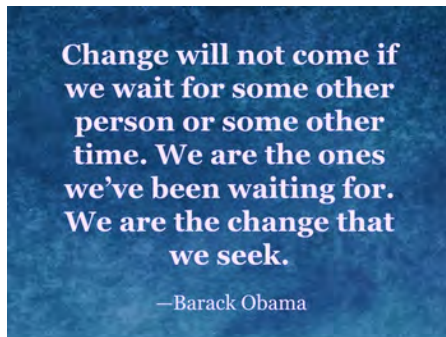
The goal of ***I Cannot Be a Bystander*** is to reach the people who see hate as an issue but do not feel it is their place to get involved. I want to encourage those who keep their heads down to see this film and add their voices to those who are already taking action.

The survivors are living testaments that atrocities can happen anywhere if people stay silent, and as they enter their 90's and even 100's, their experiences must have a lasting impact on future generations.

This film is a call to action. It ends with a powerful message—that none of us can be bystanders. We are all responsible for speaking out, and ultimately, we are our brothers' keepers.

I hope you will support my vision and help get this film to the people who most need to see it.

*Jakeinish*



## Notable Interviews to Date

Twelve Holocaust Survivors ranging in ages between 85 to 102

### Members of Congress:

Senator Adam Schiff, California

Representative Don Bacon, Nebraska District 2

Representative Salud Carbajal, California District 24

Representative Jamie Raskin, Maryland District 8

Representative Jan Schakowsky, Illinois District 9

Representative Brad Schneider, Illinois District 10

Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Florida District 25

Representative Nikema Williams, Georgia District 5

### Media Figures/Journalists/Experts:

Hon. Joyce E. Dudley (Ret.), Santa Barbara County District Attorney

Dr. Jen Golbeck, Professor, Author, MSNBC/CNN Contributor, Cybersecurity Expert

Patrick Riccards, CEO of Life After Hate

Katherine Stewart, NY Times bestselling Author and Journalist



HISTORY, DESPITE ITS WRENCHING PAIN,  
CANNOT BE UNLIVED,  
BUT IF FACED WITH COURAGE,  
NEED NOT BE LIVED AGAIN.

MAYA ANGELOU



Hate cannot drive out  
hate, only *love* can do  
that.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

## Impact & Distribution Strategy

Our primary goal is to share the message of *I Cannot Be a Bystander* as widely as possible. We will pursue a strategic, multi-platform distribution plan to ensure the film reaches its intended audience. The target audience is broad: people who are aware of the hate in this country but do not think it is their place to act. We want to show them their voice and actions can make a difference in building a better world. Whether they are comfortable speaking out, or quietly going to the ballot box, if viewers leave their indifference behind when they leave the theater, we will have succeeded.

### I. Impact and Reach

- **Audience Activation:** A core feature of this film is its focus on empowering viewers to become active participants. Through inspiring stories and actionable ideas, the film shows viewers *why* and *how* to be upstanders.
- **Educational Use:** We see the film as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue in educational settings. Drawing on our backgrounds in education, we plan to create viewing guides and study materials to accompany the film.
- **Community Engagement:** We will partner with a network of "boots on the ground" organizations and trusted community leaders to amplify the film's message through screenings and interactive speaker sessions.

### II. Distribution

- **Distribution Team:** Executive Producer, Lorne Price, is an industry veteran with decades of distribution and international sales experience. We will work together to secure the right distribution partner.
- **Film Festivals:** Our robust festival strategy will begin with a hometown launch at the **Santa Barbara International Film Festival** and include high-profile festivals such as **Sundance** and **Toronto**, and festivals highlighting multicultural and social justice themes.
- **Theatrical & Broadcast:** The film lends itself to a limited theatrical run in key markets like Los Angeles and New York, followed by a broadcast and digital strategy targeting major outlets such as **PBS** or **HBO**.
- **Educational:** We will secure a partner such as **Kino Lorber**, **Icarus Films**, or **Kanopy** who can build educational resources to accompany the film for schools and universities.
- **Digital:** Our website, [www.bystanderfilm.com](http://www.bystanderfilm.com), will serve as a hub for educational resources, film clips, and calls to action.



## Our Team



**Jennie Reinish** (*Director/Producer*) began her production career in 1992. She has extensive experience working on feature and documentary films and commercial projects. Jennie spent six years working with legendary film producer Tom Pollock and film director Ivan Reitman at the Montecito Picture Company. Since 2006, Jennie has focused full-time on her production company, Tidepool Pictures. Drawing on her MS in Education, from Northwestern University in 1994, Jennie designed and taught a hands-on filmmaking course to teens, teaching them skills to film and edit projects of their own. Jennie taught for fifteen years, while simultaneously working on a variety of feature and documentary films. Jennie served as a juror for Adobe's Design & Achievement Awards for nine years, providing feedback and mentorship to film students. Between films, Jennie creates videos for local non-profits, small businesses, and individuals through both Tidepool Pictures and her event videography company, Riviera Productions.

Jennie directed and produced the award-winning documentary *Behind the Lines: Fighting a Wildland Fire* and co-produced/directed *The Aphrodite Project*. She was also the cinematographer and producer of two Holocaust-centered documentaries *We Played Marbles* and *Margaret Singer: Seeking Light*. While working on *I Cannot Be a Bystander* Jennie continues to create videos for clients, including a short film for her local synagogue.


Jennie was honored in 2023 with a prestigious California Arts Council Fellowship, a program designed to recognize excellence in the arts.

Jennie's hobbies include nature photography, hiking and travel.





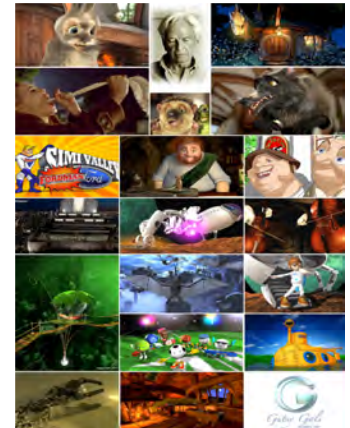
**Abbie Nissenson** (*Producer*) draws upon a diverse skill set and her deeply personal connection to the material. Throughout her twenty-five year career, Abbie has channeled her creative talents and dedication to *tikkun olam* – healing the world – into civic education programming, food and environmental justice movement-building, and production work for film, television, and educational events.



Abbie holds an MS in Public Policy & Management from Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz School and a BA with honors from UCLA. One of the most influential people in Abbie's life – her Grandma Jetti – was a survivor of the Dachau and Auschwitz concentration camps. Despite having endured unimaginable trauma and loss, Jetti lived the rest of her life fiercely caring for loved ones and strangers alike. Perhaps as a result of Abbie's closeness to her grandma, the notion that *no one is safe unless we all are safe* resonates deeply in her bones, and the sense that each of us is obligated to care for one another is a guiding force for her work on this important film.

**Keith English** (*Animation Director/Producer*) In an animation career spanning twenty-eight years, London-born Keith has worked on a wide range of productions from VFX to directing both films and music videos, character animation, scriptwriting, and projects for film festivals, the Cartoon Network, Disney, and legendary filmmaker Jim Cameron. Keith was commissioned to create animation for: a John Lassiter tribute event; a main character in Sam Raimi's film *Drag Me To Hell*; Michael Jackson's *This is It* stage show; and Sony's film *Fall From Grace*.

Keith's company, Screaming Pixels, ([www.screamingpixels.com](http://www.screamingpixels.com)) is a niche animation and design house.





**Lorne Price** (*Executive Producer*) has twenty years of experience in the film and television industry in development, production and distribution. Early in his career, Lorne worked alongside film pioneers John Dunning and Andre Link in a development role. He then worked with producer Ina Fichman at Rock Demers' film company *Le Production La Fête* in development and production.

Most recently, Lorne ran Sphere Films International/WaZabi Films which he co-founded in 2019, which represented some of the best independent arthouse films from Quebec, Canada and around the world. Prior to that, Lorne was the Head of Sales & Market Development at the documentary film powerhouse National Film

Board of Canada for almost fifteen years, responsible for all domestic and international sales and business development.

Lorne has proudly served as an international mentor at the SXSW festival and has served on boards and committees of several organizations in the film industry.



40 2

Liked by bystanderfilmproject and others

repnikema I cannot be a bystander--not when hate is on the rise, not when our freedoms are under attack, not when silence equals complicity. Behind the scenes with the @bystanderfilmproject's upcoming project, #CannotBeABystander, about standing up, speaking out, and showing up. Always.

**I CANNOT BE A BYSTANDER DOCUMENTARY FILM**  
**BUDGET DATE: 8/1/2025**

**PRODUCTION COMPANY:** Tidepool Pictures, LLC   **DIRECTOR/PRODUCER:** Jennifer Reinish  
**PRODUCERS:** Abbie Nissenson and Keith English  
**FORMAT:** Digital   **LENGTH:** 90 min   **LOCATIONS:** U.S. Various   **UNION/GUILD:** Non-Union

<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>637,200</b>
<b>INCOME TO DATE</b>	<b>73,000</b>
<b>FUNDS NEEDED</b>	<b>564,200</b>

<b>Remaining Production and Post-Production Costs</b>	
DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Producing Staff / Above the Line Personnel	261,500
Production Expenses (services and equipment)	97,800
Production Expenses (travel)	38,400
Post-Production	145,500
Promotional Expenses	15,000
Indirect Expenses	6,000
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>564,200</b>

As of August 2025, I Cannot Be a Bystander (ICBAB) has approximately two-thirds of principal photography completed. To film the outstanding pieces for the rough cut, we will need to travel to the remaining interview subjects. We estimate that cost at \$38,400. The post production cost estimate includes animation, composition, editing, sound, and accessibility to ensure that the film has the greatest possible impact. All donations are tax-deductible thorough our Fiscal Sponsor, [Grateful Film Fund](#).



## Contact Us:

Jennie Reinish: +1 (805) 452-7069

[jennie@tidepoolpictures.com](mailto:jennie@tidepoolpictures.com)

Abbie Nissenson: +1 (650) 279-6640

[abbie@301south.net](mailto:abbie@301south.net)

Keith English: +1 (805) 729-5911

[keith@screamingpixels.com](mailto:keith@screamingpixels.com)

Lorne Price: +1 (514) 979-6512

[lorne\\_price@sympatico.ca](mailto:lorne_price@sympatico.ca)

**For more information and to view  
promo videos please visit:**

**[www.bystanderfilm.com](http://www.bystanderfilm.com)**

Thanks to [Grateful Film Fund](#), financial support  
for this film is **tax deductible**.

To make your secure online donation, please  
visit: <https://bystanderfilm.com/donate>

