

# With insights from Hollywood luminaries, report examines why social impact entertainment works

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Credit: University of California, Los Angeles

The Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment (Skoll Center SIE) at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television (UCLA TFT), in partnership with Participant Media, has released a world-class report titled "The State of Social Impact Entertainment." The extensive report not only defines social impact entertainment, but discusses how it works, why it matters and how it can be created.

With commentary from the [entertainment](#) and performing arts industries' leading artists and executives, along with distinguished scholars and educators, "The State of Social Impact Entertainment" maps the landscape of social [impact](#) entertainment, examines frameworks for evaluation, establishes best practices, highlights key issues and corroborates generally accepted impact principles. Robust data, case studies from content creators and collaborators, and a comprehensive interconnected map of the space reinforce the findings in chapters that focus on narrative and [documentary films](#), television, theater and emerging forms.

The financial success seen from these types of media, as well as the accolades they garner, are proof that there's a real hunger for social impact entertainment. Results show that audiences are interested in powerful stories that entertain, engage and inspire—stories that speak to our timeless, universal human condition and to the contemporary zeitgeist.

The report also outlines the business case for social impact entertainment. Advocates in film, television and theater analyze the impact of their work, including, among others:

- Gus Van Sant and Dustin Lance Black—*Milk*
- Terry George and Don Cheadle—*Hotel Rwanda*
- Joshua Oppenheimer—*The Act of Killing*
- Gina Prince-Bythewood—*Love & Basketball*
- Fisher Stevens and Leonardo DiCaprio—*Before the Flood*
- Neal Baer—*ER* and *Law & Order: SVU*
- Eve Ensler—*The Vagina Monologues*
- Reginald Hudlin—*Marshall*
- Oskar Eustis, The Public Theater's Artistic Director—premiered the off-Broadway run of *Hamilton*, among many others
- Cathy Schulman—Producer and President Emerita, Women in

## Film

- Rainn Wilson—Co-founder, SoulPancake

"The State of Social Impact Entertainment," which is broken down into various sections — Narrative Film, Documentary Film, Television, Theater, Emerging Forms, the SIE Agenda and the Bigger Picture — also provides an ecosystem map focused on showing the universe of and relationships between key players across the space. Much like the report itself, this map will be a resource for entertainment industry leaders, artists, scholars, educators, students, SIE practitioners and others interested in the people, companies, institutions and organizations in the SIE space and how they connect to each other through the projects they've worked on.

According to the report, social impact entertainment is an emergent space that is being shaped "not just by the content creators, but also the funders, nonprofits, and academics that help support them." The path leading to the creation of social impact entertainment involves engagement, raising awareness, a change of attitude, mobilization and, ultimately, social change. Shifting demographics, ways of consuming media, changes in consumer taste (wanting/supporting media that also has a double bottom line) all point to a current climate that is ripe for social impact entertainment. This report will serve as a foundation for future research and collaboration, setting the stage for further reports exploring the growing power and potential of social impact entertainment.

Through a range of data, research and commentary from experts across the field, the report breaks down key components of SIE including what works to engage audiences on social issues, why SIE's financial potential is growing considerably, which metrics most accurately reflect its impact, what the established theories of change are and the correlation of these concepts to mainstream Hollywood.

The Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment at UCLA TFT was created by UCLA TFT Dean Teri Schwartz in collaboration with Jeff Skoll, visionary philanthropist, social entrepreneur and founder of Participant Media. In 2014, Skoll made a transformational \$10 million gift to name and endow the Skoll Center SIE at UCLA TFT. This flagship report is an outgrowth of their shared vision for entertainment and performing arts to inspire and drive social impact. One of The Center's goals is to help the next generation of industry leaders, creative talent and scholars shape their work by embedding the ideals of social impact entertainment into their stories, their leadership decisions, their research and their careers. With research, education and public engagement serving as the pillars upon which the Skoll Center SIE is built, another key goal is to bring together groups that don't often connect around the topic of storytelling, serving as a hub for foundations, social entrepreneurs, non-profits, philanthropists, corporations, and the creative community, that need a resource to create new ways to connect and tell stories that make a difference.

"There is no secret formula for success in Social Impact Entertainment, just as there is no formula for entertainment. As "The State of SIE" reveals, however, there are approaches that tend to yield greater dividends. Ultimately, this report aims to serve as a guidebook for industry leaders and storytellers who want to engage others in solving challenges that are often too complex for any single hero to save the day. For those hoping to make a difference in this world, the spotlight has never been brighter," says Peter Bisanz, executive director of the Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment. "Whether you're the head of a studio looking to develop a social impact team, a filmmaker trying to learn how to create a social impact campaign, or an educator doing high-level impact research, this report is designed to help you create work that makes a positive difference in the world."

"Social impact entertainment is an idea whose time has come," says

Schwartz. "As our world has become more complex and challenging, artists, scholars, educators and industry leaders are realizing the true value of social impact entertainment — not just in terms of moving and changing people from all walks of life by creating deeper meaning and connections for all of us, but also by a new-found belief in the double bottom line: that you can do well and do good in life. I am very proud and grateful that we are launching this inaugural research report, in partnership with Participant Media, and sharing it widely around the world. All of the remarkable artists, executives, game changers, innovators, thought leaders and educators have contributed brilliantly to this first year's success. We look forward to the Skoll Center SIE's annual report, along with other social impact research and special activities, becoming an important mainstay for the entertainment and performing arts industry, key organizations, and educational institutions. It's an exciting time for SIE and we're very thankful to Jeff Skoll for his generosity and belief in us at UCLA TFT to be the home for this great work."

Participant Media, the leading media company which has had an historic year with its Academy Award-winning films *Green Book* and *Roma*, as well as acclaimed, award-winning documentaries *RBG* and *America to Me*, was founded on the belief that a story well-told has the power to inspire and engage audiences toward positive social action. David Linde, CEO of Participant Media, says: "For the last 15 years, Participant has been a vital link between artists, who have a unique ability to see around the corner and craft stories that bring bubbling societal issues to the forefront, and consumers, whose actions increasingly help make meaningful, lasting change around the world. This union of telling stories that matter and accelerating solutions that endure is at the heart of impact media. In a world that is more interconnected than ever before, we embrace the immense opportunity for impact media to catalyze change, and the responsibility to unlock even more resources that can inspire, empower and connect more people to fight for a more peaceful

and just world."

**More information:** The State of Social Impact Entertainment:  
[thestateofsie.com/](http://thestateofsie.com/)

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

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