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Dear Better Angels Donors and Friends,

As we sit down to write this, very few things remain as they did when we wrote our update last year. Our nation is straining under the weight of a global pandemic and struggling to address the racial and social inequalities that have plagued our democracy for generations.

Through your support, we have been able to advance unity and understanding in the face of a national crisis. The Better Angels Society is proud to support education and dialogue centered around America’s past, helping us navigate the choppy waters of our present.

Although we are living in uncertain times, there is still much joy to be found. This past year we witnessed the unifying power of documentary films through the inaugural Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film, the premieres of Country Music and College Behind Bars, and the launch and expansion of Ken Burns in the Classroom.

“American History Nights” on PBS featured rebroadcasts of Ken’s most prolific films, allowing families to gather together, enjoying quality time while learning about the roots of our republic. A large portion of Ken’s filmography was released on several streaming platforms, making these films more accessible than ever before.

Our colleagues at PBS LearningMedia and Ken Burns in the Classroom raced to provide students and educators with even more resources as the country transitioned to distance learning. We are so grateful for the Better Angels who support our education initiatives, as their generosity enhanced PBS’s capacity to create online lesson plans and sponsor live conversations with Ken Burns and educators.

After the success of the inaugural Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film, we are happy to report that the prize is continuing to grow in notoriety, impact, and prestige. We received twice as many submissions this year as we did in the first year. Due to COVID-19, this year’s prize ceremony will be held virtually, which will allow more people than ever to participate. We look forward to celebrating this year’s prize winners with you on October 20, 2020 at 7 p.m. Eastern.

We hope that as you read the following pages, you feel the same pride as we do about the amount of work being done in the name of The Better Angels Society. It is because of your dedication to American history education that we are able to weave this beautiful quilt of America’s stories.

Amy Margerum Berg
President, The Better Angels Society

Bobby Stein
Chairman, The Better Angels Society
Board of Directors

BOBBY STEIN, CHAIR*
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Artist

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President, Robert H. Smith Family Foundation

PETER THOREN
Executive Vice President, Access Industries

*Denotes Executive Committee Members

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REBECCA NORDSTROM
KENNETH ROSENTHAL
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Next Generation Advisory Board

GREG GOLKIN, CHAIR
CHARLIE HELLMAN
ERIC OBENG
ALEXA VON TOBEL

Our Mission

The Better Angels Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating Americans about their history through documentary film.
Through the generosity of Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine and our partners at the Library of Congress, The Better Angels Society has concluded the second year of its newly established major program, the Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film. The 2020 contest attracted twice the number of submissions as the first year, and these films were reviewed through the summer by Library of Congress film experts, nationally recognized documentary filmmakers, and some of our nation’s most prominent historians.

The Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film is a $200,000 cash award made possible by the Lavines’ generous endowment and presented annually to one exemplary American history documentary film for post-production and finishing costs, including outreach and marketing. The prize is designed to advance and elevate feature-length American historical documentary filmmaking in the tradition of Ken Burns, and encourage a growing community of history documentary filmmakers working on bringing America’s stories to light. Supplemental prizes of $50,000 (awarded to the runner-up) and $25,000 (awarded to four finalists) are made possible by The Better Angels Society.

As a result of the 2019 Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film awards, last year’s winners and runner-ups have successfully finished and broadcast their films. The winner, Flannery, premiered in virtual theaters across the country this summer, and Mae West was broadcast nationally on PBS American Masters. Directors of the finalist project 9to5: The Story of a Movement, Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert, won an Academy Award for Best Documentary for their other film, American Factory.

The Better Angels Society is proud to have established this official partnership with the Library of Congress, which, through the Lavines’ funding, ensures that more ideologically balanced, carefully researched, compelling histories will find their way onto America’s screens and laptops, and into the national conversation.

2020 Prize Jury

Andrew Delbanco  Dawn Porter  Edward Ayers  Rachel Dretzin  Elizabeth Coffman
A Note from Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine

Whenever you launch a new initiative, you are never quite sure how it will work out — even with a lot of thoughtful planning and careful execution. When we saw the entries for the inaugural Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film, we were overwhelmed with the quality of work submitted. It confirms the need to support such important, historical storytelling, and the value the prize provides for filmmakers laboring to get their projects in front of an audience.

Our nation’s current challenges underscore the importance of understanding and learning from history. Ken Burns has been a teacher through his own films, and we’re proud to join him, The Better Angels Society, and the Library of Congress in supporting the next generation of documentary filmmakers.

“We believe an understanding of history is critical to a healthy democracy.”

– Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine, Better Angels

About the Crimson Lion/Lavine Family Foundation

Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine established the Crimson Lion/Lavine Family Foundation to focus a significant portion of their philanthropic efforts toward leveling the playing field for individuals and families. The Foundation works to address pressing social challenges in the areas of education, community and public service, health and welfare, and discrimination and poverty. The Foundation supports the multidisciplinary efforts of organizations that serve to strengthen society through research, innovation, public policy, direct service, and advocacy.

Other projects supported by Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine include Defying the Nazis: The Sharp’s War (2016), The Vietnam War (2017), The Holocaust & the United States (2021), Benjamin Franklin (2022), The American Revolution (2025), and LBJ & the Great Society (2027).

For more information on these films, visit www.thebetterangelsociety.org/we-support/films
2020 Next Generation Angels Awards

The Better Angels Society’s Next Generation Angels Awards are presented annually to the first, second, and third place Individual Documentary winners in the junior and senior divisions of the National History Day organization’s national contest. Student filmmakers begin their journey with National History Day at the local level by presenting history documentary films in the mold of Ken Burns in their own classrooms and schools, and progress to regional and ultimately a national competition involving thousands of middle and high school students from every state and US territory all over the world.

Last fall, through the support of The Better Angels Society, the 2019 student winners and their chaperones traveled to Washington, DC, for an all-expenses-paid, three-day excursion of events celebrating their work, which included spending time with Ken Burns, receiving copyrights for their films from the Library of Congress, and screening their films before a live audience of more than 250 students.

In light of the pandemic, The Better Angels Society has shifted gears to provide a series of virtual events to honor and promote the 2020 winners’ exceptional history documentaries. The Next Generation Angels Awards winners will participate in a virtual film festival involving thousands of teachers and homeschooling students as the virtual audience, a copyright presentation ceremony with the Library of Congress, and exclusive mentorship sessions from Florentine Films filmmakers and Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film awardees.

Throughout the course of the year spent researching their topics, the Next Generation Angels Awards winners delve deeply into archival collections of historic film footage, photographs, sound recordings, and documents. They study the films of Ken Burns and conduct interviews in his style, and they write and record the narration that knits their stories together. The Better Angels Society is proud to recognize and honor these students, who are the next generation of American history lovers and historians, and who serve as an inspiration to their fellow students and to all of us, reminding us how powerful history is as a tool for academic growth, empowerment, and civic discourse.

The Next Generation Angels Awards program was established and funded by The Better Angels Society as a youth complement to the Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film. A major donor is sought to endow this program, which works in partnership with the National History Day organization and offers national donor recognition opportunities, at the $1 million level.

The Next Generation Angels Awards winners will share their documentaries with thousands of students during this virtual film festival.
Announcing the 2020 Next Generation Angels Awards Winners

Award winners’ videos are hosted at [www.thebetterangelsociety.org/we-support/next-generation](http://www.thebetterangelsociety.org/we-support/next-generation)

**Middle School Division**

2019 Next Generation Angels Awards winners with Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden

**FIRST PLACE**

**Allison Reed** | Kansas

**Film Title:** *All the World Loves a Baby: Breaking the Two Pound Barrier*

**SECOND PLACE**

**Rishit Shaquib** | Florida

**Film Title:** *Harvey Wiley: The Man Who Changed America One Bite at a Time*

**THIRD PLACE**

**Caroline Bruton** | Virginia

**Film Title:** *Penicillin: Breaking Bacterial Barriers*

**High School Division**

2019 Next Generation Angels Awards winners with George Thuronyi, the deputy director of public information and Education at the US Copyright Office

**FIRST PLACE**

**Summer Royal** | Hawaii

**Film Title:** *The Tereshkova Effect: The Role of Propaganda in Breaking Barriers*

**SECOND PLACE**

**Sophia Alleman** | Ohio

**Film Title:** *FDR and REA: Bringing Light and Power to Rural America*

**THIRD PLACE**

**Giuliana Alleva** | Pennsylvania

**Film Title:** *“Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work”: Leon Sullivan’s Fight Against Job Discrimination*
Country Music

The premier of Country Music in September 2019 was a resounding success with over 34.5 million unique viewers tuning in. The film’s first five installments marked PBS’s most-watched primetime telecasts of the 2018-2019 broadcast season, and Ken Burns’s most-watched film since 2014’s The Roosevelts. In an interview with Rolling Stone about her role in the film, Roseanne Cash said, “They connected every dot, from Appalachia to Bob Wills to Bakersfield to my dad. It was artfully done, and so moving.”

The Better Angels Society brought together a dedicated, enthusiastic, and fun-loving group of philanthropists to support the production and educational resources of this groundbreaking film on one of America’s oldest cultural institutions. Longtime Better Angels Jon and Deborah Dawson chose to give to Country Music because of their belief in Ken Burns’s work and its cultural significance. Jon explains:

It’s always our choice in philanthropy to support excellence. Ken Burns has set the standard in excellence in documentary filmmaking. We also believe passionately in the importance of history and the teaching of it. We see Ken’s films as an incredibly important educational tool — both for the adults who find them when they air on PBS and for the kids and young adults whose teachers assign them year after year.

We have an ongoing commitment to The Better Angels Society, because we are well aware of how much these great American history documentaries depend on people like us for support. Deborah and I realize PBS funding doesn’t go as far as it did ten years ago, and both the level of PBS funding and the certainty around it are diminishing. That’s why we were proud to be sponsors of Country Music, and why, year after year, we recommit to supporting the excellence and educational value that Ken Burns gives us all through The Better Angels Society.

“People are pulling off the road traveling I-81 just to stop in because they saw Country Music. We have had visitors from Detroit, Seattle, Little Rock, Chicago, and many other remote-to-Bristol locations show up in the past month.”

— Keith Liskey, board member, Birthplace of Country Music Museum, Bristol VA
Interview with Tom and Bonnie McCloskey, Better Angels and Muhammad Ali Donors

In addition to funding *Muhammad Ali*, the McCloskeys have also supported *The Roosevelts, The Vietnam War, College Behind Bars, Benjamin Franklin, American Revolution*, and *Leonardo da Vinci*.

**Why do you think the Ali film is relevant to today?**

Pretty much everyone feels Ali was a great athlete, but more importantly, he was a principled activist who endured tremendous personal sacrifice for his beliefs. Most young people (if they remember him at all) know about his achievements in the ring. While his athletic accomplishments are undeniable, he demonstrated that commitment to principles is paramount and, like boxing, takes no small measure of courage. Ali remained steadfastly committed to his faith despite the personal costs, and ultimately prevailed. He is a positive role model for activism, particularly at this point in our country, and nobody will tell his story better than Ken.

**What made you decide to support the film?**

Bonnie and I know Ken well and have supported his projects over the years. His ongoing commitment to excellence has spoken for itself over the last 40 years.

**Why do you think American history documentary films are important to our country’s democracy?**

Philosopher George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.” American history documentaries provide all of us with a critical perspective of our nation’s accomplishments and mistakes so we can identify and avoid possible future missteps, and continue to improve and evolve as an independent and free society. Pretty important, don’t you think?

> “Through his storytelling, Ken revives our often dormant moral conscience while giving a voice to the voiceless. He is a national treasure.”

— Ron Moultrie, Board Secretary, *The Better Angels Society*
When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Lynn Novick, who in 2019 released College Behind Bars, the documentary series she made with producer Sarah Botstein and executive producer Ken Burns, sprang into action finding alternative ways to bring their newly released film to people across the country — virtually. “There was a steep learning curve, but I think in the end we were able to make the most of it” says Novick. “In a way, we got to have many more personal conversations because we were connecting with people where they are.”

For Novick, that is the power of documentary film. Quoting the great civil rights lawyer and historian Brian Stevenson, she says that to understand and deal with a problem, “we need to have proximity to it.” Correctional facilities, by design, are walled off, inaccessible for the majority of the population, and because of that, Novick and Botstein felt the story of incarcerated men and women trying to earn college degrees was “the kind of story for which the medium of documentary is ideally suited.” Novick continues:

The camera, the documentary, takes you to a place most of us never see. Unless you have been incarcerated yourself — which tragically is the case for millions of Americans — even those of us who have loved ones who are incarcerated can’t necessarily know what it’s really like. The documentary can provide a kind of intimacy and a proximity, albeit one step removed. Sarah and I are so grateful to the students who were so generous, who believed in the film and shared their stories with us. Their lived experience of growing up in America, many of them in marginalized communities of color, of attending underresourced, inadequate schools, of ending up in the criminal justice system, and of trying to transform themselves through education. It’s far too easy for most of us, I think, when you’re talking about huge social problems, daunting statistics, to say, “Oh, that’s too bad,” and move on. When you’re confronted with an actual human being who’s telling you their story, it’s harder to say, “Oh, that’s too bad.” Their stories are even more relevant and resonant today as the country reckons with racism and equity in a such deep and unprecedented way.

Novick’s upcoming eight-hour documentary film series, The History of Crime and Punishment in America, will explore the 400-year history of criminal justice and injustice — in America, from the 1600s to the early 21st century. The series will unfold chronologically and will largely be told through the lived experiences of individuals whose personal stories will bring this sweeping, epic story to life.

The series will “illuminate the promise embedded in America’s foundational ideals of equality, justice, and freedom, and the human cost of our failure to live up to those ideals,” Novick says. In revealing how our system of criminal justice has evolved, the film will challenge assumptions about what prison should be for — physical or psychological punishment, containment, social control, deterrence, retribution, rehabilitation, redemption — and about who belongs inside it. The series will address central issues of race, ethnicity, and class, and the fairness (or lack of it) involved in deciding who is to be punished and who walks free. And through it all, she and her team of filmmakers will try to provide answers to a question more urgent now than ever: Why, after 237 years of independence, are 2.2 million men and women incarcerated in America, the largest prison population on earth?

Novick says that she is still at the early stages of the project. “College Behind Bars in a way feels like the last chapter, and now we’re going to go way back to the beginning to figure out how we got to where we are. One of the things that I’m excited about is that there is so much that I still don’t know, that our viewers probably won’t know. The idea for this project is to take the story of our system of criminal punishment and look anew at American history through that lens. Each project informs the next, and this one will inform what comes next too.”
The four-part, eight-hour documentary film *Muhammad Ali* is set to air on PBS in the fall of 2021. Ali was one of the best-known figures of the 20th century, a three-time heavyweight boxing champion who captivated millions of fans throughout the world with his mesmerizing combination of speed, grace, and power in the ring, and charm and playful boasting outside of it. At the height of his fame, he took American life— the racial prejudices, the religious biases, the role of celebrities, the role of sports in society—and refashioned it in his own image.

His brazen outspokenness and unsurpassed boxing skills made him a heroic symbol of Black masculinity to African Americans across the country, yet at times he seemed to take pride in humiliating his Black opponents. In an age of sit-ins and freedom rides aimed at ending segregation, his deep ties to the Nation of Islam, a Black nationalist organization that preached separation, made him, for a time, among the most feared and reviled men in the country. At the peak of his ability, he bravely sacrificed his career by refusing to go to war in Vietnam — and though he was condemned for it, Ali would later be celebrated as a principled pacifist.

“Tested time and time again by a society that demanded he conform to its racialized standards, Ali remained resolutely true to himself, no matter the cost, and we’re often astonished and inspired by how deeply his words and actions still resonate today among people of all walks of life,” noted director Dave McMahon.

The *Muhammad Ali* team uncovered what they believe to be the oldest extant moving image material of young Cassius Clay, weighing in for an amateur boxing competition at age 14, deep in Louisville’s WHAS-TV archives, a local collection that has never before been accessed by an archival researcher outside of the station. Other highlights from that collection include interviews with Clay’s grandmother and classmates at his high school, as well as many hours of footage that will help the filmmakers set the scene of Clay’s childhood in Louisville.

Major donor funding for *Muhammad Ali* is still needed to support production and educational-resource-related needs before the documentary series airs and streams nationally on PBS.
Educational Resources during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the nation’s transition to remote learning, Ken Burns, PBS, and The Better Angels Society have been actively supporting educators, parents, and students as they develop new methods of teaching and learning about American history.

As a response to the pandemic, The Better Angels Society provided a grant to PBS LearningMedia to expand and accelerate educational resources related to Ken Burns in the Classroom, a website that provides free access for teachers and students across the country to Burns’ film clips and offers discussion themes and lesson plans that support social studies and history curricular standards.

Over one million people visited Ken Burns in the Classroom in the first half of 2020, and user traffic increased by 79 percent.

The Ken Burns UNUM platform, a PBS website made possible by a generous gift from Better Angel David Rubenstein, unveiled a beautiful makeover for 2020, which allows the site to be utilized by thousands more students and teachers during distance learning.

Ken Burns UNUM allows armchair historians, teachers, and students the opportunity to create video playlists from across Burns’s filmography. This year, with virtual learning mandated, these playlists are especially important to students because they directly correspond to the Advanced Placement United States History curriculum. UNUM plays a vital role in helping students prepare for their exams and encourages them to think critically about how themes in American history can be connected to contemporary challenges.

Additionally, both Burns and Lynn Novick held several virtual events that showcased how relevant their ideologically balanced American history documentary films can be to the national discourse, especially in times of crisis.

In early April, Burns partnered with the National Constitution Center to host a free conversation for students and teachers on “The Constitution in Times of Crisis.” Burns and Jeffrey Rosen, the center’s CEO and president, discussed the transformational moments of the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the New Deal and the effect they had on the Constitution.

PBS also hosted an exclusive conversation with Burns for teachers facing the challenges of virtual learning, on how to support students remotely and ignite their passion for US history through Ken Burns films. Over 4,000 educators participated in this live discussion. They had the opportunity to ask Burns questions about how to help students make connections between the past and present.

In May, the New York City Department of Education held a College Behind Bars screening and training webinar with 500 administrators and teachers from the nation’s largest public school system. Film director Lynn Novick, Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) graduates Giovannie Hernandez and Sebastian Yoon, BPI founder and Executive Director Max Kenner, and the chancellor and first deputy chancellor of the New York City Department of Education engaged in a powerful discussion about the transformative power of education, and how to bring College Behind Bars into classrooms.

“I literally don’t have the sufficient words to express how absolutely wonderful tonight was,” Chancellor Richard Carranza said after the event. “Inspirational. Transformative. Uplifting. Thank you for such an important story that you’ve told. Giovannie and Max are incredibly powerful testaments to the power of believing in people and their better angels. Thank you.”

Follow UNUM on Social Media

@UNUMKenBurns
In February 2020, The Better Angels Society, in continued partnership with Georgetown University, held their second annual Courageous Conversations event together.

The series aims to underscore the relevance and impact historical documentaries can have on academic and public life in our democracy. This year’s public event conversation focused on the timely topic of immigration.

Georgetown students had the opportunity to attend an intimate classroom event with Ken Burns and Chris Celenza, dean of Georgetown College, entitled “Conducting Interviews and Truth in Storytelling.” Burns and the students engaged in an animated conversation about narrative-building, his personal interview methodology, and his well-honed technique piecing together the intricate web of American history.

Later that day, Georgetown University President Jack DeGioia joined Burns onstage in one of Georgetown’s largest auditoriums, which was filled with both students and members of the general public. The event began with a clip reel entitled “Immigration: Views on Liberty,” exploring themes around immigration as seen in Burns’s work.

Through Burns’s digital platform, UNUM, short segments were shown from Prohibition, The West, and The War, with special clips from The Statue of Liberty featuring brothers (and now lieutenant colonels) Yevgeny and Alexander Vindman as young children describing their experiences coming to the United States from Ukraine. Both brothers were in the audience that evening and received a sustained standing ovation when introduced.

The presentation was followed by a panel discussion on immigration history, literature, and policy moderated by Celenza, which featured top faculty from Georgetown College and Georgetown Law School. The event closed with a conversation on stage revolving around storytelling and civic dialogue with President DeGioia and Burns.

Through partnering with top-tier colleges and universities, The Better Angels Society is advancing the practical application of history documentary filmmaking as a tool in strengthening our nation at a time when finding common ground and understanding has never been more urgent.
## FINANCIAL DATA BASED ON AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2017 - 2019

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In 2019 TBAS raised $20.2 million in contributions and grants and regranted $8.4 million of both current and prior years' donations. Over the past five years, the Society has raised over $77 million and has made grants to support documentary film and education totaling $37 million. The 2017-2019 financial statements of The Better Angels Society were audited by Marcum LLP (formerly Raffa, Inc.).
OVER $100 MILLION RAISED FOR FILMS AND OTHER PROJECTS AS OF 6/30/2020*

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<td>$93,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internship Program</td>
<td>$31,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Projects</td>
<td>$19,500</td>
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<td>Designated for Future Projects</td>
<td>$1,785,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Parks</td>
<td>$455,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dust Bowl</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
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— President Abraham Lincoln, first inaugural address, March 1861