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Dear Better Angels and Friends,

Ken Burns credits Mark Twain with having said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it rhymes,” and 2022 seems to have been a testament to that. Major gifts provided by our generous Better Angels made it possible for our organization to play a significant role in funding Florentine Films’ *The U.S. and the Holocaust*, which aired and streamed last year on PBS, sparking and informing a global conversation at a time when it is hauntingly relevant.

In addition, our donors’ funding supported a collaboration between PBS, Florentine Films, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to create the profound educational materials that will accompany this film for many years to come. Ken Burns, Lynn Novick, and Sarah Botstein have said that this is among the most important and influential projects that they have ever produced. We’ve long recognized that history documentary films are vital to the national conversation and offer an unparalleled catalyst for civic and educational engagement. We are so grateful to those who share our appreciation for the power of history.

A decade ago we set out to become the preeminent organization supporting American history documentary filmmakers, and we are so proud of how far we’ve come. With your support of the important work of Ken Burns and his team, and other American history documentary filmmakers through our Better Angels Stories initiative, we have funded more uniquely American stories than ever before. In 2022 our partnerships with PBS’s *American Masters* and *American Experience* flourished, allowing us to help support more than a dozen high-quality historical documentaries broadcast on PBS in 2022 and 2023.

In 2022 we celebrated the Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film by congratulating two winning films: *Philly on Fire* and *Bella! This Woman’s Place is in The House*, alongside four other finalists telling America’s stories. For the first time since our inaugural Prize in 2019, we had the opportunity to gather together in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress for our award ceremony, celebrating with bipartisan representation from members of Congress and bringing together the wide community of filmmakers that this Prize honors each year.

In addition to funding the Prize, Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine make possible a related annual program run by The Better Angels Society—the Better Angels Lavine Fellowship. This program offers filmmakers support and professional development from a range of expert advisors. We recently announced the fourth annual class of Lavine Fellows, and look forward to introducing these talented filmmakers and their films to you in this report.

We hope that as you read the following pages, you feel the same pride we do about the mission of The Better Angels Society. We are deeply gratified and encouraged that the community of generous philanthropists that made our work possible when we began over a decade ago has remained loyal and grown even more generous with every passing year.

Amy Margerum Berg
President

Bobby Stein
Chair

Our Mission

The Better Angels Society’s mission is to be the preeminent organization supporting American history documentary filmmakers, advancing the use of their body of work to promote civic engagement and educate generations of students and lifelong learners.
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THE BETTER ANGELS SOCIETY | 3
The **Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize** for Film is a $200,000 cash award made possible through a generous endowment from Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine. It is presented annually to one exemplary American history documentary film to cover post-production and finishing costs, including outreach and marketing. The Prize is designed to advance and elevate feature-length U.S. 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.

Each year the submissions are subject to a lengthy selection process that includes experts from the Library of Congress, nationally recognized documentary filmmakers, and some of our nation’s most prominent historians.

The 2022 **Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film** was awarded at a ceremony on October 18, 2022 in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress, with Members of Congress including Senator Roy Blunt (MO) and Representative Jamie Raskin (MD) attending, as well as prominent filmmakers, academics, thought leaders, and distinguished public media professionals who gathered to honor the importance of history documentary filmmaking. The award was presented to two winners in a tie decision: **Bella!**, directed by Jeff L. Lieberman, and **Philly on Fire**, directed by Ross Hockrow and Tommy Walker. These films each received a $200,000 cash award.

The finalists were **Cannabis Buyers Club** (Directed by Kip Andersen & Chris O’Connell), **Imagining The Indian: The Fight Against Native American Mascoting** (Directed by Aviva Kempner & Ben West), **Raymond Lewis: L.A. Legend** (Directed by Ryan Polomski & Co-Directed by Dean Prator), and **Virgil Thomson: Creating The American Sound** (Directed by John Paulson).

The Better Angels Society is proud to have established this official partnership with the Library of Congress which is only possible through the generosity of Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine through the Crimson Lion/Lavine Family Foundation. Together we are working to ensure that more ideologically balanced, carefully researched, compelling histories will be made accessible to the public and help guide our national conversation.
The Better Angels Lavine Fellowship program was established in 2020 as a component of the Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film. The Lavine Fellowship is made possible by The Better Angels Society and Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine through the Crimson Lion/Lavine Family Foundation.

The Fellows are selected in January through their application for the Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film. Film projects that demonstrate exceptional potential, especially those with an emphasis on telling the stories of America’s diversity, receive support, guidance, and advice from a panel of expert filmmakers. These experts have experience in all aspects of history documentary filmmaking, including archival research and rights-related issues, legal matters, script writing, distribution, marketing and more. The Fellows also participate in a series of group workshops with experts from the film industry, including one with PBS.

This program is yet another way The Better Angels Society—through generous donors like the Lavines—supports both humanistic inquiry and public media.

Below are the 5 films and filmmakers selected for the 2023 Better Angels Lavine Fellowship.

15th PARISH
Directed by Ben DiGiacomo
The story of New York City’s dancehall culture told by its legendary participants, from early pioneers to present-day megastars Shaggy and Sean Paul. 15th Parish creates a coherent account of dancehall as a New York immigrant evolution of shared Jamaican identity and cultural pride.

NEW WAVE
Directed by Elizabeth Ai
Mile-high hair. Synthesized music. Underground parties. The “Vietnamese new wave” scene of 1980s California was the catalyst to healing a generation of refugees in limbo. NEW WAVE is the coming-of-age story about trailblazers who pioneered a raucous music scene and inspired their community to rebuild in the wake of war.

PHOTOGRAPHIC JUSTICE: THE CORKY LEE STORY
Directed by Jennifer Takaki
Using his camera as a “weapon against injustice,” Chinese American photographer Corky Lee brought art and politics together through decades of documentation of the Asian American experience. From Lunar New Year to street protests, Pakistani Independence Day to Diwali, Lee’s photographs empowered generations of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) pride. Filmmaker Jennifer Takaki’s unprecedented access reveals the triumphs and tragedies of the man behind the camera.

REMEMBERING WOODBINE
Directed by Patrick Longstreth
In 1971 an explosion at the Thiokol Chemical Plant in Woodbine, Georgia took the lives of 29 workers, predominantly Black women. The explosion was one of the worst industrial disasters in U.S. history, and it was caused by the U.S. government’s misclassification of material being used to make trip flares for the Vietnam War. Interviews with survivors, relatives, and first responders retrace the events of that day and their lasting effects on the community.

SECOND GROWTH
Directed by Robert Carpenter
Lacrosse is an ancient, Indigenous pastime, played on North American shores long before the first settlers arrived. In the late 1800s, colonists appropriated the game and turned it into lacrosse, which has become a major contemporary sport. Second Growth tells the story of the Indigenous lacrosse journey to regain agency in modern lacrosse and use this platform as the foundation of a larger cultural movement.
The Better Angels Society is immensely proud to run The Next Generation Angels Awards, a program designed to recognize the excellence and achievement of six student history documentary filmmakers who embody the future of American storytelling. Through their participation in National History Day®, these students create original American history documentary films that compete locally, regionally, and nationally before they are selected as Next Generation Angels.

While creating their documentaries, The Next Generation Angels Award winners delve into archival collections of film, photography, sound recordings, and documents before submitting their 10-minute films to the National History Day® contest, which attracts thousands of entries from middle and high school students. The top films selected from both the Junior and Senior categories become the six Next Generation Angels Award winners.

On November 30, 2022, through a new collaboration with the Philadelphia Film Society, middle and high school students gathered—virtually and in the Philadelphia Film Society’s main theater—to watch the Fourth Annual Student History Documentary Film Festival, a virtual event where the winners and their films were featured in interviews with Mike Mashon, Head of the Moving Images Section of the Library of Congress.

In addition to the live festival, this collaboration between The Better Angels Society and the Philadelphia Film Society led to the creation of educational resources for teachers and students, making it easier for more students to explore the field of documentary filmmaking. This curricula is a guide to the history documentary-making process, highlighting the narrative, research, and artistic techniques inherent in filmmaking.

“Throughout this experience, I have learned a great deal about the world of filmmaking and most memorably, had the opportunity to engage with filmmakers who have dedicated their lives to creating pieces of art to share with the world. I have always had a love for documentaries, especially historical films. Speaking with Ken Burns, one of the most iconic historical filmmakers in the history of the craft, was a moment that I will never forget.”

– Maci Hill,
1st Place, Senior Division (2022)
Communist in the Cornfields: Roswell Garst’s Citizen Diplomacy

The Next Generation Angels Awards are funded thanks to the generosity of John and Jessica Fullerton, who have pledged to support this program for ten years. These awards were established by The Better Angels Society as a youth complement to The Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film.
This film will tell the story of Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci, best known as Leonardo da Vinci, a 15th century Italian polymath of soaring imagination and profound intellect, who left behind artistic works of staggering beauty and detailed sketches of futuristic contraptions of warfare and flight that today are marveled at for their technical ingenuity and foresight.

From his birth out of wedlock to a notary and peasant woman and apprenticeship to a distinguished Florentine painter, to his days as a military architect, cartographer, sculptor, and muralist for hire, the film will offer an intimate portrait of a singular visionary whose Mona Lisa, The Last Supper and The Vitruvian Man are among the most celebrated works known to man, but whose artistic endeavors sometimes seemed an afterthought to his pursuits in science and engineering.

Set against a rich and dynamic backdrop of Renaissance Italy, at a time of skepticism and free-thinking, regional war and religious upheaval, Leonardo da Vinci will bring Leonardo and his towering achievements to life through his voluminous personal notebooks, primary and secondary accounts of his life and times, and on-camera interviews with modern scholars, artists, engineers, inventors, and admirers.

Directed and produced by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, and David McMahon, written by David McMahon and Sarah Burns, and executive produced by Ken Burns, Leonardo da Vinci is slated for broadcast on PBS in 2024.

“It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things.”

— Leonardo da Vinci

Saint John the Baptist, Leonardo da Vinci

Upcoming Films

- The American Buffalo | October 16-17, 2023
- Leonardo da Vinci | 2024
- The American Revolution | 2025
- Crime and Punishment in America | 2026
- Emancipation to Exodus | 2026/2027
- LBJ & The Great Society | 2027
The initial broadcast of *The U.S. and the Holocaust* exceeded all expectations. As the first documentary series to examine the Holocaust from an American perspective, the comprehensive educational resources and community engagement programs associated with the film will ensure its enduring impact.
The film aired at a time of rising antisemitism, providing viewers with a detailed look at the history of antisemitism in the U.S. and abroad. Its premiere reached more than 16.5 million viewers in the U.S, representing a 260% increase from the PBS primetime average. PBS launched a nationwide rebroadcast in January and interest in the film was equally strong internationally. (Source: WETA)

*The U.S. and the Holocaust* received widespread critical acclaim, with reviewers highlighting the many ways in which its themes resonate at a time of intense divisions worldwide. Many critics praised the film’s ability to promote constructive dialogue across political boundaries. In the U.K., *The Sunday Times* described the film as a “diligent, absorbing, serious, committed piece of astounding television.”

For all Florentine Film projects, the generosity of Better Angels allows for the public broadcast and distribution of each film, as well as the development of rich educational resources. The educational materials that accompanied *The U.S. and the Holocaust* are the result of a collaboration between PBS LearningMedia and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, with the support and input of other leading Holocaust education experts.

*The U.S. and the Holocaust* was made under uniquely challenging conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The successful completion of the film would not have been possible without the unwavering support of these generous donors:

Jeannie and Jonathan Lavine; Jan and Rick Cohen; Allan and Shelley Holt; Koret Foundation; David and Susan Kreisman; Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder; Blavatnik Family Foundation; Crown Family Philanthropies honoring the Crown and Goodman families; Fullerton Family Charitable Fund; Dr. Georgette Bennett and Dr. Leonard Polonsky; The Russell Berrie Foundation; Diane and Hal Brierley; John and Catherine Debs; Leah Joy Zell and the Joy Foundation.
Better Angels Stories

As part of our growing Better Angels Stories initiative, the Society has committed to supporting a wide array of historical documentary films bringing the most important untold stories of American history to life on PBS through GBH’s American Experience, WNET’s American Masters, and other films broadcast on public media. Our goal is to ensure that these vital, complex narratives can be brought to millions of PBS viewers across the country.

THE ADVENTURES OF SAUL BELLOW
(American Masters, WNET)
Broadcast December 12, 2022


“We’re thrilled with our partnership with The Better Angels Society. This remarkable community helps us do what we do best: illustrate the creative journeys of America’s most captivating historical figures through documentary film for a broad and diverse national audience.”

– MICHAEL KANTOR (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, AMERICAN MASTERS/WNET)
ZORA NEALE HURSTON: CLAIMING A SPACE
(American Experience, GBH)
Broadcast January 17, 2023

Raised in the small all-Black Florida town of Eatonville, Zora Neale Hurston studied at Howard University before arriving in New York in 1925. She would soon become a key figure of the Harlem Renaissance, best remembered for her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. But even as she gained renown in the Harlem literary circles, Hurston was also discovering anthropology at Barnard College with the renowned Franz Boas. She would make several trips to the American South and the Caribbean, documenting the lives of rural Black people and collecting their stories. She studied her own people, an unusual practice at the time, and during her lifetime became known as the foremost authority on Black folklore. Directed by Tracy Heather Strain, produced by Randall MacLowry, and executive produced by Cameo George.

“Support from members of The Better Angels Society helps us present to the public diverse, compelling, and often untold stories about some of America’s most intriguing historical figures and moments.”

– CAMEO GEORGE (Executive Producer, American Experience/GBH)
### Data Based on Audited Financial Statements

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In 2022, TBAS raised $8.7 million in contributions and regranted $9.4 million of both current and prior years’ donations. Over the past five years, the Society has raised over $62.9 million and has granted $58.3 million to support documentary filmmakers, advancing their work to promote civic engagement and to provide educational opportunities.
As The Better Angels Society enters its second decade, we have expanded our work beyond the films of Ken Burns and his team to include programs that support Ken’s legacy and elevate the untold stories of American history. These important programs are represented below.

PROGRAM DIVERSIFICATION BY REVENUE
JANUARY 2019 — DECEMBER 2022*

WETA Outreach
$2,943,591

Better Angels
Lavine Fellowship
$930,000

PBS and
Film Education
$246,688

Better
Angels Stories
$1,376,400

Unrestricted Donations
$5,735,673

The Next Generation
Angels Awards
$930,000

Library of Congress Lavine/
Ken Burns Prize for Film
$4,825,000

*Excluding administrative fees and donations restricted to operations

Our donors recognize that philanthropy through American history documentary film strengthens our democracy.
### DONOR LIST

**WE ARE THANKFUL TO THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT**

*Denotes member of the Board of Directors and Founders Board*

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- John & Catherine Debs
- Fullerton Family Charitable Trust
- Jeannie & Jonathan Lavine, Crimson Lion/Lavine Family Foundation
- David Rubenstein
- Plus Anonymous Donors

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David Blistein
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Cheryl & Stephen Boyle
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Susan Bremond
Shawn Bresnahan
Paul J. Brisson
Wendy Byrne
Nancy J. Cable
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Mark Cebulske
Courtney Chapin
Elizabeth Christians
Jennifer Chu
Joshua Claybourn
Carlyn Clement
James Cockrum
Craig Collinson
David Corban
Peter P. Costa
Robert Crain
Rob & Molly Cramer
Jim Crawford
George & Julie Cromer
Penny Cross
Chris Darling
Ciaraan Dean-Jones
Ann Deloney & Chuck Kleymeyer
Joseph DePasco
Meredith DeWitt
Frances Dienstag
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Holly Griffith
Kevin Greensley
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Kristen Hagan
Bruce R. Halpern
George Halvorson
Sally & Steve Hansen
Paul Harth
Matthew Harrington
Sarah Harrington & Frederic Fanet
The John W. Harris Family
Will Harsh
Sallie Ann & Robert Hart
Sean Hayes
Mary G. Hegar & Anne Harrington
Harr Hegarty
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— President Abraham Lincoln, first inaugural address, March 1861