

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* TOUR

FOR STUDENTS



The World is as Big or Small as You Make It

Directed by: Heidi Ewing & Rachel Grady

2015 USA | Duration: 12 minutes

Film Summary

In North Philadelphia, local kids gather at a rec center to participate in a modern-day pen pal program. Through digital technology, these teens connect, bond, share and forge friendships with peers around the world — Nigeria, France, Kazakhstan — proving that horizons can always be expanded and that the world is as big or small as you make it.

Teachers: *This film could be helpful in studying social issues, geography, race, culture and global studies.*

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* TOUR

FOR STUDENTS

Filmmaker Interview



"We all tend to not look outside of our box, but when we have the chance to do so it changes what we see as in the realm of possible."

– **Heidi Ewing & Rachel Grady** | Directors

Q: How did you learn about the nonprofit, Do Remember Me, and its recreation center Skype program, and why did this story appeal to you?

A: *We were actually part of a contest that the Sundance Institute, the Gates Foundation and the crowd-sourcing site Tongal were holding. People were asked to submit ideas of a social issue or organization that would make a good short documentary and if their idea was selected, professional filmmakers would realize the film pitch. In this case, that was Loki Films! The Do Remember Me program was pitched and selected as the winner.*

Q: When editing the film, was there anything you wished you could have included in the final cut?

A: *There were several exchanges between the Philly kids and the other children that were sort of priceless. The Kazakhstan kids showing our group their traditional national dance was something that we would wager has never happened before, nor will ever happen again.*

Q: When you made the film, did you have a specific audience in mind?

A: *We try to make all of our films as relatable as possible to any and all audiences. Finding the links and the common humanity is always first and foremost in our minds.*

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* TOUR

FOR STUDENTS

Q: Is there a specific action you hope people are inspired to take after seeing this film?

A: *We hope that people realize that they don't have to have access to expensive and complicated technology to connect and inspire others. We often have simple solutions at the tips of our fingers.*

Q: What motivated Sannii Crespina-Flores, the instructor of the program profiled in the film, to start this program for North Philadelphia students?

A: *Sannii feels very deeply that making connections between teens is a simple and profound way to connect North Philly kids to the world at large and remind them of the many versions of reality that exist on their planet.*

Q: What are some of the challenges you encountered in the making of this film?

A: *The time differences were crazy! We were often 9, 10 or 12-hour time differences and this is an extremely challenging production hurdle.*

Q: The film touches on racism. What role do you see these Skype sessions playing in the students' lives when it comes to understanding race and culture?

A: *Sometimes holding a mirror up to one's day-to-day experience is incredibly profound. We all tend to not look outside of our box, but when we have the chance to do so it changes what we see as in the realm of possible.*

Q: Why did you decide to include this film in Mountainfilm for Students?

A: *This is a wonderful film for young people. We actually have made many films about youth and have found that these peer-to-peer connections never get old and are universal.*

Q: What does working in a documentary format allow you to do that other film formats (like Hollywood-style narrative) would not?

A: *Documentaries are often an exercise in limitations (of money, of being in the right place at the right time, stories changing etc.) and this makes for an incredibly nimble approach to storytelling.*

— T E L L U R I D E —

MOUNTAINFILM * ON * TOUR

FOR STUDENTS

Q: What's the next big adventure or film project on the horizon for you?

A: *We are making an American Masters biography for PBS on the TV legend Norman Lear and he's the youngest guy we have met at the age of 93! He's an inspiration and a real treat to make a film about.*

Q: Any parting thoughts for Mountainfilm for Students?

A: *Make Documentaries! It's the best job ever!*

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* TOUR

FOR STUDENTS

Tags

Culture

Democracy

Diversity

Economics

Equality

Geography

Global Studies

Humanity

Social Studies

Storytelling

Pre-screening Activity

Discuss what it means to experience a cross-cultural connection. Ask students to share experiences they've had meeting students from other countries. What student activities do they imagine are or are not available to kids in other countries? What similarities and differences do they imagine foreign students experience in their daily lives compared to their own? Ask students to imagine questions they would ask other students in a particular foreign country, and how they would tell their personal story.

Introducing the Film

1. Ask students to share any cross-cultural connections they've experienced. Fill in key information as needed:
 - a. Locate France, Kazakhstan and Philadelphia on a map.
 - b. What are each country's distinguishing cultural features? (e.g., language, type of government, major religions, etc.)
 - c. United States' population and economic status relative to France, Kazakhstan and other nations.
2. Review vocabulary: cross-culturalism, stereotypes, racism
3. If students aren't familiar with documentary film, review the characteristics that distinguish documentaries from other film formats.
4. Give students an assignment for viewing (e.g., looking for how the subjects solve a particular problem or what the students notice about the film's messages). Be sure they know why you are showing them this particular film (and how it connects to other work they are doing or subjects they are studying).

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* *TOUR*

FOR STUDENTS



Discussion Question Categories

General/Open Prompts

1. What are the main messages of this film? Do you agree or disagree?
2. Name one thing you saw in the film that inspired you, one thing that made you mad or sad, and one thing you want to know more about.
3. Imagine going home and telling a friend or family member about this film. What would you say?
4. What is one lesson you learned from the film that you wish everyone in your family or community or school knew? What do you think would change if everyone knew it?
5. What did you notice about Skyping with students from foreign countries?
6. If you could ask anyone in the film one question, who would you ask and what would you ask them? What is interesting to you about that question?
7. Would you recommend this film to a friend? Explain your reasons.

Exploring Self

1. What did you see in the film that made the strongest impression on you? What was it about that moment that moved you?
2. If you were going to send a text message to a friend about this film, what would it be?
3. In what ways are the students in the film like you or like someone you know? In what ways are they different?
4. Sannii, the program director, says students find they are more alike than they are different, and that it's an exchange of possibilities. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
5. What challenges do kids share when faced with a cross-cultural experience with other students? Do you think you would try one of these Skype sessions? Do you think trying new experiences is brave? If so, why?
6. Have you ever assumed that you might not have something in common with a student from a foreign country? Why did you feel that way? Did the film change your opinion?

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* *TOUR*

FOR STUDENTS

Exploring the World

1. Before viewing the film, what did you know about kids in France, Kazakhstan or Philadelphia? In what ways did the film affirm or challenge your image of those places?
2. What similarities do you notice between the kids in the Skype sessions and you and your friends?
3. Could meeting students from other countries change a student's view of his or herself? Explain why or why not.
4. What benefits do you think there are for students from different countries to Skype with one another?

Exploring Filmmaking

1. What questions do you think the filmmaker was trying to answer? How do you know?
2. In one word, how did the film make you feel? What techniques did the filmmaker use to make you feel that way?
3. What important perspectives do you think are missing in the film? What additional voices would you have included and why?
4. Describe the symbols (conventional or other) used in this story, both those that have meaning outside of the story and those that have meaning only within the story. What does each stand for?

Exploring Social Issues

1. Why do you think the students in France are confused that the African American students from Philadelphia were born in the United States and not Africa?
2. One student says, "The world is as big or as small as you make it." Why do you think the Skype sessions inspired him to feel that way?
3. One student asks another "What makes you happy? Are you happy?" Would you be willing to answer this question from a foreign student? If so, what would you say?

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON*
TOUR

FOR STUDENTS

4. A young woman from Kazakhstan asks the Philadelphia African-American students if they've experienced racism. Why do you think they were so astonished that she brought up this issue?
5. What three similarities did you see the Philadelphia students discover that they shared with foreign students? Do you think this program could work in your school?

Sense of Wonder

1. How do you think the students felt when they completed their first Skype session? What do you suppose they were thinking when they realized they could communicate via social media with their new foreign friends?
2. What do you think the students learned from their experience about themselves and about their relationship to the world?

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* TOUR

FOR STUDENTS

Extensions



Watch

Teens About Diversity, How it Affects Their Generation and How They Learn from Their Friends | USA Today

<http://tedxinnovations.ted.com/2015/04/02/spotlight-tedx-talk-why-separating-kids-with-disabilities-from-their-peers-hurts-instead-of-helps/>

Every Kid Needs a Champion | TED

http://www.ted.com/playlists/125/tv_special_ted_talks_educatio



Read

Featured Nonprofit Organization | Do Remember Me.

<http://www.dorememberme.org/what-we-do/>

Teen Writer, Luiz Miguel on Do Remember Me | United Youth Journalists

<http://unitedyouthjournalists.com/2015/05/08/do-remember-me-luiz-miguel-brazil/>

Synopsis of the Film by Local News | Philly.com

<http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/trending/Jesus-Camp-filmmakers-create-documentary-on-Philly-kids.html>

Documentary Films by Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady | Loki Films

<http://lokifilms.com/about.html>

Why Students Need Global Awareness and Cultural Understanding | The Guardian

<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2012/sep/25/students-global-awareness-other-cultures>

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON TOUR*

FOR STUDENTS

Friendships Across Cultures: Cross Cultural Learning and Sensitivity | Stacie Berdan
<http://stacieberdan.com/2014/08/26/friendships-across-cultures/>

The Art of Conversation | Essential Life Skills
<http://www.essentiallifefskills.net/the-art-of-conversation.html>

The Art of Storytelling by StoryCorp and Humans of New York | TED
<http://ideas.ted.com/the-art-of-storytelling-according-to-the-founders-of-storycorps-and-humans-of-new-york/>



Do

8 Ways for Students to Connect to Global Peers | Julie Ramsay
<http://juliedramsay.weebly.com/learning-around-the-world-in-8-ways.html>

Storytelling Activities for Teens – Grades 9–12 | Dream Productions
<http://dreamonproductions.com/wordpress/PDF-ACTIVITY-PACK-FOR-TEENS.pdf>

See a Pie Chart of Your School's Diversity in One Easy Step | USA Today
<http://www.gannett-cdn.com/experiments/usatoday/2014/11/diversity-school/index.html>



Book Recommendations (NF: Nonfiction, F: Fiction)

F | Grades K–2

What Does it Mean to Be Global?, by Rana DiOrio

http://www.amazon.com/What-Does-It-Mean-Global/dp/0984080600/ref=pd_sim_14_3?ie=UTF8&refRID=ORD62DH4M7TTFT32E9T
[W](#)

TELLURIDE

MOUNTAINFILM *ON* TOUR

FOR STUDENTS

NF | Grades K–4

I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Book About Understanding and Appreciating Each Other, by Cindy Gainer

http://www.amazon.com/Like-You-Youre-Understanding-Appreciating/dp/1575424363/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1436895808&sr=8-1&keywords=diversity+books+for+children

F | Grades 5–8

The Thing About Luck, by Cynthia Kadohata

<http://www.amazon.com/Thing-About-Luck-Cynthia-Kadohata/dp/1442474653>

NF | Grades 7–12

I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives, by Martin Ganda

http://www.amazon.com/Will-Always-Write-Back-Changed/dp/0316241318/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1436827974&sr=1-2&keywords=pen+pals+for+teens

NF | Grades 10–12

Global Citizens: How Our Vision of the World is Outdated and What We Can Do About It, by Mark Gerzon

http://www.amazon.com/Global-Citizens-Vision-World-Outdated/dp/1846042178/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438638489&sr=1-3&keywords=global+citizens

NF | Teachers

Diversity Training for Classroom Teaching, by Caroline S. Clauss-Ehlers

http://www.amazon.com/Diversity-Training-Classroom-Teaching-Educators/dp/0387277706/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1436896830&sr=1-4&keywords=cross+cultural+classrooms+for+students