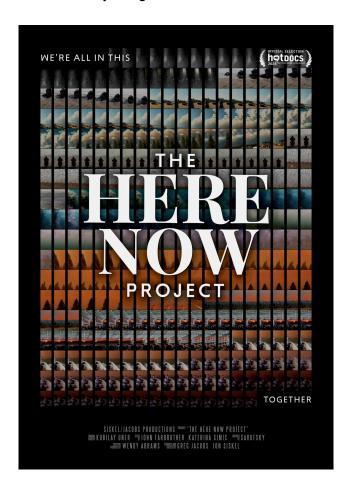
#### Siskel/Jacobs Productions presents

#### THE HERE NOW PROJECT

a film by Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel



USA // Documentary // 75 mins // 16:9 // Stereo Mix
Primary language: English // Additional languages: ASL, Arabic, Dinka, French, German,
Indonesian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish
Website // Film Images and digital assets

#### **Contact:**

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#### **LOGLINE**

The Here Now Project weaves together in-the-moment, self-shot footage from 2021—no narration, no talking heads—to create an unprecedented visual diary of the impact climate change is already having on ordinary people around the world. [36 words]

#### SHORT SYNOPSIS

2021 was the year climate change came home.

From the streets of Brooklyn to the forests of Siberia, a relentless barrage of fires, floods, and storms made devastatingly clear that the extreme weather climate scientists had been predicting for half a century had arrived. Now, in a production of unprecedented scope, Emmy-winning filmmakers Jon Siskel and Greg Jacobs chronicle that pivotal year through the eyes of everyday people around the world. Built out of thousands of hours of in-the-moment footage—no narration, no talking heads—*The Here Now Project* transforms the ordinary act of shooting a cell phone video into the radical act of bearing witness, capturing both the simultaneous, global nature of climate change itself and the deeply human resilience, resourcefulness, and courage needed to confront it. At once immersive, epic, intimate, and inspiring, the film is a wake-up call *to* the world *from* the world. The message: we're all in this, together.

[154 words]

#### **FULL SYNOPSIS**

The Here Now Project starts in Texas, where a record-breaking February 2021 cold snap leads to the costliest winter disaster in American history, highlighting a theme that will run through the rest of the documentary: the chaos that results when climate extremes meet a social and physical infrastructure that isn't prepared for them. The film then proceeds chronologically through the year, alternating between sequences of catastrophic intensity (thousand-year floods in China and Germany; devastating storms in the U.S., Indonesia, and Brazil; massive wildfires in Siberia, British Columbia, and around the Mediterranean) and scenes that are less dramatic, but no less revelatory (a Turkish schoolgirl reads her report on the "sea snot" infestation in the Sea of Marmara; a Kenyan driver marvels at a swarm of locusts; a Vancouver teen signs temperature conversions during an historic heat wave). Taken together, these moments reflect the full range of human emotion—awe, fear, curiosity, anger, resignation, humor, community, desperation, love—while capturing the lived experience of climate change around the globe. The film then concludes with a closing credit sequence that incorporates new videos from several of the featured footage providers, delivering their "messages to the world"—a "call to courage," rather than the more traditional documentary call to action.

The Here Now Project includes video and sound from more than two-hundred sources, gathered primarily from social media over the course of twenty months by a global team of footage producers. Helping to hold everything together is an original score crafted entirely out of sounds from the archive itself—what composer Kubilay Uner calls "The Here Now Orchestra." And it's all filtered through an opening credit sequence designed to communicate two basic truths: that the scientific foundation for climate change has been in place for over a century, and that the consequences scientists have been predicting for decades are already happening. In other words, human-caused climate change is here, now.

[317 words]

#### **DIRECTORS' STATEMENT**

The Here Now Project takes the user-generated video driven approach of our Emmy-winning 9/11 documentary 102 Minutes That Changed America and applies it to the issue of climate change. As with 102 Minutes, our aim is to cut against the grain of the increasingly familiar, even obligatory, approaches of more traditional documentaries on the subject. The Here Now Project is raw rather than "filmic". It doesn't follow a standard victim/villain narrative. It's not educational, explanatory, or explicitly political. Instead, it's visceral, immersive, and—as we see it, at least—subversive, a climate change film masquerading as an extreme weather documentary.

Our goal Is to convey the urgency of climate change in a way that can reach audiences numb to what The New York Times' Amanda Hess called "the anesthetizing stream of global warming content itself." Climate communications specialists have consistently found that ordinary people (ordinary Americans, in particular) often view climate change as something that's happening to someone else, somewhere else, sometime in the future. By distilling a year's worth of climate-amplified extreme weather events into a single narrative experience, The Here Now *Project* allows audiences to connect the dots themselves and see the pattern that emerges. Moreover, the film's unique structure provides a compulsively engaging way for them to wrap their heads around what can seem like a problem of unfathomable scale: the global, interconnected, ever-accelerating nature of climate change itself. And it does so through a visual language that's about as ubiquitous and accessible as you can get: the common narrative currency of cell phones and social media. So while the film includes footage in at least twelve languages from seventeen different countries, the effect we hope to create is one of borderless empathy, and in turn, common cause. The Here Now Project is a climate change film unlike any other, and recent extreme weather events have only served to magnify the urgency of its message: "We're all in this. Together."

—Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel, Co-Directors

#### THE TEAM

#### **GREG JACOBS AND JON SISKEL, Co-Directors/Co-Producers**

Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel are the founders of Siskel/Jacobs Productions, a Chicago-based documentary production company specializing in films that tackle vital stories with integrity, complexity, and emotion. Their first documentary, the landmark History Channel special 102 Minutes That Changed America, won three Primetime Emmys, was named the Best Nonfiction TV Episode of the year by iTunes, and has since been seen by over fifty million people in 150 countries. Their next film, Louder Than a Bomb, won seventeen festival awards and finished with a 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, before premiering on the Oprah Winfrey Network. After winning a News and Documentary Emmy for their National Geographic Channel special Witness: Katrina, Greg and Jon served as the U.S. Executive Producers of 1916: The Irish Rebellion, an award-winning public television series that aired around the globe. They then co-directed the feature documentary No Small Matter, which moved the needle on the issue of early childhood education nationwide through nearly 2000 screenings and an ambitious impact campaign. Their most recent film, The Road Up, premiered at the Chicago International Film Festival in October 2020, winning the Audience Award for Best Documentary.

Jon is a 2023 Meier Achievement Award recipient and the Producer/Director of *Memorial*, a documentary short about the July 4, 2022 mass shooting in his hometown of Highland Park,

Illinois. Greg is a 2016-2017 New America Fellow and the author of *Getting Around Brown*, a history of school desegregation in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio.

#### **WENDY ABRAMS, Executive Producer**

Wendy Abrams is the founder and CEO of the Eleven Eleven Foundation, devoted to sustainability, education, healthcare and social justice. In 2019, Abrams was honored by RFK Human Rights as a Ripple of Hope Award Laureate for her activism. Abrams is a founding partner of The Earthshot Prize, in partnership with the Royal Foundation. Abrams has used public art as a platform for activism; she curated the "Invisible Words" exhibition to amplify the voices of the homeless, and in 2006, Abrams established Cool Globes, Inc., a nonprofit promoting climate change awareness.

#### JOHN FARBROTHER, Editor

John Farbrother co-edited the Academy Award-nominated and Emmy-winning PBS Frontline documentary *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*, directed by Steve James. He also edited the MTV Documentary Films feature *Finding Yingying*, directed by Jiayan "Jenny" Shi, which won the 2020 Documentary Special Jury Prize for Breakthrough Voice at South by Southwest; *Hidden Letters*, directed by Violet Du Feng, which premiered the Tribeca Film Festival and aired on Independent Lens; *Surf Nation*, which premiered at Mountainfilm; and *One with the Whale*, which premiered at DocNYC and will air on Independent Lens in 2024. A frequent collaborator with Siskel/Jacobs Productions, John edited *Louder Than a Bomb* and *The Road Up*, and co-edited *No Small Matter* with Miranda Yousef.

#### **KATERINA SIMIC, Editor**

Katerina Simic's work has been seen on PBS, CNN, History, A&E, the National Geographic Channel, and at various film festivals, including Sundance and Tribeca. Katerina edited Siskel/Jacobs Productions' National Geographic Channel special *Witness: Katrina*, which won the 2011 News and Documentary Emmy for Historical Programming. Since then, she has collaborated with Kartemquin Films on a number of projects, including Steve James' acclaimed *City So Real*, Raj Patel and Zak Piper's *The Ants and the Grasshopper*, and Maria Finitzio's *In the Game*.

#### **KUBILAY UNER, Composer**

Kubilay Uner makes adventurous, eclectic, colorful music for media ranging from film and television to concerts and records. Credits include his SCL Award-nominated score for the Al Pacino historical drama *American Traitor: The Trial of Axis Sally*; the 90s throwback action film *Force of Nature* starring Mel Gibson; the Lionsgate Western *Gone Are the Days* starring Lance Henriksen, Tom Berenger and Danny Trejo; as well as *Big Sur*, based on Jack Kerouac's novel; plus a genuine Wyld Stallyns track for *Bill & Ted Face the Music*, record productions for soul legend Bobby Womack, music for the Busch Gardens theme park ride *Corkscrew Hill*, and music for a video art installation in the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). For the past nine years, Kubi has served as the director of the Music Composition for the Screen MFA program at Columbia College Chicago, named the world's leading program of its kind by The Hollywood Reporter in 2022 and 2023.

#### **SAROFSKY**, Graphics

Sarofsky is a one-stop cross-media production company, specializing in creating high-end, premium storytelling content for brands and for the entertainment industry. Sarofsky is well-known for their title sequences for Apple, Netflix, Amazon, and Marvel Studios, as well as several documentary films. Sarofsky is based in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood.

#### **POINT OF VIEW MAGAZINE**

## POV

# The Here Now Project Review: Documenting Our Own Destruction

BY COURTNEY SMALL APRIL 26, 2024 HOT DOCS/REVIEWS

"It's like a horror movie," exclaims a man from Zhengzhou, China as he records himself gingerly walking along the side of a flooded train tunnel with other passengers. Although his words speak to the treacherous realities of his current circumstance, he could easily be speaking directly about Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel's latest documentary *The Here Now Project*.

A chilling work, The Here Now Project captures the effects of climate change in a visceral way. Instead of incorporating talking head interviews with scientists, activists, artists, and experts who have been sounding the alarm for decades, Jacobs and Siskel simply let the witnesses to the environmental impact speak for themselves. Sifting through thousands of hours of cell phone footage, they compile a film that displays the collective dangers that have already occurred and will only get worse moving forward.

Chronicling the year 2021, and utilizing in-the-moment footage, the documentary commences with various residents across Texas attempting to navigate a snowstorm and record-breaking lows in temperature. As Texans deal with bursting pipes, rolling black outs, frozen gas pumps, and crumbling infrastructure, the dire reality of their

situation becomes devastatingly clear. Supplies are low and the chances of people dying due to lack of heat are high. Things are so bad that, as one man notes in a humorous moment, even the gas station hot dogs, which no one eats, are sold out.

The human ability to find brief levity in times of uncertainty allows the audience to come up for air before being submerged in the fear and grief that permeate the film. Whether it is a woman in British Columbia witnessing her town being ravaged by wildfires, or villagers in Kenya overwhelmed by the large swarm of locusts decimating their crops, the emotion in the film is palpable. By stitching together environmental disasters from across the globe, often occurring within the same month, Jacobs and Siskel create a sense of shared trauma.

One cannot help but feel a shiver down their spine observing a massive cloud of red dust threatening to devour cyclists in Brazil, or the terror on the faces of passengers stuck inside a flooded train where the water level has risen to their necks.

"I've never seen this before..." is a common phrase repeated by those in front and behind the cameras around the globe. Regardless of what part of the world one may reside, the terror that comes from wildfires, flooding, seas covered in microorganisms that look like phlegm, cyclones, and more are events every country is dealing with in some fashion.

Creating a sense of shared community through tragedy, *The Here Now Project* makes it clear we each bear responsibility in making meaningful change. While there is plenty of environmental destruction on display, there are also many examples of humans coming together in times of need. By eliminating the political rhetoric and calculated news punditry that often stifles any forward movement on the climate crisis front, Jacobs and Siskel's film emphasize that we can no longer treat the issue like it is the monster in the closet and say it doesn't exist.

A pulsing and terrifying look at what will become of the world if we do not collectively act, *The Here Now Project* serves as an urgent reminder that Mother Nature will no longer allow us to sit idly and record from the sidelines.



## Hot Docs 2024 #3: Our First 8 Must-sees at the Festival!

By Vickie on April 23, 2024

#### The Here Now Project (7/8)

Lemme just say this: every single climate-change denier out there should be forced to sit down and watch this documentary. Assembled entirely from videos shot by everyday people all over the world, the film captures a year (2021, to be exact) of devastating meteorological, agricultural and societal byproducts of global warming through the firsthand accounts of those experiencing them as they're taking place. From a deep freeze in Texas and a dust storm in Brazil to swarms of locusts in Kenya, revolting "mucilage" in Turkey, floods from Germany to China, and wildfires in every corner of the globe, co-directors Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel deliver an urgent, engrossing and highly effective eco-doc unlike any other. There are no stats or diagrams here, no commentary from scientists or activists, just raw, sometimes disturbing and often extremely emotional footage of exactly what it means for humans and nature when the planet warms up by just a degree or two.



### HOT DOCS 2024 REVIEW | THE HERE NOW PROJECT

written by Andrew Parker April 26, 2024

Filmmakers Jon Siskel and Greg Jacobs utilize the power of the moving image as captured by everyday people around the world to document the impact of climate change in the creatively edited and assembled *The Here Now Project*.

The Here Now Project goes through the year 2021 to depict one of the most volatile weather years on record. Cell phone videos, social media posts, and home movies capture the feelings and fears of people caught unprepared for largely unforeseen and unpredictable extreme weather events. It starts with record setting cold and snow in San Antonio, Texas that knocks out the state's usually reliable power grid, moves to clouds of locusts awakening in Kenya destroying crops, shifts to extreme heat and forest fires ravaging the normally temperate climate of Lytton, BC; concurrent community destroying, deadly floods in Western Germany and China; dust storms in Brazil; tropical storms bringing New York City to a standstill; even gross looking mucilage (a.k.a. "sea snot") choking the life out of Turkish seas.

The Here Now Project makes a pointed case that these events are unquestionably connected under the banner of a unifying crisis, not anomalies that climate change deniers claim them to be. Siskel and Jacobs pepper in some news reports for additional context at some points, but the footage provided by The Here Now Project captures these weather events from an unfiltered, on-the-ground perspective. What emerges is more than an assembly of clips, but a larger picture of a world in crisis told by the people forced to live through them without much advanced warning. A lot of the subjects providing footage for The Here Now Project were caught unaware, but when placed together in close proximity, these videos provide a stark alarm bell worth heeding.

## THE TYEE

## When the Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction, Turn to Documentary

A wild time in the world of cinema is reason to support the work of brave filmmakers.

Dorothy Woodend 3 May 2024 The Tyee

#### The Here Now Project

No film is more direct in its collective implications than *The Here Now Project*.

Composed of more than 200 pieces of footage of extreme weather and climate catastrophes from around the globe, the film is a portrait of what we are facing as climate instability wreaks havoc on planetary systems, from ocean warming to forest fires. "Biblical" might be the best descriptor, especially when hordes of locusts descend on sub-Saharan African countries, eating as much in a single day as many thousands of people.

Riveting as it is, some of this footage isn't unfamiliar. Similar scenes have unfolded in the daily news cycle for years now, but there is something about the collected aspect of all these experiences that hammers home both the scale and the on-the-ground reality of the situation.

In 2021, the number of severe climate events that took place ranged from hot to cold, wet to dry. The film begins with the unprecedented February cold snap in Texas that upended the power grid and brought the state to a frozen standstill. More than 200 people died as a result of the weather, as the infrastructure essentially crumpled under the weight of the demand.

No matter the location or the severity of the experience, the response to immediately document is interesting — as if we humans can better, or perhaps only, understand something through the lens of technology.

Although, in more than a few instances, I wanted to scream at people: "Quit filming. Get the hell out of there!"

In Siberia, a dishevelled and blackened firefighter explains that he can feel the fire at his back. Even as he is facing the camera, explaining what is happening, the wall of flames behind him is consuming everything in sight.

With no interpolation or talking-head experts interjecting ideas or commentary, there is only the footage itself, taken on cellphones or other devices. It's shaky, unpolished and mesmerizing, often mere steps from total disaster, and very much on the frontlines.

The film follows people in Siberia forced to battle the largest wildfire on the planet with little more than portable backpacks. It also strikes close to home, when the Interior of British Columbia experiences both the hottest and the wettest extreme weather events in recorded history within months of each other.

Filmmakers Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel employed a similar approach for their Emmy Award-winning film *102 Minutes That Changed America*. Of all the films about 9/11, *102 Minutes* remains one of the most impactful. I remember watching it with my hand over my mouth, a reaction of horror and humanity, such was the curious combination of world events captured from intimate and individual angles.

Without the greater context of history sorting, assembling and assigning meaning, chaos and confusion reigned. So it is in *The Here Now Project*.

Sometimes it feels like a miracle that people survive. Sometimes they don't. The fire in Lytton, B.C., is a case in point — a historic wildfire during a heat wave in June 2021 killed two people and destroyed the town. *The Here Now Project* follows a young Lytton woman as she packs up her car and talks about how the smoke has aggravated her asthma, yet maintains that the authorities would surely alert people in case of an evacuation. But as she drives through town, a sob of sheer unfiltered shock escapes her lips as the full scale of destruction is revealed.

As the filmmakers' statement makes clear, *The Here Now Project*'s structure was made in direct opposition to most conventional social-impact documentaries. The intent was to pierce the nullifying sense of habituation that seeing a familiar narrative engenders.

"Our goal is to convey the urgency of climate change in a way that can reach audiences numb to what the New York Times' Amanda Hess called 'the anesthetizing stream of global warming content itself," the filmmakers said.

The greater takeaway from the film is that we are all in this together, and no one will escape planetary breakdown. Climate scientist Simon Donner's closing quote sums it up: "Addressing climate change is not about optimism or pessimism.... It is about courage."

#### **CREDITS**

"Addressing climate change is not about optimism or pessimism...It is about courage."

Simon Donner Climate Scientist

University of British Columbia

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Jon Siskel

**Executive Producer** Wendy Abrams **Editors** John Farbrother

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ComposerKubilay UnerWritersJohn Farbrother

Greg Jacobs

Footage Producers Lidia Afrilita

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Shelby & Madison

KHOU 11

**Texas Storm Chasers** 

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Biket A

Erdek Belediyesi isa şahintürk MLV Video Arhan Torun Birkan Erdem

**CANADA** Mike Carpenter Northerly Nomad

PacificNorthwestKate

Harold Josevich

Pete's Farming Videos

Music to My Ears, Singing from My Heart

Channel4 News France24News **CBC News ITV News** Len Len BF

Skw'akw'as (Sunshine) Dunstan-Moore

Nanette Phillips via Storyful

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6abc Philadelphia **Bloomberg Television** 

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7NEWS Australia

ABC Southern Queensland/Wayne Pratt

9 News Australia SE QLD Storms

Market to Market/Iowa PBS

ABC7 Chicago Fox on the Farm Kevin Lope

The Traveling Clatt Screenocean/Reuters

Sky News

**BBC** via Getty Images

**ABC News** 

**Additional Music** Floating Doubts

Written by Thomas Marc Paul Toccafondi

Courtesy of APM Music

Words of Hope

Written by Harrison Stanford and Sam Taylor

Courtesy of APM Music

Amberscript

**CBS** Translation

**Translations** 

**Additional Footage** 

Multilingual	Connections
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Jesus Diaz

**Design & Animation** Nik Braatz

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The world says, What we are becoming, we are becoming together.

—Ada Limón, 24th Poet Laureate of the United States From "Startlement" (2023)

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