

A Patagonia Films and Storyville Films Production
In Association with Ford Foundation and JustFilms

THIS IS NOT A DRILL

An Oren Jacoby film

****WORLD PREMIERE - 2025 TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL****

Audience Award / Best Documentary feature film - 2025 Globedocs Film Festival



2025 | United States | 80 mins

CONTACTS

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Language: English

5.1 | Color | 23.98 frame rate | 1.78:1 aspect ratio

Available formats: DCP, MP4

LOGLINE

When their communities are threatened, three fearless grassroots leaders — joined by rebellious Rockefeller heirs — confront Big Oil and environmental racism in a fight for a renewable future, proving that everyday people can change the course of history.

SYNOPSIS

As extreme weather around the world grows deadlier, a new generation of leaders is rising to face the challenges. In the American South, hard hit by climate disasters, three unlikely heroes take on one of the most powerful industries in the world. 25-year-old Justin J. Pearson rallies a multiracial grassroots coalition to try and defeat a crude oil pipeline in Memphis, Tennessee. Roishetta Ozane, a mother of six from Louisiana, transforms personal loss into political action, taking her fight from the storm-ravaged streets to the halls of Congress. Sharon Wilson, a former oil insider turned methane hunter, uses infrared cameras to expose invisible deadly gases pouring from fracking sites and pipelines in Texas that have been hiding in plain sight.

Backing them are unlikely allies, descendants of John D. Rockefeller, who have turned against their family's oil empire to expose ExxonMobil's decades long coverup. Together, this coalition uncovers what they call the Big Oil's "Big Con" - an industry doubling down on fossil fuels while disguising the truth.

With gripping access, *THIS IS NOT A DRILL* is the story of courage, betrayal and grassroots victories that shows how people, armed with only grit and determination, can stand up to power. The smallest voices can topple giants.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Written by Oren Jacoby

When democratic institutions and regulations are gutted, corporate greed is given free rein, and the public good is endangered, how can we fight back? How do we save our communities? We discovered three extraordinary individuals who have stepped up to show us the way. They are taking on the fight to stop oil and gas companies from ignoring the warnings of science and expanding the infrastructure that is the biggest driver of climate change. Each has something real and immediate at stake in this fight.

During a research trip down south, I was on somebody's back porch when Justin Pearson sat down next to me and said, "We're Christian folks down in Memphis, and we often compare this with the David and Goliath story. We know how it ends... so we can keep taking on Goliath." A few

hours later, I heard him give a speech that reminded me of the great Civil Rights leaders of the 60s. So I wasn't surprised that he took on a multibillion dollar oil pipeline project in Memphis that had targeted his neighborhood as "the point of least resistance," and soon made sure that it wasn't.

The day I met Roishetta Ozane, she told me that she and her six children had been driven out of their home on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana after they were hit by two hurricanes in one season. I learned that she would stop at nothing to try and slow down permits for the new oil and gas infrastructure that she had discovered was speeding up climate change.

Sharon Wilson used to be an analyst for an oil and gas business in Dallas. A few years after leaving that job for a small ranch in Decatur, Texas, she and her two sons were forced to abandon their home when their air and water was poisoned by a fracking site next door. Sharon soon became a fulltime witness, learning how to use an infrared camera to gather evidence and testify to anybody who would listen that so-called "natural" gas was not clean energy. For 20 years she has been providing stark, visual proof of exactly where and how oil and gas infrastructure is causing climate change.

Hearing Justin's, Sharon's, and Roishetta's stories led me as a director to the cinematic language of a detective-story. They are the investigators. They are casing the scene of crimes they saw being committed and are holding the industry accountable for hurting them and their families. *THIS IS NOT A DRILL* shows how they came up with sophisticated methods to fight back and marshal that evidence to build strong cases. Justin, Roishetta, and Sharon are ordinary citizens who have become part of an organized opposition that is making the expansion of oil and gas infrastructure more difficult. They understand that this could be the most effective strategy in the urgent effort to slow down climate change.

For me as a director, the setting of this struggle had to be an important character in the story. *THIS IS NOT A DRILL* covers the American South: the Permian Basin in Texas, the largest oil and gas field in the world; the bayous of the Louisiana Gulf Coast, home to most of the liquid natural gas export plants in America; and the African American neighborhood of Boxtown in Memphis, Tennessee, a template for environmental racism. These are the settings where the fight over climate change and an intractable oil and gas industry are being played out. In just a few years, fracking has made the Permian the number one source of the emissions that are causing global warming. The general public still doesn't know this but local citizens are already suffering.

The struggle which has united our three characters shows the rest of us that we don't need to feel helpless in the face of the daunting realities of climate change. We don't have to see global warming as a doomsday scenario that makes us depressed, or too scared to even think about it. Justin, Sharon, and Roishetta each decided to stand up and do something. So can we.

ABOUT THE TEAM

OREN JACOBY - Director



Oren Jacoby is an Academy Award®-nominated director, writer, and producer. He is the founder of Storyville Films, which has produced award-winning documentaries about people of courage, conscience, and innovation including *Sister Rose's Passion*, which won Best Documentary Short at the Tribeca Film Festival and was nominated for an Oscar. Among his recent films are: *Shadowman* (Film Movement/Amazon), *On Broadway* (KinoLorber/PBS), and *Constantine's Sword* (Netflix).

His other director/producer credits include *Lady 'Ndrangheta* (SkyTV); *Elon Musk* (Bloomberg) for the Risk Takers series; *The Beatles Revolution* (ABC); *Master Thief* (ABC); *Topdog Diaries* (PBS) with Suzan-Lori Parks; *Idols of the Game* (TBS) with Michael Jordan; *Benny Goodman: Adventures in the Kingdom of Swing* (PBS); and *The Second Russian Revolution* (BBC) winner of the DuPont /Columbia Gold Baton for Best Documentary Series.

BETSY WEST - Writer + Producer



Betsy West is an award winning filmmaker, journalist and professor. She and Julie Cohen directed the Academy Award®-nominated and Emmy winning *RBG* (Magnolia, Participant, CNN Films) as well as the shortlisted *Julia* (Sony Pictures Classics); *My Name is Pauli Murray* (Participant/Amazon Studios), which won both the Peabody and duPont Columbia awards; and *Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down* (Briarcliff/CNN), nominated for a Critics Choice Award. She and Cohen were executive producers of the recent Amazon documentary *Frida*.

Most recently, Betsy was the director of *Once Upon a Time in Ukraine*, a short documentary nominated for a Critics Choice Award and shortlisted for an Oscar in 2024. She is Executive Producer of the Hulu documentary *Barbara Walters: Tell Me Everything*. As an ABC News producer and executive producer of the documentary series *Turning Point*, she won 21 Emmy awards.

CREDITS

Director

Oren Jacoby

Writer

Betsy West

Producers

Sam Jinishian

Janet Klein

Betsy West

Producers

Alex Lowther

Monika McClure

Editor

Ilya Chaiken

Original Music by

Joel Goodman

Directors of Photography

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Buddy Squires

Tom Hurwitz

Stefan Wiesen

Bob Richman

Jason Longo

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Consulting Producer

Sam Pollard

Executive Producers

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Melony & Adam Lewis

Melissa Johnson

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Additional Editing

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Associate Producer

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Camara Aaron

Featuring

Roishetta Ozane

Justin J. Pearson

Sharon Wilson

with

Otis Sanford

Ward Archer

Lottie Larce

Jeff Prince

Peter Gill Case

Valerie Rockefeller

David Kaiser

Miranda Kaiser

Scottie Fitzgerald

Dr. Kimberly Owens-Pearson

Tim Doty

Miguel Escoto

Molly Dunton

John Beard

Kamea Ozane

Vice President Al Gore

Senator Ed Markey

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Mark Roy
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Roger Phenix

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Jerry Oliver
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Matt Michaelson
Stefan Wiesen

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Stephen Kaye

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Gramercy Post

Additional footage courtesy of Ward Archer
Protect our Aquifer additional videographer: Eric Swartz

Archive provided by

Bill Moulton/Nomad Pictures
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Bowdoin College
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Earthworks

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Leslie Westbrook/The Acadiana Advocate
MCAP
Miranda Kaiser
The Pearson Family
Peter Case
Pond5
The Rockefeller Archive
Sharon Wilson
Storm Chasing Video
Susan Sullivan
Vice

For Patagonia Films

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Michael Esealuka
Miguel Escoto
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Morgan Pehme
Naomi Yoder
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Richard Johnston
Richard Wiles
Risa Goldstein
Roddy Hughes
Rosemary Corbett
Roxanne Stachowski
Ruth Santiago
Sara Houston
Sarah Brennan
Shanti Avirgan
Sharon Eubanks
Stephanie Jenkins
Steve Coll
Susan Mercandetti
Susan Rockefeller
Tim Smith
Tom Lennon
Vanessa Fajans-Turner
Winslow Dresser
Yolonda Spinks

Additional Original Music by Benjamin Krauss

"Burning Down the House (Live)"

Written by David Byrne, Chris Frantz, Jerry Harrison and Tina Weymouth

Performed by Talking Heads

Courtesy of Sire Records Company

By arrangement with Warner Music Group Film & TV Licensing

"Bastard's Lullaby"

Performed by Rick Steff

Courtesy of Minden Music BMI

"I'm On The Wonder"

Written by Clifton Chenier

Performed by Clifton Chenier

Courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Records

"Back Water Blues"

Written by Bessie Smith

Performed by Irma Thomas

Courtesy of Rounder Records

"Everyday People"

Written by Sylvester Stewart

Performed by Sly & The Family Stone

Courtesy of Epic Records

By arrangement with Sony Music Entertainment

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