

# **RADICAL FILM NETWORK NYC: A GLOBAL GATHERING**

3-6 May 2017

**LOGOS EITHER HERE OR on BACK COVER**

- See list of logos at bottom of this page: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/radical-film-network-nyc-a-global-gathering-tickets-30347960567>.

**Location:**

Murphy Institute for Worker Education & Labor Studies, 25 West 43rd Street, 18th Floor

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## Introduction

### The Radical Film Network?

The Radical Film Network (RFN) was set-up in 2013 when representatives of progressive and experimental film organisations in the UK met to discuss how they could work together to support the development of politically-engaged, aesthetically innovative film culture. Around the world, digital technologies have facilitated a marked growth in organisations using moving image media in the struggle for more democratic, just and sustainable societies. Yet while cultural production has been democratised, this has spread existing and shrinking public and private resources more thinly, making sustainability a key issue. Such precarity means little time to network with other groups, share resources and best practice, or find out about the grass-roots film histories of which they are the contemporary incarnation. The RFN is designed to facilitate communication and collaboration among this diverse community, raise awareness of the different organisations that exist and ultimately increase the visibility and sustainability of radical film culture around the world.

### What's 'radical' film anyway?

Part of the point of the RFN is to provoke a range of different answers to this question. 'Radicalism' is a concept with a diverse range of applications and 'radical film' can describe a variety of cultural practices. The multiple contexts in which the word 'radical' can be used is one of its key strengths. However, for those involved with the RFN, 'radicalism' refers first and foremost to a political commitment to progressive politics and struggles for social justice – from workers' rights and environmental sustainability to gender, racial and sexual equality.

Aside from this broad-based orientation, members of the RFN interpret and practice 'radical' film a multiplicity of ways. From developing new aesthetic practices and experimenting with the medium itself to applying political ideas to processes of production, distribution or exhibition, the question: 'what is radical film?' is being answered in different ways all the time, all around the world.

### The story so far

Since it was established, the RFN has grown rapidly and now consists of more than 100 organisations across 4 continents. These range from production companies and video-activist collectives to archives, artists' studios, film festivals and distributors, as well as hundreds more individual activists, filmmakers, artists and academics. The RFN has no core funding so, to ensure a minimum of administrative work is required to maintain it, the apparatus of the network is intentionally light-weight: at present, it consists of a website with a directory of affiliated organisations, a mailing list and a Facebook and Twitter feed. There is no official membership status or application process – organisations simply request to be listed in (or are invited to join) the directory and mailing list, and can participate as much or as little as they wish.

In 2015 RFN members Steve Presence and Mike Wayne secured a 'network' grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) designed to bring RFN members together internationally in a series of panels, workshops and discussions. As part of this, the RFN Global Gathering in New York has been organised by and is a collaboration between members of the RFN in the UK, the **Workers Unite! Film Festival** and the **Murphy Institute for Worker Education & Labor Studies at the City University of New York**. Other major supporters and sponsors are **Third World Newsreel**, the **Global Labor Film Festival** and the **National Writers Union**.

### What next?

This gathering is designed to bring us together to build relationships, share ideas and learn from one another. How can we work together more effectively? What challenges do we share? What networks or organisational structures will help ensure our organisations survive in the long-term?

Many of those we've spoken to in the lead-up to this conference have suggested that a US-based division of the RFN would be a sensible next step. Whatever the outcome of the conference, let's work together, learn from each other and build the most effective, networked political film culture possible.

## Practicalities

The Murphy Institute has generously provided the venue for this event free of charge, and the AHRC funding has enabled us to support many organisations to attend. Unfortunately, that budget cannot cover food. Please bring your own food to eat during the break or visit local eateries (information on quality, affordable places to eat will be available from The Murphy Institute).

### Wifi code

User: cuny (no caps)

Password: cunySTARS

### Directions:

25 W. 43rd Street (Between 5th & 6th Ave), 18th Floor

4/5/6 Trains to Grand Central Station/42 St

7/B/D/F/M Trains to Bryant Park/42 St

1/2/3/N/R/Q Trains to Times Square/42 St

### Tweet:

@RadFilmNet; @WorkersUnite; @MurphyInstitute

#RFNNYC

#workersunitefilmfestival

For queries prior to the conference, please email [info@radicalfilmnetwork.com](mailto:info@radicalfilmnetwork.com) (note: this will not be responsive during the event itself!).

## Schedule

### Day 1: Wednesday 3 May

11-11.45am: coffee and networking.

11.40am-12.00pm: Introduction, Andrew Tilson (Workers Unite! Film Festival) and Steve Presence (Bristol Radical Film Festival/University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol).

12-1pm: Keynote presentation: 'Imagining Change: a short history of radical film in the USA', Chuck Kleinhans (Co-editor, *JUMP CUT: A review of contemporary media*). Chair: Alexandra Juhasz (CUNY).

The promise and power of radical media is to document the world as it is lived, to reveal its hidden foundation, and above all to imagine change to bring about a more just, more humane, more viable world. In doing so, it contributes to moving people to advance to a better world. From the beginning, artists and activists have used media for radical political ends. Different forms: dramatic narrative, documentary witness, personal expression. Different issues: economic inequality, race and gender discrimination, cultural prejudice. Different venues: public, national, community, home, and personal. Different platforms: theatrical, broadcast, streaming.

An overview of the past clarifies what strategies and tactics can work for the future. We can expand our imagination by seeing the diversity of the past. And we can learn some important lessons about issues of form and content, financing and production, distribution and exhibition, and most of all about political effectiveness.

1-2.30pm: lunch

2.30-3.45pm: Panel 1, 'Approaches to Community and Youth Media-Making with Karina Hurtado (Global Action Project, NYC) and Paolo Davanzo (Echo Park Film Centre, LA)'. Chair: Mike Wayne (Brunel University).

This session focuses on two organisations that use film to stimulate political-engagement among working class youth. Founded in 1991, Global Action Project (GAP) has provided media-arts and leadership education for thousands of working-class youth across New York City and the country. GAP's mission is to work with primarily undocumented youth and trans and gender non-confirming youth to build the knowledge, tools, and relationships needed to create media for community power, cultural expression, and political change.

Echo Park Film Center is a non-profit media arts organization in Los Angeles that provides equal and affordable access to film/video education and resources via a neighborhood microcinema space, free and nominal cost education programs, equipment services, a film school and local and international artist residencies. With a special focus on 'at risk' youth, EPFC programs and services use cinema as catalyst to inspire, educate, and empower communities.

### Evening event:

'Every Fold Matters: A live performance with film about the work of doing laundry'. Created by Lizzie Olesker and Lynne Sachs, and featuring performances by Jasmine Holloway, Veraalba Santa and Ching Valdes-Aran.

Time: 6.30-8.30pm

Venue:

Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, 325 Hudson Street, 6th floor

*Every Fold Matters* offers a window into the world of a neighborhood laundry. Based on interviews with New York City laundry workers, the project combines narrative and documentary elements as it explores personal stories of immigration and identity. In the process, we look at the intimate experience of cleaning other people's clothes; an often unrecognized, historic form of labor. With original dialogue, music and choreography, our ensemble of three renowned downtown actors creates a one-hour performance exploring clothes, dirt, stains, money, and time. Set at the crossroads of a changing neighborhood, *Every Fold Matters* brings audiences into a uniquely social and public space that is slowly disappearing from our changing urban landscape.

## Day 2: Thursday 4 May

9.30-10am: Registration and coffee

10-11.30am: Panel 2 (Roundtable), 'Radical Media Making, Community Organizing, and Institution Building'. Chair: Christopher Robé (Florida Atlantic University)

As various forms of media have grown more accessible and affordable, media making has increasingly become integral to community organizing, outreach, and social justice activism. The rise of off-set printing and analog video in the 1960s in the West, for example, yoked cultural activity much more with activism than in the past. Although significant socio-economic barriers still limit historically disenfranchised communities' access to digital media, this roundtable explores the multifaceted ways that media making has become an activist practice in itself by building community, collectively organizing, and building movements for social change.

The roundtable participants are:

Angela Aguayo, Associate Professor of Cinema and Photography, Southern Illinois University—Carbondale

Liz Canner, independent filmmaker, *Orgasm Inc.*

Dennis Flores, founder of El Grito de Sunset Park

Franklin Lopez, founder of Sub.Media.tv

Todd Wolfson, Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies, Rutgers University, and co-founder of Media Mobilizing Project

11.30am-12pm: coffee break

12-1pm: Panel 3, 'Politics and Aesthetics, with Oliver Ressler and Barrie Cline (Workers Art Coalition)'. Chair: Gregory Sholette (New York University).

Oliver Ressler will talk about a cycle of films, 'Occupy, Resist, Produce', he carried out in collaboration with Dario Azzellini. 'Occupy, Resist, Produce' focuses on the rare, better organized cases of factory occupations in Europe where the purpose of the struggle is to bring production under workers' control. The workers do more than protest, they take the initiative and become protagonists, building horizontal social relations on the production sites and adopting mechanisms of direct democracy and collective decision-making.

Workers Art Coalition member Barrie Cline shall present a short survey of the group's projects and collective practices that navigate between art and (new) labor movement building while constructing an ongoing invitation for blue collar participation in this work. The Workers Art Coalition is a group of union tradespeople who are artists and artisans, along with allied artists and faculty from the Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies.

1-2.30pm: lunch

2.30-3.45pm: Panel 4, 'Funding Alternative Media with Thomas Barlow (Real Media Fund, UK), Alan Story (WellRedFilms, UK), John T. Trigonis (Indiegogo) and Deborah Wallance (producer, *Gasland, Blood On The Mountain*). Chair: Thomas Zaniello (Northern Kentucky University)

If there's one thing social justice film organisations have in common, it's a paucity of income and resources. From production collectives to film festivals and cinema spaces, most socially-engaged film organisations have a precarious existence because they lack money. Existing independently of funding is important in several respects: groups retain their autonomy and political independence, and can organise and act in relative freedom. On the other hand, making a living from radical and progressive film is hard, and those organisations that depend on funding to get by will be destroyed when their funding streams dry up or change focus.

Yet no money also means no stability, and renders groups dependent on volunteer labour to survive. All too often, this limits the reach and potential impact of progressive film activity, and sees many groups burn-out after a few years. This session focuses on the crucial issue of funding political film culture. How should this issue be approached? Can it be addressed collectively? Do income streams inevitably result in compromise? What are our options and what are the risks involved?

Evening event:

'Immigrant Workers Double-bill: *El Pueblo se Levanta* + *The Long Ride*. With introduction and discussion by Third World Newsreel and former Young Lord member, filmmaker and author, Iris Morales'

Venue: Cornell International Labour Relations (ILR) NYC Conference Center

Address: 16 East 34th Street, 6th Floor

Time: 18.00: doors open, screening starts at 18.15.

In the late '60s, conditions for Puerto Ricans in the US reached the boiling point. Faced with racial discrimination, deficient community services, and poor education and job opportunities, Puerto Rican communities began to address these injustices by using direct action. This event is a rare chance to see Newsreel's portrayal of inner city organizing in the late 60s, *El Pueblo se Levanta* (1971, 50mins). The film focuses on the community of East Harlem and captures the compassion and militancy of The Young Lords as they implemented their own health, educational, and public assistance programs and fought back against social injustice. The event will feature an introduction and discussion with Third World Newsreel and Iris Morales, former Young Lord member, filmmaker and author of *Through the Eyes of Rebel Women: The Young Lords, 1969-1976* (2016).

This event also includes a special screening of *The Long Ride*, a timely new documentary about the historic 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride that sparked the birth of the new Civil Rights Movement for immigrant workers in the U.S. and the ongoing fight to fix the broken immigration system.

### Day 3: Friday 5 May

9.30-10am: coffee

10-11.15am: Panel 5, 'Third World Newsreel Celebrates 50 Years: Filmmaking and Organizing Then and Now'

Since December 1967, Third World Newsreel (TWN), formerly The Newsreel Collective, has been making and promoting progressive independent media that promotes the struggle for social change, equality and peace. With a special focus on communities of color, TWN's work ranges from the Black Panthers and the Young Lords to the struggle for workers' rights and against police brutality. Fifty years later, our work continues as we document the fight for people's rights and justice today.

Present day communities continue to organize for many of the same social justice goals that were at the forefront of political struggles in the 60s and 70s. This panel sees a mixture of original TWN members, staff and students from the TWN Production Workshop, labor activists representing street vendors and domestic workers and TWN's Interim Executive Director, J.T. Takagi, reflect on 50 years of radical filmmaking and organising.

11.15-11.30am: break

11.30am-12.30pm: Panel 6, 'Filmmakers of the world, UNITE against racism and capitalism! A history of Contraimagen group with Violeta Bruck (Contraimagen, Argentina). Chair: Svetla Turnin (Cinema Politica).

The search to join audio-visual and artistic production with revolutionary left politics is the axis that crosses the history of the Contraimagen group. Each stage has been developed in different political moments of Argentina and the world, encapsulated by multiple categories of audio-visual production. These include short films, photographic shows, internet TV, documentary feature films, the fictional web-series such as 'Marx is back', TV spots from the 'Left Front', animations, media criticism and audio-visual journalism materials from the



international network, 'La Izquierda Diario', a diverse initiative that also seeks to promote left ideas among young people, women and workers.

The effects of the 2008 economic crisis, the growth of the right-wing politics and racism in the United States and Europe, coupled with new attacks on working conditions and new forms of struggle emerging around the world, mean that the radical and leftist filmmakers have to come together to change this reality. We must begin to coordinate and unite our work effectively, promoting common initiatives to overcome these challenges.

12.30-2pm: lunch

2-3pm: Panel 7, 'Organising Exhibition, with Svetla Turnin (Cinema Politica, Montreal) and Elson Menegazzo (Brazilian International Labour Film Festival, São Paulo)'. Chair: Andrew Tilson.

Many progressive film organisations work in exhibition. Whether it be organising regular community screenings, running a cinema space or organising an annual festival, exhibition is an essential component of alternative film culture. This session looks at two long-standing radical film exhibition organisations and explores their background, organisational structure and the challenges they face as well as their plans for the future.

Cinema Politica is non-profit network of community and campus locals that screen independent political film and video by Canadian and international artists throughout Canada and abroad. The Canadian component of the network has nearly 70 active locals, most of which are located on high school, college and university campuses, and the international component has nearly 30 active locals.

The Mostra CineTrabalho / Brazilian International Labour Film Festival (BILFF) was founded in 2006. The event is supported by São Paulo State University merges the cultural characteristics of a film festival with the academic discipline of social sciences to bring together knowledge and a critical view of the labour world.

3-3.15pm: short break

3.15-5pm: Plenary: 'Building sustainable radical film cultures: closing discussion led by Karen Ranucci'.

This is the final session of the conference. What have we learned? How can we build the RFN? What would a sustainable radical film culture look like in five or ten years' time? Should there be RFN-USA? An RFN Latin America? What would these organisations look like and how would they operate?

The discussion will be led by the renowned New York-based independent filmmaker and investigative journalist, Karen Ranucci.

6pm: Workers Unite! Film Festival opening night.

Venue: Cinema Village, 22 East 12th Street, Manhattan

## Day 4: Saturday 6 May

10.00 –: Coffee-morning debrief and next steps.

Venue: National Writers Union, Suite 703, 256 West 38th Street.

This session is an informal opportunity to reflect on the conference and develop its outcomes. What went well? What could have been done differently? This session also aims to build on the decisions made in the closing discussion, distribute tasks and organise working groups for the development of the RFN.