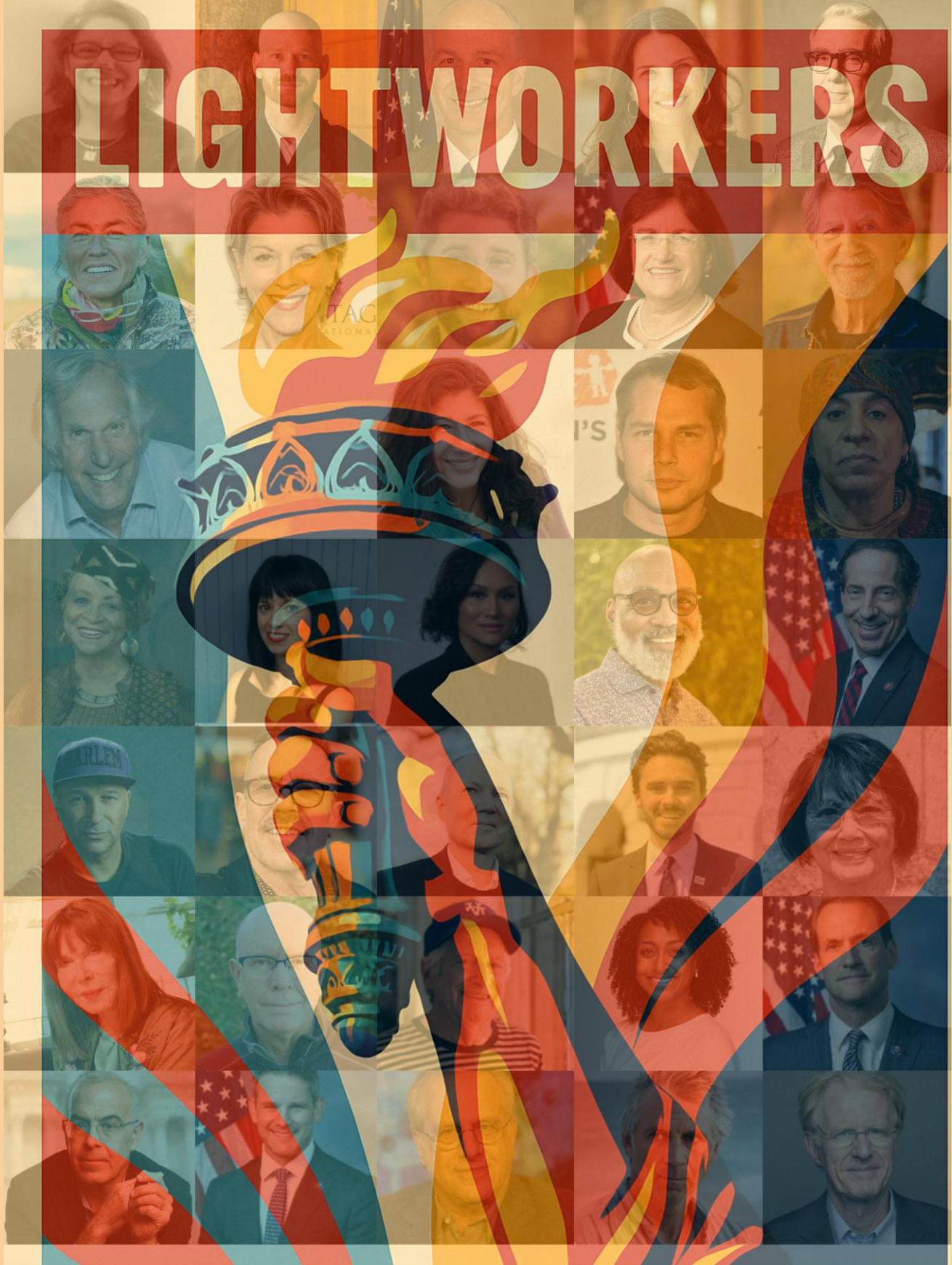


# LIGHTWORKERS



A Bobby Roth Film

Written and Directed by Bobby Roth

Produced by Bobby Roth, Jesse Kane, Monica Valdes

Music by Paul Haslinger, Edited by Jesse Kane, Executive Producer Lon Bender

Featuring Louis Abramson, Ed Begley, Jr., Debora Benchoam, June Berk, David Brooks, Rabbi Sharon Brous, Robbie Conal, Peter Coyote, Shepard Fairey, Jim Himes, David Hogg, Robert Hubbell, Adam Kinzinger, Ann Kuster, Charley Lang, Wendie Malick, Tom Morello, Keith Olbermann, Betty Osceola, Carmen Perez-Jordan, Peggy Dammond Preacely, John Quigley, Jamie Raskin, Adam Smith, Steve Van Zandt, Henry Winkler, Richard Wolff

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# THE FILM

## Logline

Thirty-five diverse men and women confront the problem of saving their democracy from fascism.

## Synopsis

What can we do? I posed that question to fifty-two people I respect and they immediately understood what I meant. They acknowledged our country has been taken over by fascists. Our democracy is being disassembled. Forces from a formerly disenfranchised, but aggressive minority are destroying every aspect of decency and the rule of law.

I posed ten questions to a diverse and dynamic group of American citizens who I considered positive forces and recognized them as LIGHTWORKERS

I first asked what constitutes “activism” and followed with “what can you do?” I was interested in how “good people” lived their lives. I asked how people became who they were. I asked what is courage, empathy and joy. I approached these questions from a socio-historic perspective that I thought would be the best context for my audience, but who was I trying to reach?

Despite my desire for inclusivity, I knew I could not reach everyone, but I wanted to reach the widest swath of Americana that was possible. I decided to focus on the voting public, particularly those who might shift the balance of power in the congress... those voting in the midterms.

As I have never been active in party politics I was flying blind. I tried to use my ignorance as a springboard for an educational exercise. This was a journey. I would use the very tools I was trying to examine, particularly the “kindness of strangers.” As in GOOD MEN, I interviewed fifty citizens I identified as “do-gooders,” people who lived their lives prioritizing helping others... people who saw themselves as part of a social order they felt an allegiance to. I call them LIGHTWORKERS. This is the story of my journey.

## How to Watch the Film

*Lightworkers* is available for educational, community, and organizational screenings. To learn more or to request access, visit:

[lightworkersdoc.com](http://lightworkersdoc.com)

Virtual or in-person Q&A sessions with the filmmakers may be available upon request.

## ABOUT THE FILM

*Lightworkers* is a feature documentary directed by Bobby Roth that brings together a diverse group of individuals who have taken action in the face of social, political, and environmental challenges. Through a series of personal, interview-driven stories, the film explores how individuals contribute to the strength and resilience of democratic society.

Rather than following a single narrative, *Lightworkers* presents a mosaic of voices reflecting on a shared question: *What can we do?* The film highlights the power of individual choices and collective responsibility, inviting viewers to consider their own role in shaping a more just and compassionate world.

### Relevant Themes

- Civic Engagement and Democratic Participation
- Individual Agency and Responsibility
- Moral Courage and Ethical Action
- Community, Empathy, and Collective Impact
- Social Justice and Equity
- Environmental Stewardship
- Leadership and Public Service
- The Power of Personal Narrative

### Potential Audiences

- Middle school, high school, college, and graduate students
- Educators across disciplines, including social studies, civics, political science, ethics, and media studies
- Civic engagement centers and nonprofit organizations
- Community leaders, activists, and advocacy groups
- Film and media literacy programs
- Public forums, libraries, and community organizations
- Intergenerational audiences interested in democracy, social responsibility, and public life

### Screening Objectives

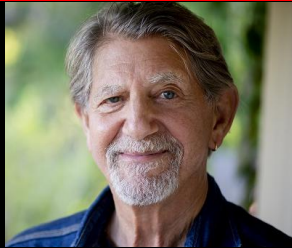
Community and classroom screenings of *Lightworkers* provide an opportunity to bring students, educators, and community members together to reflect on the role of individuals in shaping society. Through personal stories and lived experiences, the film encourages dialogue about civic responsibility, moral courage, and the importance of participation in democratic life.

We hope your screening event will meet the following objectives:

- Encourage reflection on the role of individual action in creating social change
- Promote dialogue about civic engagement, responsibility, and participation
- Highlight diverse voices and lived experiences across communities
- Foster empathy and understanding across different perspectives
- Inspire participants to consider how they can contribute to their communities
- Support critical thinking about contemporary social and political challenges

**“People who live with purpose, guided by compassion and a sense of responsibility to others, are who I call Lightworkers.”**  
**~Bobby Roth**

## Selected Participants in *Lightworkers*



**Peter Coyote – Actor, Author, and Zen Priest**

Emmy-winning narrator and activist blending storytelling, spirituality, and social conscience.



**Shepard Fairey – Artist and Activist**

Creator of the iconic “HOPE” poster, merging design and dissent to inspire civic engagement worldwide.



**Lee Grant – Actor and Director**

Oscar-winning performer and filmmaker who turned blacklisting adversity into a legacy of fearless, compassionate storytelling.



**Adam Kinzinger – Former U.S. Congressman and Air Force Veteran**

Stood for constitutional accountability and decency in public service despite political cost.



**Tom Morello – Musician and Activist**

Guitarist and songwriter whose music channels resistance and solidarity across generations and movements.



**Jamie Raskin – U.S. Congressman and Constitutional Scholar**

Defends democracy with intellect, compassion, and courage shaped by personal and national trials.

## Background Information



The themes explored in *Lightworkers*, including civic engagement, social responsibility, and individual agency, are increasingly relevant in today's social and political climate. Across the United States, there is growing concern about declining civic participation, rising polarization, and a lack of trust in institutions. At the same time, individuals and communities continue to find ways to engage, organize, and advocate for change.

- Civic participation, including voting, community involvement, and public discourse, plays a critical role in sustaining democratic societies. However, many individuals report feeling disconnected from traditional forms of participation or uncertain about how to engage meaningfully.
- Research shows that storytelling and personal narrative can be powerful tools for fostering empathy, increasing understanding across differences, and motivating civic action.
- Educators and community leaders increasingly emphasize the importance of civic education, media literacy, and critical thinking skills to help individuals navigate complex social and political environments.
- Social movements and grassroots organizing continue to demonstrate that individual and collective action can influence public policy, cultural norms, and community outcomes.

# Background Information



While many individuals express a desire to contribute to their communities, barriers such as time constraints, lack of access, limited resources, and feelings of disconnection can make civic participation feel out of reach. In an increasingly complex and fast-paced world, individuals may struggle to identify meaningful ways to engage or feel that their contributions will make a difference.

- Studies suggest that younger generations are redefining what civic engagement looks like, often prioritizing issue-based involvement, digital activism, and community-centered efforts over traditional forms of participation.
- Media environments and the rapid spread of information can both inform and overwhelm individuals, making media literacy and critical thinking essential skills for navigating public discourse and making informed decisions.

• Experiences of inequality, exclusion, or marginalization can shape how individuals view institutions and their willingness or ability to participate in civic life. At the same time, many communities continue to create spaces for engagement, advocacy, and mutual support.

- Across different sectors, including education, the arts, public service, and grassroots organizing, individuals are finding ways to contribute to social change through both small, everyday actions and larger collective efforts.
- Research and lived experience suggest that a sense of purpose, connection, and belonging can play an important role in motivating civic participation and sustained engagement over time.

## Using This Section

This background information may be used to support pre- or post-screening discussions. Facilitators may choose to highlight specific points to help participants connect the themes of *Lightworkers* to their own experiences, communities, and areas of interest.

# Discussing the Film



## **FRAMING THE CONVERSATION**

Lightworkers brings together a wide range of voices and perspectives, each reflecting on the question: What can we do? Because the film explores themes of civic engagement, responsibility, and social change, viewers may connect to the material in very different ways based on their own experiences, values, and beliefs. Participants in your screening may bring a variety of perspectives shaped by their backgrounds, communities, and personal histories. Be mindful of this, and avoid making assumptions about how individuals may respond to the film. Some discussions may raise complex or sensitive topics, including issues related to politics, identity, inequality, or personal responsibility. Facilitators are encouraged to create a space that is respectful, open, and inclusive. The goal is not to reach agreement, but to encourage thoughtful reflection and meaningful dialogue.

## **Guidance for Facilitators**

To support a productive and respectful conversation, consider the following approaches:

- Encourage participants to speak from personal experience using “I” statements (e.g., “I think,” “I feel,” “In my experience”).
- Create space for multiple perspectives, especially those that may not always be heard.
- Remind participants to listen actively and respectfully, without interrupting others.
- Invite participants to reflect before responding, allowing time for thoughtful engagement rather than immediate reactions.
- Emphasize that disagreement can be part of productive dialogue when approached with respect and curiosity.
- Be mindful of how much space individuals are taking in the conversation and encourage balanced participation.
- When discussions become challenging, refocus on shared values such as community, empathy, and mutual respect.

## **Creating a Supportive Environment**

Depending on your audience, you may wish to:

- Provide time for reflection before or after discussion (writing, small groups, etc.)
- Encourage participants to connect themes from the film to their own communities
- Offer opportunities for continued engagement beyond the screening

# Discussing The Film

You may choose to invite a moderator to guide discussion or allow participants to reflect and respond in small or large groups. The following questions are designed to support thoughtful dialogue and can be adapted based on your audience and setting.

## Discussion Questions

### Initial Reactions & Reflection

1. What does the term “*Lightworker*” mean to you after watching the film?
2. What were your initial reactions to the film? How did it make you feel?
3. Which story or individual resonated with you most, and why?
4. Did any moment in the film challenge your assumptions or perspective?

### Understanding the Film’s Themes

1. How do the individuals featured in *Lightworkers* demonstrate civic engagement in different ways?
2. In what ways can individual actions influence larger systems or communities?
3. What role do empathy and compassion play in creating change?
4. How does storytelling shape our understanding of social and political issues?
5. How do different perspectives in the film reflect the complexity of real-world challenges?

### Barriers & Challenges

1. What challenges or barriers might prevent people from taking action?
2. How can individuals overcome feelings of disconnection or lack of influence?
3. What role do institutions (government, media, education) play in shaping participation?
4. How might fear, uncertainty, or division impact people’s willingness to engage?

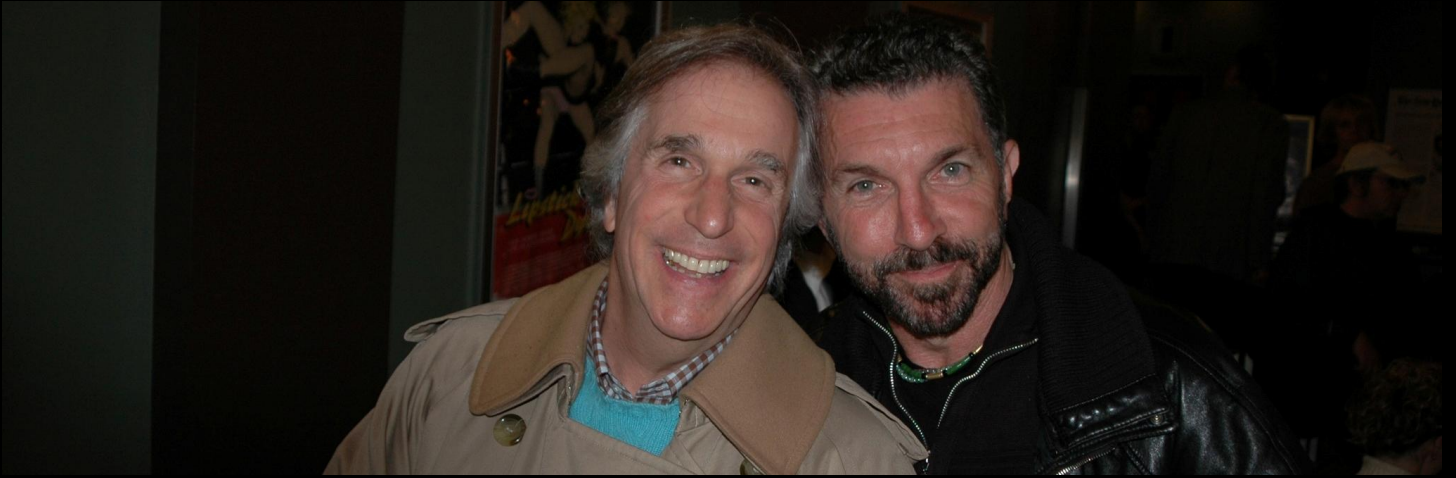
### Personal Connection & Application

1. What responsibilities do individuals have within a democratic society?
2. How can the ideas presented in the film be applied to your own school, community, or daily life?
3. What does meaningful participation or engagement look like to you today?
4. Have you seen examples of “lightworking” in your own life or community?

### Moving Forward

1. What is one issue or cause you feel personally connected to, and why?
2. What is one action, big or small, you feel inspired to take after watching the film?
3. How can individuals work together to create lasting change in their communities?

# Potential Partners



Inviting individuals and organizations to partner on your screening can create a more dynamic and meaningful conversation while helping you reach a wider audience. Partners can contribute diverse perspectives, participate as speakers, and help promote the event through their networks. We recommend identifying two to three strong partners who align with the themes of *Lightworkers*.

## Who to Invite

- Students, alumni, and community members

Invite individuals to share their experiences with civic engagement, community involvement, or advocacy. Encourage participation from people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

– Connect with local schools, universities, or alumni groups

Reach out to student organizations or civic clubs

- Educators, counselors, and school leaders

Educators can speak to the role of civic education, student engagement, and media literacy in today's classrooms. They may also offer insight into how young people are navigating social and political issues.

– Contact local school districts or university departments

– Reach out to teacher networks or education organizations

- Community organizations and nonprofit leaders

Organizations focused on social justice, environmental advocacy, public health, or civic engagement can provide real-world examples of the work highlighted in the film.

– Look for local nonprofits or advocacy groups

– Explore community centers or volunteer networks

- Artists, storytellers, and media creators

Creative voices can speak to the role of storytelling in shaping public awareness and inspiring change.

– Connect with local arts organizations or media groups

– Invite filmmakers, writers, or visual artists

- Public servants and civic leaders

Local leaders and policymakers can offer insight into how individuals and communities influence decision-making and public policy.

– Contact local government offices or civic organizations

– Invite speakers involved in community leadership

# ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

Incorporating an activity into your screening can help make the experience more meaningful and memorable. The following ideas are designed to extend the conversation beyond the film and encourage participants to reflect, connect, and take action in their own communities.

## **Suggested Engagement Activities**

### Host a Community Conversation Event

- Invite a moderator or small panel of speakers to respond to the film and engage with the audience.
- Include voices from different backgrounds (students, educators, community leaders, artists)
- Encourage audience participation through open dialogue or Q&A
- Focus on shared themes such as civic engagement, responsibility, and community action

### “What Can We Do?” Reflection Activity

- Invite participants to reflect on the film’s central question:  
*What can we do?*
- Ask participants to write a short response before or after discussion
- Invite volunteers to share their reflections
- Consider collecting responses to display or share with the group

### Showcase Creative or Community Work

- Encourage participants to express their ideas through creative or community-based work.
- Share student or community projects such as art, writing, video, or storytelling
- Invite participants to create something inspired by the film
- Highlight work that reflects themes of civic engagement or social responsibility

### Connect with Local Organizations

- Partner with local nonprofits or community groups to provide pathways for continued engagement.
- Invite organizations to share information about their work
- Provide opportunities for volunteering or involvement
- Create space for participants to learn how they can take action locally

### Facilitated Small Group Discussions

- Break participants into smaller groups to encourage more personal and in-depth conversation.
- Assign 1–2 discussion questions per group
- Encourage active listening and respectful dialogue
- Invite groups to share key takeaways with the larger audience

### Personal Reflection or Writing Prompt

- Encourage participants to reflect on their own role in their community.  
Suggested prompts:
- What does being a “Lightworker” mean in your life?
- What is one issue you care about, and why?
- What is one action you can take in your community?

### Commitment to Action

- Invite participants to identify one action they can take following the screening.
- Write down a personal commitment
- Share with a partner or group
- Follow up through school, organization, or community networks

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources provide additional context on civic engagement, social responsibility, storytelling, and community action. These materials may be helpful for educators, facilitators, and participants who wish to explore the themes of *Lightworkers* more deeply.

## Articles & Organizations

- Pew Research Center – Civic Engagement & Public Trust  
<https://www.pewresearch.org>
- Facing History & Ourselves – Educational resources focused on civic responsibility, ethics, and social justice  
<https://www.facinghistory.org>
- National Civic League – Resources on community engagement and civic participation  
<https://www.nationalcivicleague.org>
- iCivics – Interactive civic education resources and curriculum  
<https://www.icivics.org>

## Film & Media

- Lightworkers Official Website – Information about the film, screenings, and educational use  
<https://lightworkersdoc.com>
- PBS Independent Lens – Documentary films and educational resources for classroom use  
<https://www.pbs.org/independentlens>
- ITVS (Independent Television Service) – Supports and distributes documentaries focused on social issues  
<https://itvs.org>

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- Lightworkers Official Website – <https://lightworkersdoc.com>
- PBS Independent Lens – <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens>
- ITVS (Independent Television Service) – <https://itvs.org>

## Explore the Work of Lightworkers

The following books, writings, and organizations provide pathways for deeper engagement with the themes explored in *Lightworkers*.

## Books by Participants in Lightworkers

- *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* – David Brooks
- *Understanding Marxism and Democracy at Work* – Richard Wolff
- *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy* – Jamie Raskin
- *Sleeping Where I Fall* – Peter Coyote
- *The Amen Effect* – Rabbi Sharon Brous
- *Power to the People* (co-author) – Carmen Perez-Jordan
- *Unrequited Infatuations* – Steven Van Zandt
- *Obey: Supply & Demand* – Shepard Fairey
- *I Said Yes to Everything* – Lee Grant
- Hank Zipzer series – Henry Winkler

## Writing, Media, and Ongoing Work by Participants

- Robert Hubbell – Today’s Edition Newsletter (<https://roberthubbell.substack.com>)
- Keith Olbermann – Countdown with Keith Olbermann (podcast <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/countdown-with-keith-olbermann/id1633301179>)
- Shepard Fairey – Artwork and civic campaigns (<https://obeygiant.com>)
- Phill Wilson – Black AIDS Institute (<https://blackaids.org>)
- Carmen Perez-Jordan – Gathering for Justice (<https://gatheringforjustice.org>)
- Steven Van Zandt – TeachRock (<https://teachrock.org>)
- Betty Osceola – Love the Everglades Movement (<https://lovetheeverglades.org>)
- Atossa Soltani – Amazon Watch (<https://amazonwatch.org>)
- James Thornton – ClientEarth (<https://www.clientearth.org>)
- David Brooks – New York Times columns (various publications)
- Jamie Raskin – Public service and commentary (<https://raskin.house.gov>)
- Richard Wolff – Democracy at Work (<https://www.democracyatwork.info>)
- Tom Morello – Music and activism (<https://www.tommorrello.com>)
- Charley Lang – Narrative Counseling Center (<https://narrativecounselingcenter.com>)
- Adam Kinzinger – Public service (<https://www.adamkinzinger.com>)
- Jim Himes – U.S. Congressman (<https://himes.house.gov>)
- Adam Smith – U.S. Congressman (<https://adamsmith.house.gov>)
- David Hogg – Civic engagement (<https://leadersweddeserve.com>)
- Debora Benchoam – Human rights law (various publications)

Additional participants continue their work across education, advocacy, public service, the arts, and community leadership, including Louis Abramson, Ed Begley Jr., June Berk, Ann McLane Kuster, Wendie Malick, Matt Palevsky, John Quigley, Jennefer Russo, Dr. Monica Soni, and Peggy Preacely.

# CREDITS

Dedicated to Robert M. Young

Written and Directed by  
Bobby Roth

Produced by  
Bobby Roth, Jesse Kane and Monica Valdes

Executive Producer  
Lon Bender

Edited by  
Jesse Kane

Music by  
Paul Haslinger

Protools Engineer  
Travis Smith

Score Mixing Engineer  
Mitch Zelezny

Associate Producers  
Emma Weir and Barbara Williams

Consulting Producer  
Jonathan Dana

Camera  
Bobby Roth

Additional Camera  
Daeil Kim  
Austin Ramey  
Nick Roth  
Pam Springsteen

Sound  
Lon Bender

Rerecording Mixer  
David Forshee

Sound Editor

Alex Nomick

Dialog Editors

Dan Newman

Jake Reichart

Colorist

Nick Roth

VFX Supervisor

William Mesa

VFX Producer

Lincoln Kupchak

Trailer

Smitty Smith and Jeff Farrow

Publicity

Jonathan Taylor & Ric Robertson

Interviewees

Louis Abramson

Ed Begley, Jr.

Debora Benchoam

June Aochi Berk

David Brooks

Rabbi Sharon Brous

Robbie Conal

Peter Coyote

Shepard Fairey

Lee Grant

Jim Himes

David Hogg

Robert Hubbell

Adam Kinzinger

Annie Kuster

Charley Lang

Wendie Malick

Tom Morello

Keith Olbermann

Betty Osceola

Rev. Matthew Palevsky

Carmen Perez-Jordan

Peggy Damond Trotter Preacely

John Quigley

Jamie Raskin

Jennefer Russo

Adam Smith  
Atossa Soltani  
Monica Soni  
James Thornton  
Steve Van Zandt  
Phill Wilson  
Henry Winkler  
Richard D. Wolff

Consultants:

Lilan Bowden  
Barbara Carrasco  
Francine Epstein  
Jodie Evans  
Gabriella Karin  
Diane Luby Lane  
Rob Nilsson  
Adolfo 'Fito' de la Parra  
Ankur Patel  
Julia Ponsin  
Eurydice Stanley  
Lauren Tom  
Jack Waksal  
Stacey Williams  
Lori Woodley  
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