

A woman in a patterned dress stands in a field, looking towards a background of industrial smokestacks, the US Capitol, and agricultural machinery.

HOW DO YOU CHANGE
SOMEONE'S MIND ABOUT
THE MOST IMPORTANT
THING IN THE WORLD?

**THE
ANTS
& THE
GRASSHOPPER**



THE ANTS & THE GRASSHOPPER

DIRECTED BY RAJ PATEL AND ZAK PIPER
NARRATED BY ANITA CHITAYA with
PETER MAZUNDA

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LOGLINE

**HOW DO YOU CHANGE
SOMEONE'S MIND ABOUT THE MOST
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SYNOPSIS

Anita Chitaya has a gift; she can help bring abundant food from dead soil, she can make men fight for gender equality, and she can end child hunger in her village. Now, to save her home from extreme weather, she faces her greatest challenge: persuading Americans that climate change is real. Traveling from Malawi to California to the White House, she meets climate sceptics and despairing farmers. Her journey takes her across all the divisions shaping the US, from the rural-urban divide, to schisms of race, class and gender, to the thinking that allows Americans to believe we live on a different planet from everyone else. It will take all her skill and experience to persuade us that we're all in this together.

This documentary, ten years in the making, weaves together the most urgent themes of our times: climate change, gender and racial inequality, the gaps between the rich and the poor, and the ideas that groups around the world have generated in order to save the planet.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

We're deeply grateful for the opportunity to share *The Ants and the Grasshopper* with you. It's, a meditation on change, in Malawi, in the United States, in a household far away, on a farm nearby. It's a ten year documentary project, launched from the recognition that to defeat climate change, we'll need big, transformative change. We asked whether such change as possible, and what it'd look like. We found answers to both those questions. More than that, we were changed in the making of this film.

In 2011, we already knew there was something deeply amiss in the storytelling around hunger, in the US and the Global South. In America, *Food Inc* showed people of colour as victims of diabetes, destroyed by their own lack of impulse control. Their condition, the film suggested, might be solved with the sage advice of a few talking heads, and the purchase of organic food at Walmart. If Africans ever intruded into American consciousness around hunger, it was always as victims, waving away the flies in their eyes with gratitude as they received the salvation, and the narration, peddled by an economist or a New York Times correspondent.

We began filming in Bwabwa, Malawi to tell a radically different story. Over the next ten years, we came to understand how the standard operating procedures of documentary filmmaking are part of the problem.

Filming began when Steve James and Raj Patel travelled to Bwabwa, Malawi. Raj had been visiting and working with the Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC) project there, and had found a story in which women and men had transformed from being passive recipients of development advice into being active scientists and experimenters. They'd managed to end hunger by growing better crops, and by convincing men about the need for gender equality.

In the course of filming that transformation, the key subject of the film, Anita Chitaya, learned about climate change from SFHC. She immediately asked whether she needed to go to America to change their minds about climate change. With

Zak Piper taking the reins from Steve James, our film project raised the funds for her to do that. On that journey, it became clear that Anita's agenda, in front of and behind the camera, should be the driving force behind the storytelling. The decision to include her history of surviving domestic abuse was Anita's - she insisted that it be a part of the documentary. The voice-over was co-written through a lengthy process of screening, interviewing and brainstorming. And successive cuts have been shown, tweaked and approved through the last years of editing.

In the journey from a hierarchical mode of story telling to an accountable one, we've undergone the kind of transition. It's a transition, from subject to participant, from margin to centre, that mirrors the bigger transitions that the planet needs in tackling climate change. We experienced what it was like to cede the power to shape narrative, beginning from a position of assuming that the standard ways of doing things is always right.

Our reflection, on patriarchy, privilege and power, is one that is raw, but a vital part of the transition away from a colonial world, to a decolonised one. We remain grateful that our experience in working with Anita and the SFHC community helped show us a path to decolonising film making, and point to the way we'll all have to confront our culpability for a world undergoing catastrophic climate change.

The themes in Anita's journey in front of the camera are vast: climate change, hunger, women's empowerment, colonialism, racial inequality and faith. It is a film with a vision of planetary importance. It speaks to the themes of two major events in 2021 that will shape the planet for generations to come: the [UN Food System summit](#) and [UN Climate Change Summit \(COP26\)](#). Global climate and social change movements are ready to use the film, and a growing group of influencers are ready to offer their support. From 350.org, Greenpeace, and the 200-million member La Via Campesina to the Orthodox, Presbyterian and Catholic Churches, from Boots Riley to Michael Pollan, a diverse and wide coalition has formed around our film, united by the potential to transform perspectives, relationships of power, and our planet.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Raj Patel (co-director/producer) is a James Beard Award winning activist and New York Times bestselling writer. He has testified about food and hunger to the US, UK and EU governments, and his book on the food system, *Stuffed and Starved*, has been translated into a dozen languages. He worked for the World Bank and WTO and was tear-gassed on four continents protesting against them. His academic career spans Oxford, the London

School of Economics, Cornell University, the University of California at Berkeley where he taught with Michael Pollan. He is currently a research professor at Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, Austin.



Zak Piper (co-director/producer) is an Emmy-winning and Producers Guild Award-winning documentary filmmaker most known for producing the critically acclaimed film *Life Itself*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and later won a Critics Choice Award. Zak also co-produced the acclaimed film *The Interrupters*, which was hailed as one of the year's best films by The New Yorker, Chicago Tribune, Entertainment Weekly, and LA Times. Prior to these films, Zak co-produced *At the Death House Door*, which premiered at the SXSW Film Festival and was shortlisted for the Academy Awards. Zak is currently producing or

directing a number of documentary projects in development or production.



Rachel Wexler (Producer) set up Bungalow Town in 2004 with Jez Lewis, to make highly individual and compelling documentaries for worldwide audiences. Bungalow Town films document an incredible array of stories, subjects and characters. From the story of the Afghan cricket team in *Out of the Ashes*, a brain surgeon's work in the Ukraine in *The English Surgeon*, to a devastating train crash in Japan in *Brakeless*. Bungalow Town work with broadcasters, foundations and distributors throughout the world. Their films have screened at many A list festivals including: Sheffield DocFest, Sundance, London, SXSW, IDFA and

have been awarded dozens of awards, including a Grierson, an Emmy and two Peabodys.



Peter Mazunda (Producer, Cinematographer) is the Managing Director for Xtra Solutions Communications Group. Peter was trained in Television Engineering, Television Production, Television Journalism and Computer Engineering. He attained his studies in Namibia; Namibia Broadcasting Cooperation, the Training Institute of African Media Communicators Egypt, Thompson Foundation and Deutsche Welle Television Training Centre in Germany. Peter also serves as Advisor to Special Olympics Malawi Board, and was recently assistant to Chiwetel Ejiofor on *The*

Boy Who Harnessed the Wind.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Julie Goldman (Executive Producer) founded Motto Pictures in 2009. She is an Oscar nominated and Emmy Award-winning producer and executive producer of documentary feature films. Julie is producer of *Life, Animated* and executive producer of *Weiner*, both of which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. She produced Steve James' *Abacus: Small Enough To Jail*, released by PBS Frontline and nominated for the 2018 Best Documentary Feature Academy Award, and *The Final Year*, which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival and was released by HBO and

Magnolia Pictures. Previously, Julie executive produced Emmy Award winning *Best of Enemies* and several Emmy-nominated films: *3½ Minutes*, *Ten Bullets*, *The Kill Team*, *Art and Craft* and *1971*. Julie also produced and executive produced: *The Music of Strangers*, *Indian Point*, *Solitary*, *Enlighten Us*, *Southwest of Salem*, *Chicken People*, *Gideon's Army*, *Manhunt*, *God Loves Uganda*, *The Great Invisible*, *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* and *Buck*, on the Oscar shortlist and one of 2011's top five grossing documentaries.



Gordon Quinn (Executive Producer) founded Kartemquin Films in 1966 and has been a leading voice in documentary filmmaking for decades. In 2015, the International Documentary Association honored him with a Career Achievement Award. His recent films as executive producer include *The Interrupters* (2011), *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* (2013), *Life Itself* (2014), *The Homestretch* (2014), *On Beauty* (2014), *Almost There* (2014), *Saving Mes Aynak* (2014), *In The Game* (2015), and the six-part series *Hard Earned*

(2015). Gordon is a supporter of public and community media, and has served

on the boards of several organizations including The Illinois Humanities Council, Chicago Access Network Television, and The Public Square Advisory Committee, The Illinois Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.



Cynthia Kane (Executive Producer) co-created DOCday on Sundance Channel in 2002, and shepherded over 150 international and U.S. co-productions for public media at ITVS. More recently, she helped launch Al Jazeera America and the Sunday night documentary strand, Al Jazeera America Presents with series (Kartemquin's *Hard Earned* – winner 2016 Alfred I. DuPont- Columbia Awards) and documentaries (Albert Maysles' final work, *In Transit*, Leon Gast's *Sporting Dreams*, Barbara Kopple's *Shelter*, Jennifer Maytorena Taylor's

Daisy and Max, Michelle Shephard and Patrick Reed's *Guantanamo's Child*, Marc Levin's *Freeway: Crack in the System*, the last two recently nominated for Emmy's.)



Steve James (Executive Producer) previous work includes *Hoop Dreams*; Sundance and IDFA awards winner, *Stevie*; IDA-winning miniseries *The New Americans*; *The Interrupters*, which won an Emmy, Independent Spirit Award, and the DuPont Columbia Journalism Award; Emmy winner, *Life Itself*, named best documentary by The National Board of Review, and The Producers Guild of America among many others; and *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*, which has earned James a fourth DGA nomination, was one of the National Board of Review's "Top 5 documentaries of the

year," won the "Best Political Documentary" by The Critics Choice Awards, and was nominated for an Academy Award.

CREDITS

Directed by

RAJ PATEL
ZAK PIPER

Produced by

RAJ PATEL
ZAK PIPER
PETER MAZUNDA
RACHEL WEXLER

Narration Written by

ANITA CHITAYA
with
PETER MAZUNDA

Edited by

KATERINA SIMIC
JOHN FARBROTHER

Cinematography by

CLARE MAJOR
PETER MAZUNDA

Original Score by

GRAHAM REYNOLDS

Executive Producers

JULIE GOLDMAN
STEVE JAMES
CYNTHIA KANE
JOLENE PINDER
GORDON QUINN

Field Producer (Oakland) CATHY FISCHER

Field Producers (Midwest) ANDREW FUNKHOUSER
STEPHANIE SMITH

Field Producer (NY) SEAN LYNESS

Location Sound ZAK PIPER

Additional Camera ANITA CHITAYA
JACKSON JAMES

Additional Location Sound RICH POOLER GREG MILLER
PAUL RUSNAK MARK HAYGEN
ERIC REEVES JT TAKAGI

Additional Editing by MINA FITZPATRICK
INGRID ROETTGEN
CARLOS CORVA

Post Production Supervisor MATT TAYLOR

Assistant Editors PEDRO URGILES
TONY COSTELLO
RYAN GLEESON

FEATURED

Anita Chitaya, activist/farmer/teacher, Soils, Food and Healthy Communities via
Peter Mazunda, Producer (*WhatsApp available upon request*)

Rachel Bezner Kerr, co-founder Soils Food and Healthy Communities

Esther Lupafya, co-founder Soils Food and Healthy Communities

Black Dirt Farm Collective

Malik Yakini, D-Town Farm

Denise O'Brien, Women Food and Agriculture Network

Jocelyn Jackson, People's Kitchen Collective

Jim Goodman, National Family Farm Coalition

Presbyterian Hunger Program

Brahm Ahmadi, Community Foods Market, Oakland

Jim Goodman, La Via Campesina

Valerie Segrest, the Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project

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I am blown away. You have found a hero of such grace and intelligence and power, and you had the good sense to get out of the way, center the narrative on her. The film is obviously not about agriculture in the way I expected to be-- it's much bigger than that. We get to observe history. That's what ten years on a movie gets you. I feel invested in the project... so wonderful to see it completed. I will be happy to spread the word.

Michael Pollan, Author & Director of the Knight Program in Science and Environmental Journalism

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The film is lovely, so moving and so touching. Anita Chitaya has plenty to teach us...I think it's Oscar-worthy.

Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, & Public Health, New York University, Emerita, and author of books about food politics

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