

Filmmaker Biographies

Roger Weisberg, Writer/Producer/Director

Roger Weisberg joined Thirteen/WNET in 1977 as a producer of the Emmy-winning series, *HELP YOURSELF*. He produced dozens of programs on a broad range of subjects including aging, domestic violence, juvenile justice, consumer fraud, health care, the environment, child welfare, and urban poverty. Since 1980, he wrote, produced, and directed twenty-two PBS documentaries through his independent production company, Public Policy Productions. These documentaries have won over eighty awards including Peabody, Emmy, and duPont-Columbia awards. Some of Weisberg's films are verite style documentaries with no narration. Others are narrated by prominent actors including Meryl Streep, Helen Hayes, and James Earl Jones, as well as distinguished journalists including Marvin Kalb, Jane Pauley, and Walter Cronkite. While all of Weisberg's documentaries ultimately were broadcast on national public television, his 1993 documentary, *ROAD SCHOLAR*, and his 1999 documentary, *SOUND AND FURY*, had broad theatrical releases before airing on PBS. Weisberg received an Academy Award nomination in 2000 for *SOUND AND FURY* and in 2003 for *WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?*. His current productions are *BREAKING THE CYCLE*, about the struggles of low-wage workers to lift their families out of poverty, and *AGING OUT*, about teens making the transition from foster care to independent living.

Vanessa Roth, MSW Producer/Director

After receiving her Masters Degree in Social Work with a minor in Family Law from Columbia University in 1995, Vanessa began working as a child advocate in New York's Family Court, the New York school system, and the Los Angeles Rape Treatment Center. In 1997 she began making social issue documentaries. Her first feature, the national PBS special, *TAKEN IN: The Lives of America's Foster Children*, received dozens of awards including the 1998 Columbia duPont award. The film has been seen by millions of people worldwide and has been widely distributed to child welfare policymakers and practitioners. In 2002, her film about survivors of sexual abuse, *Close to Home*, premiered at the Sundance Film festival. It was the focus of an *Oprah* episode and made its broadcast premiere on the Discovery Health Channel as a two hour "television event" hosted by David Schwimmer. The impact and reach of *Close to Home* was strengthened by a comprehensive online outreach campaign. The program was distributed overseas and won numerous awards including most recently, the Distinguished Media Award from the National Center for Social Justice and the Media. Vanessa has consulted on many films including the Academy Award winning short, *Big Mama*, and is currently completing a short film about a national educational reform model called the *Schools of the 21st Century*. In addition to her recent collaboration with Roger Weisberg on the feature documentary, *Aging Out*, Vanessa's current productions are *Taken Home*, a follow up film to *Taken In* ten years later and *Roars in My Head*, a film about living with autism.