



★
Independent ★
america
RISING FROM RUINS

HRH MEDIA and OPEN DOOR PRESENT:

Independent America: Rising From Ruins

A DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

Directed by Hanson Hosein
Executive Producer Tom Powers
70', HD

Distributor and Press Contact:
Tom Powers, Executive Producer
Open Door Co. (www.opendoorco.com)
1560 Bayview Avenue, Suite 300
Toronto, Canada M4G 3B8
Direct Line +1 416 855 7386
Mobile +1 416 587 0541
tpowers@opendoorco.com





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ABOUT THE FILM

Independent America: Rising from Ruins shows a version of post-Katrina New Orleans we haven't seen yet, taking a hard yet hopeful look at the risks and rewards of small business ownership in the days, months and years since the disaster. It depicts locals coming home to resurrect their businesses and neighborhoods along with both the expected and unexpected challenges they face from all sides - including their own city government and big box retail.

The film, set in the spring of 2008, three years after Katrina, finds many communities still lack local services such as grocery stores, gas stations and banks. Yet, government support and financial breaks for large chain stores - including tax-free land and buildings - have resulted in small, local businesses being forced to subsidize their competition through the assessment of higher property taxes. Compounding the struggle for the small outfits is decreased sales due to competition and an inability to compete with lower prices offered by the larger stores. This is the story of the frustrating, spirited battle of a people passionately dedicated to bringing their communities back to life in an enduring, sustainable way.

The film received the Patois Award for Best Feature at the [New Orleans International Human Rights Film Festival](#) in April, 2009 and is an Official Selection of the [Seattle International Film Festival](#) in Seattle, Washington, with screenings scheduled for May 25 and 27, 2009.



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"Fundamentally for me, my interest in doing this movie was not necessarily to make a film about New Orleans. It was to make a film about a community in distress and how it came back and how the rest of the country and maybe even the rest of the world could look to New Orleans as an example of - when this happens to you and it will in one way or the other - what are you going to do and who's going to be there to help you?"

From "Rising from Ruins" - Hanson Hosein, Director

THE STORY BEHIND THE FILM

Director Hanson Hosein, a former NBC News journalist, decided to go "independent" a few years ago and delve into independent filmmaking. His first major project (and search for courage) was the documentary, **"Independent America: The Two-Lane Search for Mom & Pop."** This cross-country road trip uncovered a "growing insurgency" against corporate chain retail in the American heartland.

Since then, that "insurgency" has become a social movement with skyrocketing energy prices and food scares. Many Americans now see the value of "local first." While working on the first film back in 2005, a regrettable decision was made to by-pass New Orleans to make it to Bentonville AR for an interview with a senior Wal-Mart executive. Six weeks after the trip, Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast. When the news broke that local business-owners were the first to return to New Orleans to start the recovery, it was clear another "Independent America" story needed to be told.

"Rising from Ruins," recounts the courageous, emotional experiences of the men and women who decided to come back days after Katrina to help rebuild their community – and how, three years later, it remains an ongoing struggle.



FROM THE FILM...

“How do we preserve, nurture and strengthen the businesses born and raised here who come back first when we need them? How do we ensure that those corporate citizens are good to us and don’t capsize the local economy?”

From “Rising from Ruins” - Dana Eness, Director, Stay Local!

“To me the great tragedy that happened in New Orleans was not that the city wasn’t rebuilt exactly the as it was - it’s the democracy - it’s that people who had lost so much who had been utterly abandoned by all three levels of their government - left on their roofs and their attics, lost loves ones, treated with such inhumanity and such brutality - were excluded from the only thing that really could’ve healed their community which was to re-imagine a better city.”

From “Rising from Ruins” - Naomi Klein, Author

“Don’t put a thumb on a scale at the very least. Small businesses are not socialists. They don’t want the government to futz with them at all. They want the government to leave them alone and give them a permit. But they definitely don’t approve of the government then getting into the market and playing favorites with non-locals. I think all local businesses ask is that you keep a level playing field and let them compete fairly.”

From “Rising from Ruins” - Dan Houston, Civic Economics



ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Director/ Filmmaker – Hanson Hosein, [HRH Media, Inc.](#)

Hanson Hosein is the Director of the Master of Communication in Digital Media at the University of Washington in Seattle. He specializes in storytelling, social media strategies and business models of communication. Through his company, HRH Media, he employed this expertise to direct the award-winning documentary films “Rising from Ruins” and “Independent America: The Two-Lane Search for Mom & Pop,” which have been broadcast around the world. Hanson advises organizations and companies on how to communicate effectively and directly by building relationships through storytelling and online communities. He has also won Emmy and Overseas Press Club Awards for his work as a television journalist with NBC News. He was embedded with the U.S. military in Iraq and covered the impact of the war throughout the Middle East, armed only with a laptop, satellite phone and camcorder. Hanson has a Masters degree in journalism from Columbia University, and law degrees from Montreal’s McGill University and the University of Paris.

Executive Producer – Tom Powers, [Open Door Co.](#)

Tom is a principal in Open Door Co., a Toronto based producer of award winning documentaries, specializing in “Content that Matters”. Launched in 2005, the company has produced two critically acclaimed award winning feature documentaries, “Cracked Not Broken” (HBO) and “Independent America – The Two Lane Search for Mom & Pop” (Sundance Channel). A graduate of Queen’s University School of Law, he is a former M&A lawyer with over 10 years of experience in sophisticated multinational corporate transactions with a specialty in knowledge based industries. He has produced 7 prime time series and 5 feature documentaries for clients including HBO, Sundance Channel, NHK, CTV, Discovery Networks, The Documentary Channel, CanWest and SBS, among others.



IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Vera Williams - Owner, Community Book Center
<http://www.communitybookcenter.com/>

Hanson Hosein - Independent Filmmaker/Director
<http://www.hrhmedia.com>

John Besh - Owner and Chef, August Restaurant
<http://www.restaurantaugust.com>

Dan Houston - Consultant, Civic Economics
<http://www.civiceconomics.com/index.html>

David Baker - Associate Editor, Louisiana Weekly
<http://www.louisianaweekly.com/>

Dana Eness, Director, Stay Local!
<http://www.staylocal.org/>

Kim Henry - Gentilly Resident

Jeff Milchen - American Independent Business Alliance
<http://www.amiba.net/>

James Perry - Director, Fair Action Housing Center
<http://www.gnofairhousing.org/index.html>

**Dr. Edward Blakely - Executive Director
Recovery Management for the City of New Orleans**
<http://www.cityofno.com/>

Darlene Wolnick - Director of Marketshare
<http://www.marketumbrella.org>

Naomi Klein - Author
"Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism"
<http://www.naomiklein.org/main>

Charlotte Hayward - Manager, Holmes One Stop Restaurant
5340 Saint Claude Ave, NO, LA 70117, (504) 309-8560

Henry Holmes - Owner, Holmes One Stop Restaurant
5340 Saint Claude Ave, NO, LA 70117, (504) 309-8560

Steve McHugh - August Restaurant
<http://www.restaurantaugust.com>

Poppy Tooker - Crescent City Farmer's Market
<http://www.marketumbrella.org/>

Aurthur Brocato - Owner, Angelo Brocato's Ice Cream
<http://www.angelobrocatoicecream.com/>

Hillary Guttman - Owner, Laurel Street Bakery
5433 Laurel St., New Orleans, LA 70115 - (504) 897-0576

Jenny Temple, Nanette McCutcheon, and Sarah Burgess
Laurel Street Bakery Customers

Walter "Wolfman" Washington, Musician

Tom Lowenburg, Owner, Octavia Books
<http://www.octaviabooks.com/index.php>

Karen Gough, Owner, Bay Books
131 Main Street, Bay St. Louis, MS 39500 - (228) 463-2688

Christy Williams, Owner, Teacher's Shop
4315 Bienville Av. New Orleans, LA 70119 - (504) 483-7867

Roy Zuppardo, Owner, Zuppardo's Supermarket
<http://zuppardos.gourmetfoodmall.com/>

Macon Fry, New Orleans Food and Farm Network
<http://www.noffn.org/>

Bruce Foret, Owner, Oak Street Hardware
8338 Oak St, New Orleans, LA 70118 - (504) 861-4501

Mike Massey, Massey's Sports
<http://www.masseysoutfitters.com/shop/>

Kim Wittenburgh, Dash Lumber
<http://www.dashlumber.com/>

Pres Kabacoff, President, HRI Properties
<http://www.hrihci.com/>

Ray Nagin, Mayor, New Orleans
<http://www.cityofno.com/pg-35-1-mayors-office.aspx>

Pamela Brown, New Orleans Food and Farm Network
<http://www.noffn.org/>

Peter Nguyen, Viet Village Urban Farm
<http://vietvillage-urban-ag.org/default.aspx>

Derek Ditcharo, Shrimp Wholesaler

Mike Bertheolt, Shrimper

Groovesect
<http://www.groovesect.com/index2.html>

Gentilly Civic Improvement Association
<http://www.gcia.us/>

Merlin Fleury II - Owner, Merlin's Place
5325 Franklin Ave, New Orleans, LA 70122 - (504) 284-3766

Fair Grinds Coffee House
<http://www.fairgrinds.com/>



CREW and ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Director

Hanson Hosein

Executive Producer/Producer

Tom Powers

Director of Photography/Editor/Producer

Hanson Hosein

Camera

Hanson Hosein

Kirk Mastin

John Wayne Liston

Tom Powers

Photography

Kirk Mastin

John Wayne Liston

Research

Adriana Gil Miner

Heather Hughes

Animation Narration

Heather Hughes

Animation

Thomas Troisch - Troublefish

Additional Images Courtesy

Getty Images

NOAA

Bruce Foret

Diana Schwam

marketumbrella.org

Roy Zuppardo

Dana Eness

Special Thanks

Dana Eness

David Baker

John Besh

Hotel Provincial New Orleans

Gerald Baldasty

University of Washington

Alvin Singh

Charlotte McConnell

Eamonn McConnell



MUSIC

“Fondre”

Music by Hanson Hosein
Lyrics by Manon Dumas
Copyright 2001

“New Orleans is Sinking”

Music/Lyrics by J. Fay, G. Downie, R. Baker, P. Langlois,
G. Sinclair
Performed by The Tragically Hip
Little Smoke Music/Southern Music SOCAN
Courtesy Universal Music Canada
Copyright 1989

“Goin’ Home”

by Stephan Zillious, Martin Reinsel, John Kirby
Newman
Performed by Gravelroad
Copyright 2008

“Jet City Sweet” and “Learning to Live With the Wind”

by Hanson Hosein
Copyright 2006/1998

“Where Did You Sleep Last Night?”

by H. Ledbetter
Performed by Leadbelly
TRO-Folkways, BMI
Copyright 1944

“Movin’ On”

by Danny Abel, Eric Vogel

“Buttersauce”

by Danny Abel
performed by Groovesect
Copyright 2007

“Crescent City Starlights”

by Edward J. Washington, John B. Cruz
performed by Walter “Wolfman” Washington
BMI
Copyright 2008



IMAGES



Tom Lowenburg, Owner, Octavia Books



Dana Eness, Director, Stay Local!



Post-Katrina views of New Orleans, three years after the disaster.



Hopeful graffiti on an abandoned building in New Orleans.



Abandoned retail space in New Orleans, three years after the disaster Katrina.



Filmmaker and Director, Hanson Hosein.



Dr. Edward Blakely - Executive Director Recovery Management for the City of New Orleans, and Hanson Hosein, Director.



Post-Katrina views of New Orleans, three years after the disaster.



Post-Katrina views of New Orleans, three years after the disaster.



PRESS RELEASES

INDEPENDENT AMERICA – RISING FROM RUINS, WINS BEST FEATURE AT NEW ORLEANS INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

NEW ORLEANS/TORONTO APRIL 14, 2009 - Independent America: Rising from Ruins has won the Patois Award for Best Feature at the New Orleans International Human Rights Film Festival. The film (70', HD) (<http://www.risingfromruins.com>) takes a hard yet hopeful look at the risks and rewards faced by entrepreneurs leading the recovery in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Emily Ratner, Festival Co-Director states, "We are thrilled to present the Patois Award for Best Feature to the film Independent America: Rising From Ruins. This award is one of the highest honors that our festival bestows and is given to the film that most exemplifies our mission: using the media of film to generate and promote community dialogue about important social justice issues. Rising from Ruins is exactly the kind of film we love to present. It is a powerful film that is especially relevant to all of us living here in New Orleans. And it's great filmmaking."

The film's director Hanson Hosein, former NBC foreign correspondent and Emmy winner, adds: "It's daunting to make a film about such a storied city as New Orleans. So this award tells me that we got it right. It's exactly the momentum we need as we take "Rising from Ruins" national. Post-Katrina New Orleans offers many lessons for a country in crisis, especially how fiercely independent local businesses can help resuscitate an economy." Hosein is the Director of the Master of Communication in Digital Media <http://mcdm.washington.edu/> program at the University of Washington.

Executive Producer, Tom Powers from Open Door states: "We are honored to have been given this award – particularly in New Orleans. It means a lot and we look forward to screening the film around the country". He noted the film's next screening will be at the Seattle International Film Festival in May.

Independent America: Rising From Ruins, is a co-production of Open Door Co. and HRH Media.

About PATOIS: New Orleans International Human Rights Film Festival (www.patoisfilmfest.org <<http://www.patoisfilmfest.org>>)

PATOIS was founded by New Orleans artists and activists, and is dedicated to nurturing the city's human rights community. PATOIS is the language spoken at the intersection of art and social justice.

About Open Door (www.opendoorco.com)

Launched in 2005, Open Door is in the business of producing, acquiring, distributing and investing in Content That Matters. It is content with a Double Bottom Line:

- High impact personal, social & political themes, characters and subjects
- Provocative, edgy, uncomfortable, thoughtful, intelligent, challenging
- Real stories that make a difference in who we are, how we view ourselves and how we relate to others

About HRH Media (www.hrhmedia.com)

HRH Media is an independent production company headed by Emmy Award winner and NBC foreign correspondent, Hanson Hosein and his partner, network news journalist Heather Hughes (NBC, MSNBC). Hosein is presently Director of the Master of Communications in Digital Media program <http://www.uwdigitalmedia.org/> at the University of Washington in Seattle.

CONTACT

Tom Powers, Executive Producer: (416) 855-7386; tpowers@opendoorco.com

Emily Ratner, Co-director, New Orleans International Film Festival: (216) 978-1395

emily@nolahumanrights.org

More about the film, press releases, links to media coverage, and full resolution images available at: <http://risingfromruins.com>.



PRESS RELEASES

TORONTO/EDMONTON Jan. 22, 2009 - Independent America: Rising from Ruins, a new feature documentary by filmmaker Hanson Hosein and Executive Producer Tom Powers will have its world premiere on Super Channel, Jan. 26, 2009 at 8 p.m. ET. The pairs' first collaboration, the award-winning Independent America - The Two Lane Search for Mom & Pop will immediately precede it at 6:30 p.m. ET.

Independent America: Rising from Ruins (70', HD) (www.risingfromruins.com) takes a hard yet hopeful look at the risks and rewards of small business ownership in post Katrina New Orleans. It depicts the locals coming home to resurrect their businesses and neighborhoods and the challenges they now face from all sides including their City government and big box retail.

Hanson Hosein, a former NBC foreign correspondent and Emmy winner who is currently the Director of the Master in Communication Digital Media program at the University of Washington, said "It's inspiring how small business was the first to return to the city, even as some chain retailers chose not to return." "There's a lesson there for any community in distress after a disaster – who can you count on? The answer we found, quite simply, is your neighbour".

Tom Powers (Open Door Co.) adds; "Having never been to New Orleans before, I was most struck by the scale of the destruction – even three years after the fact there is still so much to do. I was even more struck, however, by the resolve and determination of those who came back to attempt the rebuilding of a sustainable future. Their personal risk is enormous".

"Super Channel is proud to offer smart documentaries, produced by Canadian companies like Open Door. They are a terrific example of the innovation we are offering viewers," said Sandy Perkins, Super Channel, Vice-President of Programming. "Our goal is to offer Canadians more programs that can't be found anywhere else and we are pleased we can find entertainment made right here at home."

For Hosein, Rising from Ruins is the completion of an unfinished journey. When doing his first full-length documentary "Independent America: The Two Lane Search for Mom & Pop", Hosein and his wife, Heather Hughes, decided to bypass New Orleans six weeks before Katrina hit, in order to make a key interview with Wal Mart in Arkansas. "Now we're here to honor the voices of Moms & Pops and hopefully help them shape the future of an independent New Orleans," says Hosein.

Independent America: Rising From Ruins, shot and produced in full HD video, is a co-production between Open Door Co. and HRH Media.

CONTACT

Tom Powers, Executive Producer: (416) 855-7386; tpowers@opendoorco.com

For Super Channel

Sylvie Powell, Communications: 613-290-1497; spowell@medialanecom.com

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"Independent America: Rising from Ruins" to have worldwide premiere in New Orleans on 3rd Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Three years after Hurricane Katrina's onslaught, New Orleans is at a tipping point. Parts of the city still look like a war zone, the recovery further slowed by a bad economy and high energy prices.

Some neighborhoods remain half-populated, former residents scared away by a lack of essential services – particularly retail. As "The Shock Doctrine" author Naomi Klein told us, "New Orleans is still being destroyed."

However, even as chain retailers are reluctant to return to the city in the aftermath of the storm, independent Mom & Pop stores immediately stepped into breach. "Independent America: Rising from Ruins" is the inspirational story of the small businesses that have risked everything to resurrect their neighborhoods.

From the city's top chef (and former marine) who manned a soup kitchen, to the hardware store owner who kept looters at bay to provide vital supplies, this documentary shows how neighborhood Mom & Pops are crucial to community vitality – especially during times of disaster.

Shot in full high-definition, "Rising from Ruins" will have its worldwide premiere at the Katrina-related event, "We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For," organized by The New Orleans Institute, on Saturday August 30th. The film's director, Hanson Hosein, will be in the city and available for interviews that week.

The production is funded by Canadian broadcaster Superchannel as well as the University of Washington's Department of Communication. Contact: film@independentamerica.net +1.206.801.1867 (Pacific) or +1.416.587.0541 (Easter/Independent America: Rising From Ruins, is a co-production of Open Door Co. and HRH Media.

More about the film, press releases, links to media coverage, and full resolution images available at: <http://risingfromruins.com>.