

MAKE A CIRCLE

Press Kit

Directed by
Jen Bradwell &
Todd Boekelheide

Produced by
Jen Bradwell,
Todd Boekelheide &
Rebekah Fergusson

Runtime: 89 minutes

Filmmaker Contact:

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Film Logline

A love letter to early educators and a rallying cry for a child care system in crisis.

Film Synopsis

From an award-winning filmmaking team, MAKE A CIRCLE follows a group of child care providers who are determined to change how our society values the education of its youngest citizens. With a mix of humor, outrage, and passion, MAKE A CIRCLE captures the unfolding stories of Patricia, a leader of a new union for child care workers, as she fights on behalf of a largely immigrant workforce; Charlotte, another union member who tirelessly lifts up the low-income families in her care; and Anne, the director of a large preschool, who finds novel ways to value and support her teachers when jobs at Starbucks are offering higher pay.

Within their stories are interludes that offer a cinematic window into the unique, imaginative world of the young children in their care. The film culminates as thousands of child care union members march on their state capitol demanding better working conditions, just as their contract is set to expire. Weaving together the magic they create in the classroom, the struggles they endure at home, and their tireless activism for their profession, MAKE A CIRCLE is a moving portrait of life as an early childhood educator and a promising blueprint for fixing our broken child care system.



Film Stills

[Link to high quality film stills](#)



**MAKE
A CIRCLE**

Press Mentions

KQED 'Make a Circle' Places Child Care Providers at the Head of the Class



Children play with a toy colander in a scene from 'Make a Circle.' (Courtesy DocLands)

"Todd spent a lot of very patient time literally down on their level, just watching stuff unfold," Bradwell adds. "Kids this age don't see the camera within a minute of you being there, and they go through a rainbow of cinematic emotions every 10 minutes."

"The kids have incredible BS detectors," Boekelheide says. "If you're lying to them, if you're not fully present, they dismiss you or they destroy you. So these teachers are really present. What is cinema but being present?"

Jen Bradwell & Todd Boekelheide talk MAKE A CIRCLE



"One hell of an eye opener."



San Francisco Chronicle

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The children are watching: Documentary shows how day care providers are gaining power in California

By G. Allen Johnson
May 1, 2024



"We need our benefits," said Moran, who has been a daycare provider for 26 years. "We have value and are worth it. I hear someone say 'The only thing you are doing is changing diapers.' That's very unjust. We need to have the law respect us. Most of us have college degrees and training."

New film shows Bay Area early child care providers' fight for fair pay



"A mosaic of love and frustration...
90 minutes of sheer beauty...
illuminating!"



- [KQED](#)
- [SF Chronicle](#)
- [KALW](#)

Live interviews on: ABC KGO-7 Morning News, KALW's Your Call, KSJS Celluloid Dreams with Tim Sika, Sports Byline with Rick Tittle, KALX Film Closeups



From the Directors

It is one of the greatest disconnects in American society: the importance of a child's first five years versus how the work of early care and education is valued. We are among the 25 million parents of young children in the US who have felt the struggle to access and afford quality child care, as well as the heartbreak of seeing talented early educators leave the field for better paying jobs at coffee shops and delivery services.

There is a common misperception that early care and education is just a form of "babysitting." We believe the invisibility of the work helps perpetuate a system that pays poverty wages and offers little professional respect – that we cannot value what we cannot see. A mentality shift is needed about when "real learning" starts, the skill and expertise early educators bring to their work, and what voices we should be listening to for ideas about how to fix our broken child care system.

During a preschool parent-teacher night, exploring what an anti-racist curriculum for young children could look like, one of our protagonists, Leila, spoke about the power of storytelling. She talked about how inequality and discrimination are perpetuated by the stories we tell ourselves about some people being more worthy than others. And how, with our youngest citizens, we have a unique opportunity to tell a different story from day one.

As two filmmakers who have collectively worked on dozens of documentaries, Leila's statement about storytelling resonated deeply for us. We've seen first-hand how a viewer's attachment to characters undergoing against-the-odds journeys can change minds, change culture and change policies. At the same time, we saw an opportunity to play with the form. To use the medium of cinema to invite viewers into the world of young children and to feel their innocence, their process of discovery, their joy, and their tears.

Our vision is for MAKE A CIRCLE to immerse viewers in both the imaginative, whimsical world of young children and the passionate, hopeful, but imperfect world of the adults who teach and care for them. We have developed aesthetic approaches to subtly distinguish these worlds from each other and, ultimately, to connect them. Child-centric moments and the strong arcs of our teacher characters will coalesce into a larger portrait of the beauty, complexity, and impact of this work.

Our goal has been to direct an artful film about a pressing social issue in a way that is inclusive of and transparent to our participants. We have stayed grounded in the origin story of the film – a desire for child care providers to see a film that truly reflects their perspective – and that central tenet has guided how the film goes out into the world.



A Note About Language

While the term “**daycare**” is in common use, and film participants Patricia and Charlotte sometimes refer to their programs as “daycares,” many Early Childhood Educators are trying to move away from the word because it doesn’t encapsulate the skilled education work that is happening with children before the age of kindergarten. And, as teacher Leila says in the film, “Care and Education: you can’t have one without the other.”



Other terms to consider when writing about the film:

- **Early Childhood Educator or Early Educator:**
A good, inclusive term for all the educators featured in MAKE A CIRCLE, whether they work in homes or centers.
- **Family Child Care / Family Child Care Home / Home-Based Child Care:**
Film participants Patricia and Charlotte operate their child cares out of their homes and often refer to themselves as **Family Child Care Providers, Child Care Providers**, or simply **Providers**.
- **Center-Based Child Care / Preschool**
All People’s School in the film (with participants Anne, Leila, Dan and Margarita) is considered a center-based facility for early care and education. Preschool often refers to learning environments for children from 2 to 3 years old until they enter kindergarten at age 5. Infant-toddler care can refer to kids from babies up to age 2 to 3. The educators in these center-based facilities often refer to themselves as Infant-Toddler Teachers and Preschool Teachers.





JEN BRADWELL
DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Jen has edited more than 15 feature documentaries, including the Emmy Award-winning TIME FOR ILHAN, THE BIG PICTURE: RETHINKING DYSLEXIA (Sundance/HBO), Jennifer Siebel Newsom's FAIR PLAY (Hulu), and Erika Cohn's WHAT YOU'LL REMEMBER (NYT Op-Docs). Two seminal projects she wrote and edited (RESILIENCE and PAPER TIGERS) have had more than 50,000 community screenings to date, helping ignite a national conversation about childhood trauma. Jen has taught editing master classes at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism and UC Santa Cruz's Social Documentation program. Years of editing and story consulting have inspired her to direct her first feature doc.



TODD BOEHKELHIDE
DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER

Todd's long and varied career began with editing picture and sound on STAR WARS and THE BLACK STALLION. He subsequently mixed sound on numerous Oscar-winning films, and won an Academy Award for AMADEUS. He then built a career composing music for documentaries, including HEARTS OF DARKNESS, BALLETS RUSSES, SEÑORITA EXTRAVIADA, and 3½ MINUTES, TEN BULLETS. He has worked with a stellar list of filmmakers: David Fincher, Carroll Ballard, David Lynch, Jon Else, Milos Forman, Philip Kaufman, David Peoples, Bill Couturié, Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine, Lourdes Portillo and many others. Todd brings his decades of experience to his directorial debut.

**About the
Filmmakers**



About the Filmmakers



REBEKAH FURGUSON
PRODUCER

Rebekah is an accomplished creative producer whose recent credits include HELEN AND THE BEAR (Hot Docs 2024), the Rory Kennedy-directed ADRIFT (Mill Valley 2023), the Academy Award-nominated Netflix Originals CRIP CAMP (Sundance 2020) and END GAME (Sundance 2018), and the Kevin Durant executive-produced Q BALL for Fox Sports (SFFilm 2019). She co-produced the Academy Award shortlisted HBO documentary THE CASE AGAINST 8 (Sundance 2013), directed PELADA (2010 SXSW) and was a cinematographer on END GAME and PELADA. Rebekah was an Impact Partners Producing Fellow and is a member of the Documentary Producers Alliance, Film Fatales, and FWD-DOC.



SABRINA SCHMIDT GORDON
CONSULTING EDITOR

Sabrina is an award-winning documentary filmmaker from NYC. Her films employ provocative, nuanced storytelling to center marginalized voices, illuminate diverse experiences, and inspire around the issues that affect our global society. Recent projects include Sundance premieres VICTIM / SUSPECT (Netflix), TO THE END (Hulu), and QUEST (POV). Since her Emmy-winning editing debut, she has distinguished herself as a producer, editor, and director. Sabrina was honored with 2023's Reel Sisters Trailblazer Award. She is also a Women at Sundance Fellow, recipient of the Dear Producer Award, and is a member of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



About the Participants



PATRICIA MORAN is an Early Childhood Educator, advocate, and leader in the Child Care Providers United union. The daughter of a statesman turned indigenous rights activist and a prima ballerina in Bolivia, political turmoil forced Patricia to abandon her law school studies as a young adult. Becoming a refugee in the United States, she fell in love with the field of education and received her BA in Child Development. After several years as a teacher, she became a Coordinator at a child care development agency in Santa Clara County, and eventually opened her own family child care: the Creative Learning Center. Witnessing abuse and discrimination, Patricia joined efforts to create a union for family child care providers who receive subsidized children in California. Now on the negotiating team for her union, she brings her passion for supporting young children and families to gain economic justice for her fellow providers.



CHARLOTTE GUINN is the owner of Rose's Daycare, which has served families in Oakland for over 29 years. She left a steady career as a bank manager to pursue her dream of creating future leaders. Charlotte is the Vice President of Alameda Professional Childcare Association, and an active member of the Oakland Family Childcare Policy Program Team and the Child Care Providers United union. Bringing years of experience and dedication, Charlotte is committed to promoting quality early education and strengthening the child care industry. Giving her students a legacy of love and a zest for learning that follows them into their elementary school years, Charlotte's motto is: "Make learning fun." Charlotte is also an internationally competitive martial artist with a 5th degree black belt, and the proud mother of three beautiful adult children.



About the Participants



ANNE BAUER has cultivated an embodied expertise in early care and education over the course of over twenty five years working at Aquatic Park School, part of All People's School, starting as a teacher and now as a director. In her work, Anne emphasizes supporting social, emotional and identity development from a culturally responsive, strength-based framework for children and teachers, and to supporting the adult learning and wellbeing of educators. Anne was raised by the village of Yellow Springs, Ohio, and the foundational experience of engaged citizenry that this intergenerational, progressive community gave her informs so much of her professional passions in ECE. Earning her Doctorate of Education from Mills College in 2018, her dissertation research explored the professional identity of early educators. Anne is dedicated to ongoing practices that sustain her – meditation, anti-racism, writing – and is probably picking up a new, short-lived hobby as you read this.



Film Credits

Featuring	Ann Bauer
	Charlotte Guinn
	Dan Harrison
	Leila Leo
	Patricia Moran
	Margarita Sanchez de Lopez
Directed and Produced by	Jen Bradwell
	Todd Boekelheide
Produced by	Rebekah Furguson
Editor	Jen Bradwell
Co-Editors	Todd Boekelheide
	Aldona Watts
Director of Photography	Todd Boekelheide
Music by	Emily Rice
Consulting Editor	Sabrina Schmidt Gordon
Additional Cinematography	John Behrens
	Jason Blalock
	Rebekah Fergusson
Location Sound Recordists	Ramsay Davila
	Rebekah Fergusson
	Justin Pearson

Additional Production Support	Colter Macshane
	Jeff Powell
	Orlando Torres
Additional Editing	M'Daya Meliani
	Bill Weber
Assistant Editors	Nicole Amyx
	Ilana Rappaport
Digital Intermediate by	Different by Design
Digital Intermediate Colorist	Francisco Loritte
Digital Intermediate Editors	Misha Aranyshv
	Charles Butler
Digital Intermediate Producers	Greg Lanesev
	Matt Radecki
Archival Conversions	Joe Bogdanovic
DI Assistant	Mike Werner
Re-Recording Mixer	Sam Lehmer
Sound Designer and Sound Effects Editor	Justin Pearson
Dialogue Editor	Justin Pearson
Sound Design Consultant	Gary Rydstrom
Production Counsel	Isaac Hager, Richard J. Lee Law
Bookkeeping Services	Juliet Mason, Manage 4 Results

Archival Courtesy of:	Childcare Providers United
	CNN
	KCET PBS Southern California
	KERO ABC Bakersfield
	KPBS San Diego
	Pond5
	Shutterstock
	WBZ CBS Boston
	WCPO ABC Cincinnati
	WCVB ABC Boston

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