

Doc NYC Pitch Day Application 2024

Project Title: Facing History (working title) **Website:** [13DL Project Site](#).

Director/Producer: Ryoya Terao (rterao@citytech.cuny.edu), Elisabeth Gareis

Logline: An avalanche of archival discoveries ties a small Bavarian town to the Holocaust, compelling modern Germans to confront their historical legacy, connect with Jewish descendants overseas, and embark on journeys of reconciliation and discovery.

Project Description: "Facing History" began in 2021, diving deep into the histories of Jewish citizens in a small German town during WWII. This feature-length documentary, building on our short film "13 Driver's Licenses," expands beyond the high school students' research to explore the broader experiences of Jewish individuals. Filming has taken place across the USA, Germany, and Poland, including interviews with five survivors now in their 90s, a descendant of a Nazi profiteer, and relatives of those tragically lost during the November Pogrom. The documentary aims to provide a comprehensive view of the past, its enduring impact, and the pathways to reconciliation.

Relevance and Impact: Our film goes beyond traditional Holocaust narratives by focusing on the potential for reconciliation and learning in today's society. It offers a template for acknowledging and overcoming historical atrocities and is especially relevant amidst rising nationalism and xenophobia. The story serves as a reminder of the importance of confronting uncomfortable truths about the past to prevent future injustices.

Artistic Approach: Our approach combines striking visual storytelling with sensitive narrative construction. We utilize high-tech reenactments, archival footage, and personal testimonies to create a compelling visual and emotional experience. The film's cinematography captures the stark contrast between the idyllic present and the dark past, using light and color to symbolize hope and renewal.

Budget and Funding Needs: The majority of filming has completed, and now towards post-production, we have secured \$86,630, including a matching grant from the Claims Conference. The project requires additional funding to cover the full scope, which includes editing, color grading, sound mixing, and more. Total post-production costs are projected at \$270K. Our team, comprised of full-time academics, is committed to the project, willing to forego salaries if necessary to ensure its completion. We have applied for some other grants and will have fund raising events. We will film reenactments at a high-tech virtual studio in 2025 and complete post-production by the end of the year.

Team: Ryoya Terao the director (NHK etc.), writer Peter Frumkin (PBS etc.), Emmy and Peabody recipient Mark Raker (Director of Photography), Emmy-winning Josh A. Kapusinski (graphics), and Paul Special (sound designer), producer Elisabeth Gareis, composer David Smith, and more who worked on our short film together <https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/13dl/the-team/>

Project Relevance Today: Our film is not just a recount of past events but a vital tool for education and reconciliation, relevant to contemporary issues of societal division and historical accountability. It serves as a global example of how communities can confront and learn from their darkest histories to foster peace and understanding.

Video Sample: Trailer of "13 Driver's Licenses" (3 min.). Our feature documentary is its expansion, and will have a lot more movement beside talking head interviews:

<https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/13dl/trailer/>