



Kim A. Snyder's US KIDS Moves Mountains at Mountainfilm 2020

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

One of the most exceptional films I viewed during Mountainfilm was *Us Kids*, directed by Kim A Snyder, a filmmaker known for taking on emotionally-wrought films. Snyder also directed the Peabody award-winning, and most-watched documentary film of the last decade, [Newtown](#), that provided a look into the lives of those most affected by the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. *Us Kids* documents some of the most prominent students, including Emma Gonzales, David Hogg, and Cameron Kasky in the months following the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD) High School in Parkland, Fla. In case anyone has forgotten, on February 14, 2018, a nineteen-year-old former MSD student opened fire inside the school with a semi-automatic rifle killing seventeen students and wounding seventeen others without any apparent motive.

In opening *Us Kids*, Snyder utilizes some pivotal archival news footage of classmates Emma Gonzales and David Hogg. Gonzales, a senior survivor of the Parkland Marjory Stoneman Douglas School shooting, stands on the footsteps of the Broward County Courthouse delivering her 11-minute "We Call B.S." speech at a gun control rally in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., while Hogg responds to a backlash from the right wing-media and nationally syndicated, conservative television host, Laura Ingraham's mocking tweets. His response precipitated 27 sponsors dropping their ads from Ingraham's show. Snyder also records Marjory Stoneman Douglas schoolmate Sam Fuentes sharing her difficulties in trusting others "when a kid I barely knew tried to kill me."

Us Kids is a direct cinema-style, full-length feature documentary film that followed the classmates from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School as they launched a student-led political action committee, Never again MSD, advocating for tighter regulations to prevent gun violence and to not only help get out the vote in 2018 but to sway the vote in 2018. The group embarks on a nation-wide, bus tour seeking support for safe learning environments and for politicians to stop taking National Rifle Association (NRA) monies. Stops in cities strife with extreme examples of gun violence and/or a powerful presence such as St. Louis, El Paso, Dallas, Houston, Sioux City, Milwaukee, San Antonio, Las Vegas, and Orange County are made.

Snyder captures the toils and the rigors of campaigning for a just cause as Never Again MSD becomes fearful and afraid of being misunderstood. Attacks on social media became vicious. Furthermore, the students were antagonized and followed into their hotel by gun-toting members of the Utah Gun Exchange. In addition, the NRA counter protested sending nefarious characters in cowboy attire with red mirror-reflective sunglasses to agitate, barking at the young men and women of Never Again, MSD, telling them they are nothing more than pawns and questioning their purpose. The responses from the Stoneman-Douglas Never Again, MSD, survivors were deep, articulate, and heartfelt leaving the agitators dumbfounded and scratching their heads.

US Kids won the Jury Prize for Best Feature at the 2020 Mountainfilm Film Festival. In addition to being an award-winning documentary, *US Kids* is also a critical and seminal socio-political artifact on school shootings, political activism, and student-led PACs. Highly recommended.

Category

1. Mountainfilm
2. Telluride

Tags

1. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School
2. Never Again MSD

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