

## Interview, Audio: Directors Bonni Cohen & Jon Shenk of ‘An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 7, 2017 - 12:23pm

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CHICAGO – The beauty of ex-Vice President Al Gore is that whenever his name is mentioned we think about his central passion... how Planet Earth is changing due to greenhouse gases and pollution. His groundbreaking “An Inconvenient Truth” documentary is a cultural icon, and now he is back with the aptly titled “An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power,” co-directed by Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk.

This is both an update of the first and a cause for optimism. Al Gore has his slideshow – which is being updated almost day-by-day, as depicted in the documentary – and there are ominous and apocalyptic signs still in the picture (Miami is altering its infrastructure because of rising ocean levels), but also there are true success stories as a result of Gore’s crusade. The wind and sun power industries are viable and becoming profitable enough to be adopted, plus the word is out.. in a large part due to Gore... and we know that if we’re going to leave the world a better place, that as inhabitants we must demand change in levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and our governments must act.



Former Vice President Al Gore Guides ‘An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power’

*Photo credit: Paramount Pictures*

Much of the new film’s essence comes from a pair of married co-directors, Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk. “An Inconvenient Sequel...” is lively and moves at both a informational and entertaining pace. The focus is on Al Gore, and we meet him again as an elder statesmen, Nobel Prize winner and citizen advocate of the world. He is tireless in his crusade, and in a sense he has gone from a quixotic tilting at windmills to being the impetus for wind power. Instead of sitting on his past triumphs and history, he is generating new victories for the cause and hopes to alter our future viability. Patrick McDonald and Jon Lennon Espino of HollywoodChicago.com – with Jim Alexander of Reel Talker – spoke with



co-directors Cohen and Shenk about their approach to their “inconvenient truth.”

**HollywoodChicago.com (Patrick):** There is a distinct style to the original “Inconvenient Truth” that became part of pop culture. What did you want to pick up from the original that you knew was vital, and how did you want to expand your own style onto the current sequel?

**Jon Shenk:** ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ is such a monumental film and moment in environmental history. We feel that it gave us the language to have a conversation like this, and it was so vital in so many ways... it put the issue on the map for so many people. Bonni and I felt like the sequel was in part an opportunity to update what we’ve learned in where we are with the climate crisis and solutions, but since the first film was on the table, we could go further with getting to know Al Gore.

We felt like if Al was up to it, we could go ‘behind to scenes’ to how he built the slideshow in the first place, his meeting with scientists in Greenland, and his interactions at the Paris Agreement Summit. We wanted that authenticity, and as a character revealing element, to explore how that slideshow was made. That’s the relationship between the style of the first film and our style, we are more an observational fly-on-the-wall type of documentary makers.

**Bonni Cohen:** Observational filmmaking is unassailable, and if we wanted to create portals based on the slideshows, where we’re both seeing the updates and more as to what we have to learn. People are always wondering to themselves ‘what have been the results of what Al Gore is doing since the first film?’ We opened the portals on the slideshow to see where he collects his information, and that gives the added benefit of not being able to poke holes in the truths that he is revealing.



Al Gore with Co-Directors Bonni Cohen & Jon Shenk of 'An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power'

*Photo credit: Stephen Speckman for © 2017 Sundance Institute*

**HollywoodChicago.com (Jon):** You’ve both worked on documentaries that deal with human rights – online bullying, Nazis, the lost boys of Sudan and even Star Wars – what drew you to the topic of climate change?

**Cohen:** This is actually our second climate change film. We made a film in 2012 called ‘The Island President,’ which was about the first democratically elected president of the Maldives, which is the lowest lying island nation in the world. It’s also the most vulnerable to climate change. We were schooled on this subject, as well as the adaptations to it. That is part of the reason that [production company] Participant Media called us to do the sequel. They made the first movie, and the head of their documentary unit is someone we’d worked with in the past. She thought we’d take to the subject matter and be able to do something different, with the type of filmmakers that we are.

**Reel Talker (Jim):** When I look at the title, I wondered about what ‘inconveniences’ you both had in putting the film together, and what sticks out as being troublesome as you tackled this complex subject again?

**Shenk:** The climate crisis, as depicted in the film, has gotten so overwhelmingly bad, that predictions made around the time of the first film have not only come true, but have expanded even more than previously thought. Part of the challenge was choosing material that would be emblematic in the expansion of the crisis. One thing we have learned is that when you mess with a complex system like Planet Earth, everything about it changes. There used to be thinking that ‘how can you connect an extreme storm or weather event to climate change?’... but now they can.

The science has evolved to where they think that everything changes in a complex system like a planet, when there are extreme weather events. We wanted to make sure we touched on that ‘everything’ – for example, drought, wildfires, sea level risings, storm surges and ‘rain bombs.’ Then we had to get into how much material is out there, like the footage captured on mobile phones, and how it touches everyone’s

lives. Our main challenge was connecting those dots in a way that made sense for an audience, but also to show enough variation in climate events, so people can relate to what is going on in their part of the world.. to make it a real wake up call.

**In the audio portion of the interview, Bonni and Jon talk to the three interviewers about Al Gore the man, political divisions on the climate change topic and how they dealt with the “wonkiness” of both Gore and the subject matter.**

*“An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power” opened nationwide in select theaters on August 4th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Al Gore. Directed by Bonnie Cohen and Jon Shenk. Rated “PG”*



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