

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FILM STREAMS**  
AT THE RUTH SOKOLOF THEATER



**In Person:**

**JUDITH HELFAND**

A three-day event featuring teacher, activist, and award-winning filmmaker Judith Helfand.

**Friday, March 26 – Sunday, March 28**

Film Streams' Ruth Sokolof Theater, 1340 Mike Fahey St.

Judith's visit to Omaha is generously supported by the **Todd & Betiana Simon Foundation** and **United States Artists**.

**Omaha, Nebraska**—Film Streams is thrilled to announce a special, interactive three-day event featuring Peabody-award winning documentary filmmaker and United States Artists Fellow **Judith Helfand**. From Friday, March 26 to Sunday, March 28, Film Streams will present four programs with Helfand in person at the Ruth Sokolof Theater, Omaha's nonprofit cinema.

The weekend at a glance:

- **On Friday, an evening retrospective** of Helfand's work (1995-2010), including scenes from *COOKED* her current work-in-progress that uses the tragic 1995 Chicago heat wave to explore the politics of crisis and the long-term disaster called poverty. (She swears this will be uplifting!)
- **On Saturday, a special double-feature screening** of *A HEALTHY BABY GIRL* (1997) and its sequel *BLUE VINYL* (2002) in honor of Helfand's 20th anniversary of life post DES-related cancer. Q&A's with Helfand to follow, plus a sneak preview at new DVD extras in development for the 2010 DVD re-release of *A HEALTHY BABY GIRL*. *Judith wants feedback from Omaha!*
- **On Sunday, "Story Leads to Action" workshop**, a FREE event introducing Omaha to *CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES* (a hybrid film fund and nonprofit production company dedicated to supporting women filmmakers) and *WORKING FILMS* (a nonprofit that leverages the power of storytelling through documentary film to advance struggles for social, economic, and environmental justice, human and civil rights). The workshop will be of special interest to filmmakers, community activists and those curious about how story-driven, nonfiction films paired with community engagement campaigns lead to concrete social change. Women filmmakers, environmental health and justice activists and women's and girls' rights advocates will find this session especially useful—because *CHICKEN and EGG PICTURES* is dedicated to supporting Women Filmmakers (and a whole new brand of chick flicks!)

**- SEE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR BIO & SCHEDULE OF EVENTS -**

## About Judith Helfand

Judith Helfand is an award-winning filmmaker, educator and media activist whose documentary films are socially conscious and humorous, politically engaged and personal — or as she puts it, “toxic comedies for our times.” She took on class, power and the complex role of memory and history in the lives of Southern working people in UPRISING OF '34, co-directed with George Stoney (1995); corporate responsibility, environmental health and justice and the long-term impact of chemical exposure from one generation to the next by focusing the camera on her own family in A HEALTHY BABY GIRL (1997), its sequel BLUE VINYL (2002) and the final installment in the trilogy EK VELT (2004). A HEALTHY BABY GIRL is an intimate, humorous, yet searing exploration of what happens when science, marketing and corporate power enter our deepest family relationships via DES, a reproductive “wonder-drug” that was actually carcinogenic and ineffective; BLUE VINYL, co-directed with Daniel Gold, is a “rollicking eco-activist detective story” that goes deep into the dark side of the vinyl/PVC industry and Helfand’s father’s deep wish to never have to paint his house again. EK VELT: At the End of the World (2004) rounds out this 15-year saga with Helfand’s usual brand of warmth, irony, deep access into what makes a family, and a serious glimpse into the “green” building blues. In EVERYTHING’S COOL (2007), Helfand and co-director Gold follow a group of self-appointed global warming messengers — passionate, exasperated, driven by fear, hope and their commitment to the next generation — as they race to communicate their knowledge to an indifferent public and a laggard United States government, while industry-funded think-tanks and lobbyists work tirelessly in the background and on prime-time news to challenge, convolute and dismiss the issue as hysterical.

Building on a decade of developing innovative community engagement efforts around the distribution of her own films, Judith co-founded **Working Films** in 1999 with film curator and media activist, Robert West. Today Working Films is a nationally and internationally recognized organization that links non-fiction media to cutting-edge on-the-ground activism. In 2005 she co-founded **Chicken & Egg Pictures**, a hybrid film fund and nonprofit production company dedicated to supporting women filmmakers who are as passionate about the art and craft of storytelling as they are about the human rights, global health and environmental justice issues they are exploring on film. Judith serves as Director of Creative and Strategic Development and is currently spearheading their mentorship program.

Judith was full-time faculty at NYU’s School of Undergraduate Film and Television for seven years where she taught documentary production and designed a [ongoing] documentary “pitching” event for the women-run Fusion Film Festival. She co-designed and taught “DOC-BOOT CAMP” for New School University and two years ago started working as the Environmental Filmmaker-in-Residence at the University of Wisconsin’s Nelson Institute in Madison, where she bi-annually teaches “Community Engagement through Film” and “Environmental Documentary Making” to (non-film) students studying science, history of medicine and environmental studies.

**In 2007, Helfand was one of fifty artists awarded a United States Artists Fellowship Grant, meant to nurture, support and strengthen her work. She is the USA Simon Fellow, funded by the Todd and Betiana Simon Foundation.**

**- SEE NEXT PAGE FOR SCHEDULE OF EVENTS -**

## Schedule of Events:

### FRIDAY, MARCH 26

7pm

#### **Judith Helfand: Opening Night Retrospective**

Join Judith Helfand on a dynamic journey through her twenty-year filmmaking career, featuring clips from her films (1995-2010) and scenes from her work-in progress COOKED. This evening will be an interactive introduction to Helfand's work, her unique brand of "toxic comedy," and how she collaborates with other artists, her subjects and grassroots activists to make films that are "serious fun." Running time: 150 min.

**Tickets:** \$9 general, \$7 seniors, students, teachers, and \$4.50 Film Streams Members.

### SATURDAY, MARCH 27

1pm

#### **Q&A Screening: A HEALTHY BABY GIRL (1997)**

An intimate, humorous, yet searing exploration of what happens when science, marketing, and corporate power enter our deepest family relationships. In 1963, Helfand's mother was prescribed the drug diethylstilbestrol (DES), meant to prevent miscarriage and ensure a healthy baby. But technology is rarely a benign midwife. In 1990, at age 25, Helfand was diagnosed with DES-related cervical cancer. She went home to her family to heal from a radical hysterectomy. There she picked up her camera. Her video diary, A HEALTHY BABY GIRL, was shot over five years and goes beyond loss to document mother-daughter love, family renewal, survival, political awakening, and community activism. Running Time: 57 min.

**Awards:** Peabody Award; chosen for PBS's national testimonial campaign "Be More"; Melbourne Int'l Film Festival, Best Documentary; IDA Best Documentary Nomination; Best Documentary South Bronx International Film Festival; Official Sundance Film Festival selection (1997).

**Followed by: Sneak Preview screening of DVD Extras in Development:** Be a test audience for the DVD Extras Judith is creating for the 2010 DVD re-release of A HEALTHY BABY GIRL Judith will treat us to three new extras which include funny and highly original deleted scenes that didn't make it into the final film. Omaha, Judith needs our feedback!

3pm

#### **Q&A Screening: BLUE VINYL (2002)**

With humor,chutzpah and a piece of vinyl siding firmly in hand, Peabody Award-winning filmmaker Judith Helfand and co-director and award-winning cinematographer Daniel B. Gold set out in search of the truth about polyvinyl chloride (PVC), America's most popular plastic. Back at the starter ranch, Helfand coaxes her terribly patient parents into replacing their vinyl siding on the condition that she can find a healthy, affordable alternative (and it has to look good!). A detective story, an eco-activism doc, and a rollicking comedy, BLUE VINYL puts a human face on the dangers posed by PVC at every stage of its life cycle, from factory to incinerator. Consumer consciousness and the "precautionary principle" have never been this much fun. Running Time: 120 min. **Awards:** Best Cinematography Award at the Sundance Film Festival; Emmy nominations for Best Documentary and Outstanding Achievement in Research; International Documentary Association nomination for Distinguished Documentary Achievement.

**Followed by: Q&A and screening of a few choice DVD extras and shorts from BLUE VINYL:** Judith will treat us to three new extras which include funny and highly original deleted scenes that didn't make it into the final film. Omaha, Judith needs our feedback!

**Tickets:** \$9 general, \$7 seniors, students, teachers, and \$4.50 Film Streams Members. [Purchase a ticket](#) to either A HEALTHY BABY GIRL or BLUE VINYL and get into the other screening free.

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**Schedule of Events (continued):**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 28**

12pm to 2pm

**Story Leads to Action Workshop (FREE)**

Chicken & Egg Pictures is a hybrid film fund and nonprofit production company dedicated to supporting women filmmakers who are as passionate about the craft of storytelling as they are about the social justice, environmental and human rights issues they're exploring on film. In this presentation and workshop, Judith Helfand will discuss films supported through this innovative UPSTART OF A "start up" and present clips from current grantees' projects. She will explore and present the new brave world of "community engagement" via the efforts of WORKING FILMS using Chicken & Egg supported films as examples.

This workshop will be of special interest to filmmakers, community activists, and those curious about how story-driven, non-fiction films paired with community engagement campaigns lead to concrete social change. Women filmmakers, environmental health and justice activists and women's and girls' rights advocates will find this session especially useful --- because CHICKEN AND EGG PICTURES is dedicated to a whole new brand of chick flicks!

**Tickets for the Story Leads to Action Workshop are FREE and available the day of the event.**

For media inquiries, interview requests, or questions, please contact Casey Logan at (402) 933-0259 ext. 11 or [casey@filmstreams.org](mailto:casey@filmstreams.org). Additional information on the weekend of events is available at [www.filmstreams.org](http://www.filmstreams.org).

More Information about Judith Helfand is also available at the following:

**United States Artists:**

<http://www.unitedstatesartists.org/Public2/USAFellows/2007Fellows/ByDiscipline/JudithHelfand/index.cfm>

**Chicken & Egg Pictures:**

<http://www.chickeneggpics.org/>

**Working Films:**

<http://workingfilms.org/article.php?id=59>

**Green Cine Interview with Judith Helfand (April 4, 2005):**

<https://www.greencine.com/central/node/451>

**"A Victim of DES Puts Experience Into a Documentary" (NY Times, January 19, 1997)"**

<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/19/nyregion/a-victim-of-des-puts-experience-into-a-documentary.html>

**IMDB:**

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0375030/>

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Film Streams is grateful for the wonderful support of our members, individual donors, corporations, foundations, and government organizations who make our programming possible, including support from:



**FILM STREAMS** is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the cultural environment of the Omaha-Council Bluffs area through the presentation and discussion of film as an art form. For more information, visit us online at [www.filmstreams.org](http://www.filmstreams.org).