

READOUT

Storytelling & Solutions: The Role of Entertainment in Shifting our Climate Culture

26 February 2025

Rare and the UTA Foundation convened a private symposium, *Storytelling & Solutions*, bringing together **creative professionals, philanthropists, NGO leaders, and scientists** to explore how the entertainment industry reflects climate and sustainability on screen — from the food we eat to how we power our homes or get around, to the solutions we need to ensure an equitable, healthy, and safe climate future.

We found that not only is entertainment capable of moving public perceptions, but that it's measurably effective, that creatives care and are engaged, and there's an emerging ecosystem capable of scaling it. However, this remains a greatly **under-leveraged and under-resourced opportunity: supporting our best creative minds to tell these stories.**



Foundation



1 Entertainment Shapes Culture

Entertainment has a long and celebrated history of inspiring audiences around the world. While storytelling first and foremost must entertain, it can also change hearts and minds simply by reflecting our dynamic world.

- *The X Files* boosted confidence in women to pursue careers in STEM.
- TV shows like *Cheers* helped popularize designated drivers, working with other cultural sectors to reduce annual alcohol-related traffic fatalities by 30%.
- *Will & Grace* helped bring same-sex relationships into the mainstream.
- *Roma* inspired policy to protect worker rights in Mexico and the United States.

And what entertainment has done before with other issues, it can do for climate. Entertainment holds the power to shift norms and shape culture – on policy support, on beliefs, and on behaviors. From scripted dramas to reality TV, from feature films to short-form digital content, these stories can **surface vital themes about our climate, normalize sustainable behaviors and broaden engagement beyond traditional environmental messaging.**

Despite its immense potential, **entertainment remains an under-leveraged sector in the climate movement.** However, success stories across genres and formats have proven its capacity to catalyze change, from hit series with small moments of sustainability, to blockbuster films with prominent climate storylines. **A dynamic ecosystem of nonprofit partners, industry executives, and social scientists** is working to support creatives to tell these stories. The challenge now lies in maintaining and **scaling these efforts**, securing sustainable funding, and ensuring these programs continue to bloom into a **mainstream, commercially viable practice** created with and for the industry.

IF...

creators and talent
craft more stories
and moments of
climate and
sustainability

THEN...

popular culture will
shift on climate

Adoption of
solutions

Popular
support
for action

Expectation
for a just
transition

2 Sustainability in Entertainment: State of the Industry

There is growing **industry support** and [audience demand](#) for sustainability in film and TV, yet it must still **entertain and be commercially viable**. Successful representation of climate themes and sustainable solutions comes through **character-driven narratives**, **authenticity**, and **alignment with existing storytelling devices** rather than overt advocacy.

- “We can leave our climate charts and graphs at home, and bring a great character, bring an exciting story.”
- “We have to future proof our content,” for example, as EV adoption takes off in the countries where audiences live, the shows and movies will start to look old.
- “We need more research on what audience want to see what sustainable solutions in what shows to nail the commercial value for the industry.”
- “We learned to enhance the marketing phase—with social media and in theatres before a film, that’s where we can really punctuate what the audience sees on screen.”

*Want to learn more about the current state of climate and sustainability in entertainment, **behind the scenes and on screen**? Check out these resources:*

- [Netflix’s Sustainability Stories Collection](#) and [Sustainability on the Slate](#) teaser
- The Hollywood Reporter: [Netflix to Feature General Motors EVs in TV Shows and Movies in Deal That Kicks Off at Super Bowl](#)
- [Universal’s GreenerLight Program](#)
- [The Wild Robot](#) – Lupita Nyong’o shares sustainable steps to take care of your community
- Deadline: [Steve Coogan Project Leads Climate Spring Movie Development Slate](#)



Check out this video from the **Sustainable Entertainment Alliance**, produced by [NRDC’s Rewrite the Future](#), narrated by Meryl Streep, with music by Coldplay.

WATCH ►

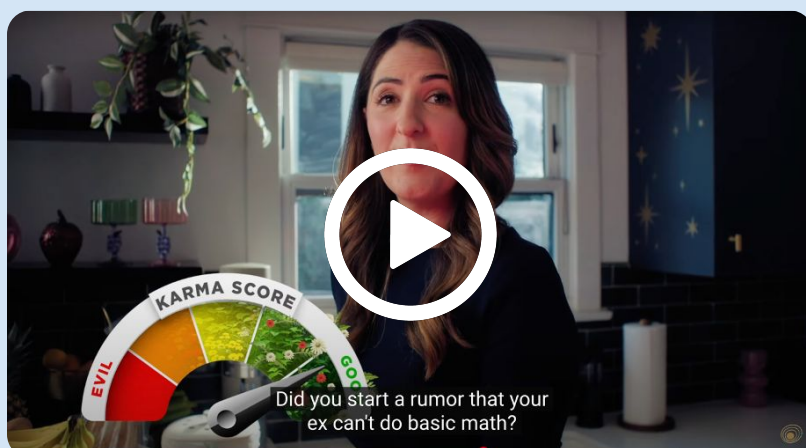
3 Changing Food Norms on Screen

Food plays a critical role in addressing climate change, and **media can inspire what and how we eat**. Whether [showcasing plant-rich diets](#) in shows like *And Just Like That* or showcasing food waste reduction in unscripted formats, entertainment is a **powerful lever in shaping food behaviors**.

- “There are no major policy instruments in food systems. There’s just culture.”
- “Culture is the water we all swim in. And if we’re swimming upstream against it, we’ll never get to policy and systems changes.”
- “The adoption of plant-rich diets is being hindered by the four N’s: the perceptions that eating meat is Nice, Normal, Necessary, and Natural.”
- “Food is deeply personal and cultural – which makes it a prime opportunity for creative exploration.”

Want to learn more?

- [Tilt Collective](#) is committed to creating a global food system that works for everyone
- From Rare’s [Climate Culture Index](#), we know that people tend to underestimate how many others around them are trying to eat more plant-based meals, which can discourage them from taking action themselves



Check out how **Yellow Dot Studios** uses comedy to show how to reduce your food waste with the star power of *The Good Place*'s D'Arcy Carden.

WATCH ▶

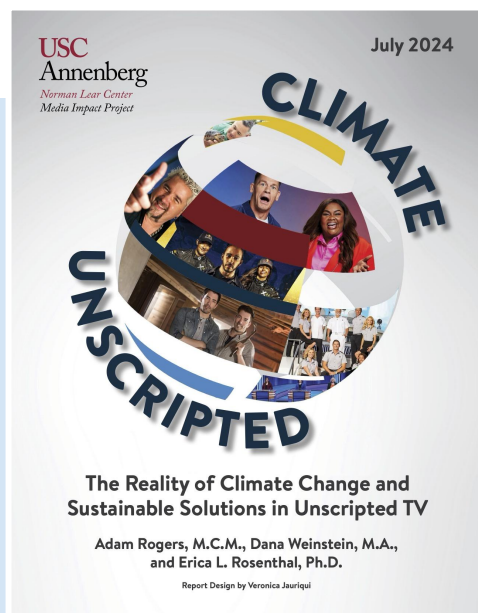
4 Changing Energy Norms on Screen

From **household appliances** to **rooftop solar** to **electric vehicles**, entertainment can help audiences see **clean energy as the new normal**. Scripted and unscripted media (think: reality TV, home design shows, etc.) alike can **demonstrate practical, aspirational clean energy solutions**.

- “Unscripted is relatable, because it’s real people, people in a neighborhood like yours.”
- “Entertainment needs to capture authentic and diverse stories. Where are all the people who will be hurt the first and worst by climate change? Are they being represented on screen?”
- “The economic state of the industry is an opportunity and a risk. Producers need to make budgets work, and there’s opportunities to support them in putting climate solutions on screen. But others might sense this opportunity too.”
- “Electrification can be the hero, for the community it serves and for the audience wanting it in their lives.”

Want to learn more?

- [Rivian Pathway Report](#), which emphasizes three levers that must be pulled at once: (1) Transition to Zero-Emission Vehicles; (2) Power with fossil-free energy; and (3) Reduce supply chain emissions
- [Major Unscripted Producers Announce Sustainability Pledge & Roadmap](#)
- Interested in shifting narratives? The [Beyond Petrochemicals Campaign](#) works to change the narrative to center the people leading the movement for a better future — and reduce demand for plastic and other petrochemical products



Check out *Climate Unscripted: The Reality of Climate Change and Sustainable Solutions in Unscripted TV*, a report from **Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project**.

READ ►

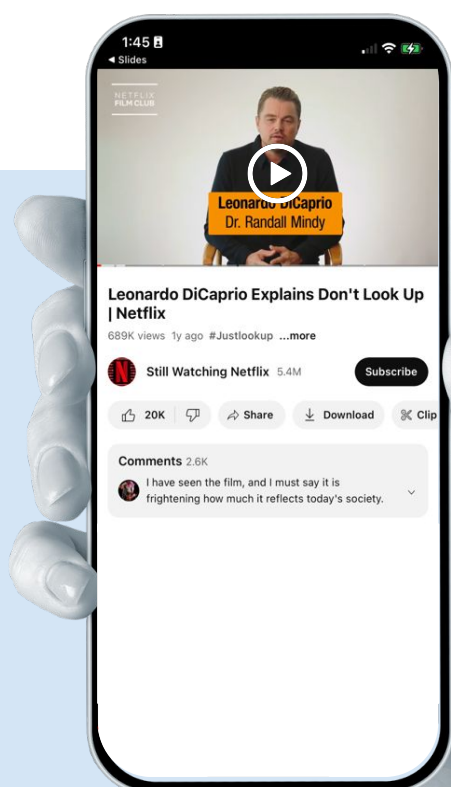
5 From Household Change to Systems Change

Beyond everyday solutions, entertainment can raise awareness and inspire **systems-level change**, from **policy shifts** to **support for governmental action**. When we work together, and we work at scale, change is possible.

- “The intersection of artists, companies, and philanthropy can be magical.”
- “What are the unique opportunities we have to use the biggest microphones?”
- “Our stories need to connect with all American audiences and fit with their lives and values.”
- “Culture is worth the investment.”

Want to learn more?

- [Yellow Dot Studios](#) challenges Big Oil disinformation and climate inaction
- Storytelling can boost support for governmental action, through movies like [Don't Look Up](#) and TV like [Madam Secretary](#)
- Check out [An Idiot's Guide to Climate Change](#), Rainn Wilson's web series in which he learns firsthand about climate science
- Mark your calendars! Discover the intersections of entertainment, climate, and sustainability at the [2025 Hollywood Climate Summit](#), June 2-4, 2025



Check out Leonardo DiCaprio talking about **Don't Look Up**. Watching the film and this marketing video decreased willingness to vote for someone who opposes significant climate action.

WATCH ▶

Where Do We Go From Here?

✓

CREATE
Are you a storyteller or creator? Explore the ways you can reflect climate and sustainability in your work (and see the next page for resources).

✓

SUPPORT
Nonprofits help the industry with research, consulting, and resources for sustainability-driven storytelling. Now is the time to support these groups.

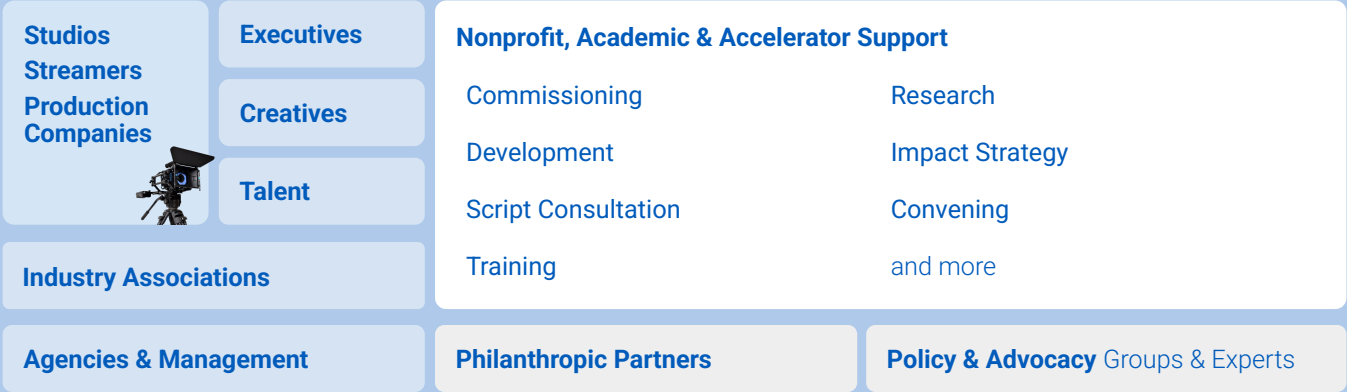
✓

TALK
Talk goes a long way in Hollywood! Help spread the word about these efforts. *After all, we change when we see other people changing.*

Storytelling is a catalyst for cultural change—and by reflecting climate solutions in entertainment, we can accelerate the transition to the more sustainable world.

A proven ecosystem exists, to support creators

We're integrating across partners and institutions into an ecosystem with huge potential.



For more information

The nonprofits ecosystem includes a wide variety of practitioners with a range of capabilities. This ecosystem includes:

- 🔗 [Climate Basecamp](#) is unique blend of scientific experts and social trendsetters, committed to getting everybody talking about climate change, not just the scientists and activists.
- 🔗 [Climate-Spring](#) changes how the world sees climate change by identifying climate stories with potential to be developed into mainstream film and TV content and by informing, inspiring, and incentivising creatives to create new screen narratives.
- 🔗 [Electric Creatives](#) helps entertainment professionals showcase better, electric options in film and television, inspiring people to power their own lives without dirty fossil fuels.
- 🔗 [Good Energy](#) supports TV and film creators in telling wildly entertaining stories that honestly reflect the world we live in now—a world that's in a climate crisis.
- 🔗 [Hollywood Climate Summit](#) unites entertainment professionals, activists, and climate experts through summits that fosters collaboration, builds networks, and amplifies the industry's role in addressing climate change.
- 🔗 [Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project](#) has conducted research on the impact of media and entertainment narratives on audiences' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.
- 🔗 [NRDC | Rewrite the Future](#) leverages NRDC's deep environmental expertise to support creators in telling entertaining stories that reflect our climate-altered world and the path toward a better future.
- 🔗 [Rare's Entertainment Lab](#) inspires a climate culture through film & TV by bringing behavioral insights to Hollywood and by helping the industry tell climate-friendly stories that put high-impact everyday actions on screen.
- 🔗 [Reality of Change](#) operates at the intersection of climate change and unscripted television entertainment, strengthening relevant awareness and know-how within this unique sector, both in front of and behind the camera.
- 🔗 [Yellow Dot Studios](#) is a non-profit media studio founded by Adam McKay, built to create entertaining, memorable, and scientifically accurate digital media and videos that challenge the decades of disinformation.

For additional resources and information on other organizations working in this space, please see [ClimateOnScreen.org](#) 🔗

