



## **The Charleston Documentary Film Festival The ChasDOC Film Society**

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## **The Charleston Documentary Film Festival Debuts With Special Screening of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth***

***First Annual Festival Set for October 6-9, 2006***

**Charleston, S.C.** — The Charleston Documentary Film Festival (ChasDOC) will debut Thursday, June 22, with an exclusive “sneak preview” of *An Inconvenient Truth*, the new film chronicling former Vice President Al Gore’s crusade to raise awareness of global warming.

Dr. Heidi Cullen, The Weather Channel’s global warming expert, will be on hand to address the audience and introduce the film. Proceeds from the screening will benefit the Charleston Documentary Film Festival and its programs. The event also marks the introduction of ChasDOC and its founder, filmmaker Justin Nathanson, to Charleston, a gracious southern city renowned for its commitment to the arts, history and the environment.

In addition to presenting an annual film festival, ChasDOC is a not-for-profit foundation dedicated to educating the community through the production of award-winning documentaries on relevant environmental and social issues.

“The idea behind ChasDOC is to put on a film festival where the community can really get involved, make a difference, and have fun,” Nathanson said. “I started with the idea of an environmental documentary and built a festival around it. Little did I know that it would be met with so much enthusiasm and interest that we’d be able to start a year-round non-profit dedicated to producing environmental films.”

In accordance with ChasDOC’s educational mission, films will be distributed throughout the year through multimedia channels and put into the hands of influential organizations, policy makers and legislators. Each October, ChasDOC’s efforts will culminate in a stimulating four-day annual festival where important documentaries are screened in theaters and outdoor settings. The festival also features lively seminars, workshops and parties where attendees discuss relevant issues and solutions with leading filmmakers, scientists, activists and policy leaders.

In addition to *An Inconvenient Truth*, Nathanson already has secured environmental films produced by actors Woody Harrelson and Matt Damon, among others, for the first annual festival, scheduled this year from October 6 to 9. He’s also working with local producers to direct a new film about the displacement of the Route 17 communities, and collaborating with LEEP on a film of a three-week trek through South Carolina’s waterways.

Nathanson, a native of Brooklyn, New York, began in his career in television documentaries, feature films, game shows, music videos and reality shows before being hired to work on award-winning environmental films such as *Blue Vinyl* and soon-to-be released global warming documentary *Melting Planet*. Newly inspired, he decided to start a film festival – settling on the beautiful city of Charleston.

ChasDOC also features the ChasDOC Film Society, a year-round program for a group of revolving community participants who come together to tell untold local stories through documentary film. Anyone with a story that impacts the local environment, natural resources and human rights issues is invited to participate, and there is a special club for teens and children. ChasDOC provides the cameras, lights, professional training, editing suites, and counsel from top documentary filmmakers.

The film society’s first project is “Home” (working title). ChasDOC currently is working on a documentary film that will explore the potential destruction of important historical African American communities in Mt. Pleasant, SC, through loss of land due to growth and development. A proposed highway extension threatens to bisect these close-knit

neighborhoods of cousins and kinfolk, established by freed slaves and home to generations of their families for hundreds of years. Many residents are artisans and craftspeople, practicing traditional skills including sweetgrass basket making, brought over from West Africa and handed down from mother to daughter (Mt. Pleasant is the only place in the U.S. where this grass is harvested and “sewn” into this particular type of basket). The film will document the political battle currently taking place over land rights, and attempt to preserve — at least on film — the special places that may be lost forever as the struggle between the real “bin heahs” and the “come heahs” escalates.

In addition to his focus on filmmaking, Nathanson is putting together the infrastructure necessary for supporting the year-round festival and its programs. Among his priorities are securing a board of directors, partners, donors and sponsors.