

A black and white photograph of a man in a white jacket and cap standing in front of a wall covered in graffiti. The man is looking to the left. The wall is covered in various graffiti tags and drawings, including a large, stylized figure. The overall tone is gritty and urban.

CHANGE AGENTS

Real People making Real Change

Change Agents is a non-scripted, challenge-driven drama following charismatic citizen activists asked to re-create their local successes in entirely new communities with new people and obstacles. Their passions will remain the same but the problems they face will be entirely unexpected.

With real life dramas unfolding, the stakes are clear. Will they earn the title of “Change Agent” by saving a new community? Each activist will be tasked with a measurable challenge to accomplish over the course of a season.

Whether getting 300 hand-guns off city streets or setting up a boxing gym for at-risk kids, these

fish-out-of-water activists will have to enlist new people along the way, building alliances and constructing strategies to deal with obstacles.

They’ll be working not only for the satisfaction of a job well-done and the eternal gratitude of those they help but also to continue their work in needy communities around the nation as a true “Change Agent”.

This is a new kind of make-over show, focused on bettering communities and solving real-world problems. This is drama – raw and real. The stakes are higher than ever. *Change* is coming...

CASTING

This is not a touchy-feely show about tree-hugging idealists. Our characters will represent America's cultural, regional and economic diversity and will be selected based on, 1) the *dramatic impact of their activism* and, 2) their *compelling and inspirational personalities*.

Their work might be local but their appeal will be global, as demonstrated by the three Change Agents who have already signed on: Debbie “Daza” Griffin, Joe Pommier, and Lauren Parsekian & Molly Lee Thompson.

A black and white portrait of Debbie 'Daza' Griffin, a Black woman with short, curly hair, smiling and looking slightly to the left. She is wearing a light-colored collared shirt. The background is dark with out-of-focus bokeh lights.

Debbie "Daza" Griffin

Former gang member turned community activist

Debbie “Daza” Griffin survived her first drive-by shooting in the 1980’s at age 15. Her best friend did not. The leader of a local Crown Heights gang, Debbie picked herself up off the street and decided, at that moment, to use her formidable energies to clean up her community instead of tear it down.

She redoubled her efforts to reduce gun violence in 2006 when her cousin and close friend, Damon Allen (a local hero who had saved a girl from a burning building) was killed by a stray bullet in a street gun battle.

After 20 years of activism, Crown Heights is a different neighborhood. While walking down Flatbush Avenue past a mural dedicated to kids killed by guns, she raises her hand to the sky and, with a slyly questioning look in her eye asks, “What do you hear?” There’s nothing but birds and cars and people laughing and chatting. “No gunshots,” she continues, “we can walk down the street now.” And she’s right – perhaps the clearest evidence of her success is the neighborhood’s newest problem: gentrification.

As successful as Debbie has been, gun violence still ravages our

inner cities. This episode of *Change Agents* will focus on Debbie as she is challenged to use her experiences to help another neighborhood take control of its gun violence problem. A few miles away from Crown Heights lies Brownsville, East Brooklyn, “one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the United States”, according to Reuters.

While overall crime has dropped across the country in recent years, gun violence in Brownsville is up 50% from last year alone. As one local resident put it, “You can get a gun like a box of Pampers around here.” A massive public housing project, Brownsville is like an urban prison rife with teen pregnancy, unemployment, drugs and crime.

Though in the same city, to Debbie and her local Crown Heights network, Brownsville might as well be in a different state. Her community and municipal contacts don’t extend into Brownsville and, to be effective, she’ll have to partner with local residents who want to see a change. Will her hard earned street savvy and community activism skills make a difference in this abandoned neighborhood?

Of course, systemic change can't happen in 2 – 4 weeks but the groundwork can be laid and, to demonstrate the effectiveness of that groundwork, this episode of *Change Agents* will follow Debbie as she tries to accomplish the following:

- Build a network of Brownsville gun activists who will continue to work after Debbie leaves.
- Recruit “violence mediators” (ex-gang members who actively look for “beefs” to squash).
- Organize a neighborhood “Unity Day” – community Block Party – in which residents gather for food, music, sports and conversation. The evening is capped with a candlelight vigil for those killed by guns and an emotional sharing from the victim's mothers.
- Organize a “Put Down the Gun, Pick Up the Mic” talent show.
- Collect 50 guns off the street to be melted down.

We'll watch as survivors visit their repentant shooters in prison and learn that the only real villain is the system of dysfunction they live in. We'll attend funerals and community celebrations.

To provide context for this issue as a whole, we'll interview experts who'll trace the money down the “iron pipeline” of I-95 to gun companies who supply their products to gun shows in the South with a wink and a nod.

Debbie's story will climax with “Unity Day”, the block party community event in the heat of summer featuring speeches by the mothers of gun victims as well as an amateur talent contest called “Put Down the Gun, Pick Up the Mic” in which local kids prepare and present their abilities – competing through music and art instead of gangs and guns.

The heart of this story will be Debbie and the people she meets, confronts, helps and changes. We'll talk with everyone about what drives them to work so hard against guns. Debbie's heartfelt story of lost loved ones is tragically common and the emotional stakes for her and the rest of the community will be vividly etched into our minds. Their real and revealing stories will move us to tears and inspire us to take action.

Possible Guest Experts

David Kennedy

Director, Center for Crime Prevention and Control John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Expertise in gun and gang violence, drug markets and crime reduction strategies.

Alan Dershowitz

Professor, Harvard Law School

The often-quoted advocate for civil liberties has taken a hard line in favor of gun control. He once said, “The Second Amendment has no place in modern society.”

Philip Cook

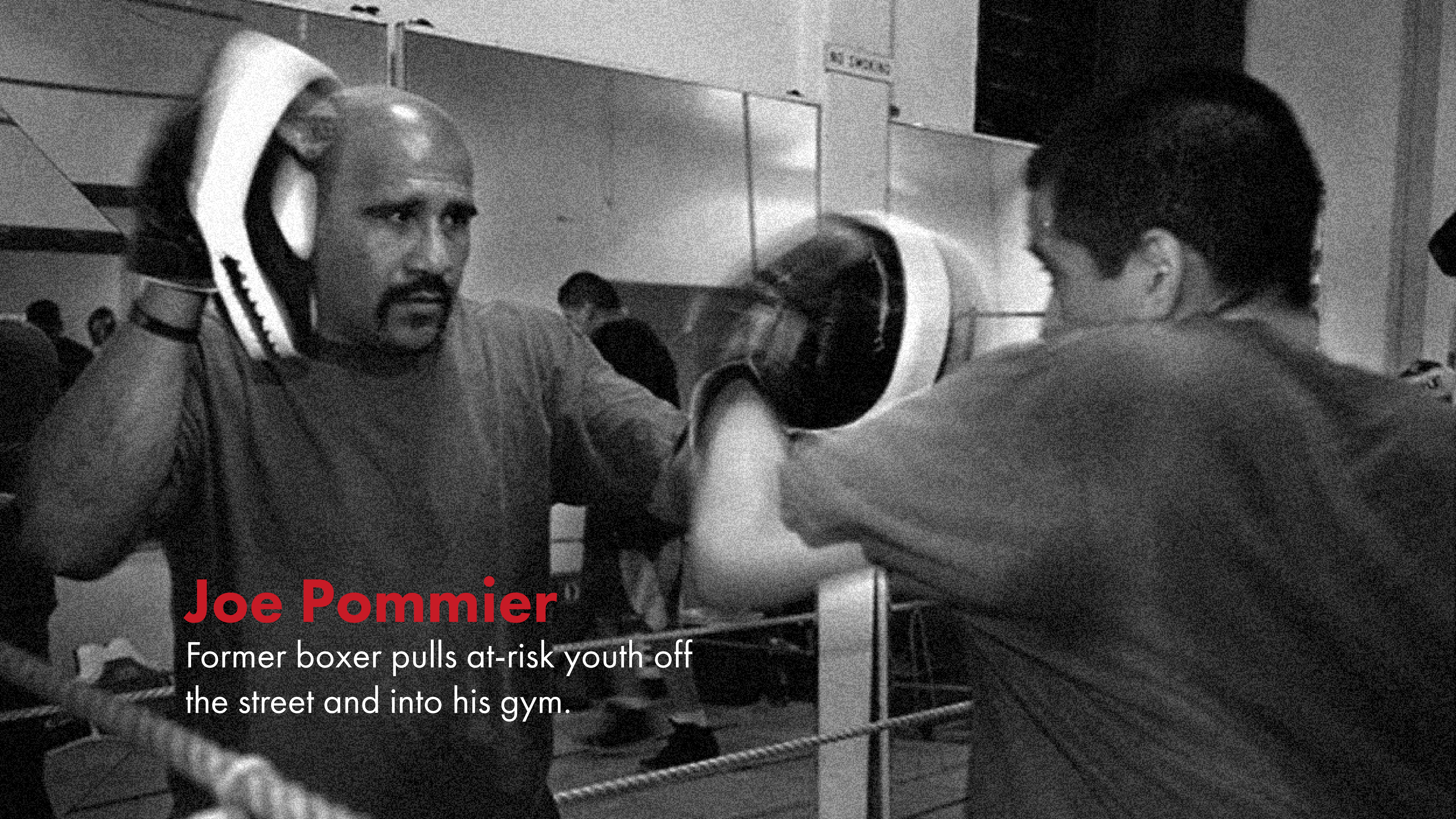
Professor, Duke University

A professor of economics, sociology and public policy, he has written books on the costs and consequences of the widespread availability of guns.

Amy Ellenbogen

Project Director, Crown Heights Mediation Center

As director of the Crown Heights Community Mediation Center, Amy Ellenbogen oversees the day to day operations of the neighborhood problem solving center.

A black and white photograph of Joe Pommier, a former boxer, in a boxing gym. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and boxing gloves, looking intently at a young man who is seen from the back, also wearing boxing gloves. They are in a boxing ring with ropes visible. In the background, there are mirrors and a "NO DRINKING" sign on the wall.

Joe Pommier

Former boxer pulls at-risk youth off the street and into his gym.

In 1989, Joe Pommier was ranked fourth in the nation as an amateur welter weight boxer. But instead of pursuing a career in the ring, Joe decided to dedicate himself to helping underprivileged kids achieve success inside and outside the ring. Along with his wife, Jean, Joe started volunteering at Primo Gym where he now coaches “at risk” kids through athletic training, discipline, anger management and conflict resolution.

Every week, 3 – 5 new teenage boys and girls with little to no athletic experience and all from “at risk” backgrounds come to Primo as a last resort. For Joe, their attendance alone is a success. As he sees it, keeping them busy between school and dinner (the time when the majority of teenage violence occurs) with positive, self-affirming training goes a long way towards keeping them out of trouble.

Once in the gym, the kids are encouraged to take advantage of not only the athletic training but the tutoring, mentoring, media programs and special classes offered. “After a few days”, Joe says, “they start to talk”, opening up about their lives and what issues

they face at home. Joe’s wife, Jean, carefully handles the anger management and conflict resolution education while Joe continues to focus on the kid’s training, discipline, mentoring and sense of self-worth.

Since Joe started coaching, his program has been a success in the underprivileged communities he serves. Alumni from his gym have gone on to become doctors, lawyers and journalists, not to mention successful fighters like Francisco ‘Chia’ Santana. Some even return to the Primo Gym as mentors to help pass along the gifts they were given as teenagers.

Other gyms, martial arts centers, dojos and training facilities have approached Joe over the years to create a similar program, knowing that the gap between wanting to help and knowing how to do it can be a wide one. Joe has always turned these offers down, preferring to spend his time helping the kids in his own gym. Until now.

This *Change Agents* story begins with Cesar, Joe's ex-student, who coaches at a gym on the far side of town. Though energetic and committed, Cesar has never put together a program for underprivileged kids before and he's not sure he can succeed. We'll watch as Joe takes Cesar under his wing and guides him through the beginning stages of a youth boxing program, starting with recruiting the kids.

Though their training is ostensibly in boxing, our show will focus less on their athletic development and more on their emotional and personal growth. We will watch them transform from insecure, unfocused, undisciplined, "at-risk" teenagers to self-aware, confident, emotionally stable young men and women whose gravity and maturity better themselves and all those around them.

The drama will immediately unfold as Joe mentors Cesar who's struggling to establish respect and order in his new program. Meanwhile, we'll follow a handful of kids in Cesar's gym: the promising but quiet newbie, the journeyman training for an upcoming tournament, and a talented but reckless wild-card who constantly tests the patience and abilities of her mentors.

Following their lives outside of the ring, we'll witness the issues

they're dealing with at home and at school and see firsthand the powerful effect of Joe's athletic discipline and Jean's emotional training on their lives. Over the course of the show, we'll watch them evolve away from negativity and toward the self-confidence and communication skills needed to deal with problems that otherwise seemed insurmountable.

As these kids change, we'll also see their impact on their own communities, proving that behaviors are learned and that by living as an example, we can all make a difference. We'll watch their friends respond to them differently as their grades improve and they become a positive influence on their family and community.

Meanwhile, Joe's protege, Cesar, will struggle to keep his new gym afloat while training his young fighters to be responsible, honest young adults.

As all these stories unfold, we'll climax with a boxing tournament showcasing the young boxers' new skills and new attitudes toward life, competition, and challenges. Whether they win or lose, we'll come to understand that each of Joe's kids are already winners on their way to a better, stronger life.

Possible Guest Experts

Irving Spergel

University of Chicago Sociologist and expert on gang violence.

Francisco “Chia” Santana

A former “at risk” student of Joe’s who’s gone on to be a successful professional boxer.

Lawrence Gray, Jr.

President of the Midnight Basketball League, Inc.



Lauren Parsekian & Molly Mae Thompson

Anti-bullying advocates and founders of The KIND Campaign

Lauren Parsekian attempted suicide in the 7th grade. An outwardly happy and active girl, she was pushed to the breaking point by merciless bullying that had mysteriously begun just a year earlier. And she was not alone. Now that schools and parents have become more aware of bullying, reported cases have been on the rise, leading kids to depression, suicide and anti-social behavior.

Fortunately, Lauren pulled her way through the confusing abuse, finding her own ways to cope, and graduated college a strongly independent, confident and assured woman. But the memory of her early years haunted her. She decided that no girl should have to go through what she had experienced and, with the help of her close friend Molly, started The KIND Campaign, dedicated to raising awareness of, and combating, teen-on-teen cruelty.

She struck a chord. The KIND Campaign went national and Lauren and Molly found themselves traveling from school to school, bringing their message of education, tolerance and communication to auditorium after auditorium full of girls hungry for guidance. Their inventive workshops successfully used activities like personal testimonials, school-wide sleepovers, life-swapping, fat-suits and celebrity appearances.

The impact of their message has been felt by school administrators who report a decrease in bullying complaints and by the many inspired girls who've started their own "Kind Clubs" to continue Lauren and Molly's work locally.

Successful though they've been, Lauren and Molly have only just begun their crusade. *Change Agents* will challenge them to return to the same middle school Lauren attended when she was a student — the same school that nearly killed her — to set up an anti-bullying workshop and potentially save the lives of another generation of girls.

At the same time, Lauren and Molly will mentor a pair of college-aged young men looking to follow in their footsteps to create a similar program for boys. Starting with the best intentions, they will quickly find out that boys and girls do things differently and Lauren's previous set of skills will need to be re-examined for this new challenge.

The result will be drama, genuine emotional catharsis and a poignant look at teenagers in America today — all while Lauren makes peace with the uncomfortable past that pushed her into the mission she's on today.

Possible Guest Experts

Dr. Joel Haber

Anti-Bullying Speaker and Counselor

Rosalind Wiseman

Author of Queen Bees and Wannabees

Dr. Michela Borba

Author, Speaker and Educator on bullying prevention

Christina Aguilera

Pop star who dealt with severe bullying and harassment growing up in Staten Island

Lady GaGa

Ridiculed and bullied in high school for looking “ugly” and being “different”

Chris Rock

Only black child in a mostly white school, he was hassled every day

Robert Pattinson

Before he was double- stung MTV movie awards, he was getting slammed against lockers.

FORMAT

While the core conflict and drama is clear, the “right” format partially depends on the broadcast platform. A prime-time television slot will look different from a 1/2 digital series which will be different still from a 10-minute mobile show.

Fortunately, *Change Agents* is dramatically robust enough to accommodate these format options and, in an ideal world, would exist simultaneously on all three, driving viewers in an endless loop from one to the other.

For the sake of example, let’s look closely at one possible format: one-hour, episodic television.

1 HOUR EPISODIC

In this format, each hour-long episode follows the complete arc of a single Change Agent as they labor to successfully complete their challenge over a number of weeks with only their innate skills, previous experience, and the occasional advice of a **Guest Expert** to guide them.

ACT I

In fast-paced, documentary style, the cold open begins by introducing each Change Agent via the successful impact they had in their own community and the challenge they've accepted to create change in a new community. We get a feel for who they are, their sense of humor and fundamental values and we get a sense of how they might approach the coming challenge.

Following a rousing title sequence that combines graphics and inspirational music with clips of historical change agents in action (Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr., etc.), Act I wraps up with each Change Agent embedded in the foreign community they will call home for the next month. New characters – the dramatic antagonists to our Change Agent – are introduced, setting the

stage for the complex relationships that lie ahead. Expectations are confounded, differences noticed and surprising new challenges are discovered here. Excitement and enthusiasm mix with apprehension and nerves as our Change Agent begins to reflect on the ordeal ahead. What if they can't help these new people? What if they fail?

ACT II

Our hero now puts their plan into action. After a few minor successes, it becomes clear even the best laid plans will crumble in the face of real world challenges. Our Change Agent realizes every community is unique and the old solutions must be redesigned for the problems at hand. Among the setbacks, our hero will contend with unexpected local resistance, last-minute resource shortfalls, ingrained fear of change and divergent mission statements – the same obstacles standing in the way of every would-be trailblazers, entrepreneurs and trendsetters throughout history.

Through real-time coverage and “state of play” interviews, we'll get an intimate view of the simmering tensions between community locals and this fish-out-of-water Change Agent. We'll witness not

only the practical problems created by this challenge but also the emotional strain on those involved as the friction between egos and tactics increase.

Throughout this unfolding drama, the episode is visited by Guest Experts to provide larger context for the problems tackled. These Guest Experts will also be limited resources for our Change Agents during moments of crisis. Now, with a clearer understanding of the larger stakes, we become more invested in the story, rooting for the hero's success entering Act III.

ACT III

The bottom falls out as the newly laid plans go awry and our hero is brought to their knees. The simmering, whispered tensions of the last half-hour boil over as the fears and resistance of the community solidifies against our Change Agent.

With the stakes again raised, it's no longer just about the challenge but about preserving the integrity and respect of newly formed relationships as well. Our hero is not just doing a job – they're working to better the lives of their new friends and, in the process, themselves. Act III comes to a close with our hero rallying their adopted community to the cause and putting forward a bold new strategy to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

ACT IV

In the final act, with a new strategy in place, a new commitment made and new motivations driving them, we watch our hero band together with the entire cast of characters to make a final, Herculean effort to bring about the lasting change the community needs.

By the show's end, we've taken a journey with our Change Agent as they applied the change they believed in to a community of strangers and, in the process, transformed those strangers into new friends while learning more about themselves.

ACT V

In the final minutes, we will jump forward three months to take our Change Agent back to the community where they worked so hard to reconnect with the friends they made and to see whether the change they strived for has taken root.

As we wrap up, the audience is encouraged to go online to the ChangeAgents.org website where they can follow the stories they've watched in more detail as well as learn how to get involved themselves as Change Agents in their own communities.

ADDITIONAL FORMATS

1 HOUR SERIALIZED

A variation on the episodic format, this version would follow three to four change agents over the course of an entire season, breaking their progress up into bite-sized chunks carried over multiple, five act episodes. While each of their stories will take longer to unfold, the audience will have the chance to get to know and fall in love with each character, hooking them into the next episode.

DESKTOP DIGITAL (20 - 30 minutes)

Similar to the one-hour episodic format, this version would focus on a single Change Agent's challenge from beginning to end but cut tighter and shorter to fit the shorter attention span of an online audience. Continuity would be provided by the show's premise, package, and dramatic format and, if necessary, could be enhanced by incorporating a single "Change Agent Expert" to host each episode.

MOBILE (5 - 10 minutes)

Combining portions of both the television and digital desktop formats, these more snackable episodes will focus on a single change agent but break their progress up over multiple segments. The idea is to keep each episode short and focused on only one or two major dramatic turns while ending on a question that encourages viewers to swipe into the next segment.

THANK YOU

Be the change you want to see...