



Dartmouth Films in association with Literally Films present

# THE DIVIDE

A film by Katharine Round

THE GUARDIAN ★★★★ TOTAL FILM ★★★★

CITY AM ★★★★ TIME OUT ★★★★

EVENING STANDARD ★★★★ THE EXPRESS ★★★★

In cinemas now and Nationwide 31 May



@thedividefilm @katharineround

[www.thedividedocumentary.com](http://www.thedividedocumentary.com)

<http://www.facebook.com/DivideFilm>

Running time: 74 minutes Cert: 12A

World Premiere Sheffield Doc/Fest 2015

London Premiere Open City Documentary Festival 2015 - Nominated 'Best UK Film'

Official Selection East End Film Festival 2015

Official Selection Take One Action Film Festival 2015

Official Selection Cork Film Festival

Opening Film Global Health Film Festival

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## **Synopsis**

The Divide tells the story of 7 individuals striving for a better life in modern day US and UK - where the top 0.1% owns as much wealth as the bottom 90%. By plotting these tales together, we uncover how every aspect of our lives is controlled by one factor: the size of the gap between rich and poor.

This isn't based on real life. This is real life.

Wall Street psychologist Alden wants to make it to the top 1%; Glaswegian rapper Darren just wants to stay sober; Newcastle carer Rochelle wishes her job wasn't looked down on so much; Jen in Sacramento, California, doesn't even talk to the neighbours in her upscale gated community - they've made it clear to her she isn't "their kind". It becomes clear that a higher income doesn't ensure happiness and inequality hurts us all - rich and poor.

By weaving these stories with news archive from 1979 to the present day, The Divide creates a lyrical, psychological and tragic-comic picture of how economic division creates social division. The film features high profile commentators including former economic adviser to Margaret Thatcher, Sir Alan Budd, historian Sir Max Hastings, economist Ha-Joon Chang, Noam Chomsky and epidemiologist Sir Michael Marmot.

The Divide serves as both a call to arms, and a powerful warning. The film is inspired by the critically-acclaimed, best-selling book "The Spirit Level" by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett.

## **Long Synopsis:**

For years we've wondered what's been going wrong. As many Western countries have become richer, they've seemingly become unhappier, with social and health problems which refuse to go away. This film seeks to unravel that mystery: why, despite increasing material wealth, Western countries such as the US and UK are experiencing profound social breakdown.

The film weaves together seven characters each striving for a better life: Wall Street psychologist Alden wants to make it to the top 1%; Glaswegian rapper Darren just wants to stay sober; Newcastle carer Rochelle wishes her

job wasn't looked down on so much; Jen in Sacramento, California, doesn't even talk to the neighbours in her upscale gated community - they've made it clear to her she isn't "their kind". It becomes clear that a higher income doesn't ensure happiness and inequality hurts us all - rich and poor.

The film's narrative travels across the world, into individual lives, to see how broad economic shifts have shaped not only our physical circumstances but also the way we think and what we believe in. It reveals, piece by piece, the forces that have undermined our economic foundations, and led to a dramatic transfer of wealth to the very top: the top 0.1% in the US own as much wealth as the bottom 90% of the population.

The film features high profile commentators including former economic adviser to Margaret Thatcher, Sir Alan Budd, historian Sir Max Hastings, economist Ha-Joon Chang, Noam Chomsky and epidemiologist Sir Michael Marmot.

The Divide plots parallel character narratives together with an archive spine, juxtaposing news reports from 1979 to the present day, with the outcomes of those economic decisions and the thinking that made them possible. The lines are clearly drawn between the big picture and the very personal, producing a new and more human way of depicting the true toll of rising inequality. The Divide serves as both a call to arms, and a powerful warning. The film is inspired by the critically-acclaimed, best-selling book "The Spirit Level" by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett.

## **Director's Biography**

Katharine Round is a British documentary filmmaker who explores big-picture concepts in an intimate and often psychological form. With 17 years experience in broadcast television and independent production, she has made films for the BBC, Channel 4 and Discovery, as well as screening at leading film festivals. Recent credits include the experiential documentary "London Recruits", part of the V&A's award-winning Disobedient Objects exhibition (and also playing in the Crossover Exhibition at Sheffield 2015), "The Citizens' Network" for Al Jazeera. In 2009, she founded Docheads, the leading networking and screening organisation for documentary professionals. She is also the co-founder of production company Disobedient Films.

## **Executive Producer's Biography**

Christopher Hird is a leading figure in UK independent documentary making. He is the founder and managing director of Dartmouth Films, which has pioneered new ways of funding, producing and distributing documentaries in the UK, as well as promoting the work of new and emerging filmmakers. Among the films which Christo has executive produced: Black Gold (2006), The End of the Line (2009), The Flaw (2011) Fire in the Blood (2012), McCullin (2013) and Still the Enemy Within (2014). He is a former chair of the Sheffield International Documentary Festival and was the founding chair of the Channel Four Britdoc Foundation. He is currently a trustee of the Wincott Foundation, One World Media and the Centre for Investigative Journalism and a patron of the Grierson Trust.

## **Director's Statement – Why I made the film**

When I was a teenager I was obsessed with mathematics – I'd spend my free time with imaginary numbers rather than imaginary friends. Numbers fascinated me in the way people did, a contradiction of meanings, certainties and mysteries. My friends would look at my notebooks and ask how I could understand that stuff, and I remember thinking 'it's only a language, you just have to know how to read it'. Although maths was my passion, it was the meaning of mathematical relationships that really captivated me.

So how is this relevant to "The Divide"? Well, the genesis of the film came from being given a copy of "The Spirit Level", the landmark book on inequality written by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. The book was a fascinating exploration of the relationship between rising income differences and various social outcomes, told through a variety of graphs and charts.

When I saw those charts it struck me that every point on those graphs represented millions of ordinary lives – the charts had a human meaning beyond a mere statistical correlation. And so I embarked on a plan to tell the story of "The Spirit Level", which at its heart was a story of how big picture economics can pull very personal, individual psychological levers in all of us and have an impact on how we live our lives. But from the beginning, I

wanted to tell the story through the voice of lived experience - not just statistics, but real people. I felt it would be much more powerful to see, and feel, at first hand what the data meant. This was also a chance to show the psychological mechanisms at play that might explain the relationships in the data.

I wasn't sure whether you could tell a big picture story through the interweaving experiences of a cast of individuals & families, people whose lives are on different sides of the same economic coin, but whose experiences in a world of growing inequality had many parallels. So casting the film was the biggest challenge - each person needed to represent a significant trend in the data, without of course treating them like a case-study or example. I spent many months talking with community groups and individuals across the UK and it was through this I met Darren and Rochelle. The bigger challenge was filming in the US as, with a very tight budget, I was not only unable to go over prior to the shoot but only had the resources to spend 4 days in each city. Over the years I've developed my own style of working with contributors which many of them have described to me as being "like therapy". I feel a strong sense of connection with the people I film, and hope to be able to portray their thoughts and feelings with warmth and humour.

Through the juxtaposition of their lives with a poetic and lyrical use of archive, I aim to tell both the economic trends, and the social ones. On the economic-side we see reducing employee rights, the increasing remuneration to economic stars as a result of globalisation and deregulation, the absence of a living wage, the financialisation of the economy and the drive for higher rewards at the top - both in Wall St, and outside. The real story for me is the social one - the social division driven by this economic division - with implications for our physical health, mental health, food choices, addiction behaviours, violent behaviours and the sense of commonality or cohesion in society. This is the kind of society where fear is commonplace, and where we support harsh treatment of our fellow citizens rather than looking at the economic factors that underpin the whole scenario.

Every step of the way I uncovered the lines between big-picture economics and personal anxiety, fear and isolation - there seemed to be somebody ready to cash in at every turn: be it selling a drug, a dream, security or easy cash.

I would and could not claim that "The Divide" is a scientific document - I make documentaries not research

papers. However, I hope by giving an insight into seven lives that lie at significant points in a bigger data analysis, we may gain more understanding of how the economic landscape can have an impact on us all. I also hope it will engage those who are turned-off by charts and graphs (and I'm told there are many) to see the picture of inequality.

I hope the film provides a powerful wake-up call to those believe that economics has no bearing on the way we live, or that mathematics cannot tell us anything beyond a mere correlation. I also hope it enables us to understand inequality without the ties of a particular set of political colours, which so often muddies debate in this area. Inequality is a very human problem, that we all need to come together to solve.

## **Credits**

**DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY:**

**Katharine Round**

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:**

**Christopher Hird**

**EDITOR:**

**John Mister**

**DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:**

**Woody James**

**ADDITIONAL EDITING:**

**Gideon Gold**

**ORIGINAL MUSIC BY:**

**Andrew Hewitt**

**THANKS TO:**

**All those who contributed what they could to make this film possible**