Presents

8 BILLION ANGELS

Are there too many of us for Planet Earth?

**Director** Victor Velle
**Producer** Terry Spahr

RT: 74 minutes

www.8billionangels.org

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Today, humanity’s demand for resources vastly exceeds nature’s ability to supply them. Food, water, climate and extinction emergencies are unfolding before our eyes. 8 BILLION ANGELS tells the truth about the conflict between the size of our global population and the sustainability of our planet. It dispels the misperceptions that technology can save us, that reducing consumption is the only answer, and that the blame lies solely in the developing world. Using breathtaking cinematography and startling emotion, the film takes the viewer on an immersive and emotional journey into the lives of farmers, fisherman and others as they witness an unfolding global crisis and inspires real solutions toward lasting sustainability and a better quality of life for all Earth’s inhabitants.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Global warming, food and water shortages, catastrophic storms, extinction of species, habitat loss ... the list of environmental, social and economic catastrophes afflicting our planet goes on and on. If there was a simple root cause, and a fundamental solution, wouldn’t you want to know?

Enter Terry Spahr and his 8 Billion Angels (8BA) team to do what most of the environmental community has yet to do: connect the dots among all of the “downstream” symptoms of our global environmental crises with their fundamental upstream cause - overpopulation. 8BA uses breathtaking photography and startling emotion to show how mankind’s incredible success, as measured in numbers and wealth, could ultimately undo us all. It trades political correctness for an honest assessment and real solutions to our growing emergencies.

8BA explores the impact of overpopulation on marine, animal and human life. Always present but rarely named, overpopulation impacts us all, from the loss of green space to urban sprawl, from gridlocked traffic to beaches strewn with plastic or closed due to water pollution. Combining powerful stories with immersive photography, 8BA makes overpopulation understandable and personal by focusing as much on human emotions as scientific facts.

How? The film tells the stories of individuals around the world impacted by overpopulation, giving faces and voices to an issue that is often relegated to the shadows of our personal, political and international discourse. We learn what trying to find clean water is like in the densest cities in India; how overdevelopment of our land has impacted the oyster industry in Maine; and in what ways our mass agricultural machine has fueled an ever-expanding population at the expense of the natural resources upon which it depends.

Finally, the film delivers a message of beauty and hope about solving a complex problem of global proportions.
DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

In August of 2018, Terry Spahr approached Katya Alexander and me with an idea for a documentary. It was a story that resonated strongly with him and one he knew that he had to tell. The Earth is struggling: ocean acidification, the collapse of our aquatic ecosystems, the desertification of our lands, degrading air quality are just a few of its problems. Our planet is clearly sick and the role of human activity as the primary cause of its illness is now undeniable. To put it simply, we, as humans, consume more than the earth can provide. Terry felt strongly that we had to show as many people as possible that we can and must find a better way to live in harmony with planet Earth.

*8 Billion Angels* takes us across the world, talking to people from all walks of life, in order to shine light on the problem and the solutions. By educating women and empowering them in their family planning decisions and by embracing the idea of smaller families, we can reduce the world’s population. As a result, our consumption of resources would naturally decrease, alleviating the stress on our natural ecosystems, and ultimately leading to a balanced and healthy planet.

Addressing the population taboo is extremely important. For generations, we have lived without truly understanding the impact we have on this planet. It is time for us to stop burying our heads in the sand and build a future in which we all can prosper. This film speaks directly to a younger generation, the generation responsible for the future of our planet, my generation. As the director, my goal was to share our message as you would in a conversation. This film was my way of taking the audience on the adventure I went on, seeing the world with eyes wide open and ultimately realizing my role in how we got to this point. Most importantly, I want to help audiences feel the hope that I feel that, if we band together, we can chart a new path from one of despair and paralysis to one of hope and action.

- Victor Velle
CHARACTERS – BIOGRAPHIES

Jason Hall-Spencer is a Professor at Plymouth University and scientific advisor to the United Nations, ICES and the United Kingdom Government. His current research spans seamount ecology, fisheries, ocean acidification, aquaculture and conservation. He completed a BSc in Marine Biology at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and a PhD on coralline algae at University of London. He has completed postdoctoral work on human impacts in marine systems at institutes in Scotland, NW France, NW Spain, Italy and Malta. He helps run large marine biology undergraduate programs and leads a research group of PhD and Masters students.

Vimlendu Jha is an activist and social entrepreneur known for his innovative and unconventional approaches to contemporary environmental and social issues. In 2000 he founded Swechha a youth-run, youth-focused NGO operating from Delhi, India, whose work focuses on the environment and social development. As its leader, Vimlendu has been invited to speak and take part in numerous international and councils and assemblies. He currently serves on the Government appointed Ridge Management Board and also on the UNEP Multi Stakeholder Advisory Council on Sustainable Lifestyle and Education.

David Montgomery is a professor of geomorphology at the University of Washington and the author of Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life. He is known for his fundamental contributions to our understanding of the geophysical forces that determine landscape evolution and how our use of soils and rivers has shaped civilizations past and present. He received his B.S. in geology at Stanford University and his Ph.D. in geomorphology from UC Berkeley.

Bill Mook, is the owner of Mook Sea Farm, an oyster farm on Maine’s Damariscotta River that raises oysters for the half-shell market and sells seed oysters to other East Coast farms. Mr. Mook received a B.A. degree in Earth and Environmental Science at Wesleyan University. While a student at the University of Maine, he studied benthic ecology and learned how to spawn and rear bivalves. He is a member of the NECAN steering committee (Northeast Coastal Acidification Network), and served on Maine’s Ocean Acidification Commission. He is a founding member of The Nature Conservancy’s Shellfish Growers Climate Coalition.

Dr. Saroj Pachauri is a Distinguished Scholar at the Population Council. She previously worked for the Ford Foundation, where she developed the child survival and reproductive health programs. She has published extensively on policy and implementation issues related to family planning, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and has given presentations at conferences and workshops around the world.

Stuart Pimm is the Doris Duke Professor of Conservation at the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. He studies present-day extinctions and what we can do to prevent them. Pimm received his BSc degree from Oxford University and his Ph.D from New Mexico State University. Pimm introduced the idea that present extinction rates are 1000 times background — a now familiar statistic from Al Gore’s An Inconvenient Truth to the international consensus on the state the planet, the Millennium Assessment. His papers provide the best

**Travis N. Rieder, PhD**, is the Assistant Director for Education Initiatives, Director of the Master of Bioethics degree program and Research Scholar at the Berman Institute of Bioethics at Johns Hopkins University. Rieder’s work is wide-ranging, including issues in overpopulation and climate change ethics, procreative and reproductive ethics, and ethical and policy issues surrounding America’s opioid crisis. He has published widely, both in academic journals and for the media. Travis Rieder is the author of two books. The first, *Toward a Small Family Ethic*, was published in 2016 and explores how consideration of planetary limits and resource shortages might affect the morality of procreation. The second, *IN PAIN*, focuses on the ethical and policy issues raised by America’s opioid crisis and was published by HarperCollins in May 2019.

**Dr. Shashi Tharoor** is a second-term Member of the Indian Parliament representing Thiruvananthapuram, and Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs. He has served as Minister of State for Human Resource Development and for External Affairs in the Government of India. During his nearly three-decade long career at the United Nations, he served as a peacekeeper, refugee worker, and administrator at the highest levels, serving as Under-Secretary General during Kofi Annan’s leadership. He is an award-winning author of 18 books of fiction and non-fiction, including *The Great Indian Novel*, *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century*, *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*, *Why I Am A Hindu* and the recently published *The Paradoxical Prime Minister*.

**William N. Ryerson** is Founder and President of Population Media Center (PMC), an organization that strives to improve the health and wellbeing of people around the world through the use of entertainment-education strategies. He also serves as Chair and CEO of The Population Institute in Washington, DC which works in partnership with Population Media Center. Mr. Ryerson has a 47-year history of working in the field of reproductive health, including three decades of experience adapting the Sabido methodology of social change communications to various cultural settings worldwide. Ryerson received a B.A. in Biology from Amherst College and an M.Phil. in Biology from Yale University.

**Bill Stowe**, was the CEO of the Des Moines Water Works, a regional utility that protects public health and promotes economic development with a safe, affordable, high-quality water source. A graduate of Grinnell College, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Illinois, and Loyola University Law School, Mr. Stowe passed away in April 2019 at the age of 60.

**Zoe Weil** is the co-founder and president of the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) and is considered a pioneer in the comprehensive humane education movement that works to create a peaceful, healthy, and just world for all people, animals, and the environment through education. Zoe is the author of seven books including *The World Becomes What We Teach: Educating a Generation of Solutionaries*, and Nautilus Silver Medal winner, *Most Good, Least Harm: A Simple Principle for a Better World and Meaningful Life*. Zoe received a Master’s in
Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and a Master's and Bachelor's in English Literature from the University of Pennsylvania.

Brownie Wilson is the Geohydrology Section's GIS/Support Services Manager at the Kansas Geological Survey. Previously, he worked for the Kansas Department of Agriculture and the Kansas Water Office. Mr. Wilson graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in Geography. Mr. Wilson has interest and expertise in GIS application development and data assessment, groundwater modeling, and water resource management. He is a lifelong Kansan and has worked extensively across the High Plains aquifer region in the state.
Do you have any practical suggestions for what I can do about our environmental emergencies? There are many small things you can do like, eating less fish and meat, starting your own garden, buying food locally, planting trees and preserving land, but the most profound action by far that one can undertake to address climate change and restore the environment is to have a small family. If you have chosen not to have children or have already past child bearing age, educating yourself and actively communicating and advocating to others the importance of growing smaller gracefully is the most impactful and scientifically effective environmental green strategy available to individuals and nations that comes with immensely positive social, economic and health benefits for all who adopt this path.

Why is the title 8 Billion Angels? The inspiration for the title was to reflect the reverence of human life. We have an enormous capacity for care, compassion, decency and love, what I would term the better angels of our nature. Yet as our numbers quickly approach 8 billion, our collective actions, no matter how good or benign, are having massive catastrophic consequences for us and every living creature, and we must find the moral courage to address this truth.

How long did the project take? My idea for the film germinated for almost a decade. I read and researched off and on during that time and have devoted the past three years of my life to setting the wheels in motion, arranging the stories we filmed and finishing the film for worldwide exposure.

What was the most interesting subject of the film for you personally? Everything has been interesting because the problem is so big and complex. However, what was most interesting for me was my shift in conviction. Over three years of reading, studying, speaking with and interviewing a very broad and diverse group of scientists and everyday citizens, has convinced me that reducing our numbers quickly and humanely is not only the easiest but the only way to address, long term, all of our environmental emergencies. Now we just have to get everybody to stop being afraid to discuss it.

How did you choose the topic of your film? For more than half a century, as humanity has expanded I have observed the increasing destruction we have wrought in our world. Everything we have been doing to try and fix all our environmental emergencies hasn’t worked and by all accounts every symptom is getting worse. As our numbers grow the implications for our health, prosperity and sustainability will continue to suffer. Unless and until we change our way of thinking, and find the courage and honesty to discuss our success and its unintended consequences, it is transparent to me we won’t solve this crisis.
Who or what influenced you the most in creating the film?
My father was certainly a great influence by introducing and exposing me to nature. There were also numerous authors and books like Elizabeth Kolbert’s Sixth Extinction, Alan Weisman’s Countdown and quite a few ecologists, scientists and energy experts whose books and papers I have studied.

Do you feel documentaries like yours have an impact on viewers in creating substantive change?
Yes, I think documentaries can affect real change, but only if they are able to connect with the viewer emotionally. Documentaries can challenge, investigate, reveal, inspire—but can’t change the world—only people can. A documentary does not absolve the personal responsibility of taking action. People change the world.

Why is Jane Goodall in your film?
Jane Goodall is famous for devoting her entire life not only to protecting chimpanzees from extinction but also for redefining species conservation to include the needs of local people and the environment. In reflecting on her many years as a naturalist, she grew to see the plight of the chimpanzees in the context of the entire planet. She recognizes and espouses the idea that public awareness, jungle conservation, and anti-poaching efforts are helpful, but will never be enough to save the chimpanzees or any other animal unless we curtail the relentless rising tide of humans.

What was the most important or most surprising thing you learned while filming 8BA?
When we met people and explained our project, we were expecting objections, pushback even ridicule, but most everyone was receptive to it and in many cases fully agreed that unsustainable population growth is the greatest existential environmental threat of our times. They were happy that we were tackling a difficult subject that sorely needed to be addressed. The other important thing I learned was that the solutions to growing smaller were all deeply based on valuing human rights; enabling and empowering women to make their own decisions, gain reproductive autonomy, get an education, and improve their health and living conditions for themselves and their children.

What is your goal for the film? Entertainment? Education? Activism?
Like most filmmakers we want our film to be relevant, widely viewed and inspire millions of people. I would love for the film to bring the topic of unsustainable population growth to mainstream public discourse, giving everyday citizens and leaders around the world permission to both discuss the topic and promote a culture, practices and policies that not only improve human health and welfare, but ultimately reduce our footprint which is the safest and surest path to achieving long term sustainability.
FILM TEAM

Terry Spahr, Producer
After a successful career in real estate, Terry Spahr decided to pursue his passions for politics, science, and the environment by researching, writing, and producing *8 Billion Angels*. He is currently the executive director of Earth Overshoot, a nonprofit established to ensure ecological limits are central to all decision-making. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania’s College of Arts and Science and Fels Center of Government, Terry lectures on issues of sustainability to students, businesses and civic organizations. He is a regular blogger and an opinion writer for a variety of publications.

Katya Alexander, Producer
Katya Alexander is the co-founder of Colorless Queen Studios, a successful Los Angeles production company. After completing her film studies at Emerson College in Boston, she worked around the world on production, including two documentaries: *FOUR*, which follows the lives of four children in Zambia and *Nomad*, which depicts the culture of spearfishing through the lives of two men as they sail to Catalina Island.

Doug Emerson, Producer
Doug Emerson is the founder of c49, a Los Angeles-based production company. His many clients from the tech community include Tekuma, Humon, TruEnergy, and the Massachusetts Institute for Technology. c49 has received 5 Telly Awards, representing the best work created by advertising agencies, television stations, production companies and publishers.

Victor Velle, Director
Victor Velle is the director of *Nomad*, an award-winning feature-length documentary and *FOUR*, a documentary short about an orphanage in Zambia. After studying at Emerson College, Victor worked in television and at Hollywood production companies before co-founding Colorless Queen Studios.

Jake Mitchell, Director of Photography
Jake Mitchell is a recipient of the Congressional Black Caucus’s Visual Arts scholarship and is currently a Visual Media Studies student at Emerson College in Boston. Most recently, Mitchell won the 2016 “Outstanding Cinematic Achievement” award for his film, *Zoo* at Emerson’s Evvy Awards.

Darianna Cardilli, Editor
Darianna Cardilli has over 20 years of documentary-editing experience, Darianna Cardilli’s skill lies in crafting an engaging and compelling story that brings a filmmaker’s vision to the screen and captivates the audience. She attended the prestigious American Film Institute (AFI) graduating with an MFA in Film Editing. Her credits include TV series and specials which have aired on A&E, AMC, the Biography Channel, the History Channel and Bravo, as well as numerous
independent documentaries. She has edited for World of Wonder’s Fenton Bailey & Ron Barbato, Oscar-nominated producer Stuart Sender, and Academy Award-winner Morgan Neville. She has been a Contributing Editor for Documentary, the magazine of the International Documentary Association, for the past 15 years.

Adam Weiss, Music Editor
Based in Brooklyn, New York, Adam Weiss is a summa cum laude graduate of Boston’s esteemed Berklee College of Music composition program. He was honored by the Kennedy Center with back-to-back CAPPIES nominations in 2013 and 2014 for his two original scores for the theater productions: The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe, and Macbeth. In 2015 and 2017, the Los Angeles CineFest and the Oniros Film Awards in Italy nominated Weiss for Best Score for his original soundtrack to director Tom Smith’s film, Pathfinder.

About Earth Overshoot
Earth Overshoot is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to making ecological limits central to all personal and public decision-making through targeted education and advocacy. Its goal is to achieve a sustainable society characterized by human well-being and flourishing biodiversity. Launched in early 2019, the organization builds upon the key messages presented in 8 Billion Angels, a documentary feature about overpopulation as an overarching upstream cause of our global environmental emergencies.

About Abramorama
Abramorama is the preeminent global theatrical distribution and rights management partner for documentary and music films and is recognized for the consistent high quality of its work on award winning features. An innovator in the focused, personalized form of film marketing, promotion, distribution and live, event and digital cinema, Abramorama provides invaluable alternatives to filmmakers while continuing to trail-blaze exciting new pathways to defined audiences.

Over the course of 20 years, Abramorama has successfully distributed and marketed hundreds of films, including Ron Howard’s Grammy Award®-winning The Beatles: Eight Days A Week – The Touring Years; Stanley Nelson’s Miles Davis: Birth of The Cool; Atlantic Records and Melanie Martinez’ K-12; John McDermott’s Jimi Hendrix: Electric Church; Amir Bar-Lev’s Long Strange Trip – The Untold Story of the Grateful Dead; Tabbert Fiiller’s The Public Image Is Rotten; Danny Clinch and Pearl Jam’s Let’s Play Two; Corbett Redford and Green Day’s Turn It Around: The Story of East Bay Punk; John Scheinfeld’s Chasing Trane – The John Coltrane Documentary; Roberta Grossman and Nancy Spielberg’s Who Will Write Our History; Brett Bern’s BANG! The Bert Berns Story; Brett Morgen and National Geographic’s seminal Jane; Asif Kapadia’s Senna; Neil Young’s vast catalog of Bernard Shakey Productions; Cameron Crowe’s Pearl Jam Twenty; Sacha Gervasi’s Spirit Award-winning Anvil! The Story of Anvil; Banksy’s Academy Award® nominated & Spirit Award-winning Exit Through the Gift Shop; Laurie Anderson’s New York Times critics’ pick, Heart of a Dog; Showtime’s National Board of Review Winner Listen to Me Marlon; Academy Award®-nominee and IDA Best Documentary Winner The Look of Silence;
and the episodic multi-platform series *Deconstructing The Beatles*. Abramorama is a founding partner of The Seventh Art Stand program, an act of cinematic solidarity against Islamophobia, that ran in more than 50 theaters across the United States in May of 2017. Abramorama launched a conscious films imprint, Mangurama, in 2018 alongside its music-centric film fund focused on the global release of iconic music documentaries. In January of 2019 the company launched the live multicast streaming enterprise ABCinemaNOW.com with the global live introduction, interstitial programming, and Q&A from Paris, France for the 55-country release of *Who Will Write Our History*. ABCinemaNOW events are powered by Abramorama’s virtual remote live streaming studio with the collaboration of live streaming event producer Susan Jacobs and director George Barnes. In 2020 Abramorama Selects was launched providing a gateway for select films across global VOD platforms. For more information visit abramorama.com.