

SXSW EDU.

SXSW EDU® Announces 2024 Film and Performance Lineup

Creators behind such works as “Harlem Rising” and HBO-chronicled “Ranked” join the growing list of presenters at the upcoming Conference & Festival

[January 17, 2024] // Austin, Texas – The South by Southwest EDU® Conference & Festival has unveiled the screen and stage projects that make up its 2024 Festival program. From the complexities of experiencing a school shooting and the effects of forced displacement to investing in future changemakers and breaking the poverty cycle, this lineup invites audiences to examine the power of access for underrepresented communities. Through SXSW EDU’s film program, attendees can explore how society, life, and education intersect. This programming is rich in content and has some exciting creators participating including *Butterfly in the Sky* star **Levar Burton**, a cameo by **Sharon Gless** in *Show Her the Money*, and voice narration by executive producer **Freida Pinto** in *She Creates Change*. And one other exciting note, *She Creates Change*’s campaign song “Who Am I?” Is written by Young Poet Laureate **Warsan Shire** whose poetry was adapted for Beyonce’s “Lemonade.”

“An important method for addressing systemic matters within education is understanding how they affect people to begin with. Storytelling, whether through film or live performances, helps us reflect, explore, and connect with those experiences and address often difficult or silent issues that many face. That’s why the festival component of SXSW EDU has become so important to our community and to us,” said **Greg Rosenbaum**, senior director of SXSW EDU. “Our 2024 lineup is particularly insightful in its wide-ranging coverage of past, present, and ongoing narratives, and significantly heightens several of the key themes and tracks making up this year’s event.”

FILMS:

From tragedy to triumph, the nine [films](#) selected for the 2024 program showcase an array of challenges and achievements impacting communities around the world. Portraying topics such as access, literacy, civics, and the connection to culture, land, and the environment surrounding you, the program includes

Butterfly in the Sky

Directors: Bradford Thomason & Brett Whitcomb

Butterfly in the Sky tells the story of the beloved PBS children’s series *Reading Rainbow*, its iconic host **LeVar Burton**, and the challenges its creators faced in cultivating a love of reading through television. Two seconds into the bubbling synth sounds of its theme song will have a child of the 1980s or ‘90s exclaiming “Reading Rainbow!” Such is the beloved nature of the classic children’s literary television show that introduced millions of kids to the wonder of books.

Q&A to follow

[Watch the trailer](#)

Como Vivimos (How We Live)

Director: Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz

Each year, hundreds of Latinx children across California are made to vacate their homes and miss months of school. That's because they live with their families in one of the state's farmworker housing centers – subsidized apartment complexes that close at the end of the harvest season and require families to relocate at least 50 miles away. *Como Vivimos* spends a year in one such community to reveal how the cycles of displacement, lost learning, and unaffordable housing impede economic opportunity.

Q&A with Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz, José Modesto, Luis Magaña, & Lauren Ornelas

[Watch the trailer](#)

Farming While Black

Director: Mark Decena

Farming While Black examines the historical plight of Black farmers in the U.S. and the rising generation reclaiming their rightful ownership to land and reconnecting with their ancestral roots. As the co-founder of Soul Fire Farm, **Leah Penniman** finds strength in African agrarianism – agricultural practices that can heal people and the planet. Influenced and inspired by **Karen Washington**, a pioneer in urban community gardens in NYC, and fellow farmer and organizer **Blain Snipstal**, Leah galvanizes around farming as the basis of revolutionary justice.

Q&A to follow

[Watch the trailer](#)

Harlem Rising

Director: Rayner Ramirez

Using archival video footage filmed by Black and Brown youth from the '80s, '90s and early 2000s, *Harlem Rising* traces the history of the Harlem Children's Zone through the individual narratives of the children, parents, and community members impacted by its work. This story, as told by its founder **Geoffrey Canada** and current CEO **Kwame Owusu-Kesse**, captures the transformation of New York City's Harlem through the unique lens of three generations who grew up with the Harlem Children's Zone.

Q&A with Geoffrey Canada, Kwame Owusu-Kesse, & Christian Rhodes

[Watch the trailer](#)

Join or Die

Directors: Rebecca Davis & Pete Davis

Join or Die is a film about why you should join a club — and why the fate of America depends on it. This feature documentary follows the half-century story of America's civic unraveling through the journey of legendary social scientist **Robert Putnam**, whose groundbreaking *Bowling Alone* research into America's decades-long decline in community connections could hold the answers to our democracy's present

crisis. Flanked by influential fans and scholars — from **Hillary Clinton**, **Pete Buttigieg**, and Surgeon General **Vivek Murthy** to **Eddie Glaude Jr.**, **Raj Chetty**, and **Priya Parker** — as well as inspiring groups building community in neighborhoods across the country, join Bob as he explores three urgent civic questions: What makes democracy work? Why is American democracy in crisis? And, most importantly... What can we do about it?

Q&A with Rebecca Davis & Pete Davis

[Watch the trailer](#)

She Creates Change

Director: Martha Adams

She Creates Change is a groundbreaking anthology series about six young girls who use life skills such as empathy and perseverance to overcome obstacles and transform their lives. The series is designed to help adolescent girls around the world develop the skills they need to create positive change in their own lives, and their communities. The series promotes gender equality and demonstrates the positive change that occurs when girls are provided the support they need to stay in school.

Q&A with Martha Adams, Dr. Geetha Murali, Heather Simpson, & Siqi Song

[Watch the trailer](#)

Show Her The Money

Director: Ky Dickens

This is a story that's never been told. The film addresses women getting less than 2% of venture capital and demystifies what venture capital is. Featuring rock-star female investors who invest in diverse women entrepreneurs with innovations that will change the world, *Show Her The Money* reminds us that money is power and women need it to achieve true equality.

Q&A with Ky Dickens, Catherine Gray, Pocket Sun, Kelly Ann Winget, & Naseem Sayani

[Watch the trailer](#)

The Truth About Reading

Director: Nick Nanton

In the land of opportunity, the ability to read is a fundamental right and a necessity for success. Yet, in the United States, a silent epidemic of illiteracy is eroding the foundation of our society. *The Truth About Reading* delves into this critical issue, unveiling the stark reality of illiteracy in America and, more importantly, proposing viable solutions to ensure every child acquires proficient reading skills.

At the heart of this exploration are the poignant stories of adults who have overcome the challenges of learning to read later in life. These narratives not only highlight the struggles associated with illiteracy but also serve as powerful testaments to human resilience and the transformative power of education.

Q&A with Nick Nanton, John Corcoran, & Nora Chabazi

[Watch the trailer](#)

We Are Columbine

Director: Laura Farber

We Are Columbine is the first film to offer insider access behind and beyond the headlines of Columbine. The documentary highlights the stories of four freshmen students who survived one of the deadliest school shootings in United States history at Columbine High School in 1999. Director **Laura Farber**, who was also a freshman during the shootings, sensitively captures her classmates' unique perspectives during an unprecedented walk-through of the school itself, shedding light on the issues mass shootings represent to those affected and how to address them. When we can't change the violence in America, we can change how it affects us.

Q&A with Laura Farber, Amy Staley, Kiki Leyba, & Wes Van Der Voort

[Watch the trailer](#)

PERFORMANCES:

SXSW EDU also welcomes an exciting list of poets, musicians, and artists to the live [performance](#) portion of its annual festival. Presented in formats ranging from an open mic to student musical theater, these performances push the conversation forward on issues of expression, mental well-being, relatability, and education. Featured productions include:

[Bigger Than Hip Hop: Why Folks Say it Controls Your Brain](#) – While innovation catapulted schools into the 21st century, it has minimized the importance of learning connected to the arts, critical thinking, social emotional learning, and civics. This workshop will take participants through an evidence-based hip-hop-inspired approach to teaching youth, followed by a performance by well-respected hip-hop artists.

[Knowledge of Self: Poetry Performance, Workshop, & Open Mic](#) – Infused with the energy of an open mic, this session will be enacted as a performance space. Designed to disrupt conventions that pressure educators and students to adhere to respectability politics, internationally acclaimed poets will open this session which leads into dynamic dialogue and the opportunity for the audience to share their work on the mic.

[Ranked - A Musical of Identity, Pressure & Self-Worth](#) – What are you worth? Who decides? And what do you do when it all comes crashing down? Heralded as the musical "that predicted the college admission scandal" (NPR's Morning Edition) and became the subject of the 2022 HBO documentary "My So-Called High School Rank," RANKED, A MUSICAL explores the intense and brutal costs of being a "successful" student in today's schools.

[Changing the Future of STEM Education with STEMusic!](#) – The STEMusic performance is a high-energy presentation that shares **Roy Moyer III's** journey through STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Roy takes his audience through a journey that covers his path to becoming an aerospace engineer while also showcasing how he created STEMusic to address the lack of black and brown professionals in the STEM Industry.

Press Credentials:

To register, please go to sxswedu.com/press/accreditation.

About SXSW EDU:

The SXSW EDU® Conference & Festival is a reflection of the world's most critical social issues as seen through the lens of education. This year's event will bring together the learner, the practitioner, the entrepreneur, and the visionary to share their groundbreaking stories, tackle complex issues, and build reimagined paths forward. As a community of diverse people who are united around a like-minded vision for the future, SXSW EDU serves as a place for attendees to renew their purpose in practice from both a personal and professional perspective. It is a place to reinforce the core principles of teaching and learning as well as an opportunity to express your creativity and passion for education. Join the passionate and innovative community at SXSW EDU, March 4-7, 2024.

For more information, please visit sxswedu.com.

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