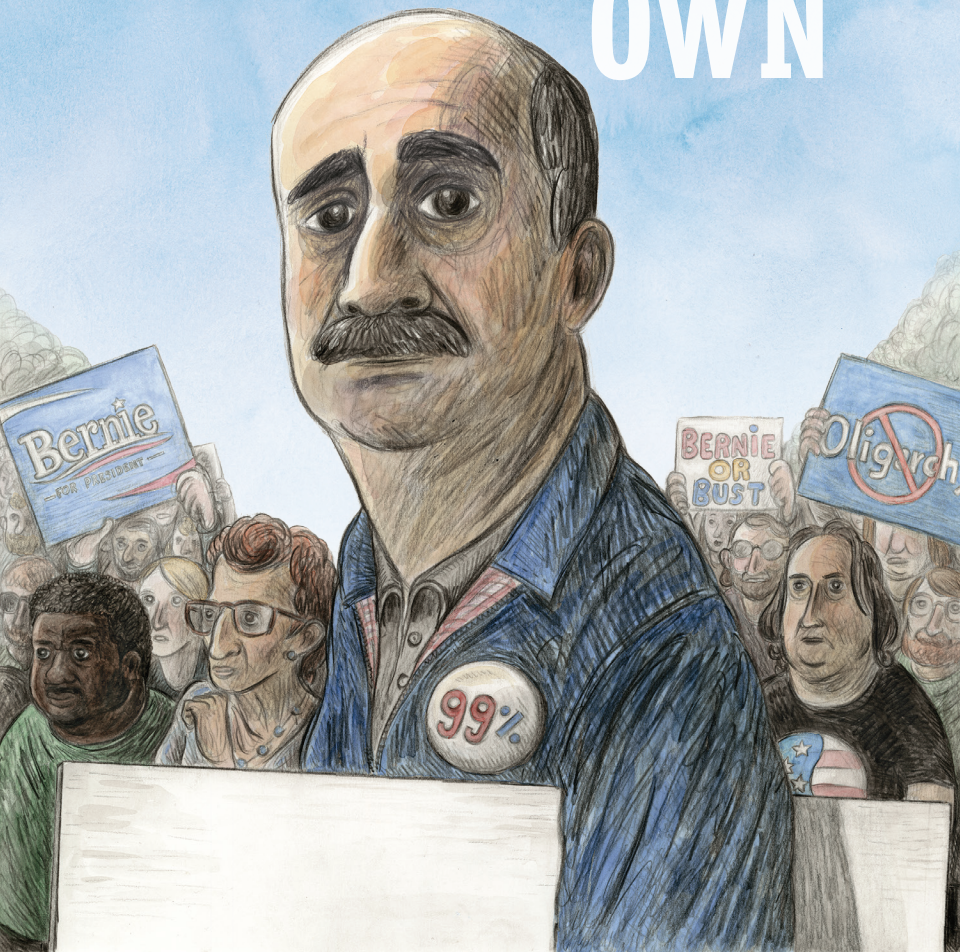


SELECTION OFFICIELLE
VISIONS
DU RÉEL
2017

a film by Lionel Rupp and Michael David Mitchell

A CAMPAIGN OF THEIR OWN





BERNIE
OR
BUST

Gigarcia

Jonathan Katz is convinced that Bernie Sanders is the only true hope for transforming America. Swept up by his enthusiasm for the Democratic-Socialist Senator from Vermont, he joins thousands of other activists in New York city to get Sanders on the 2016 presidential ballot. But as the primaries come to an end and Sanders concedes the race to Hillary Clinton in Philadelphia, Jonathan accuses the Democratic Party of cheating and being responsible for the defeat of the one everyone calls “Bernie”.

A Campaign of Their Own

Donald Trump’s election as President of the United States of America on November 8th, 2016 came as a surprise to many, especially for the media that had been predicting a Clinton win for months. What happened? Most political analysts blame Trump’s election on the rise of populism in turbulent times and a growing skepticism towards the ruling elite.

A Campaign of Their Own tells a different history. By focusing on the defeat of Bernie Sanders from the point of view of his most fervent supporters, the film is a deep immersion into a populist-political movement that was neglected and even ignored by the media, and especially in Europe. By plunging into the subject, the filmmakers discovered an ever-widening fault line within the Democratic Party and the beginning of a nationwide resistance movement that continues today.



“We decided we like Obama,
now we’re not gonna ignore
all his faults”.

**I think that I have reservations
about Bernie and yet saying he’s
our best option. When we stop
criticizing him we lose.**

Talya Lubit Highschool Student

”



Director's Statement, Lionel Rupp

Howard Zinn's book *A People's History of the United States* was an important source of inspiration for the film. It tells the political history of the U.S. from the point of view of political movements and everyday citizens —not of their leaders. It tells of the struggles of Native Americans, unions, feminists, African Americans, and all oppressed groups who have tried, and sometimes succeeded, to improve their lives through uphill battles.

Bernie's campaign is in line with a movement that came too late to be included in another of Zinn's book: *Occupy Wall Street*. The core principles of the 99ers resonate throughout Sanders' campaign, especially with Sanders' focus on reducing the gender, race, and economic inequalities in America. Bernie always spoke using the third-person plural "us" instead of the "I" used by most presidential candidates. But as the events of 2016 unrolled, his campaign eventually found itself hijacked by this "us" as his supporters virulently protested his endorsement of Hilary Clinton in Philadelphia. Herein lies the meaning of the title *A Campaign of Their Own*. Bernie's people ended up going further than Bernie himself, becoming a sort of monstrosity campaign without structure or leader that pulled itself apart and in every different direction.

A Campaign of Their Own shows a different campaign than the one told by the mainstream media and gives a voice to the activists on the historical stage instead of the politicians in the spotlight. The film shows how Sanders' activists lived the campaign, reappropriated it, and spoke about the Democratic Party. We learn through their own words what their hope is for the country and how they felt about Bernie's defeat.

We didn't hold any casting before arriving in New York, preferring to meet activists in meetings, at campaign headquarters, and at rallies. I made a point to film as close-up as possible, creating the tightest possible relationship between spectator and protagonist. And instead of directly approaching Bernie Sanders, we decided to film the campaign from the reverse angle, taking the point of view of the crowd instead of the candidate behind the podium. Bernie appears in the background, behind the activists.

The film allows for a reevaluation of the United State's democratic system as well as the failure of the European left to implement its agenda. The U.S. Democratic Party is similar in many ways to the centrist left parties in Europe who are incapable of reform from within, do not have a substantial platform, and systematically lose terrain in every election.

The film also approaches the much larger question of the role of citizens in modern democracy. Is the way in which the U.S. Democratic primaries played out symptomatic of the aging of Europe's leftist parties? Can a political movement survive the loss of its leader? Are elections an opportunity for veritable democratic participation or blind adherence to a system that gives the illusion of choice?





**“ Asking me to choose between
Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump
is like: “Gee, would I rather be ass
raped with a tree branch or a hot
poker?”**

Activist from the American Communist Party

”

**“ We want a revolution,
and we want it now. ”**

Jonathan Katz, Harlem



From the Producer's Point of View, Michael David Mitchell

In April 2016, I had been working on an idea for a film about my father and the American elections, but I couldn't find the right angle to portray my Trump-leaning father, with whom I was trying to convince to support Bernie. Finally, one evening over drinks with Lionel, I looked at my friend/director and said, "I want to do a film about Bernie Sanders." Two days later, we were on a plane to New York City for the primary between Clinton and Sanders.

With no production preparation whatsoever, we ran on intuition through 14 to 18 hours of filming per day. Sometimes we'd plan what we were going to film over breakfast and change course before lunch. We talked our way into Sanders' headquarters in Brooklyn and Harlem, followed activists as they went canvassing door-to-door, filmed huge rallies and small protests. We brought back with us some amazing footage—but the project was just beginning.

A few months later and a couple of days before the Democratic National Convention, we received news from Jonathan Katz, the film's principle protagonist, that he was going to Philadelphia to show his continued support for Bernie and anger at the Democratic Party. Thanks to a last minute contribution from Zooscope and some funds drummed up with crowdfunding, we were back on a plane to the U.S. within three days, ready to witness a pivotal moment in American politics.

A Campaign of Their Own is a film made from the bottom up. It's an emotionally charged political drama that follows a handful of activists during a decisive period of time in American history. The film lets the activists speak, offering them—and the world—an artistic rendering of a voice that too often goes unheard. From this voice one can even hear the seeds of the future defeat of Hilary Clinton by Donald Trump—a prophetic message from the American people themselves.



“I think that in New York State and maybe in the country, everybody is saying how the republican party is in trouble. Well, I think the Democratic party is in almost just as much trouble in terms of young people saying: “No I don’t want the thing as usual, I’ve had enough of this.””

Terry Weber, Highschool Teacher





“ This election is about ending the grotesque level of income and wealth inequality in America today. ”

Bernie Sanders, US Senator



**“ When you burn the American flag
you kind of surrender that symbol
to the enemy right?
We should be working harder to reclaim
that symbol and reclaim our democracy
rather than saying it’s all fucked. ”**

Bernie Delegate





Switzerland, 2017, 74', DCP, 16:9 Ratio, Color, Digital/Stereo, English (s.t. français)

Genre: Documentary

Credits

Director	Lionel Rupp
Producer	Michael David Mitchell
Production company	Zooscope Production
Sound Recordists	Noah Myers / Kyle Porter
Camera / Editing	Lionel Rupp
Sound editing	Jérôme Cuendet
Color correction	Robin Erard
Graphic elements	Joël Boucheteil

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Lionel Rupp / Director

Born in Switzerland in 1983, Lionel has directed several shorts (Poisson, Eskapop and La Forêt) that were shown in international film festivals and garnered several prizes as well before finishing film school (HEAD, Geneva) in 2011.

Since then he has worked with artists, stage directors, playwrights and musicians on different interdisciplinary projects. He collaborates with the other members of Zooscope on individual or collective projects since its creation in 2008. In 2012 he co-directed his first feature film *Quai Ouest* with his brother, Adrien Rupp. In 2015 he co-directed the feature film *Heimatland*, which was selected for the international competition at Locarno Film Festival.

Michael David Mitchell / Producer

Born in 1979 in New York State, Michael moved to Switzerland in 2001 to pursue his studies in philosophy and literature at the University of Fribourg, where he graduated with a Masters degree in Political and Ethical Philosophy.

Head of international media strategy for the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL) in Lausanne from 2008 to 2013, he also worked during this time with Wim Wenders on two major productions — *If Buildings Could Talk* and *Cathedrals of Culture*.

He joined Zooscope in 2013 and collaborates as producer and dramaturge on both individual and collective projects in the fields of cinema and theater.

Zooscope

Zooscope is a production company and artist collective with eight members from a variety of artistic backgrounds. It is above all a way of working, both together and individually, that focuses on including multiple media platforms and disciplines. Formed in 2008, each member has his or her own artistic activity (film, dance, theater, dramaturgy) and collaborates both formally and informally on each other's productions. In 2014 the members of Zooscope decided to create collective projects that tie in all of their disciplines and in 2016 the collective decided to finance certain projects in order to make it easier to quickly launch instinctive and intransigent productions.

**“Dissent is the highest
form of patriotism.”**

Howard Zinn

acampaignoftheirown.com



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