

TENTH ANNUAL
**MEDIA
THAT
MATTERS**

DENIED (12:00 min)
Directed by Julie Winokur
Produced by Julie Winokur
Winner of the Jury Award



About the Film

When I met Sheila Wessenberg, she was living the American nightmare.

She had a potentially fatal illness, but because she was uninsured her life seemed expendable.

She said to me, “There is no reason why anyone should be shoved into homelessness and helplessness just to live.” She was referring to the fact that she could only get publicly funded health care if she gave up her home and her car. In the meantime, her doctor had abandoned her and she had already gone seven months with no chemotherapy.

I was so horrified by the real-life cost of poor public policy that I became obsessed with all the ‘Sheilas’ whose lives were on the line. I realized Sheila could be any one of us—could even be me. I wanted to shout from the highest rafter that she was being dealt one of the greatest injustices I had witnessed in the 20 years I’d been a journalist.

We first published Sheila’s story in The New York Times Magazine. Readers were so shocked by her suffering that they donated over \$50,000 in order to help the family stay afloat. Next, we published Sheila’s story in a book and exhibition called Denied, which was shared on Capitol Hill and toured to state capitols across the country.

But our work wasn’t done because U.S. health care policy hadn’t budged an inch. We decided we had to tell Sheila’s story in film so even more people could see the shocking truth. Considering the raging debate on health care reform in Washington now, inclusion in the Media That Matters Film Festival couldn’t be more relevant or more urgent.

Filmmaker Bios

Julie Winokur is a writer and documentary film producer who strongly believes in using visual power of film to catalyze positive social change. Winokur's work has received numerous awards and has appeared on PBS, Discovery.com, MSNBC.com, NPR.org, AARP.org, MediaStorm, Good Morning America, and the National Geographic Magazine website, as well as in The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times Magazine, and The Washington Post.

Her passion for social advocacy has produced multi-year projects including the one-hour film *Aging in America: The Years Ahead*, its companion book and traveling exhibition.

Her ongoing six-year project examining the health care crisis includes the feature-length documentary *Firestorm*, the short films *DENIED* and *Collateral Damage: Bad Medicine in Tennessee*, and the book *Denied: The crisis of America's Uninsured*.

Winokur's dynamic approach to documentary filmmaking drove her to turn the camera on herself in the 2008 short film *The Sandwich Generation*, in which Winokur and her husband chronicled their personal challenges caring for their two children and Winokur's aging father.

Take Action Links

Take Action with Stand Up for Health Care

(<http://www.standupforhealthcare.org/page/s/PledgeSupport3>)

Opponents of the health care reform bill are trying to repeal it. Lend your voice to the cause so that all Americans will have access to health care.

Take Action with Health Care for America NOW!

(<http://www.standupforhealthcare.org/page/s/PledgeSupport3>)

Give the Department of Health and Human Services a piece of your mind, and speak out against big profits for insurance companies and poor health care access for Americans.

Take Action with The Mary Kay Foundation: How to Host a

Fundraiser (<http://www.standupforhealthcare.org/page/s/PledgeSupport3>)

Support the fight against domestic violence and cancer affecting women by hosting your own fundraiser.

Take Action with Susan G. Komen for the Cure

(<http://www.standupforhealthcare.org/page/s/PledgeSupport3>)

Share your own story and connect with millions of women around the world affected by breast cancer.

For more information about Denied and the other films from the tenth annual Media That Matters Film Festival, visit www.mediathatmattersfest.org or contact us at festival@artsengine.net.

