



# GUNS, GRIEF & GRACE IN AMERICA



(LEFT) JANET FITCH, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER OF THE 3-PART DOCUMENTARY SERIES: GUNS, GRIEF AND GRACE IN AMERICA.

## Janet Fitch/ Filmmaker and Community Engagement Specialist

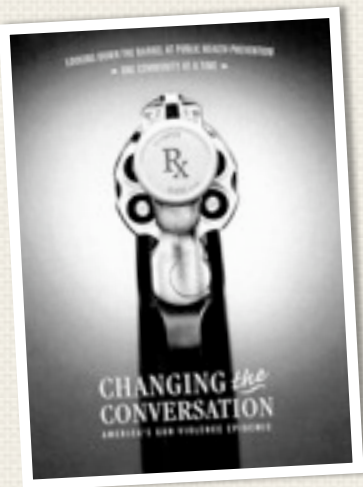
Janet Fitch creates films that take us away from the world of never-ending polarizing frameworks to offer a fresh glimpse of expanded thinking and sensible solutions to critical social problems. As director of the award-winning, 3-part documentary series, *Guns, Grief and Grace in America*, Fitch stands out among her peers in the emerging field of community engagement. By expanding her own focus from what was intended to be a single documentary on the '2000 Million Mom March For Sensible Gun Laws' into three documentaries -- *Dear Rita*, *The Promise of America* and *Changing the Conversation-America's Gun Violence Epidemic* - Fitch presents an in-depth look at gun violence in the United States through local, state and national lenses.

"Act locally/think globally" is a guiding principle for Fitch. As a producer/director/writer and outreach specialist, she plays a variety of roles in her endeavor to make America more literate on gun violence issues. Fitch works with both national and international organizations ranging from Gettysburg College to an International Women's Conference in Ireland. At the same time, she works intrinsically with her own community in raising awareness about gun violence and the issues related to it. Fitch is a consistently active member of her community, holding multiple positions - most recently as a member of the Steering Committee for the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) of the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Fitch's work often airs on Public Television and bears witness to her commitment to succeed at the intersection of the arts and social change. Recognition of her work includes a wide range of accolades and awards including: the Milwaukee Business Journal's *Women of Influence in Public Policy*, *Communicator of the Year* from Women in Communication; *Activist of the Year* from the Shepherd Express weekly newspaper in 2004 and the *Service to the Community Alumni Award* from Alverno College in 2008.

The first two films of the series have taken on an outreach life of their own, garnering numerous awards: Moondance International Film Festival (*Dear Rita* - special screening); New York Festivals International Film & Video Awards (*Dear Rita*); Houston WorldFest (dual Silver Education Awards) and a Telly Award for *The Promise of America*.

## CHANGING THE CONVERSATION: AMERICA'S GUN VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC



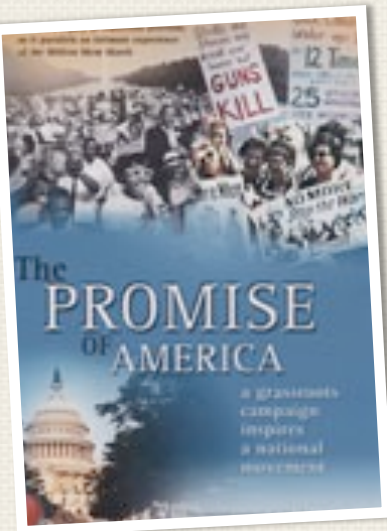
"Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic", is the final film in the award-winning 3-part documentary film series Guns, Grief & Grace in America. Gun violence is generally discussed in terms of urban homicides, yet startling statistics tell another story. This film reframes the conversation of America's gun violence epidemic by shifting the focus from Second Amendment rights to public health prevention. Engage in a radically logical approach to restructuring how we think, speak and act on gun violence through three distinct lenses. Hear from lawmakers, activists, urban musicians united for change and a quiet town, searching for answers after a domestic violence murder-suicide. Wisconsin, serves as a model for every state with urban, suburban, small town and rural populations. Public health experts offer impressive evidence as they present the benefits of reframing this currently polarizing conversation to focus on the broader story. Hope emerges with the awareness that diverse populations experience critical social issues in different ways, and that strategies for prevention will succeed—when driven by data, instead of ideology.

## DEAR RITA



"Dear Rita" is a one-hour account of one family's loss, which embodies the spirit of so many others in the United States. On a Saturday in March of 2000, Rita Martinez prepared her Grandma's favorite lunch – a grilled cheese sandwich. Rita kissed her Grandma and went into the bedroom to watch cartoons. Moments later, a bullet broke the front window, tore through the bedroom wall and lodged in her head, killing the eleven-year-old. Rita's mother vowed to fight for sensible gun laws, a promise that put her on the bus to the Million Mom March. For the remainder of the year, Rita's family, teachers and classmates opened their lives and hearts to us, in hopes that others will see and hear how the horrific details of gun violence impact families, friends and society. We have learned much about Rita's short, beautiful life and the sense of loss and grief shared by those who knew and miss her. In a time when many of us are numbed to accounts of "yet another killing," the intimate, honest and emotional testimony compels viewers to acknowledge our collective grief, as citizens of a country where 10 children die from gun violence every day.

## THE PROMISE OF AMERICA



"The Promise of America": rich archival footage of bold, public action reveals a legacy of American activism, while it parallels an intimate experience of the Million Mom March for sensible gun laws. On historic Mother's Day 2000, a generationally, racially and ethnically diverse crowd of 820,000 came together from across the United States and the World. Participants' personal motivations to attend the event are explored, along with barriers overcome to do so and responses to the experience. A range of respected professionals examines the ethical, medical and international ramifications of gun violence. Hope for an America true to its promise emerges as historians Gerda Lerner and Amy Swerdlow offer an analysis of the March on a framework of other historic movements. Cameo statements from celebrities such as: Susan Sarandon, Marian Wright Edelman, Debbie Allen, Rabbi Eric Yoffie and Dr. Antonia Novello bring popular contemporary voices to the discourse. At this critical point in history, when the topic of civic engagement as a response to violence is present in the minds of the United States and the world. "The Promise of America" offers a reminder of the power and obligation individuals possess to participate in the process of social change.

# Articles and Conferences

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<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/61524467.html>

Janet Fitch's editorial on Gun Violence as a public health issue in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[Award Winning Milwaukee Filmmaker brings works on gun violence to Compass Coffeehouse](#)  
Door County Compass, March 23, 2005

[Meet Janet Fitch...Milwaukee's award-winning indie filmmaker](#)  
Door County Compass

[New Moon Rising – An interview with alum filmmaker Janet Fitch](#)  
Alverno Alpha, 11/1/2003

['Dear Rita' film shown to offenders to stem gun violence](#)  
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 5/31/2002

[Activist directors doing three-film series on gun violence in America](#)  
The Business Journal, 4/26/2002

[Women of Influence – Public Policy – Janet Fitch](#)  
The Business Journal, 10/19/2001

[Local Filmmakers Shoot for "Moondance"](#)  
The Business Journal, September 7, 2001

[Grief inspires mothers' protest](#)  
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 5/13/2001

[Girl's death focus of gun violence piece](#)  
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 3/27/2001

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## **COMMUNITIES COMING TOGETHER (CCT): A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO GUN VIOLENCE**

Conference held 10/19/2005

In October 2005, New Moon Productions (NMP) held a statewide conference at the internationally known Marshfield Clinic, located in central, rural Wisconsin. The conference's goal was to re-frame discussions of community gun violence, from a frame of singularly 2nd Amendment to one inclusive of Public Health. Participants, including medical professionals, activists, members of the faith community and law enforcement, returned to their home communities with the tools, including fresh perspectives, to do just that. This meaningful event serves as a model for partnerships. A number of them have been drawn into this exciting process.

## **Global Women's Studies Conference – University College Dublin, IR**

The Promise of America was part of the 17th Annual UK and Ireland Women Studies Conference at University College in Dublin, Ireland. 400 energetic participants represented 28 countries. NMP was invited to screen this film because "At this time, it is imperative that people from around the world are able to put a face on Americans working for change within their own country!"

# PHOTOS AND CONTACT



FOR MORE INFORMATION/ INTERVIEWS/  
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