



Toxic Comedy Pictures and Working Films report from the road:

BLUE VINYL and the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE Consumer Organizing Campaign 2002-2003

With humor, chutzpah and a piece of vinyl siding in hand, BLUE VINYL co-directors Daniel Gold & Judith Helfand hit the road to tell the truth about America's favorite plastic. Their toxic odyssey bore surprisingly sweet fruit: the award winning film BLUE VINYL that has folks laughing in the face of toxic chemical exposure and heedless corporate behavior, canceling their vinyl fence and siding orders, and realizing that environmental health and justice is a human right.

A detective story, an eco-activism doc and a rollicking comedy all rolled into one, BLUE VINYL picks up where Helfand's Peabody Award-winning film A HEALTHY BABY GIRL left off. Like its prequel, the film explores home and family, and actively questions industry-sponsored science and a prevailing national culture that pits bottom-line profits and economics against human health. In strategic step with MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE, BLUE VINYL 's organizing and education campaign, the odyssey continues. MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE, co-directed and coordinated by Working Films, works in close cooperation with leading grassroots environmental health organizations including: The Coming Clean Collaboration and its PVC/Dioxin Workgroup, Healthcare Without Harm, and the Healthy Building Network. These organizations and others are part of the movement to transform and transition the polyvinyl chloride (PVC) industry so that it is no longer a source of environmental and human harm. And with 35,000 plus blue vinyl tchotchkie (pieces of the Helfand's blue vinyl house strung on mardi gras beads and bearing a warning label) across North America – the word is out.

Could be curtains for vinyl...

Producing BLUE VINYL has provided us a chance to experiment with "toxic comedy," to stretch the boundaries of investigative journalism and, in collaboration with Working Films, link independent media to successful grassroots organizing. We made BLUE VINYL to entertain and to be *actively* watched. In between the laughter, we hoped that audiences would reconsider the cynical attitudes we've all come to live with. Top three: 1) Everything causes cancer these days. 2) Chemical pollution is the price of "progress." 3) Consumers are only interested in saving money *not* the environment.

We made BLUE VINYL with the intention of reaching a broad spectrum of viewers – from policy makers and government agencies, to organized labor and corporate managers, from health care professionals to the construction industry – with the same strategic message about the global toxic threat from the manufacture and incineration of, PVC. To insure the film's effectiveness in the field, it was produced and edited in



photo by Chris Pilaro

consultation with grassroots environmental health advocates and scientists who work with these issues on a daily basis. We also tested the fine-cut of the film with representative audiences of consumers – the unconverted and the non-believers, those "paralyzed" by all of the bad news about pollution. By balancing the serious with the subversive, horror with humor, and hard (supported and foot-noted) science with serendipity, we, in collaboration with HBO, reached over five million mainstream consumers. Via linking popular entertainment to grassroots activism and corporate accountability we are shifting consumer will.

BLUE VINYL has been lauded by major film and TV critics as "scary and hilarious," "that rare muckraking film with a sense of humor," "one of the best shows on television this year," "outrageous and energizing... a new standard in activist filmmaking." But perhaps the most important critics are the millions of viewers who watched BLUE VINYL from home. Within hours of BLUE VINYL 's May 2002 premier broadcast on HBO, we received hundreds of emails from inspired consumers who were "canceling that vinyl siding order," saying "no vinyl, what 's your alternative?" to the fence salesman, and mindfully comparing the cost of ease, convenience and low-maintenance with the value of the long-term health of themselves, their children and their communities.

Lesson Learned:

Funny wins! And walking out of a theatre or turning off your T.V. with part of a solution in hand, a little chutzpah in your heart and hope in your pocket is a good thing.

INSIDE:

From unsolicited emails to solemn promises – BLUE VINYL and the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE campaign is having an impact on consumers, the industry, policy makers and high school students on their lunch period.

A RABBI, A SIGNMAKER, A SUBURBAN HOMEOWNER AND AN ARCHITECT WERE ALL AT HOME WATCHING TV...



Original Blue Vinyl animation by Emily Hubley

Dear Judith,

I recently watched your movie and would like to invite you to my synagogue in Morris County, NJ. We have created national and international building projects, some through Habitat For Humanity.

My "specialty" at the blitz build in Waterloo, Canada was siding. My crew chief gave me a small piece as a souvenir with the words "G-d Bless You" on it. So the movie really hit home. Please let me know if you are interested in pursuing a relationship with us... I hope we can be in touch.

All the best, Rabbi Joel Soffin

>We think Rabbi Soffin is on to something: turn to page six to learn about building in Good Faith, our new organizing initiative linking faith-based communities to the green building movement..

Hello Filmmakers:

Firstly I want to thank you for "Blue Vinyl." As I watched, I couldn't believe how a substance so widespread could have such serious health implications for so many people, for the entire earth. I hope "Blue Vinyl" will continue to be shown frequently on cable AND on "regular" TV as well. On to my questions... Where do I begin, what do I ask, and who do I ask?

I've been a sign maker since 1978... Almost all modern sign shops now use vinyl in several forms. Especially franchise sign shops like Signs Now, FastSigns, Speedy Sign-A-Rama, etc. Thousands of non-franchised sign shops also use vinyl daily... Does banner material leach dangerous chemicals onto your hands when handling it and lettering it? What is the risk involved in heating vinyl – does heat release toxic fumes or chemicals? My guess is nobody has done testing.

Sign makers have NEVER been told about possible health risks that vinyl or PVC pose. Thousands of people in the sign making trade are exposed to this on a daily basis and if not for vinyl lettering films and automated letter cutting equipment, would not even be in the sign making business... Most people don't realize how prevalent signs are until they consciously look at them as a product... Someone had to manufacture that sign. The great majority of these signs involve vinyl in some form.

If you have had posters or banners produced for your screenings, they will most likely have been produced using vinyl. How many millions of bumper stickers, banners, and American Flag decals been produced since the Sept. 11th tragedy? All made from vinyl. This is a huge issue with no immediate solutions. But I want to find out what I can do and where I can get info that I can make available to other sign companies who, like myself, had no idea that there were health risks connected to vinyl and PVC. Can you help direct me?

Best regards, Mayo Pardo

>Dear Mayo: We aren't aware of studies that have specifically tested vinyl banner material, but we know that the chemical "softeners", which give vinyl its flexibility, have caused a number of disturbing effects in animal studies, including damage to the liver, kidneys, lungs and reproductive system. We also know that vinyl releases a host of toxic chemicals when heated, the lethal hydrochloric acid in particular. Studies of vinyl combustion show releases of vinyl chloride, benzene, and toluene among many other compounds – a characteristic that has led firefighters and their union organizations to call for alternatives to vinyl in building construction. For more information please talk to our colleagues at The Healthy Building Network (www.healthybuilding.net), Health Care Without Harm (www.noharm.org), and Greenpeace (www.greenpeace.org). They have made it possible for regular, non-experts, like the Helfands, to get access to this important information about the effects of and alternatives to vinyl. Keep in touch.

Dear Filmmakers,

Thank you for your time and efforts in researching and producing "Blue Vinyl." My wife and I built our house nearly 5 years ago and it is made of brick and stone. But the trim, porch columns, eaves, and fascia are wood. It is almost time to re-paint those wood portions and I had been considering vinyl siding for the trim and fascia as an alternative to keeping the wood and re-painting it every few years. Until last night. I saw your film on HBO. The wood stays. Paint is cheaper than lives. We can afford the paint.

Yours, Kerry Lancaster

Dear Judith & Dan,

I was getting ready to turn off the TV and go to bed when Blue Vinyl came on. I was riveted to the TV for the rest of the night. It was an excellent documentary – presented well and easy to understand. My Mom recently e-mailed me to let me know she was thinking of putting vinyl siding on her house. (Oh the irony!) She had come back from a vacation working on houses for Habitat for Humanity and they had put vinyl siding on those houses. She was sold on the idea of not having to paint her house again. I've asked her to hold off until I can get her a tape of Blue Vinyl. I hope it will change her mind. It did mine.

Thank you, Adam Platt, Goshow Architects LLP, NYC

>We sent Adam a copy of BLUE VINYL and a tchotchki for his mom. We're waiting to find out what she chose.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK – so that it *does* work!

Prior to the launch of BLUE VINYL at the Sundance Film Festival and the national broadcast on HBO's America Undercover series, Working Films sent out over 300 BLUE VINYL preview tapes to our Coming Clean partners (a collaboration that was launched with the March 2001 PBS broadcast of TRADE SECRETS: A BILL MOYERS' SPECIAL REPORT ON THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY), other community organizations, non-profits and activists. These tapes were used in both private behind-the-door and public screenings with the goals of "galvanizing the troops," securing press coverage of both the national movement to transform the PVC industry and the "local" PVC story, and allowing our allies to organize local screenings and events.



LAYTON GETTING A LESSON IN AIR QUALITY: Bucket Brigade is teaching residents how to test air near homes.

Deseret News, January 14 2002

We were determined to leverage our Sundance media opportunities to talk about the long-term cumulative damage of the PVC life-cycle. We made this rather abstract issue concrete, newsworthy and human by linking residents from two very different fence-line communities: Lake Charles/Mossville, Louisiana—the vinyl resin "capital" of America (and featured in the film), and

Layton, Utah—a middle-class suburb not far from Sundance, where PVC products and other consumer trash is burned in the region's largest municipal incinerator. Simply put, we connected those who get hurt early in the life-cycle of PVC to those who get hurt later on down the same toxic PVC road. This link was made via a "Bucket Brigade" training. Activists from Louisiana, Laura Cox and Beth Zilbert, traveled to a local Mormon church to train Layton residents (those living on the fence-line of the incinerator) how to monitor their air with the "bucket system." From both an organizing and a P.R. perspective, the way we leveraged our Sundance cachet and the "PVC life-cycle" story into serious off-the-arts pages press were great successes. The "Bucket Brigade" story got immediate attention in newspapers across the state and aired on ABC affiliate's 10pm news two nights in a row.

For the pre-broadcast phase of the campaign, the most important collaboration and investment were the satellite coordinators. Managed by the Coming Clean collaboration and hand-picked by the lead dioxin organizer from the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, these satellite coordinators were chosen from environmental non-profits across the U.S. These groups included: Toxics Action Center, Portland ME; Citizens Environmental Coalition, Albany NY; Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Burgaw NC; Ecology Center, Ann Arbor MI; Institute for Sustainable Future, Duluth MN; Clean Air Clean Lake, Seabrook, TX; Sustainable Energy and Economic Development, Austin TX; Women's Voice

for the Earth Missoula MT; Center for Environmental Health, Oakland CA; Washington Toxics Coalition, Seattle WA; The Center for Health, Environment & Justice, Falls Church VA; and the Healthy Building Network, in Washington DC. These satellite coordinators organized nearly 100 events and screenings around the HBO May 5th broadcast—from house parties to large public gatherings, a number of which included state and local officials as well as policy makers. Every event was co-hosted by a local grassroots environmental organization and was tied to a local PVC "life-cycle" issue, as well as the long-term overall organizing goal, the phase-out of PVC. For example:

• In Seattle, the Washington Toxics Coalition (WTC) and the Healthy Building Network (HBN) hosted a pre-HBO screening of BLUE VINYL for the Seattle City Council, who were in the process of considering a new purchasing policy. The following morning a council member called up the lead organizers and, we are told, resolutely said, "I've decided that this resolution will include a PVC-free procurement policy." In July 2002, the Seattle City Council became the first city in the nation to pass a resolution to reduce the purchase and use of products that result in persistent toxic pollution such as dioxin, mercury and other heavy metals. The resolution specifically addresses PVC because it is estimated to be the largest material source of dioxin and a notable source of persistent toxic chemicals. The purchasing policy will increase the demand for cleaner alternatives.

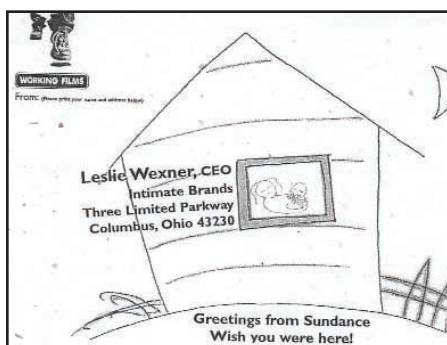
If not VINYL, then what? AND IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE is the consumer organizing and education web campaign designed for consumers who watch BLUE VINYL and ask "what now?" The campaign and site are co-directed and coordinated by Working Films, a nationally recognized activist-driven link between high quality documentary filmmaking and serious progressive organizing. Cutting edge environmental health organizations including the Coming Clean Collaboration and its PVC/Dioxin Workgroup, Healthcare Without Harm, and the Healthy Building Network have been collaborating partners from the start.

Whether viewed at home on HBO, at an art cinema or a community center, BLUE VINYL and the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE campaign (www.myhouseisyourhouse.org) offer "next steps," direct actions and links to local and national organizations that are addressing the toxic trail of PVC. When the lights come up, average consumers are stirred and compelled and want to know how the purchase, use and demand for PVC-free building materials and consumer products can play a role in reducing levels of toxic chemicals in the air and water, in the food chain and in our bodies.

My House Is Your House was launched in January 2002 in conjunction with BLUE VINYL's premiere at Sundance. After seeing the film, audience members were handed the first, straight off the Helfand's house, "BLUE VINYL tchotchkie" displaying a warning label about PVC and address of the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE web site. They were also offered the chance to participate in a direct action – and to use the Sundance Film Festival as serious grassroots leverage – by signing and sending the postcard, as seen below, to Intimate Brands, the parent company of Victoria's Secret and Bed and Bath Works.

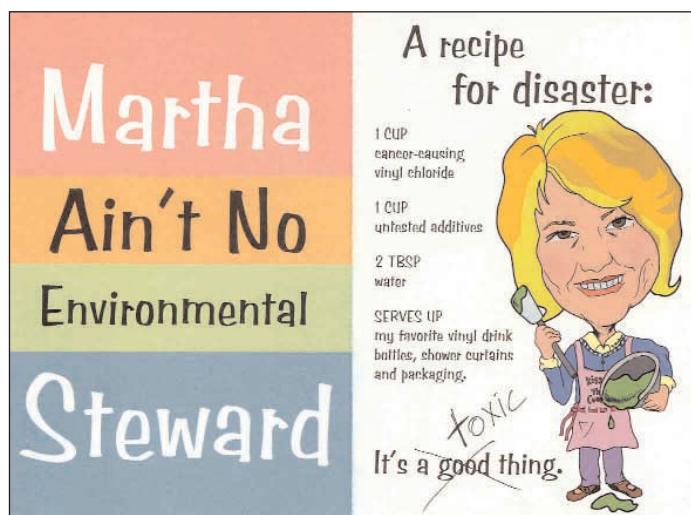
And it worked!



After receiving 6,000 e-mails/faxes via the Greenpeace web site, and 1,500 postcards from Sundance audience members who had "just seen the toxic truth about PVC in BLUE VINYL," Intimate Brands made a commitment to a

100% phase-out of PVC packaging products. The kicker was perhaps when Greenpeace told them that within four months millions of Americans would see the "truth about PVC" when BLUE VINYL would premiere on HBO, right after Six Feet Under.

Currently, with a click of their cursor, users can ask (poor!) Martha Stewart to stop using PVC packaging in her K-Mart Everyday consumer line, "I urge you to replace vinyl with safer materials... consumers are saying 'no' to PVC." Another market e-mail, produced and sent in partnership with the Healthy Building Network, asks Armstrong Flooring, one of the founding members of the US Green Building Council, to stop opposing the promotion of PVC alternatives, "Armstrong can't have it both ways, selling environmentally destructive products while greenwashing their image by joining environmental organizations."



Armed with information and a collective mission, viewers are truly beginning to question their consumer choices, to question their faith community's building choices, to push for corporate accountability, and to talk with their neighbors about that ubiquitous plastic, PVC. BLUE VINYL is girding activists and non-activists alike with hope and energy to pursue what is right and to reframe what is "cheap!"

The overall goal of this grassroots movement, of which BLUE VINYL and the MYH campaign play a central role, is to transform and transition the polyvinyl chloride (PVC) industry so that it is no longer a source of environmental and human harm. We recognize that this battle will be long-fought and hard-won, but have been encouraged by both the concrete and ephemeral evidence of our successes thus far.

"How did you find our house?" "We looked for Bagel Boss and made a right."



photos on this page by Chris Pilaro

A few days after the HBO broadcast in May, two teenagers appeared at the Helfand 's front door in Merrick, Long Island. They had just watched BLUE VINYL, taped off the air by their A.P. Environmental Science teacher at Oceanside High School. During their lunch hour, they jumped in their car and traveled across three towns to Merrick. They made a "right at Bagel Boss" and drove up to the blue, now-wooden house. They rang the doorbell and were greeted by Ted Helfand.

"Do I know you?" he asked them. "Uhhh, no sir, well we sort of know you, you see we just watched BLUE VINYL...and we were wondering if we can ask you a few questions?...Do you like the house now?" "Yes, very much." "Is your wife talking to your daughter yet?" "You'll have to ask her," and he called out, "Florence, come to the door." "Have you put the house on the market?" "No." And finally, "well, the real reason we came was ...see we were wondering if you have any more of those necklaces left – we're doing a unit on recycling and we want to include them in our presentation ...for extra credit."

Ted Helfand, amazed at how "the kids got it," and moved by the distance they were willing to go, gave them his last two tchotchkies from Sundance. Thrilled, they high-fived each other and ran back to their car, blue vinyl tchotchkies clutched in their hands.

This is not a one-of-a-kind story. We have received wildly loving responses from students, including our reception at a high school screening in Salt Lake City (2002 Sundance Film Festival), and an awesome response received by co-director and cinematographer Daniel Gold after a two-day Sundance 2003 filmmaking workshop with students. These experiences, and the e-mail seen below, give us reason to believe that middle and high school students can relate to our brand of serious fun, are not daunted by the enormity of the problem and that we should be mining this connection and opportunity further.

"Dear Filmmakers – Loved it, even my 14 year-old son (who pretty much thinks the world rotates around him) stayed glued to the TV, asked questions and was genuinely interested – a rarity! Thanks!! – Coleen."

As a start we hope to work with some high school and middle school teachers and classes in the communities where BLUE VINYL will be shown



As seen in BLUE VINYL, Ted and Florence Helfand making the very first tchotchkies in their backyard.

over the next six months as part of the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE campaign and road tour. And, we hope to visit that A.P. Environmental Science class at Oceanside High School in the spring. After all, they are the "next generation" of consumers.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES from the HBO broadcast and beyond

Each time BLUE VINYL is re-broadcast on HBO (they have the rights to broadcast it for the next five years), screened at a festival, or used as part of the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE campaign, the response is kinetic and the impact measurable. Here are some other examples:

• A student at Northeastern University attended the pre-HBO Boston premiere and wrote this note: *"I went to the screening with my roommate, and we both were shocked to learn the truth about a pretty common product. Shortly after we went shopping for our apartment and saw a shower curtain we both really liked. We were all set to buy it when one of us noticed the label that read 100%vinyl. We didn't buy it (despite the fact it was cute). At the end of the year, we moved to a different dorm and we brought our blue vinyl tchotchkies with us. They are on the wall 'till you tell us how to safely dispose of them."*

• After watching BLUE VINYL at the packed closing night of the Cornell Environmental Film Festival, a builder came up to Judith and shyly said: *"I won't be buying those 3,000 vinyl windows tomorrow. I'll spec aluminum."* Awed, Judith asked him put it in writing on a blue vinyl tchotchki:



We recently followed up with him: *"Yes, we are still no vinyl!! Thanks to you. I am still in the process of finalizing (bureaucracies move slow!) the funding for metal windows for the 165 apartments complex I talked*

about. I hope to have the first apartment retrofitted/replaced by mid February. I will send you a photo of that first apartment."

• A "deep throat" from inside the building manufacturing industry in the Bay Area sent one of our colleagues this e-mail exchange between two "flooring guys": *"I also heard yesterday that 'Blue Vinyl' is playing in theaters on the west coast and non-PVC competitors, such as Forbo, are taking designers by the droves to see it as an evening on the town. I imagine you are feeling more of this pressure than us. If not, you need to get a step closer to the users of your products. It is difficult to combat the flood of anti-PVC sentiment out here. It isn't just AGD firms either, facilities managers are getting inundated with this anti-vinyl campaign as well. I wish I had some better answers – all the suggestions will probably be expensive – but perhaps our very survival depends upon getting out of PVC – ASAP!"*

BLUE VINYL COMES HOME TO MOSSVILLE and kicks off a national Fence-line Tour

As part of a national tour and the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE 2003 campaign, we, and our organizing partner Working Films, are committed to taking BLUE VINYL to major PVC production sites, "fence-line" communities across the U.S. where local activists and workers are in the throes of organizing for safer, cleaner, and healthier places to live and work. The tour will take us to PVC resin manufacturing communities in Louisville KY, Plaquemine LA, New Sarpy LA, Pottstown PA, Point Comfort TX, and Midland MI.

At each site, and prior to each event, we will collaborate with local organizations and community members on how to best use the screening: when to time it and how to strategically use press opportunities that come with bringing a Sundance-award-winning film about *vinyl*, to a town where they manufacture it. The goals are to tie these hometown screenings to: 1) strategic actions, 2) calls for renewed media attention and government accountability, 3) the creation of authentic relationships between fence-line communities and faith-based institutions, consumers, and municipalities. Our goal is for all institutions to see the link between their procurement choices and the folks who may be hurt first in the life-cycle of a product. We believe values-based purchasing power can play a strategic role in the phase out of PVC and concurrently stimulate "green" economic

development in communities that have been strangled by toxic industries that offer "good jobs" at a huge cost.

Our first stop on the fence-line tour: Mossville, LA. This small African American community, which you might remember from the film, is squeezed between PVC manufacturing plants and refineries. With local press and TV in attendance for the screening, "Sundance award winning film comes home to Mossville tonight", Mossville Environmental Action Now, Inc. (M.E.A.N.) re-focused the local media's attention on health issues facing the community and specifically the need for: rigorous pollution reduction policies for nearby industrial facilities; environmental clean-up of excessively polluted and contaminated areas; relocation for Mossville residents who want and need to move; and the need for medical services that recognize the link between chemical exposure and health.

Judith 's explanation of how her parent's house is linked to the house across the street from the PVC factory in Mossville was featured on the local evening news. Imagine close-ups of those well traveled blue vinyl tchotchkies on Lake Charles' NBC affiliate KPLC "Live at Five "and the 5:00 pm/10:00 pm FOX news hour.

BUILDING IN GOOD FAITH: DON'T JUST BUILD A BUILDING, BUILD A *JUST* BUILDING

Every day, on the behalf of faith-based institutions, the chairs of building committees and the captains of capital campaigns make fundraising calls and say something like this: "Your contribution is not just for the new religious school, hospital, community center. It is not just a new wing of an ancient tradition. It is a building for the next generation." What if that captain meant it literally? If faith-based institutions linked each step – from fundraising to the choice of building materials – to the principles and practice of sustainability and green building, they would truly be building for the "next generation" and investing in environmental and economic justice at the same time.

For example, faith-based institutions, especially schools and hospitals, purchase vast quantities of vinyl flooring. If they considered the externalized cost of the PVC life cycle problems –

from the factory, to the health of the adjacent community, to the fabricators, to the off-gassing after its installed, to the incinerator where the waste goes, to the dioxin that gets into the food chain – they would most likely choose an alternative, even if it cost a little more. In contrast, by purchasing bamboo or natural linoleum, they would create incentive for manufacturers to produce more affordable healthy alternatives. Thus, Working Films' other primary effort in 2003, in collaboration with the Healthy Building Network (HBN) and regional affiliates of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), is to launch a national effort called "Building in Good Faith" (BIGF). Our motto: Don't just build a building, build a *just* building.

The seeds of this effort were planted in July 2002 at the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. After the screening of BLUE VINYL, Working

Films and Bay COEJL held a BIGF "Lunch and Learn", which featured a rabbi, a minister, an architect and a nationally recognized "materials" expert (with a focus on flooring). Over 100 people representing environmental and "green" building institutions, and decision makers from local faith-based institutions attended. Together we identified more than 15 building projects in the planning, design and fundraising phase, and estimated that at least 70 million dollars will be spent on faith-based construction in the Bay Area over the next decade. This Spring 2003 we are launching a follow-up pilot project in the Bay Area and Eugene, Oregon, out of which we will design a template for faith-based institutions considering either renovation or construction projects, with accompanying material for youth and adults that uses the building process as a transparent and teachable moment.

As part of this campaign, designed for all faith communities, Working Films, in collaboration with our partners, hopes to convene a national BIGF conference in 2004. Case studies from our pilot projects will be presented along with a set of nationally recognized standards or moral building codes that would guide design and procurement of green building materials, and essentially figure out how to turn this effort into a force, one that has the moral will and resources to transform a toxic marketplace. Our goal is that years from now, *just* buildings will be the trend, not the exception.



Building in Good Faith goes to Eugene, Oregon and Temple Beth Israel. Rabbi Yitz Husbands-Hankins, members of the Building and Kavod Ha Teva (Honor the Earth) Committees and Hebrew school students hold up their tchotchkies in front of the plans of their future "green/eco-kosher" synagogue.

INSIDE THE "GREEN BUILDING" MOVEMENT



One of our primary goals for the BLUE VINYL/MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE campaign has been and will continue to be working with the Healthy Building Network. Our joint goal is to get the PVC life-cycle message inside the U.S. Green Building Council and to the architecture/design community in order to counter vinyl industry pressure to accept vinyl as a green material. In November, we went to the first ever U.S. Green Building Council conference in Austin, TX, a gathering for leaders from across the construction industry (including some vinyl manufacturers) who are working to promote buildings that are environmentally responsible, profitable, and healthy places to live and work.

We held an "off the grid" BLUE VINYL screening that was both public and strategic. Working Films co-hosted this event with the Healthy Building Network. Bill Walsh, the national coordinator of HBN, sent this e-news wrap-up:

Last night 400 people saw Blue Vinyl on the first night of the US Green Building Council's First National Conference and Exposition. The over-capacity crowd (we had to turn away over 100 people at 2 locations) was no doubt bolstered by a full-page story in the local weekly which interviewed Judith on both the film and the conference with the headline: "First you laugh, then you join Greenpeace."

Our primary venue was the Alamo Drafthouse just a few blocks from the Convention Center in Downtown Austin. We led off with an awards ceremony at which we honored some green building leaders/pioneers who have taken important steps toward PVC elimination in the building industry. Judith gave an opening talk and concluded her remarks by asking everyone to wear their Blue Vinyl tchotchki – a radical totem – the next day at the conference and send the USGBC a message about taking a stand on PVC. To over 200 of the nation's leading and more cutting edge green builders, designers and thinkers in the country, Judith called out, "Stand up and show us your tchotchkies!"



photo by Gail Vittori

Among the attendees was South African architect Chrisna Du Plesis, the next morning's conference plenary speaker who was invited to talk about globalization and green building in less industrialized nations.

Well, the next day people couldn't wait to tell me about that opening plenary session in which Chrisna Du Plesis began her remarks to over 1000 people by asking how many people had seen that "fabulous movie last night." She then held her tchotchki and said that she'd thought a lot about the implications and symbolism if she, a South African, were to put a piece of US vinyl waste around her neck for the day. She said this well represented the fact that this was a global problem, a problem for all of us, and with reverence, she put the tchotchki around her neck and started her keynote address. One speaker, at a later workshop, pointed to those in the crowd wearing the vinyl in order to illustrate the concept of forces that disperse toxics throughout the environment, far from the source: "You are all dispersal agents." Ain't that the truth. Chalk it up to the tenacity of a little blue vinyl house on Long Island!!

ENVIRONMENTAL MESSENGER OF THE YEAR AWARD

In recognition of our successful collaboration of media and social change, BLUE VINYL and Working Films won the prestigious 2002 Environmental Messenger of the Year Award from the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), a "NICE MODERNIST" award from Dwell Magazine, and are a featured case study in the Council on Foundation's new publication *Why Fund Media*. An updated list of MHH events, upcoming screenings of BLUE VINYL at festivals, conferences, and campuses and a full list of awards can be found at www.bluevinyl.org.



Judith Helfand, Cynthia Creasey, Dwell Editor-in-Chief Allison Arieff, Daniel Gold and Chris Pilaro. Photo courtesy of Dwell Magazine

STATUS OF SUPPORT AND FUNDRAISING FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF WORK

We can say with truth and conviction that if not for the support of valiant and visionary social/environmental justice funders and believers, we would not be able to do this kind of work with this kind of hope. In partnership with Working Films, we are actively seeking support to keep BLUE VINYL and the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE campaign on the road, responsive to the needs of the phase out PVC movement, at the fence-line, inside the green building movement or the chambers of a city council, and evolving with the extraordinary reaction and interest we are getting from consumers and faith-based institutions. A number of foundations including the Educational Foundation of America, Dorot, Ford and Park have supported both the production of BLUE VINYL as well as the education and organizing phase during and after the HBO broadcast. They viewed this support as a sure way to maximize their initial investment in the film and their long-term investment in environmental health and justice. Foundations that have supported the launch of the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE campaign include the Beldon Fund, Bioneers Fund, Harris Trust, Merck Family Fund, Puffin Foundation, Rockefeller Family Fund, Search Charitable Foundation, the Turner Foundation, and the San Francisco Foundation. We invite inquiry about how to support the next phases of the MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE consumer organizing and education campaign. All contributions to Working Films, a 501c3, are tax deductible.

OUR NEXT TOXIC COMEDY: MELTING PLANET

An environmental adventure so hot, you won't be able to miss it



In July 2002, BLUE VINYL's field producer and photographer Chris Pilaro went to Shismaref, Alaska to cover an important vote. He sent us this photo and report:

"The residents of this small community, perched on a very fragile cape, decided overwhelmingly to relocate their entire village of 600 due to massive erosion of their beachfront. This blue vinyl house (can you believe it!!) is built on aluminum sleds to make it easy to move, just in case they have to sooner than later. They will be some of the first global warming refugees."

How could we resist?

MELTING PLANET, a feature length documentary, will juxtapose humor with horror, and present entertaining science-made-accessible scenarios featuring dynamic characters scrambling to adapt to the bewildering changes in their ever-warming realities. In the spirit of BLUE VINYL, the production and distribution of MELTING PLANET will play a key and featured role in a multi-media public education and consumer activist campaign, this one coordinated and designed by PixelPress www.pixelpress.org. Together we are teaming up to help tackle one of the most serious problems facing humanity – global warming.

As you know from your experience with us on BLUE VINYL, this new adventure will take time and money, organizational know-how, energy, a whole lotta spirit, cash and many many miles (oy! the fossil fuel!!). Thus far, we have raised support for research and development from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation and the Patricia Chernoff Charitable Trust. Toxic Comedy Pictures is actively seeking support for our pilot phase and will be happy to send a PDF of our proposal if you are interested. All contributions to this effort via the Center For Independent Documentary, a 501c3, are fully tax deductible.

WORKING FILMS: 602 South 5th Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28401 910-342-9000 www.workingfilms.org

TOXIC COMEDY PICTURES: 200 West 72nd Street #66, New York, NY 10023 212-875-0456 www.bluevinyl.org