

YEARS Q&A
CO-CREATORS/EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: JOEL BACH + DAVID GELBER
CLIMATE LEADER/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: DANIEL ABBASI

How did the idea of YEARS OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY come about?

DAVID: We came up with the idea of YEARS OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY while working as producers at *60 Minutes*. We were producing a number of climate pieces, and the more we reported on the issue, the more we knew it was a story that desperately needed to be told.

We met over a series of lunches and came up with this idea of making a big documentary film, in the model of *60 Minutes*, but featuring Hollywood A-list actors as correspondents, with the goal of attracting a large audience to shed light on the issue.

JOEL: Since neither of us knew any big A-List actors, we started making some calls and eventually landed a meeting with Jerry Weintraub. He signed on as Executive Producer, and suggested that we do a TV series to maximize viewers.

Once Jerry signed on, we connected with James Cameron, who had also been thinking of doing a television series on climate change. Once Jim agreed to join Jerry as an Executive Producer, we knew we had a chance to do something special.

Then we had a meeting with Arnold Schwarzenegger. After we showed him our sizzle reel, he signed on right away. We began work on the project in the spring of 2011.

Why did you decide to use actors for this project, rather than just leading news correspondents?

DAVID: It was really important to make sure we had reach with this series, so we decided that we would find well-known figures who are passionate about environmental issues, but not necessarily experts. We didn't want them to be experts. We wanted them to ask questions on behalf of the audience to drive that connection as concerned citizens, and they've done it spectacularly well.

How did you get the YEARS' correspondents to come together for this project?

DANIEL: We were very selective about the celebrities and journalists we approached for this project. We didn't want famous people doing cameos – we wanted people who had an authentic commitment to the environment who could bring their own insights to help us tell the story. Then we gave them an opportunity to do something that most of them hadn't done before, which was go into the field as correspondents.

JOEL: Our correspondents were enthusiastic about the opportunity to work on the series to shed light on issues that are important to them, as made evident by the dedication of these correspondents to combating climate change in their work both on screen and off. For example, Harrison Ford is a Conservation International Board Member; Matt Damon is Co-founder of Water.org; Don Cheadle is a UN Environmental Program Global Ambassador; and Ian Somerhalder is the Founder of his namesake organization that is driven to educate and engage youth, particularly as it relates to the environment.

You traveled the globe to film this docu-series. How did you determine which areas to investigate and why?

JOEL: Before we shot a frame of video, we spent a full year researching potential stories, talking to leading climate scientists and developing leads and sources. Once we had several dozen candidates, we

winnowed the stories down by what would be the most compelling and drive the most impact. The location was then determined by wherever the story was best told. At the end of the day, about two out of three stories take place in the U.S., so our hope is to further the conversation around climate change at home as well as abroad.

How do you think climate change deniers or skeptics will react to YEARS?

DANIEL: Throughout the development of YEARS, we've been respectful of all points of view around climate change. On screen, we feature citizens honestly expressing their questions and trying to figure it all out, often in the midst of dramatic personal strife. While I'm convinced by the research and evidence that climate change is real, human caused and that we need urgent action, we don't just want to attract viewers who agree with this. YEARS is a show for everybody.

Is there hope that people will pay more attention to climate change and its impact after viewing the series?

DANIEL: Yes. YEARS is our effort to invite Americans, and others around the world, to take a fresh look at climate change so they can truly understand – with their hearts as well as their minds – the profound stakes, the unmistakable urgency and why they need to lead their leaders to do the right thing.

DAVID: The goal of YEARS is to galvanize a national conversation on the realities of climate change and inspire people to share their own stories and empower them to get involved in solutions. We're also implementing an engagement campaign that will extend this effort beyond the broadcast to encourage our global leaders in politics, business and religion, as well as concerned citizens, to state where they stand on key climate issues and take action.