



Four girls, four years, and the change of a lifetime. Meet Ariana, Isha, Rosie and Esme as they let go of childhood and fumble – or sprint – toward an uncertain future.

Duration: 73 minutes  
In English, Spanish and Hindi with English subtitles  
<http://www.goingon13.com>



***“A nuanced depiction of puberty that is a must see for anyone working in education, social work, or allied fields. I cannot wait to show this film to my students-- it will be a powerful teaching tool.”***

**—Karra Bikson, Ph.D.  
NYU’s Silver School of Social Work**

***“Every topic I am concerned about, every topic I teach about, appears in the film...subtle, moving, nuanced, powerful, and right on!”***

**—Sharon Lamb  
Author, *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes***

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For more information and to download press materials, visit:  
<http://www.goingon13.com/press>



## Critical Acclaim

*"The class loved it and was totally enthralled. It is a valuable tool [that shows] teachers...their real 'curriculum' is staring them in the face every day."*

—Ron Klemp  
Instructor, California State University, Northridge  
Coordinator, Secondary Literacy, L.A. Unified School District

*"Frank and compelling. An excellent choice for discussions about what it means to become a young woman in today's society."*

—Robin Levin  
School Library Journal

*"If you have anything to do with children, tweens or teenagers then watch this film!"*

—Sarah Newton  
Author & Radio Host, *Help! My Teenager Is an Alien: The Everyday Situation Guide for Parents*

*"\*\*\* Empathetic documentary...The filmmakers appear to have established a healthy rapport with their subjects, since the pre-adolescents talk openly in front of the camera. Recommended."*

—K. Fennessy  
Video Librarian

*"**Going on 13** brings the need for youth programs and positive female role models into sharp relief. It empowered my staff to think about the messages that young girls are receiving from the media, their families, their peers, and their schools, and, what a program like ours can do to combat them."*

—Lindsay E. White  
Girls Inc. of Alameda County

*"What I found most inspiring about this documentary was how resilient each girl turned out to be. A must-see for gender studies, psychology, or education curricula. Every college library should own this DVD."*

—Melanie Bishop  
Prescott College

*"Tender, sweet, honest and foremost REAL in its depiction of girlhood."*

—Leslie Fields-Cruz  
National Black Programming Consortium

*"This film is a must-see for anyone working with adolescent and teen girls. It is a great tool to use with students- so many topics to discuss- topics they can relate to. By far this documentary is the most realistic picture of what it is like to grow up as a girl in a diverse, suburban community."*

—Gabriela G. Baeza  
San Diego County Office of Education

*"Extraordinary. Remarkable. Insightful. Real. Amazing. Beautiful. Powerful. Important."*

—Julie Metzger  
Seattle Children's Hospital





## Short Synopsis

Four girls, four years, and the change of a lifetime. Meet Ariana, Isha, Rosie and Esme as they let go of childhood and fumble – or sprint – towards an uncertain future. This is puberty and for each of these contemporary urban girls of color, it's a whirlwind of change and new choices.

**GOING ON 13** chronicles these multifaceted girls grappling with school, family, friends, and identity, and reveals the precarious state between being a little girl and becoming a young woman.

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## Long Synopsis

Four years with four girls in the San Francisco Bay Area. Meet Esmeralda, Mexican American, first to complete her daily schoolwork and also first in her class to have a “boyfriend” without her parents’ knowledge; Ariana, African American, who transforms from a tomboy into one of the “popular girls” as her family struggles to leave the poverty of West Oakland; Rosie, mixed race Latina, who, at nine, is precocious and sunny, but grows into an alienated pre-teen who finds herself dangerously close to repeating the sixth grade due to chronic truancy; and Isha, an immigrant from India, who despite her devotion to her traditional family, explores Internet teen chat-rooms with user names like “ghetto girl” and “cutie pie.”

**ESMERELDA** clearly loves attention. When we first meet her, she’s a bubbly, confident Daddy’s girl, proudly telling us about getting up at 5AM to open the school with her dad, the head custodian. By fifth grade, though, Esmeralda begins to express desires that her traditional Dad doesn’t approve of – like wanting to wear “hootchie” clothes. She’s the first to “develop,” and more and more, her attention becomes focused on boys – and on how to get them to pay attention to her.

At age 9, **ARIANA** starts out as a fighter who hits back but never “throws the first lick.” She is a fair-minded girl who protests – loudly, and with tears in her voice – when her teacher plays the movie “Bring It On” during a class party. “They only wanna watch it ‘cause it shows the little girls’ panties,” she says, as the ten-year-old boys around her hoot at the screen. We see her transform into a thoughtful and fiercely independent teen, and hear about her dreams of finding a career that suits her intellectual gifts.

At ten, **ROSIE** appears older than many of her classmates and is most comfortable among adults. Her Anglo-American mother and Nicaraguan father struggle to support their daughter in the midst of their divorce. While her mother values her daughter’s independence, they intensely negotiate about whether she will be able to walk to her new middle school alone. Rosie’s mother struggles with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) brought on by flashbacks of childhood trauma, forcing Rosie to grow up fast to help support her. As a teen, Rosie hides behind music and poetry books, a square peg in a world of round holes, just looking to be accepted as she is.

**ISHA** has a reserved demeanor and glasses in fifth grade. At home, Isha makes tea for guests, and attends to the family’s Hindu shrine, but also, like many other girls her age, idolizes the “girl



# GOING ON 13

power” cartoon characters The Power Puff Girls, which decorate the walls of her room. For Isha there are always two ways of doing things: the American way and the Indian way. While she is at home in India for the summer, singing songs and playing games on the rural farm where her cousins live, the crowded, frenetic playground of her American school is foreign, and foreboding. Her challenge is balancing the two opposing forces in her life, while simultaneously discovering who she is, and where she fits into it all.

Using a mix of intimate interviews, cinema vérité, and stop-motion animation, **GOING ON 13** chronicles the girls’ coming of age: their blossoming desires and growing sense of responsibility, their hopes for the future, and the texture, context, and contrast of the social and emotional challenges they face as their identities develop. The girls share the music, television, digital media and books they adoringly ingest – and which rarely reflect their own families’ economic or cultural backgrounds.

Without simplifying or sensationalizing the lives of these four girls, **GOING ON 13** shows us a reality of urban, pre-teen girls of color far more complex and intimate than we are used to seeing in the media. Through the everyday drama of one of the most tumultuous times of all our lives, Isha, Rosie, Esme and Ariana learn the bittersweet lesson that change is a necessary part of growth.





## **Outreach and Distribution**

### **Broadcast:**

**GOING ON 13** will have its national broadcast premiere on PBS stations nationwide beginning August 30, 2009 and continuing throughout the fall. Please visit our website for more information and to check your local listings: <http://www.goingon13.com>.

### **Outreach:**

Recognizing the popularity of websites with original video content, and that girls are accessing information through social network environments, through their mobile phones and iPods, and via the Internet on gaming and other sites—**GOING ON 13** is embracing this phenomenon and launching an audience engagement plan that places an interactive web site at its core. Our premise is that **GOING ON 13** can provide an effective and safe online portal for viewers to upload and share short responses—via text, photos, and videos about themselves. This process will be an extension of several of **GOING ON 13**'s central themes including the disconnect between youth and adults.

Our major partners are Girls Inc of Alameda County and Michelle Halsell of Mixing Pixel who will help conceive, design and create a project incorporating technology, an interactive game/website, and social networking elements. We will be working with a number of youth groups and organizations to create pilot content, review and give feedback, and eventually help produce a supportive and safe environment for girls and young women. Working with girls and those who work with them to develop the content will ensure that the project is sustainable, girl-centered and user-friendly.

By sharing their experiences in a secure and adult-curated environment, using the best practices in the COPPA laws, girls will be able to learn from and connect to those they relate best to: other pre-teen girls. In turn, our film will be able to reach a larger audience – particularly urban girls of color and their families – who don't traditionally consume documentary media. Showing the lives of real, non-sensationalized, girls of color is revolutionary and will lead to new ways of girls seeing themselves and being seen by those people who are responsible for them.

The goals project are to: 1) create a space for girls to share their experiences of puberty - as experts on their own lives; 2) engage girls and those who care about them in an inter-generational dialog; and 3) inspire communities to develop programs, policies and spaces that listen to the real needs of real girls.

### **Distribution:**

Educational and organizational copies of **GOING ON 13**, including full public screening rights are available through New Day Films: <http://newday.com/films/GoingOn13.html>. Home video versions can be purchased from our website: <http://www.goingon13.com/>.





## Directors' Statement



If there were any rules about documentary filmmaking, we probably broke them all.

One social worker, one filmmaker and one very ambitious idea: to follow girls over the course of four years as they became teenagers. Knowing that production alone would take so many years, we decided two things: one, that we would have to pace ourselves and, two, that we would be making it up as we went along. This included a shooting

schedule that allowed us to keep our day jobs while becoming very close to our “subjects,” and leaving the confines of a strictly observational cinema to either chat, hang out or answer the girls’ own questions about growing up.

Some things never change. We all go through puberty. We all emerge transformed. These are the universals. Yet we wondered what life is like, today, for girls like us: girls from the city, from immigrant and multiethnic families; girls who grew up with stepparents and within extended families. These are girls we recognize; we see ourselves in them, yet they are growing up in a world far different from our own childhood. A world far more global and digital than we ever knew. A world, in short, that changes at an accelerating rate.

There are many films about teenage girls, but few films follow them through puberty. Biological changes are only one part of this transformation. There is a whole world of emotional, cultural and social relationships that girls experience. It’s an intense period. We wanted to capture that and ask, “How do girls separate themselves from their parents and develop their own identity? How does this happen within today’s complex social and cultural context?”

Each generation contains cultural references that mark that time period. In making this film we asked ourselves, what will this generation be remembered for? Thirty years after the ERA movement, what rights do girls take for granted and in which areas of their lives has there been few gains? What impact does a global and highly digitized world have on our most intimate decisions about personal development and relationships? What does it mean to be a 21<sup>st</sup> century girl?

During our research phase, we met with hundreds of students in fourth grade classrooms across the San Francisco Bay Area. We chose schools with populations diverse across race, ethnicity and class -- the faces of a new urban America. From these classrooms we found distinct archetypes: the tomboy, the girl with a perpetual crush, the student who would never dream of defying authority, and the one who was happiest being “different”. We followed them from the classroom to the playground and beyond. One wedding, two Quinceañeras and 350 hours of footage later, the film is as much a document about growing up as it is about letting go.

Many adults forget to listen to young people or simply choose to ignore them. We not only assume that our way is the right way but that it is the *only* way. We wanted to make a space for these girls, at this time, to share their stories. We couldn't have written this story; we didn't know it. It was a story only they could tell.





## Cast & Credits

Kristy Guevara-Flanagan & Dawn Valadez  
Ariana, Esmeralda, Isha, Rosie  
J Clements  
Corey Ohama, Kristy Guevara-Flanagan  
Elizabeth Finlayson & Malcolm Pullinger  
Gerry Watson  
Dan Cantrell  
Adam Cohen, Eriq Wities & Daniel Yaffe  
Sara Porto Nolan  
Jeremiah Moore  
Gary Coates  
Video Arts  
Myariah Summers, BUMP Records  
BUMP Records  
Eva Moss

director/producer/writer  
cast (themselves)  
executive producer  
editors  
consulting editors  
director of photography  
composer  
animation  
associate producer  
re-recording mixer  
color grader  
online facility  
credit song  
original music  
outreach coordinator

## Key Personnel

**Kristy Guevara-Flanagan, Director/Producer/Writer**, picked up her first camera in middle school and hasn't put it down since. Her short films include, *El Corrido de Cecilia Rios*, chronicling the violent death of a Richmond teen. The film won the Golden Spire at the San Francisco International Film Festival, was an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival and was subsequently broadcast on the Sundance Channel. Kristy holds an MFA in Cinema and, in addition to directing films, is an editor and film instructor.

**Dawn Valadez, Producer/Director/Writer**, After 20 years in the youth and social service field with a master's degree in social welfare from UC Berkeley ('92) Dawn has stepped into the world of documentary filmmaking. Dawn has a long history of supporting and developing programs that serve children, youth and families locally and nationally, as a successful fundraiser, former board member of Youth Together and eXtreme Youth Zone, trainer and facilitator focusing on youth development, multiculturalism, cultural competency & leadership skills, and trainer and consultant to AmeriCorps, the Community Network for Youth Development, CalSAC, the East Bay Conservation Corps, 4-H, Girls Inc, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and many others. As the development director at Davis Street Family Resource Center she is raising capital funds during the worst recession since the depression--successfully! GOING ON 13 is her first feature film.

**J. Clements, Executive Producer**, has produced and directed award-winning films that have aired on PBS and the Discovery Channel. Her films have also showcased at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Clements has worked in short form directing for Maturity Broadcast News and has line produced utilizing crews from the BBC. She is a former ITVS producer, ITVS Production Manager and editing consultant. Her current consulting





includes producers from New York to Alaska. Clements also teaches media to teenagers and young adults. She has a MA in film from Stanford University.

**Corey Ohama, Editor.** Since receiving an MFA in film production from San Francisco State University in 1998, Corey has continued working in film and video in the Bay Area as an editor and associate producer. Corey is the producer, director and editor of *Double Solitaire*, a documentary about her father and uncle, who were placed in an internment camp during WWII. *Double Solitaire* received the SECA award for film from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and was broadcast nationally on the PBS feed in 2001 and is currently in distribution with the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM).

**Sara Porto Nolan, Associate Producer.** Nolan's career began in print journalism. After leaving her "old life" of pop-cultural reporting behind for the world of social justice documentaries, she worked at Toxic Comedy Pictures where she was associate producer for a feature documentary on global climate change titled *Everything's Cool*, and produced the DVD for the award-winning doc *Blue Vinyl*. She co-produced *When the Road Bends: Tales of a Gypsy Caravan*, and associate produced *My Kid Could Paint That* before moving to the Bay Area and becoming a *vaquera*.

**Open Content, Animation,** is an unconventional media company. Founded by Eriq Wities and Daniel Yaffe, the two have been working together to create social and media projects for over 9 years. Childhood friends from San Diego, California, the two UC Berkeley graduates formed Open Content in San Francisco early in 2007. Their works have received various awards and recognition.

**BUMP Records, Music,** is a comprehensive youth-run record label that gives participants hands-on experience in producing, packaging, and promoting records. Learn the skills of professional recording techniques using the latest in computer-based recording technology. Gain entrepreneurial experience through the marketing and distribution of BUMP products. BUMP Records is a program of the Bay Area Video Coalition's (BAVC) Next Generation Programs.

**Eva Moss, Outreach Coordinator.** After receiving a BA in film and theater from Smith College, Moss began working in documentary film production and editing. She has contributed to films shown on PBS, HBO, Showtime, LOGO, and Discovery Health Channel, as well as at numerous festivals around the world.





## **Awards, Festivals and Screenings**

### **Awards:**

- Best Documentary, LA Femme Film Fest
- Best Documentary, Broad Humor Film Fest
- Cine Golden Eagle Award
- Bay Area Video Coalition, Videomakers Award, USA
- Nominee, Best Documentary, Taiwan International Children's TV & Film Festival, Taiwan

### **Festivals:**

- Tribeca Film Festival, USA – **World Premiere**
- Silverdocs/AFI Discovery Channel Documentary Festival, USA
- Atlanta Underground Film Festival & DocuFest Atlanta, USA
- Seoul International Youth Film Festival, Korea
- Taiwan International Children's TV & Film Festival, Taiwan – **Sneak Preview**
- Portland Women's Film Festival, USA
- Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival, USA
- LA Femme Fest, USA
- Broad Humor Film Festival
- San Francisco International Documentary Festival, USA
- South Asian International Film Festival, USA
- San Joaquin International Children's Film Festival, USA
- Vail Film Festival, Colorado, USA
- Leed's Young People's Film Festival, England -- **UK Premiere**

### **Community Screenings:**

- BOOST (Best Out of School Time) National Conference, Palm Springs, CA
- San Diego County Office Of Education, Equity Seminar and Screening
- Julia Morgan School for Girls, 7th Grade class, Oakland, CA
- Benefit for Youth Together, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
- "Doing Your Doc: Diverse Visions, Regional Voices" Workshop, Documentary Case Study, NALIP, CPB, NEA and the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, San Francisco, CA
- "Women in Filmmaking" Workshop, West Valley College, Girls for A Change, San Jose, CA
- Julia Morgan School for Girls, San Francisco Film Society's Education Program, Oakland, CA
- Association of Women in Psychology Annual Conference, San Diego, CA
- San Francisco State University, Bay Area Filmmakers Survey Course, San Francisco, CA
- Stanford University, MFA Thesis Seminar in Documentary Film & Video, Stanford, CA
- The Oakland Film Office/KTOP Studios, Community Input Screening, Oakland, CA
- California College of the Arts, Community as Site and Social Space Lecture, Oakland, CA





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Please visit our website for a complete list: <http://www.goingon13.com>

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