

For Immediate Release



From Entertainment to Engagement

**Groundbreaking National Survey Finds:**

**AMERICANS ATTRACTED TO ENTERTAINMENT ON URGENT SOCIAL ISSUES,  
BUT FRUSTRATED BY LACK OF INFORMATION, OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE ACTION**

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**Why Purpose-Driven Entertainment Should Be Coming Soon to a Theater Near You:**

- **Four in Five Americans Believe the Entertainment Industry Should Produce More Movies and TV Series Exploring Important Social Issues and Causes**
  - **Three in Five Believe a Movie or TV Series Can Entertain *and* Focus on a Social Issue**
  - **71% Want More Movies About the Issues They Care About Most**
  - **Better than Three in Four Believe Filmmakers Should Provide More Info On Taking Action on the Social Issues Their Movies Explore**
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**To Tell the Truth: Asked Whom They Trust to Fairly Represent a Social Issue,  
Americans Cite Filmmakers as Much as the Media - and Way More Than Politicians**

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**Veteran Hollywood Insiders Ric Robertson, Jonathan Taylor Announce New  
Offering With Advocacy Agency Tiller, LLC to Help Entertainment Companies  
Maximize Their Content's Social Impact, Financial Performance**

New York, Los Angeles, January 24, 2019 – Americans are eager for Hollywood to produce more purpose-driven entertainment, especially when it provides information on the underlying issue and opportunities to take action, according to the results of a groundbreaking national survey released today by [Tirota](#), a new consultancy specializing in bolstering both the societal impact and bottom-line success of issue-focused entertainment.

Of the 1,000 adults surveyed, 80% say they are attracted (29% strongly) to movies and documentaries addressing social issues or causes, and another 80% believe (30% strongly) the entertainment industry should produce more movies and TV series exploring important social

issues. Seventy-eight percent believe the industry should provide more information on how to act on the issues their content explores.

“The data are clear. Audiences are not only hungry for content that educates and inspires them but also are looking for opportunities to learn more and actively engage. The encouraging news for content providers is that most Americans also believe a movie or TV series can focus on an important social issue and still be entertaining,” said Ric Robertson of Robertson Taylor Partners (RTP), a Los Angeles-based entertainment communications agency. RTP has partnered with Tiller, LLC, a leading East Coast advocacy and engagement agency, to establish **Tirota**.

Asked on an unaided basis to name their all-time favorite movie about a social issue or cause, survey participants offered a wide range of responses. The top 10 most-cited films were, in order, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Erin Brockovich*, *Philadelphia*, *Malcolm X*, *Selma*, *Norma Rae*, *Roots*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Milk* and *Schindler’s List*.

The representative poll of 1,000 adult Americans – 32% of whom self-identified as politically conservative, 31% as middle of the road and 33% as liberal – was conducted via the Internet by Pollara Strategic Insights, a leading North American research firm, between November 28 and December 3, 2018. Poll participants had to have seen at least one recently released movie or viewed a current episodic TV show over the last year. Among poll respondents, 53% reported they go to the movies at least once a month and 40% said they had seen three or more social issue films over the past 12 months.

Pollara president Craig Worden said: “The survey evidences a strong preference for purpose-driven content across key demographics, including age, gender, ethnicity, education level and even political outlook. Americans don’t always agree on the substance of an issue, but there is a clear desire for substantive content and engagement.”

### **From Entertainment to Education to Engagement**

The survey underscores an emergent opportunity for entertainment companies to inform and engage the movie-going public.

More than 90 percent of those surveyed agree (43% strongly agree, 49% somewhat agree) that movies can play an important role in informing people about social issues. One third of those surveyed strongly agree (44% somewhat agree) that “in the current political climate, movies and TV shows about social issues are all the more important.”

Desire for purpose-driven content and information may, in part, reflect growing disillusionment with the media and politicians alike as sources of truthful information and perspective.

Asked whom they trust to “tell the truth about/fairly represent a social issue,” 27% of respondents said the news media, 27% said filmmakers and just 3% said politicians, while 43% said none of them particularly. Of the three, filmmakers had the most positive trendline. Asked how their level of trust has changed over the last five years, 50% of respondents said they trust the media more (18%) or the same (32%) while 74% said they trust filmmakers more (23%) or the same (51%). By comparison, 75% of respondents said they trust politicians less.

“Film has always given form and meaning to our complex lives and, in an era of fake news and political distrust and dysfunction, that role can only grow in urgency,” Robertson said.

Asked which social issues they would like to see movies explore more often, issues most cited were racism/discrimination and physical or mental illness (each cited by 17% of respondents) followed by the environment/climate change/pollution (14%), gun violence (13%) and veterans’ issues, crime/law enforcement/the criminal justice system and poverty (12%).

### **Of Intention and Opportunity: The MLK Day Example**

Of those surveyed, 71% said they were at least somewhat engaged in civic or social action activities (e.g., volunteering, joining organizations, signing petitions, writing letters/speaking out). Of those, 14% said they were “very engaged,” 21% said they were “engaged” and 36% said they were at least “somewhat engaged.”

But the survey also demonstrated Americans’ desire for help getting involved. For example, while 83% of those surveyed said they were aware that Martin Luther King Day (this year, Monday, Jan. 21) was a designated National Day of Service, 61% said they had no plan to participate in a service project. Why? Perhaps because better than three out of four (77%) said they wish it were easier to find and participate in a service project on that day.

“As the life of Martin Luther King so poignantly demonstrated, dreams don’t become reality without active engagement,” Tiller CEO Rob Densen said. “We know from our past research that we need to make it easier for individuals to get involved with the issues they care about. Most of us have good intentions, but the realities of family responsibilities and the need in many families to work more than one job frequently get between us and our best intentions.

That’s why we believe entertainment companies can play such a unique and vital role in not only inspiring us but also then translating that energy into meaningful action.”

The survey found that 80% of respondents at least somewhat agree that movies about important social issues make them want to do something about the issue. On the other hand, asked about the last time they saw a movie about an important social issue, only 26% said the end credits gave more information on where to go to learn more or get involved (25% said the end credits did not and 42% couldn’t remember). More than six in 10 – 62% – say it’s frustrating not to get that information.

### **Tirota: Creating Impact from Strategy to Implementation**

With the release of the survey results, Robertson Taylor Partners also announced that it is partnering with Tiller, LLC to create **Tirota**, a new joint offering aimed at enhancing both the societal impact and bottom-line success of issue-focused motion picture, TV, streaming and music content.

“**Tirota** is built on our firms’ shared commitment to social change and the belief that coordinated, strategic communications campaigns can help purposeful content realize its considerable commercial as well as social potential,” said Tiller president James Marren.

**Tirota** offers its clients full-service PR and communications capabilities, from strategy to implementation, to build audiences for worthy projects while generating corrective action. **Tirota**’s capabilities include traditional PR, awards season strategy and promotion, grassroots and social media campaigns, website and digital asset development, issues research and polling, and identifying and developing strategic partnerships and related programming.

“Thirty-plus years of Hollywood experience confirm what our poll results so powerfully show: There is an opportunity – financial and social – for entertainment companies to enlighten, educate and help audiences engage around powerful issues,” RTP co-founder Jonathan Taylor said. “We think **Tirota** is uniquely positioned to help companies do just that.”

“As great as they are at storytelling, many content providers – documentarians, commercial filmmakers and TV production companies included – realize that truly successful advocacy and activation demands an additional, complementary skill set,” Densen said. “**Tirota** is uniquely equipped to generate deep public awareness of the issues underlying their offerings,

heightening their relevance and appeal and, in turn, converting that interest into box office, views, and meaningful social action.”

#### **About Tirota:**

Combining the expertise and insights of two leading communications companies - Tiller, LLC and Robertson Taylor Partners - **Tirota** helps entertainment companies and creative content providers achieve both social and business objectives, efficiently and cost effectively. The company is based in Tiller’s New York-area offices and RTP’s Los Angeles base. Please visit [Tirota.com](http://www.tirota.com). For more information or to request Tirota’s *Purpose and Profits: Six Questions for Socially Conscious Film Makers*, go to <http://www.tirota.com/approach>.

#### **About Tiller, LLC**

Founded in 2003, Tiller, LLC is a nationally recognized leader in designing and executing advocacy marketing and strategic philanthropy programs that build brand and business while advancing the public interest. Tiller has worked with Fortune 500 corporations as well as leading foundations and nonprofit organizations on compelling, cause-driven communications programs focused on issues such as financial empowerment of women and minorities, lung cancer, childhood grief, foster care, home ownership, sustainable investing, news literacy and more. The Tiller approach has captured numerous industry honors for excellence in public relations, writing and research; a Tiller-designed program to introduce young minority women to investing was cited by the Clinton Global Initiative as “one of 13 programs changing the lives of girls and women around the globe.” Please visit [Tillerllc.com](http://www.tillerllc.com) for more information.

#### **About Robertson Taylor Partners**

Ric Robertson and Jonathan Taylor combined their more than 30 years apiece experience in the entertainment business in 2016 to form the unique communications and consulting company Robertson Taylor Partners. With Ric’s three-decades tenure as a senior executive at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, he has proven effectiveness in management, leadership and strategic vision. Jonathan brings two decades as senior editor at leading entertainment publications and another 10-plus years in PR, corporate communications and brand building. They use this complementary tool kit to help multiple clients win Oscars® and other awards, launch new film and TV companies, shine positive light on associations and trade groups, and provide fresh and constructive guidance to every project. The firm worked on several of this year’s Academy Award®-nominated films, including “Green Book.” Please visit [RobertsonTaylorPartners.com](http://www.RobertsonTaylorPartners.com) for more information.

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