



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“One of Ten Best Docs of the Year.”

- **Roger Ebert**

“A fascinating, heartbreaking doc.”

- **SF Chronicle**

Inspired by Thomas Frank’s New York Times Bestselling Book

“WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS?”

Debuts on DVD January 25, 2011 from Passion River Films

Bonus Materials Include Audio Commentaries, Exclusive Footage and Filmmaker Q&A

OVERVIEW: The critically acclaimed feature length documentary **WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS?**, a compelling look into the rise of the conservative movement in America, comes to DVD on January 25, 2011 from Passion River Films. Hailed by Roger Ebert as “one of the best docs of the year,” this insightful film is packed with provocative interviews and footage that shed light on the rise of what is now widely known as The Tea Party Movement. The DVD, which also features never before seen footage, extended scenes and director commentary, is priced at \$24.98 SRP. Pre-order close is December 14, 2010.

SYNOPSIS

Before the Tea Party movement had a name, author Thomas Frank’s controversial New York Times bestselling book “*What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*” explored the rise of conservatism in his home state of Kansas and exposed the contradictions of the movement. Based on Frank’s book, director Joe Winston’s critically acclaimed feature length documentary **WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS?** similarly deals with the ascendancy of conservatism and how conservative

political strategists won the hearts and minds of Americans, a movement now more visible and very much in effect all across America today. The film adaptation, with its vivid characters and their unforgettable stories, sheds light on the national debate over who the conservatives are, where they come from, and why they continue to wield influence.

BONUS FEATURES

- **Audio Commentaries** - Go behind the scenes with filmmakers Joe Winston and Laura Cohen, and author Thomas Frank with these exclusive audio commentaries that take you inside the making of the film and directly connect people and events depicted in the film to today's Tea Party Movement.
- **Extended and Deleted Scenes** – Exclusive extended and additional scenes not shown in theatres including:
 - Christian home schooling (extended)
 - Patrick Henry College (extended)
 - The late Dr. George Tiller and his adversaries (extended)
 - Inside the Pro-Life movement (deleted)
 - Angel Dillard chooses conservative Christianity (extended)
 - Farmer Donn Teske on free markets (deleted)
- **Audience Q&A with Filmmakers** – Delve deeper into the revelations of the conservative movement with author Thomas Frank, and filmmakers Laura Cohen and Joe Winston in this insightful audience Q&A filmed at the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago.

FILMMAKERS

Director: Joe Winston

Written By: Based on the book by Thomas Frank

Produced By: Laura Cohen and Joe Winston

Director of Photography: T.W. Li

Film Editor: Joe Winston and Alex MacKenzie

TECHNICAL INFORMATION – DVD

Street Date: January 18, 2011

Pre-Order Close: December 14, 2010

Copyright: 2010 Tallgrass Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Consumer Retail Price: \$24.98

Catalog Number: PRDVD488963

Running Time: 90 Minutes

Layers: Dual layer

Aspect Ratio: 16:9 Widescreen

Rating: This film is not rated

Technical Info: English, English SDH

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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ABOUT Passion River Films

Since 1998, Passion River has been devoted to acquiring, distributing, and representing independent film projects for both the U.S. and foreign markets. Passion River offers "indie," documentary, and art house filmmakers with customizable modes of distribution and co-branding opportunities to effectively reach their niche audiences.

For more information, please visit www.passionriver.com

The educational version will be offered by Documentary Educational Resources (www.der.com) and digital download, VOD and television rights are handled by Filmbuff (<http://filmbuffondemand.com>)

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

What's the Matter with Kansas? plunges viewers into the heart of conservative Middle America.

Angel Dillard helps run the most popular booth at the Kansas State Fair: Kansans For Life. She's a lifelong Republican activist.

Brittany Barden is a tireless veteran of Kansas Republican campaigns. Her mission is to return America to its roots as "a Christian nation." She's 18 years old.

Donn Teske describes himself as "a red-neck Kansas farmer." He also says corporate greed is "not very Christian." He lobbies the government to save his family farm and others like it.

Angel and Brittany both attend Terry Fox's 6,000-member Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita. Fox thunders from his pulpit denunciations of gay marriage, abortion and liberal politicians. He urges his flock to vote on the eve of the midterm elections.

Then, the winds of change blow across Kansas.

Republicans start to lose elections. Terry Fox's church splinters. And Donn Teske gets a call from Washington.

Keep watching – you'll be surprised who you're rooting for...

A conversation with Thomas Frank, Laura Cohen and Joe Winston about filming ***What's the Matter with Kansas?***

What is your background as a filmmaker?

Laura: I'm originally from Pittsburgh. I came to Chicago to get a Masters in Theater Directing from Columbia College, fell in love with the city and have never left. I was soon drawn to filmmaking, first on feature films, but when I met Joe (now we're married with two children) he gave me the documentary bug. I work on the production side of documentary television.

Joe: I grew up in Chicago, in Hyde Park neighborhood. I grabbed the family Super-8 movie camera when I was a teenager and haven't stopped since. After graduating from Yale with a degree in Psychology, I returned immediately to Chicago to produce and host the TV series "This Week in Joe's Basement" on public-access cable TV. Like Laura, I make my living working on documentary television. Prior to ***What's the Matter with Kansas?*** I made a documentary on the Burning Man Festival that played on European television.

How did the project originate?

Joe: In the summer of 2004, I went to see Tom Frank speak at the Chicago Public Library on a triple-bill with Studs Terkel and Howard Dean. What Tom had to say really electrified me. At a dark moment for American liberalism, here was somebody who put it all into context – revolving around, of all places, Kansas!

Laura: I'd never even been to Kansas.

Joe: Neither had I. A couple months later, we reached an agreement with Tom, hopped into Laura's van with a volunteer shooter and some gear and drove around Kansas in October 2004, just before the election.

Tom: I had never worked on a movie before, so I didn't know what to expect. I was excited about featuring my home state in a movie, though, because *nobody* visits Kansas, it ranks dead last among the fifty states in tourism. People don't realize how beautiful much of the state is.

Laura: We followed Tom on his book tour through Kansas and popped in on whichever campaign events would allow a camera crew from some organization they'd never heard of. We also just wandered around various parts of the state, capturing scenery and meeting some of the people. It was research, basically, but we shot footage while we were doing it.

How did you find your main characters?

Tom: Many of the people I interviewed for the book appear in the movie. But I think we understood from the beginning that Laura and Joe were not going to try to follow the book too closely. They did much more than that – they really got inside the heads of their characters, the people of Kansas.

Laura: Our big break was when one of us picked up the phone and talked with the director of a liberal advocacy group in Kansas which fights the influence of the conservative evangelical churches. We asked her, "Okay, who are your three worst

enemies?" She laughed and gave us the names of the three most politically active conservative pastors in Kansas. Terry Fox was the first to return our call.

Joe: Pastor Fox was totally accepting of an unknown documentary crew with no credentials, and gave us a great interview. So then we called back and asked his assistant, "Okay, so who are your three most politically active parishioners?"

Laura: Joe interviewed three couples from Fox's church– it was kind of like doing a screen test – and Rob and Angel Dillard really shined. Later, Angel introduced us to Dawn Barden and her family, who also attend Terry Fox's church. So after a while we were embedded in a whole community of conservatives in Wichita, through Fox's church.

Joe: Kansas Farmers Union President Donn Teske came to us from Tom Frank, he's such a great character, a smart farmer, a largely self-educated man on a mission to save family farms like his own. He provided a very authentic conduit for liberal viewpoints, and an interesting contrast to the Wichita characters, because he would say things like "corporate greed, now that's not very Christian."

Were you surprised when Terry Fox's church moved to an amusement park?

Laura: When we met Terry Fox, he and the conservative movement were highly confident, seemingly at the height of their power and political influence. One of Fox's associates even offered to help fund our movie, which we politely declined, of course. But once we started visiting Fox's church regularly, his fortunes rapidly declined.

Joe: First, in summer 2006, Fox's megachurch of ten years forced him to resign. Angel and Rob told us that he'd left his church and that they would help him form a new one in a Wild West themed amusement park, which was still under construction. Rob and Angel would be quite influential in the new church, so they seemed actually quite excited by the opportunity. But later, of course, they would regret investing heavily in the park.

Laura: I'll never forget the first time I saw Terry Fox preach wearing a cowboy hat in front of a giant "WILD WEST WORLD sign."

Tom: You can't make this stuff up!

Did Terry Fox give you any insight into why the social issues, such as abortion, gay marriage, and teaching of evolution, are so salient in Kansas?

Joe: Kansas has a storied history of activism, even violence, around moral and religious issues, going all the way back to Carrie Nation and John Brown. This is not ancient history to them, people still make reference to it.

Laura: What has been largely forgotten in Kansas is the history of its progressive movements. For the Populists, economic justice was a moral and social issue, as we show when we visit the Garden of Eden, one of their few monuments.

Tom: The fascinating thing about the modern-day conservative movement is that these people use much of the same language as the old Populists, that kind of fiery common man vs. the powerful invective. But of course they want the exact opposite of what the Populists wanted. Populism works very well in America – whoever can tap into that vein of outrage will win election after election.

Does the murder of Dr. George Tiller change anything?

Joe: We recently revised the very end of the movie to give a short notice of Dr. Tiller's murder, so audiences realize his significance.

Laura: Although we make no effort to resolve it, the abortion issue looms over ***What's the Matter with Kansas?*** Dr. Tiller's clinic in Wichita was no doubt a big reason – as one of only two places women could get abortions late in pregnancy, it was an irresistible target for the Pro-Life Movement. His murder is a terrible tragedy for women everywhere.

Joe: What was most interesting about the Pro-Life movement in Kansas, as we had covered it, was the funhouse mirror it held up to the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s. The Summer of Mercy campaign in 1991 used nonviolent protests and sit-ins to shut down abortion clinics. They built a huge movement, which went to the ballot box and elected a slew of conservative politicians. An angry Pro-Lifer gunning down Dr. Tiller as he walks into church one morning, well, that doesn't exactly fit this narrative.

The movie doesn't have any narration, and Tom Frank is only in it briefly. Do you ever worry that viewers won't know what your point of view is, what message to take away?

Tom: I never wanted to be the narrator or the host of the movie. I think that would really have diluted the power of the stories it tells.

Laura: It's extremely rare to see a political documentary without a narrator or host telling you what to think. To me, the movie is still a very clear indictment of America headed in the wrong direction. But we see a lot of those -- the achievement of ***What's the Matter with Kansas?*** is that it impels viewers to walk a mile in the shoes of people whose political and religious beliefs they may completely disagree with.

Joe: What I love about movies is the way they draw the audience in to a journey of discovery, take you some place you've never been or in the company of people you don't know. For me, a narrator's voice breaks that spell. I might add that ours might be a new kind of political documentary because it fully explores clashing viewpoints without putting the audience in opposition to any of them. I think that's why post-show discussions are always so lively – people just have to talk about the movie after they see it.

What do the people who appear in the movie think of it? Have they seen it?

Laura: We held our first public screening of the completed film at the 2008 Tallgrass Film Festival in Wichita, Kansas. We did this primarily so we could get feedback from the people who are in the movie, and their community. We sent DVDs ahead of time to the main participants in the movie, and invited them all to the film festival. Many of them attended.

Joe: The screening was packed, and we held a Q & A afterwards. At one point, of course somebody asks "well, how do the people in the movie feel about it?" and I just gestured to the front row where they were all seated.

Laura: Rob Dillard took the microphone, stood up, and said he felt very fairly treated, allowed to make his case without interference, and that his family had grown very fond of us.

Joe: In the end, the movie isn't about us or what we think – it's about the people of Kansas, who are often talked about but rarely heard from.

What do you make of the Tea Party movement?

Tom: Who would have thought the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression would reinvigorate the Right? Obama and liberals had a tremendous opportunity, but it wasn't long before conservatives seized the narrative.

Right after the big bank bailout, there was a lot of traditional populist outrage at Wall Street, but somehow Glenn Beck and the Tea Party movement managed to channel that outrage into something I call Market Populism. The idea is that free markets represent the will of the people, and government is an alien interloper. Only in a world where liberals, represented by the Obama administration, shovel enormous handouts to giant banks and corporations, could an upside-down worldview like Market Populism sound convincing to a large number of people.

The bottom line is, for any American who feels aggrieved at an unfair world, conservatives have answers, someone to blame, and you can hear them on AM radio and cable TV news, all day long. Liberals have nothing to match this.

What's next for the movie?

Laura: On January 25, 2011, the Special Edition DVD will appear in stores and on Netflix. It'll include commentary tracks and extended and deleted scenes which offer more background on the conservative movement, fascinating material we just couldn't fit into the feature.

Later in 2011, the movie will be available on iTunes, Netflix streaming, and other digital platforms. Cinetic Rights Management/Filmbuff is handling digital rights.

Finally, Documentary Educational Resources will be adding an educational version to their catalog, also debuting on January 25, 2011.

What's the Matter with Kansas?

Documentary Feature Film

Director JOE WINSTON

Since graduating from Yale in 1988, Joe has produced many independent films. From 1989-93, his cable access TV series ***This Week in Joe's Basement*** won two cable TV awards, national media attention, and a loyal late-night viewership. The show became so notorious that the ***Chicago Tribune*** assigned Joe to interview star Mike Myers about whether "Wayne's World" was stolen from "Joe's Basement."

In 1997, Winston's documentary, "The Burning Man Festival," won festival prizes in New York and San Francisco and aired on DRTV (Denmark) and Planete Multi-Thematiques (France.)

In 1999, Joe collaborated with the theater troupe The Sweat Girls to create ***The Motherlode***, a live performance accompanied by more than an hour's worth of video, which played at Lifeline Theater, Chicago Shakespeare Theater and the Working Women's Festival in San Francisco.

In 2002, Joe returned to Lifeline Theatre to create video for a world premiere stage production of Kurt Vonnegut's novel, ***Cat's Cradle***.

Also an Emmy-nominated editor of television documentaries, Joe lives and works in Chicago.

FILMOGRAPHY

2009	What's the Matter with Kansas? documentary feature film
2002	Cat's Cradle video for multi-media live performance at Lifeline Theatre, Chicago, IL based on the novel by Kurt Vonnegut
1999	Motherlode video for multi-media live performance at Lifeline Theatre, Chicago, IL
1998	Burning Man: Just Add Couches? Documentary film – 50 mins.
1996	The Burning Man Festival Documentary film – 40 mins.
1989-93	This Week in Joe's Basement cable television series, 60 episodes

DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Based on the best-selling book by Thomas Frank, ***What's the Matter with Kansas?*** explores whether the religious right will continue to drive working- and middle-class voters to the Republican Party, even as they are the most hurt by its policies.

We plunge into the heart of Middle America.

At the Kansas State Fair, Angel Dillard runs the most popular booth: Kansans For Life. To children, she hands out candy and colorful fetus images; to their parents, "Pro-Life" Voter Guides.

Angel lives on a farm, which represents her fresh start after a disastrous first marriage. "I must have had a hundred first dates," she recalls of her search for her current husband, Rob. She's a life-long Republican activist, and home-schools her two daughters, Katy and Reagan – the latter named in honor of Angel's favorite president.

Culture war politics baffle one self-described "red-neck farmer." Donn Teske is President of the Kansas Farmers Union, and a fourth-generation Kansas farmer.

"I'm a Populist without a party," he jokes, referring back to America's first great liberal reform movement, which caught fire in the Great Plains in the 1890s. He deplures inequality and greed, "because that's just not Christian, to my way of thinking."

Donn fears that his farm has little chance of continuing after he's gone, and worries more broadly about the future of the family farmer in an America which seems meaner and more unfair with each passing election. "We're becoming a nation of aristocrats with a peasant population," he seethes. "That's what my ancestors left Germany to get away from."

Brittany Barden is an eighteen-year old home-schooled evangelical Christian, and a tireless Republican campaigner. "America is a Christian nation," she insists, "and we need leaders who will bring us back to that foundation." In 2006, she's working hard to re-elect Phill Kline, Kansas' Attorney General, who's notorious for trying to shut down abortion clinics.

Brittany Barden is an earnest high-achiever, bright-eyed and eager to please. In a different context, we could easily imagine Brittany campaigning to save the whales or house the homeless.

Instead, she's on a crusade to repeal modern secular society, no matter what the consequences. Brittany never ventures outside the sphere of Fundamentalist Christianity, not for church, school, nor social activities. For a typical vacation, her family visits the brand-new Creation Museum, a lavish \$27 million shrine to Young-Earth Creationism.

Brittany and Angel both attend Terry Fox's Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita. Fox thunders from his pulpit denunciations of gay marriage, abortion and liberal politicians.

Angel's faith, however, runs deeper than Fox's rhetoric. Years ago, she had an unplanned, brain-damaged son by her abusive first husband, and attempted suicide. "I said, 'God, if you're out there, please do something,'" she recalls of the moment she decided to live on, and dedicate herself to a higher calling.

Family Values, Pro-Life – those are more than just slogans to Angel, she's deeply sincere in her vision of the America she wants to live in.

Author Thomas Frank returned to his native Kansas two decades after leaving for college, shocked by the meteoric rise of the state's Religious Right. But to him, the combative language of the preachers and the abortion protesters sounded like working-class anger against injustice – the same force that used to motivate liberals. And it reminded him of the anger of the Populists who held sway over Kansas over a hundred years ago.

Frank prowls cemeteries, monuments and archives of Kansas, searching for evidence of a secret leftist past – and he finds out that, among other achievements, his home state once published the country's largest Socialist Newspaper, the Appeal to Reason.

What could Democrats accomplish, Frank wonders, if they understood the power of populist rhetoric as well as the Republicans do?

In 2006, the winds of change blow through Kansas.

Tired of his political grandstanding, Terry Fox's church forces him to resign. He founds a new one in a not-yet-completed Wild West-themed amusement park.

The Dillardes and the Bardens follow Fox to his new church, which attracts hundreds from its first meeting. Both families also invest heavily in the theme park.

The park, "Wild West World," suddenly goes bankrupt, and the owner skips town. Stunned, Terry Fox moves his church meetings to a Best Western motel.

That November, many Republicans -- nationally and in Kansas – lose in the midterm elections. The ground seems to be shifting beneath their feet.

Fox's loyalists seem blindsided by these setbacks – but steadfast in their faith. "Sometimes God just has other plans for us," Angel sighs.

Donn Teske sees greater hope as he lobbies in Washington, D.C. Finally, Congress is listening to him. He reminds them that farmers care not just about crop prices, but global warming and the environment, and urges

prompt action.

Liberals and Democrats seem to be showing signs of life, but it's way too early to count out the Christian Right.

After losing her election battles, Brittany leaves Kansas to start her freshman year at Patrick Henry College, an elite private school for training home-schooled evangelical Christians in politics and sending them to Washington. Patrick Henry has such deep ties to the Republican Party that it has sent many interns to the White House – and the school is expanding.

“We may lose an election or two, but we’ll be back,” Terry Fox proclaims to his parishioners gathered at the Best Western. Then he passes the hat to raise funds for another new church building.

KEY PLAYERS

Director JOE WINSTON

Since graduating from Yale in 1988, Joe has produced many independent films. From 1989-93, his cable access TV series "This Week in Joe's Basement" won two cable TV awards, national media attention, and a loyal late-night viewership. The show became so notorious that the **Chicago Tribune** assigned Joe to interview star Mike Myers about whether "Wayne's World" was stolen from "Joe's Basement."

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Producer LAURA COHEN

Laura Cohen has been working in film and television for over ten years. Recently, she wrapped up production on the TV series "American Greed" for CNBC and "9/11's Deadly Dust" on A&E for Kurtis Productions. In 2005, she finished research for the PBS documentary "The Power of Choice: The Life and Ideas of Milton Friedman." She has also taught creative writing in Chicago Public Schools.

Author THOMAS FRANK

A native Kansan now living in Washington, D.C., Thomas Frank is the author of the book "What's the Matter with Kansas?" It spent 37 weeks on the New York Times Best-Seller list and catapulted Thomas to national fame. His previous books include "The Conquest of Cool" and "One Market Under God." His latest best-selling book is "The Wrecking Crew". A former columnist for the **Wall Street Journal**, Frank writes the monthly "Easy Chair" column for **Harper's**.

Director of Photography T.W. Li

Since 1985, T.W. Li has shot 13 feature films and numerous television shows, including the "Pilot Season" mini-series for NBC's Trio Network. His feature credits include "The Darien Gap" with director Brad Anderson and "The Bad Situationist" with Sam Seder ("Majority Report," Air America Radio.) He won a Telly Award in 1995 and is a two-time winner of the New England Film/Video Fellowship (1989 and 1994).

Production Credits

Directed by Joe Winston

Produced by Laura Cohen and Joe Winston
Director of Photography
T.W. Li

Based on the book "What's the Matter with Kansas?" by Thomas Frank

Additional Cinematography

Dana Kupper
Daniel Herman
Susana Travieso
Marc Menet

Edited by
Joe Winston
Alex MacKenzie

Location Sound
Doug Mara
John Mathie
John Versical
Robert Sullivan
Mike Capulli

Production Assistants

Katie Klocksinn
Adam Blaszkiewicz
Matt Wendeln
Neal Patel
Gina Kovacic
Charlie Thomason

Original Music
Eric Lambert
Earhole Studios

"Blacklisted"

Written and Performed by Neko Case
Published by Nedotykoma (ASCAP)
Courtesy Anti- and Mint Records

"Spirit of God"
by Angel Dillard
Arranged by Steve LaRue
Courtesy Angel Dillard

"When Satan Comes a Calling"
by Angel Dillard
Arranged by Steve LaRue
Courtesy Angel Dillard

Location Scouts
Tad Kepley
Daniel Margulies

Additional HD Post-Production
Punkvision
Televersions

Title Design
Aurum Design

Sound mix
Bryen Hensley
Resolution Digital Studios

Production Consultant
Kartemquin Films

Archival footage
KAKE-TV
BBC Worldwide Americas
Newspaper archives
Wichita Eagle

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS?

TALLGRASS FILMS PRESENTS A FILM BY LAURA COHEN AND JOE WINSTON

"WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS?"

BASED ON THE BOOK BY THOMAS FRANK DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY T.W. LI ORIGINAL MUSIC BY ERIC LAMBERT

EDITED BY JOE WINSTON ALEX MACKENZIE ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY BY DANA KUPPER DANIEL HERMAN AND MARC MENET

LOCATION SOUND BY DOUG MARA JOHN MATHIE JOHN VERSICAL AND MICHAEL CUPULLI

SOUND MIX BY BRYEN HENSLEY RESOLUTION DIGITAL STUDIOS TITLE DESIGN AURUM DESIGN PRODUCTION CONSULTANT KARTEMQUIN FILMS

PRODUCED BY LAURA COHEN AND JOE WINSTON DIRECTED BY JOE WINSTON

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