



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 rare and inspiring close-up on girls who are at an age that is usually quite impenetrable to adults"*  
**-TIME OUT NEW YORK**

*"In the spirit of documentary greats like Seven Up! and Hoop Dreams"*  
**-TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL**

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For more information and to download press materials, visit:

<http://www.goingon13.com/press>



## Critical Acclaim

“For most people, the teenage years stand out in sharp relief. What tends to be blurry are those years between childhood and becoming a teen. Four years in the life of an adult does not typically result in creating an entirely new person the way four adolescent years do...This film shares with viewers a rare look into the lives of girls.”

—**Joanne Tobias**  
**San Francisco Chronicle**

“Remarkable in its honesty and energy...an authentic experience of growing up as a modern California girl.”

—**Giovanna Chesler**  
**SILVERDOCS/AFI Discovery Channel Documentary Festival**

“It's heartbreaking to see that girls who are young enough to be my own children aren't facing, a generation later, a world any more accommodating to their needs as human beings as the one I grew up in. But it's also strangely stirring in a way, too. Not that I would wish a rocky adolescence on anyone, of course. It's just that, in a culture that values the stories of boys and men more than those of girls and women, here are the voices of girls and women in all their complicated and human glory.”

—**MaryAnn Johanson**  
**The Flick Filosopher blog**

“*Going on 13*'s intimate portrait of four girls passing through puberty makes for instant dynamism, but the directors truly impress through their evidently close relationships with the girls. *13* touches more often and more deeply than these other two films [*American Teen* & *Hard Times at Douglas High*] so if it stops short of offering a Grand Statement about The Way Kids Live Now, that seems okay—as a portrait of the inner lives of teen girls in a single community, its most complete.”

—**Karina Longworth,**  
**Spout.com**

“This film provides 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. I wish it had been there for me!”

—**Karra Bikson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,**  
**NYU's Silver School of Social Work**

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

—**Julie Metzger**  
**Nurse Consultant at Seattle Children's Hospital**

“*Going on 13* brings the need for youth programs and positive female role models into sharp relief.

—**Lindsay E. White, Eureka! Internship Coordinator,**  
**Girls Inc. of Alameda County**





## 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 – toward an uncertain future. This is puberty and for each of these girls of color, it's a whirlwind of change and new choices. Without flinching, **GOING ON 13** enters their world as they negotiate the precarious moments 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 may have to repeat 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.”

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, their difficulties learning how to love themselves, and the escalating tug-of-war between who they want to become and who their parents think they should be. We hear the girls talk about themselves. They take us into their world, with the music, television, digital media and books they adoringly ingest – and that rarely reflect their own families’ economic or cultural backgrounds – providing texture, context, and contrast for the social and emotional challenges they face.

**ARIANA** starts out as a fighter, a tomboy 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. Ariana dreams of becoming a strong, independent person with a career that suits her gifts.

**ESMERALDA** 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 the first to date a boy. More and more, her attention becomes focused on boys – and on how to get them to pay attention to her.

**ISHA**’s fifth grade look includes glasses and a reserved demeanor. People stream through her parents’ new liquor store in the gritty hotel district of San Francisco as Isha stocks cigarettes



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and prices snack food. At home, Isha makes tea for guests, attends to the family's Hindu shrine and, like many other girls her age, idolizes the "girl 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. And while she is at home singing songs and playing games on the rural farm where her cousins live, the crowded, frenetic playground of her school is foreign, and foreboding.

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 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, which begins to take a toll on Rosie. Rosie hides behind the music in her CD player and books of poetry, she dreams of becoming... something, someone, someday. But what? Who? When?

**GOING ON 13** shows us a reality far more complex than what we are used to seeing in the media about pre-teen girls and urban girls of color. Without simplifying or sensationalizing their lives, we come to see these four girls as multi-faceted and gripping individuals. Through the everyday drama of their changing lives, Isha, Rosie, Esme and Ariana remind us that it is the small moments of insight that usher us down the rough road from childhood to adulthood.



# GOING ON 13

## 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.

[www.goingon13.com](http://www.goingon13.com)



## 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**, believes that feminism is a dirty word and she loves dirty words. She works with children, youth and families in a variety of settings and raises resources for community programs, media and the arts. She has created public art and media with youth, developed programs, and trained thousands of people in cultural competency, leadership and youth development. After twenty years of community service she sees the wisdom of producing media for social justice.

**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.

## **Awards, Festivals and Screenings**

### **Awards:**

- Best Documentary, LA Femme 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
- San Francisco International Documentary Festival, USA
- South Asian International Film Festival, USA
- San Joaquin International Children's Film Festival, USA

### **Community Screenings:**

- Julia Morgan School for Girls, 7th Grade class, Oakland, CA, 2009
- Benefit for Youth Together, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA 2009
- "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





## 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

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

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