

A Renaissance in Media

People of faith are telling their stories in a media-driven culture.

During the last year, we've read about numerous scandals involving Christians in media. Several televangelists who divorced their spouses in 2007 continue to preach in the pulpit and on TV today. And like the scandals of the 1980s, reports of financial, sexual and personal impropriety continue to make headlines.

Although we all hope these pastors and ministry leaders find correction, accountability and eventual healing, our job as believers isn't to focus on the lurid; it's to look ahead to the great possibilities for evangelism and media.

How can people of faith tell their story in a media-driven culture? Let me give you a few examples of Christians who are changing the culture with good filmmaking and the use of other media.

Jim Hanon's *Miss HIV* is a powerful documentary filmed in Africa by an exceptional filmmaker. I saw the debut of the movie at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood, and I highly recommend it to Christians interested in confronting the HIV/AIDS crisis in the world.

The movie takes a tough look at a difficult topic and uses scenes from an African beauty pageant to help remove the stigma imposed on women infected with the disease. Hanon, of Ethnographic Media, directed *The End of the Spear* and *Beyond the Gates of Splendor*. Check out the Web site and movie at [http://www.ethnographicmedia.com/](#).

Filmmaker Joshua Sikora, creator of the fascinating Web site , was only a few years out of Biola University when he had a remarkable revelation that he wanted to be a “Hollywood director.” When he realized it would take at least 10 years to achieve his dream and that in a decade Hollywood might not exist as it is today, he created New Renaissance Pictures, a Web entertainment company designed to reach the digital generation.

Continuing episodes on the site aren’t uniquely Christian, but Sikora’s worldview permeates everything he does, from campy comedy and drama to suspense. His efforts are so successful that was selected to be an entertainment partner with YouTube.

Last month a powerful movie called Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed opened by television personality Ben Stein, the movie exposes the extreme bias advocates of evolution have against Intelligent Design. Brilliantly produced, the film is about freedom of speech, and the broader implications of Darwinism. I would encourage anyone to purchase blocks of tickets to take churches and civic groups to see this film.

Another quality project now available on DVD is The Better Hour by PBS Home Video. It’s a feature-length documentary that details the life and work of William Wilberforce. An 18th century British Parliamentarian, Wilberforce spent 20 years of his life working to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire. That act is described as one of the few virtuous moments in the world because it literally changed the consciousness of a country that sanctioned slavery.

Wilberforce’s story is a brilliant example of how one person, motivated by the ideals of faith, can change the course of history.

The book *Creating the Better Hour: Lessons From William Wilberforce*, with a foreword by Rick Warren, is available at [.](#)

Scandals may rock Christian media organizations and televangelists, but we need to be reminded of a new generation of creative men and women who are committed to their faith. Let's start celebrating these and others, and begin praying for a renaissance in Christian media.

Phil Cooke, Ph.D., is a filmmaker and media strategist for churches and ministries worldwide. He is the author of *Branding Faith: Why Some Churches and Non-Profits Impact the Culture and Others Don't* (Regal Books). For more information about the book log on at [.](#)