



## ***The Lentil Underground 360: A VR Journey for the Organically Curious***

A New Media Project by Charles Dye and Jaime Jacobsen

LU360 is a new media project by award winning filmmakers Charles Dye and Jaime Jacobsen. Based on Liz Carlisle's book, *Lentil Underground*, this project will be similar to, but more topically-focused than the New York Times' The Daily 360. Viewable via a smartphone app, as well as housed in a new section of MontanaPBS' website, LU360 will be a uniquely immersive and participatory web experience that will allow viewers to better interact with the ideas, people, landscapes and foods featured in this award-winning work, encouraging dialogue across Montana's sometimes polarized agro-economic aisle.



With the full cooperation of Liz Carlisle and all of book's central 'characters' and advisors—David Oien, Bruce Maxwell, the Cowgill and O'Halloran Families, Casey Bailey, "Tuna" McAlpine, Doug and Anna Crabtree-Jones and others—this project will feature immersive 'scenes,' as experienced in Front Line's "Go Inside South Sudan's Hunger Crisis" that will bring to viewers' screens some of the book's more compelling chapters, in an interactive format developed by GoJourni, a Virginia Tech-based 360 story developer.

Winner of the 2015 Montana Book Award, and the Fall 2017 'Griz Read'—the common book for incoming freshman at the University of Montana—*Lentil Underground* tells the remarkable story of an unheralded group of Montana farmers who launched a uniquely sustainable food movement. Liz's personally compelling and largely historical narrative is well-suited for traditional 'flat' public television in many ways, but we feel a new media, 360-degree adaptation of the story will better match the innovative, visionary thinking celebrated throughout the book.



Called by some an 'empathy machine,' 360-video requires a viewer to interact with a 'scene' to fully experience it. It's a new audio-visual medium delivered via computers, tablets and mobile devices, where—most simply—a viewer clicks and scrolls across a captured clip to 'look' in any direction, even up and down. Unlike the New York Times' Daily 360, and with the help of GoJourni, the LU360 will be a layered, interactive project, with 'hotspots' built into its scenes, that viewers can 'jump through' to access deeper layers of information. Some of these will feature 360-degree animations, created specifically for this project, that will help a viewer explore key humanities themes, such as the history of the Golden Triangle, and how community was—and remains—central to any agricultural revolution.



There will also be layers of 'traditional' (flat) documentary footage, featuring interviews with those who walk Montana's agro-economic divide, including researchers such as Bruce Maxwell (Montana State University professor and new head of the Institute on Ecosystems), as well as the farmers who are still



experimenting with new frontiers in agriculture and community building. The project will also feature conversations with humanities scholars discussing creativity and innovation in rural Montana, enabling viewers to explore how communities continue to navigate shifting agricultural policies, inventions, opportunities and a changing climate. Other layers will present archival photographic montages, and historical and current vérité-coverage of life in Montana's Golden Triangle. Our end goal is not just to entertain and inform current PBS audiences in a new way, it's to bring to MontanaPBS new, younger viewers enticed by the greater interaction a 360-video approach allows.

We believe this project is important given the ever increasing polarization of our society, not only politically but also agriculturally. "Conventional" or "organic" are considered exclusive of one another, with faults found on the 'other' side. Central to this project is the idea of conversation and dialogue. It will be in working together, and in fostering dialogue with the next generation of farmers, leaders and engaged citizens, that we discover the ways Montana agriculture will take us all into the future.



#### *About the Production Team*

MontanaPBS will work with the Emmy Award-winning documentary team who created *Indian Relay* (Independent Lens, 2014) on this new media project, LU360. Filmmakers Charles Dye and Jaime Jacobsen, whom most recently collaborated on another Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary, *Finding Traction* (Netflix, 2016), will jointly serve as the project's Producers/Directors. Both Dye and Jacobsen possess over a decade of experience producing films for public television, with an emphasis on bringing Montana stories to the screen. Dye is currently an Assistant Professor of Cinema Production at Virginia Tech, and Jacobsen teaches media and communications courses as a Faculty Fellow in the Honors College at Montana State University.



Aaron Pruitt will serve as the project's Executive Producer. Pruitt is the Associate General Manager and Director of Content at MontanaPBS, and possesses over 20 years of public broadcasting experience.

Daniel Schmidt, who served as the double Emmy Award-winning DP on *Indian Relay*, as well as on *Finding Traction* (Best Topical Documentary) will serve as project's Director of Photography.

Mary Stein, who is the Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Systems Program Leader at Montana State University, will serve as the project's Humanities Scholar. Stein has over 25 years of experience working in the fields of human nutrition and food systems in Montana and across the United States. Stein has a B.S. in Biology from Tufts University and a M.S. in Human Nutrition Science from Colorado State University.

