

Vanessa McNeal is an award winning documentary filmmaker, national speaker, and 2x TEDx speaker. She travels and speaks nationally on how to confront adversity with grace using her personal story as a vehicle to inspire and empower others.

At an early age, Vanessa experienced sexual abuse and neglect, ultimately resulting in educational challenges and a month in the foster care system. At age 15, Vanessa was sexually assaulted at a college preparatory program and overcame the many faces of rape culture. Her life experiences have fueled her passion to educate on the topic of social injustice and make a difference in the life of those she interacts with.

In 2017, Vanessa founded her media company McNeal Media, with the goal of creating social change through the art of storytelling. She is the Director of the internationally recognized documentary, "The Voiceless". The film features the stories of male survivors of sexual violence. She won "Best Director" for the documentary at the Newark International Film Festival. At Indiefest she received Women Filmmaker Award of Recognition. Vanessa won the 2017 YWCA "Woman of Tomorrow" award and won the 2018 STATEment maker award in the entrepreneurial spirit category. She has also been featured in numerous publications, articles, and news broadcasts.

Vanessa was the first in her family to graduate high school and went on to pursue her Bachelor's degree at Iowa State University. She received her Master's degree in Social Work (MSW) at the University of Northern Iowa.

She most recently Directed "[Gridshock](#)", a documentary focused on the sex trafficking demand. The film was made possible after Vanessa raised \$45,000 in an all or nothing fundraising campaign.

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