

# MSNBC Films Announces ‘Model America’ Documentary Series

By BreAnna Bell ▾



Listen to this article now

Powered by Trinity Audio

00:0002:59

10

10

1.0x

MSNBC Films unveiled its upcoming series “Model America” on Tuesday.

According to the program’s log-line, the four-part documentary “dissects America’s complicated relationship with race through the lens of the people of Teaneck, New Jersey, a ‘racial utopia’ turned unlikely ground zero for the modern Black Lives Matter Movement.”

“Model America” details the fallout events that took place after 16-year-old Phillip Pannell was fatally shot by Gary Spath, a White police officer, on April 10, 1990. As the tragic death shakes up the city, rumors and misinformation begins to spread begging those in Teaneck to question if the city is really a home without racial tensions.

While the city questions whether Pannell was surrendering or attempting to pull out a gun when Spath fired his weapon, Civil Rights leaders descend upon the city during the investigation and trial — adding fuel to an already building fire.

30 years later the Teaneck community still struggles with how to move forward. After the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, a new lens is being offered through which to view Phillip’s case.

Coming from NBC News Studios, the documentary features interviews with Phillip Pannell’s family, Civil Rights Activist Al Sharpton, Senator Loretta Weinberg (Former New Jersey State Senator), Mike Kelly (author, of Color Lines and an award-winning columnist for The (Bergen) Record of New Jersey), and members of the Teaneck, NJ community including former police officers and the former Mayor of Teaneck, NJ.

“We were immediately drawn to this powerful story and felt it was important to bring to a wide audience. Working with our partners to delve into the case has been fascinating as we’ve reflected on the ways in which our country is still grappling with so many of the same complex issues today,” said Elizabeth Fischer, NBC News Studios executive producer, in a statement.

“Before Ferguson, Baltimore and countless other cities plagued by racial injustice and police shootings, there was Teaneck. Model America tells the painful story of a fatal encounter that shocked a nation and transformed Teaneck into a symbol of racial strife. Three decades later, we’re still seeing the same narrative play out again and again across the country. As the first documentary series at MSNBC, this story ties our past to our present, reminding us of how far we still have to go,” added MSNBC president, Rashida Jones.

“Model America” is also produced by Anchor Entertainment and Psycho Films. Directed By Michelle Major and Dani Goffstein, Noah Oppenheim, Liz Cole, Elizabeth Fischer, Andy Berg, Ethan Goldman, Keayr Braxton, Tyger Williams, Sam Canter, Eric Cook, Joe Weil, Dani Goffstein, Rashida Jones and Amanda Spain serve as executive producers.

The series will debut Sunday, September 18th at 10 p.m. ET/PT on MSNBC.

View the trailer below.



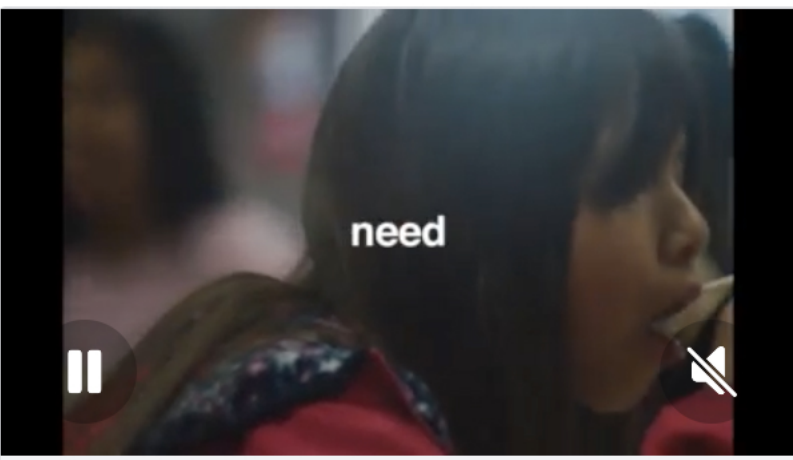
Read More About:  
Model America, MSNBC Films

COMMENTS

## MOST POPULAR



ADVERTISEMENT



### Food is The Most Important School Supply



This back-to-school season, you can help kids get their most important school supply: food. It's as easy as dining and shopping with your favorite brands. Visit [www.NoKidHungry.org/brandsthatgive](http://www.NoKidHungry.org/brandsthatgive).

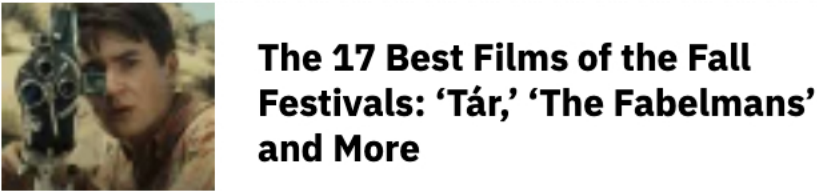
LEARN MORE >

## Must Read



AWARDS

### Ana de Armas' 'Blonde' Ambition: How She Channeled Marilyn Monroe's Body and Soul for Netflix's NC-17 Gamble



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?



How much do you like Adam Driver as an actor?

- I love him
- I like him
- He's just OK
- I don't like him
- No opinion / Other

\* By clicking "NEXT" you agree to the following: We use cookies to collect your survey answers. If you would like to continue with this survey, please read and agree to the [CivicScience Privacy Policy and Terms of Service](#)

NEXT \*

### Sign Up for Variety Newsletters

Enter your email address

SIGN UP →