



Subject:



Statement from the Orkin/Engel Film and Photo Archive

Date:

Wednesday, March 24, 2010 3:35:52 PM

Dear Victoria Espinel and President Obama,

The ASMP and the Copyright Alliance have informed me of this welcome invitation from the Obama Administration to share my thoughts with you on my rights as a creator.

I am an award-winning documentary filmmaker and photo archivist. My film "Ruth Orkin: Frames of Life" premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 1996, and my recent film "Morris Engel: The Independent" premiered on Turner Classic Movies last year.

I also inherited both my parent's archives, who were Ruth Orkin (1921-1985) and Morris Engel (1918-2005), award winning photographers and filmmakers. It is very important for me to protect their intellectual property as it is essential to maintaining and promoting their photographs and films. My mother's classic iconic photograph, "American Girl in Italy" (1951) is a photograph known throughout the world. However, it is continually infringed, and I have to spend a lot of time and money for attorneys to protect the photograph. It was registered and also renewed, but it is always a struggle to monitor the illegal usage of it. I hope in the future the copyright laws are enforced in a stronger more efficient way, so people will not think they can get away with continually using it without permission.

My parent's made an award-winning film in 1953 called "Little Fugitive" as well as other films, and their films are registered and protected by US copyright. Yet, in the digital age, it is easier to appropriate a segment of a film, or a still photograph, and this needs to be protected better. This isn't right, and shouldn't be so acceptable for people to do so. The government needs to show the artistic community that if you have a copyrighted work, it will be protected!

I am also the founder of a group of privately held family photography archives, called APAG American Photography Archives Group, www.apag.us. We always discuss intellectual property rights and copyright in the group, and I hope that in the future it is a topic that will be enforced differently and will reflect this ever-changing digital age.

I hope this is helpful, and please call on me if there is any way I can be of help in the future.

Sincerely,

Mary Engel
Director
Orkin/Engel Film and Photo Archive
NYC