

I'm southern. I've tried to deny it in the past, tried to cover the hints of my accent, and flat out denied my Dixie blood. But, there's no getting around it; I have an extreme yearning for events bygone, longing for times I have never experienced. I grew up in Louisiana surrounded by the Southern decay that I am so attracted to today. I was subjected to the macabre history of the South, which I've carried on in my work as a filmmaker by portraying the grotesque and romanticizing stories of the past.

I was born in Nashville and raised in Shreveport, Louisiana, but for the past 13 years, I have roamed from Collegetown USA to the Capital of the Midwest and as far away as Scandinavia. I've seen the beauty of the northern lights and the flatness of the American Plains. In all of these places, I became captivated by local history and indigenous traditions. I assume this obsession is due to the fact that my childhood was riddled with tragedies that I had to overcome. The biggest of the tragedies I had to deal with was my father being murdered when I was 15. This event made me have to grow up instantly, and by the time I was able to leave the town that in which he was killed, I decided to move far, far away. I searched out a new home and focused my curiosity on that of histories before my father's untimely death. Losing my father as a teenager, I gained an interest in the eras in which he lived - this eventually led to my interest in the local histories of the places that I have lived.

So, after much moving around, I finally settled down and obtained my Bachelor of Fine Arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. During my undergraduate studies, I became increasingly aware of my little dilemma of losing myself in the past of others while denying the demons of my own. I had become so engrossed in the past that I wouldn't deal with the present. So, I peeled back those layers and focused on my own past by creating *Veracity: We All Shine On*, a hybrid experimental documentary that deals with my own personal history and the history of my father.

*Veracity: We All Shine On* was also developed to critique the media and how they treat murder victims and their families, with its constant reporting and questionable ethics. I struggled at first trying to decide how to process this information into a film, eventually settling on the idea of retelling the story by using the device of a television investigative news program with myself as the reporter. This way, I was able to become the author of my family's story, while exposing the insensitivities and carelessness of the

media. Within the film, we also get glimpses of my father as I tell the stories of events that touched me deeply as a kid. The film is a critique, an homage, an exploration, a catharsis, a portrait and a very human story. My story - reclaimed.

After creating *Veracity*, I realized that my interest in storytelling and filmmaking is to find unrepresented and underappreciated stories that need to be told. Within my filmmaking, I am able to lovingly take care of these lost histories and reclaim them for new audiences to experience. As a director, the ability to transfer the endearing nature of the core of a person, a time, a place allows me to give what is due to missing history – finding the lost stories of interactions between people; creating visceral histories that can function like an archive or memorial for the viewer. I see that as being my own particular philosophy of directing, to have the responsibility of effectively passing on these stories in the medium of film—similar to the history of oral storytelling – because what we present (fiction or real-life adaptation) is something that can be passed down and re-told or re-screened for generations.

The first films I created were in art school and were 16mm experimental works, including an abundance of optically-printed and conceptual work. This is where my strengths lie – visually and conceptually – due to my background as an artist. My other experiences involve editing documentary work – credits include award-winning director Ruth Leitman’s new feature-length documentary on immigration reform, *Tony and Janina’s American Wedding*, and editing the making-of featurette for Michael Keaton’s directorial debut, *The Merry Gentleman*.

I am very fond of editing, but my own professional objective is to become a director of feature films as well as create community-based, accessible media and programming. In high school and college, I was part of student leadership, and I consider that to be the reason why I can communicate well with large groups and work with all kinds of people. I think my experience in editing, my time in art school, and my leadership roles all help me enormously as a director and storyteller. Having also spent time creating and curating a film festival for my alma mater and participating in film conferences have made me appreciate the art of filmmaking much more. My own directing influences include Terrence Malick, David Gordon Green, James Marsh, and John Sayles.

Ultimately, my dreams are to make films that would be filmed on location and use as much of locale's community as possible. The films I want to make don't just recount the past, but they engage with the stories of the people that have helped produce the film and those of the community the film is shot in. The process of making the film and the audience of the film will forge a collective identity out of the experience of the film - The subject of the film, the producers of the film, and the people that view the film all become part of the inclusive process and identity of the film. They are unique investigations of time and not just surfaces of an era. I want to go deeper than creating "period" dramas, but be able to tap into universal ideas and emotions. I want to be able to effect more than an audience not by just making films, but I'd also like to create traveling film festivals, and make filmmaking more accessible to people that normally would not be exposed to it.