

ROMEOLS



IS BLEEDING

A Documentary Film

RomeolsBleedingFilm.com

“DAMN WE LOSING”

WHERE I'M FROM BULLETS FLY FROM
BLACK HANDS TO BE LODGED IN THE HEAD
OF A BLACK MAN.



SYNOPSIS

From Executive Producer Russell Simmons and Director Jason Zeldes, comes an award-winning documentary following Donté Clark, a young poet transcending the violence in his hometown by writing about his experiences. Growing up in Richmond, CA, a city haunted by a fatal turf war, Donté and the like-minded youth of the city mount an urban adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with the hope of starting a dialogue about violence in the city. Will Richmond crush Donté's idealism? Or will Donté end Richmond's cycle of trauma?

BACKGROUND

Donté Clark's poetry captures the violence and heartbreak that haunt certain neighborhoods of Richmond, CA. The turf war between North and Central Richmond has raged for decades, with each generation having their own folkloric stories of how the war began. Donté was born in the heart of North Richmond, but found self-empowerment by writing about his experiences there. Now as a young man, Donté offers that same opportunity to Richmond's youth, through an arts organization called RAW Talent.

"Romeo is Bleeding" is structured around one year in the RAW Talent classroom, as Donté leads a cast of high school students in an effort to mount an urban adaptation of "Romeo and Juliet". As Montague vs. Capulet transforms into North vs. Central, the students of RAW Talent delve deeper into the socio-economic issues that drive the violence in their city. As the play comes together on the stage, real life begins to parallel the Shakespearean tragedy. Pushed to his limits, Donté must decide if he is capable of being the leader that Richmond's youth wants and needs him to be.

The film is set in Richmond, CA, but it captures the complexities of systematic injustices which play out in inner cities across the country. As the nation wrestles with proper policing methods and curbing the gun violence epidemic, Donté reminds us that a major piece of the puzzle is the arts, and creating safe spaces for healthy expression in every community.

“WHAT
HAPPENED TO OUR

PRIDE?”



STYLE

“Romeo is Bleeding” strives for visual poetry worthy of RAW Talent’s work. Our vérité footage offers an unfettered view on the current state of inner city US from the perspective of our characters. These perspectives range from students to city-employees, from ex-convicts to police officers. As the content of the footage turns dark, we’re able to cut to poetry performances, allowing us to hear our characters’ most personal thoughts in response to their environment. When the poetry calls on history, we cut to archival footage, allowing us to juxtapose past and present Richmond, identifying key factors behind the city’s postwar decline. The film quickly falls into a cycle, where real life informs poetry, which informs history, which informs real life. We establish a positive feedback loop, where these different elements blend seamlessly together to create an emotional, experiential, artistic, and informative tapestry of an American post-industrial city.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Poverty takes on different forms depending on the landscape, but the narratives are the same. I've seen it first hand while living in Detroit, Chicago, and now the East Bay, and I recognize that Richmond, CA is a microcosm for the injustices seen in African American communities nation wide. The African American narrative is generational, rooted in a culture bred on plantations, which has been evolving with the times ever since, but always achieving the same effect: the marginalization of black men. Originally this was accomplished through slavery, then segregation and Jim Crow, now the prison system, but black men are always labeled as "other" or worse – criminal – and abandoned as society's outcasts.

And then there are leaders like Donté, who derive pride from this history of oppression but refuse to be labeled by it. I am drawn to Donté because within him I see this convergence of a dark past and an optimistic future, battling for dominance in his heart and mind. I see an eternal conflict, a brilliant man who is both inspired and confined by his environment. He writes about this conflict in his poem titled "Find Me Guilty":

“ I DON'T KNOW WHO I'M SUPPOSED TO BE, SEE?
I'M LIKE HALF KINGDOM - HALF SLAVE!
HAVE SOME PRIDE, NO! HAVE SHAME!
I'M HALF ALIVE AND HALF GRAVE,
I BATTLE WITH LIFE AND DEATH EVERYDAY. ”

I'm recently realizing that "Romeo is Bleeding" is about this convergence, which happens within everyone as they form their identity. Will you let your constraints define you, or will you redefine them? It's a universal question, but when it plays out in poverty stricken communities, the stakes are high and the results are often tragic. For all the talent that lives in Richmond, or inner cities anywhere in America for that matter, there are so few outlets, forcing many youth to surrender to the constraints of their environment, depriving the world of their beauty while the ugliness remains.

Using the arts to heal communities isn't a new idea, but in practice it is still shockingly rare, and communities like Richmond sorely need outlets like RAW Talent. It's my hope that "Romeo is Bleeding" can multiply the local and regional effect that Donté had with "Té's Harmony", and ultimately extend Donté's influence as wide as the film can take it. Just as Donté inspired me to make a film I hope my film will inspire people everywhere to create beauty where they recognize the need, so that future generations can inherit a cultural fabric made of poetry and empowerment, rather than hatred and despair.

– Jason Zeldes





JASON ZELDES // DIRECTOR



Jason is a documentary director and editor, best known for editing the 2013 Academy Award® winning film, “Twenty Feet From Stardom”. The film earned Zeldes an ACE Award for best edited documentary feature, and led to more editing credits, including “Racing Extinction”, “The Music of Strangers”, “Out of State” and the Netflix Series “Chelsea Does”. Jason also edited the recently released Netflix series “Abstract: The Art of Design”. “Romeo is Bleeding” is Jason’s directorial debut. He is currently directing and editing on an upcoming Netflix documentary series.

MICHAEL KLEIN // PRODUCER



Michæl is a documentary, narrative, and commercial producer. He received a BA in Cinema-Television Production from the University of Southern California. Michæl produced the short film “The Deal” written and directed by Daniel Kaminsky and executive produced by Joss Whedon, the short film “Dog Food” which premiered at the 2014 SXSW film festival, directed by Brian Crano, starring Amanda Seyfried, Cory Michæl Smith, and David Craig. He also executive produced Crano’s most recent feature film “Permission” starring Rebecca Hall and Dan Stevens. Michæl has produced and directed commercials for clients such as AT&T, American Express, Apple, and Viacom.

RUSSELL SIMMONS // EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



Entrepreneur, author, activist and philanthropist Russell Simmons has launched scores of groundbreaking careers and innovative enterprises in arenas as varied as music, film, television, fashion, comedy, poetry, digital platforms, theater and finance. His lifelong mission has been giving a voice to extraordinary talent and empowering underserved communities as they in turn shape the mainstream of culture. A longtime champion of social justice and equality, one of his many charitable endeavors include Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation, which gives young people opportunities to create and appreciate art.

KEVIN KLAUBER, A.C.E. // CO-EDITOR

Kevin Klauber has edited documentaries such as the 2013 Academy Award® winning documentary “Twenty Feet From Stardom”, Cameron Crowe’s “Pearl Jam Twenty”, and the HBO Rolling Stone’s documentary “Crossfire Hurricane”. He won the 2014 ACE Award for Best Editing in a Documentary Feature and in 2012 was nominated by the WGA EAST for the feature documentary he co-wrote and co-edited “Beauty Is Embarrassing”. Kevin has also been nominated twice for the Golden Reel Award in sound editing by the MPSE.



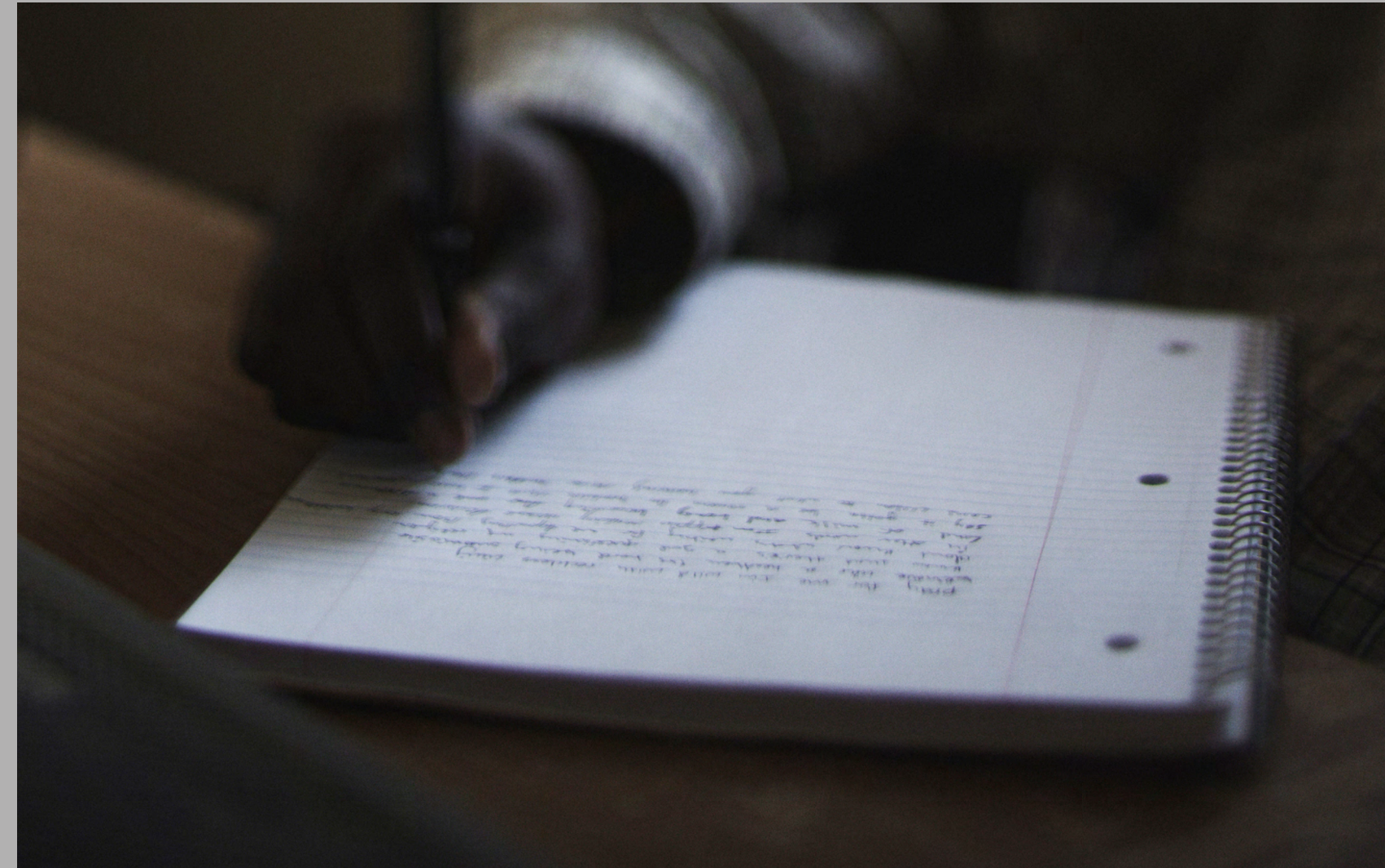
RAJIV SMITH-MAHABIR // CINEMATOGRAPHER

Rajiv Smith-Mahabir (or Jeeves as he’s commonly known), is a cinematographer/ editor who has worked in the narrative, documentary, and commercial worlds after graduating from USC’s School of Cinematic Arts in 2007. He has shot and edited videos for top brand clients such as Nike, Clorox, Hyatt, VEVO, and the San Francisco Board of Tourism, to name a few. Coming from an editing background, he is extremely familiar with the necessary framework of storytelling, and knows exactly where to place the camera in order to capture the action in the best way possible. He is currently editing the feature documentary “Blindspot: Illusions of Justice”. Originally from the Bay Area, Jeeves was thrilled to return to his home town to work on “Romeo is Bleeding”.



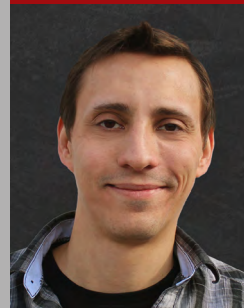
KATEY ZOUCK // ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Katey Zouck graduated from the University of Southern California with a double major, earning a B.A. in both Theatre and History. While at USC, she worked as a producer and host of Trojan Vision’s debate show “Platforum”. She also co-produced a short documentary following war reenactors. Since graduation, Katey has worked on the production side of independent feature “Much Ado About Nothing”, and BBC America’s “Richard Hammond’s Crash Course”. She also produced the independent short film “How To Be The Life Of A Cocktail Party”, winner of the Award of Excellence in the Short Film Competition at the Canadian International Film Festival.





MICHAEL SEIFERT // COMPOSER



Michael Seifert is a multi-platinum award winning producer, recording/mixing engineer, arranger, and composer. A self-taught multi-instrumentalist (drums, bass, guitar, keyboards and vocals), Seifert has worked with such artists as Tori Amos, Fountains of Wayne, Regina Spektor, Lifehouse, Colbie Caillat, Gerald Levert, Bone Thugs-n-Harmony, Neil Zaza, Too Short, Eightball, Pimp C (UGK), blues legend Robert Lockwood Jr., critically acclaimed Jazz man Ernie Krivda, Grammy Award winner Snarky Puppy, and many others. Michael has also scored independent films and major motion pictures such as the feature length documentary "Running America" as well as multiple projects for legendary filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola. He's also composed, recorded, and produced music for Fox, CBS, MTV, and Sports Illustrated among others.

JAKE FADER // COMPOSER



Jake Fader is a composer and music producer whose work has been featured in films and ADDY Award winning commercials. He has recently provided music for projects as diverse as the 2014 SXSW Film Festival and a commercial for an NFL team. As an award winning guitarist, Jake has been onstage in over 10 countries and has appeared live on the BBC, NPR and several other foreign and domestic broadcast stations. Formal training at Cleveland State University as well as private composition studies inspired Jake's interest in creating music for film. Both his personal and professional passion, Jake continues to produce, write and record music every day.

PETE HORNER // SOUND DESIGNER



Pete Horner is a sound designer and re-recording mixer. With a background in music, he began his career in post-production sound working at American Zoetrope. He now works at Skywalker Sound. He has worked on such films as "Apocalypse Now Redux", "Best of Enemies", "Rich Hill", "Hellion", the upcoming "Jurassic World" and the Academy Award® winning documentary "Twenty Feet From Stardom" and many more. He won the 2012 Emmy for Best Sound Editing on a Miniseries for "Hemingway and Gellhorn".

KEY CREDITS

DIRECTED BY
JASON ZELDES

PRODUCED BY
MICHAEL KLEIN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
RUSSELL SIMMONS
SANJAY SHARMA
CHRIS CONTI

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
KATEY ZOUCK

EDITED BY
KEVIN KLAUBER, A.C.E.
& JASON ZELDES

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY
RAJIV SMITH-MAHABIR

ORIGINAL SCORE BY
MICHAEL SEIFERT
& JAKE FADER

SOUND DESIGN BY
PETE HORNER

FEATURING

DONTÉ CLARK
D'NEISE ROBINSON
MOLLY RAYNOR
DEANDRE EVANS

TECHNICAL SPECS

RUNTIME: 93 MINS.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COLOR: COLOR

ASPECT RATIO: 1.85

SHOOTING FORMAT: HD

CAMERA(S): CANON 5D & RED EPIC

SOUND: 5.1 & STEREO LTRT

EXHIBITION FORMATS: DCP, HDCAM, BLU RAY (24FPS)

CONTACT DETAILS

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