



ALWAYS IN SEASON

Directed by Jacqueline Olive

Produced by Jacqueline Olive and Jessica Devaney

89 mins. | USA | 2019

www.alwaysinseasonfilm.com



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LOGLINE

When 17-year-old Lennon Lacy is found hanging from a swingset in rural North Carolina in 2014, his mother's search for justice and reconciliation begins while the trauma of more than a century of lynching African Americans bleeds into the present.

SYNOPSIS

In the small town of Bladenboro, NC, seventeen-year-old Lennon Lacy, was found hanging from a swing set on August 29, 2014. Despite inconsistencies in the evidence, local officials quickly ruled Lennon's death a suicide, but his mother, Claudia, believes Lennon was lynched.

Directed, produced, and written by Jacqueline Olive, *ALWAYS IN SEASON* explores the lingering impact of more than a century of lynching nearly 5,000 African Americans and connects this form of racial terrorism with racial violence today. At the height of their popularity, lynchings attracted tens of thousands of white men, women, and children spectators. They were public events, complete with souvenirs and photographs. Train seats were even specially reserved for out-of-towners to watch. Victims were tortured, mutilated, and photographed for hours. Lynching was like the sport of hunting, and black people were "always in season."

ALWAYS IN SEASON follows Claudia Lacy as she moves from paralyzing grief to leading the fight for justice for her son. As the film unfolds, Lennon's case, and the suspicions surrounding it, intersect with stories of other communities committed to breaking the silence of their own recent histories and leading the way to justice.

A few hundred miles from Bladenboro, in Monroe, Georgia, a diverse group of residents, including the daughter of a former Ku Klux Klan leader, annually reenact a 1946 quadruple lynching to make sure that the victims are never forgotten. The reenactors also believe some of the perpetrators may still be living in the area. *ALWAYS IN SEASON* asks what will it take for Americans to build a national movement for racial justice and reconciliation?

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

Fundamentally Southern, I grew up in Mississippi. My family was one of the first to integrate our neighborhood. I had good relationships with most of my neighbors, classmates, and teachers, and because I had positive experiences, as well as ugly racist encounters, I was struck early on by the lack of cross-racial conversations about structural racism and hatred -- even in friendly circles when we were all navigating institutions daily, like housing, finance, and education, that were historically designed to maintain white supremacy, and while improved, still remain inequitable. The people spotlighted in *ALWAYS IN SEASON*, who are confronting this history in order to find justice and healing in the communities where lynchings happened, inspired me as I filmed for seven years.

Moving through production, discovering increasingly more about the fallout of generations of racial terrorism that hundreds of communities are still facing, I was also raising my son, watching him grow from a boy who was mostly considered adorable into a young black man who could now be perceived as a threat. So, our ongoing conversations about racial profiling and violence became increasingly specific to him as we discussed ways he could protect himself. It became all the more urgent that I make a film that gives historical context to the racial violence going on today, while highlighting efforts for justice that can pave a path to wards reconciliation.

By 2014, my son was seventeen, and I thought I was finished filming when I learned about the case of Lennon Lacy who was also 17-years-old when he was found hanging just twenty days after Michael Brown was gunned down by police in Ferguson, Missouri. It was then that my personal life, my work about this unreconciled past that is ever-present, and the suspected lynching of Lennon Lacy converged. As I saw his mother's determination to tell Lennon's story even while grieving his death, I could not imagine how Claudia could cope with that kind of trauma, and I reached out to her to learn more.

Q&A WITH JACQUELINE OLIVE

Can you talk about the genesis of this film? You are dealing with issues that are at once extremely timely, and all too-recurrent throughout American history. Why this film now?

I started researching and developing the project in 2008 through 2009 before moving into production. I talked with some of the top scholars on lynching and learned just how pervasive lynching terrorism was. The collection of postcards and photographs with smiling spectators posing with the brutalized bodies of victims called *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* deeply moved me. The images were unsettling, but the captions pointed out so much more information that you don't immediately see in the photographs. One of the photographs was of a man named Frank Embry. He had been stripped naked, paraded around in the bed of a truck, beaten and stabbed, and photographed while this was going on. Frank Embry was photographed before, during and after he was lynched. You can see in the photograph that he is looking directly into the camera. The image is filled with so much information, like some of the wounds that are pointed out in the caption but not readily apparent, and despite the torture, he is still very present, looking directly into the camera with a challenging gaze as people pose proudly around him. These details of lynching drew me in to want to know more about the victims' stories, and eventually about the perpetrators and spectators, as well.

Prior to researching this subject, when I had thought about lynching, which wasn't very often

even though I'd grown up in Mississippi, the state with the largest number of incidents, I thought of the victims as anonymous black men hanging. As I saw those postcards and photographs, it really made me want to know more. And as I started to learn who the victims, perpetrators, and spectators were, I reached out relatives who were still devastated by lynchings that had happened generations earlier. Once I understood the scope of the violence, it was increasingly clear how entire communities were impacted, and I was excited to start to find people who were working to repair the damage.

ALWAYS IN SEASON tells a timely story, for sure. With the uptick in white supremacist organizing, political ideology resulting in a xenophobic backlash, police and vigilante shootings, and more—it's crucial that we start to look at where these sentiments come from and thoroughly explore the systems that have ensured that the power dynamics of racism and hatred survive. At the same time, the film would have also been timely if I had released it in any of the years since I began the project. I do feel that the country is much more open to tackling these issues than in 2010, and now is the ideal time for the film to play an important role in regional and national dialogues about racial justice.

Since the Eric Garner case, media attention has focused on police malfeasance with respect to African-American men, particularly young, unarmed ones. How does *ALWAYS IN SEASON*, with its focus on law enforcement disinterest in investigating lynching, intersect with this wider national conversation?

Claudia Lacy has been open to hearing the truth about her son's death, whether Lennon committed suicide or was killed. She just wants to know what happened to her child, but because his case was not properly investigated from the outset, and several years have already passed, there is increasingly little chance that people will ever know what really happened to him. And so the community is left with stories, speculation, and rumors because local police didn't properly investigate the case. That's the lens through which the film tells Lennon's story. The community has a right to an investigation in which the racial climate in the area and this country's history of lynching were taken into consideration.

The similarities between what went on in Bladenboro in 2014 and the details of historic lynchings are vast. One of the parallels is that historically lynching cases were poorly investigated, if at all. Lennon's case reminded me of what I had been learning about the way lynching cases had been historically dismissed. Fewer than one percent of the thousands of lynchings that happened ever went to trial. While Claudia Lacy ultimately got an FBI investigation opened, that's been unusual in other recent cases of black and brown people found hanging publicly, like Lennon, in the few years before and after his death.

These inequities with policing compounded by the killings of Oscar Grant, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Renisha McBride, and so many others that I can no longer count, along with the ways the unarmed victims are often criminalized and the officers rarely even indicted—all come out of this history, and we have to pay closer attention to the lessons that are imbedded in the past to make our work for racial justice fully effective.

As a filmmaker, how were you able to achieve emotional distance from a subject that is disturbing to everyone, but personal to you, as the mother of a 17-year old young man?

Sometimes I maintained emotional distance, and sometimes I didn't. I always approached my work professionally because I'm keenly aware that when I show up in communities, in people's households, in Claudia Lacy's living room—I'm given access because I'm a director. It's my job to tell their stories accurately and be present in a way that helps them do so with clarity. Many times, I wanted to cry, but if we're both crying during an interview, I'm not getting the work done. I love filmmaking and really value that role as a director.

When I wasn't with the people I was filming with and I might be looking at the lynching photographs while writing grant applications or working on the edit, I'd see them dozens of times and take them in with a focus on composition, content, or the lighting. I could do that with emotional distance, and then that same photograph might floor me weeks or months later. I'd look at the Frank Embry photo, for example, determining the best way to crop it and go on examining it for months fairly intellectually, but then the details of the trauma for him, the horror, would all come into view.

It's hard to distance yourself emotionally from this history when you know the details, and we shouldn't. Just like it did for thousands of people who came out to watch lynchings, it requires a level of cognitive dissonance that makes dehumanizing others necessary. You can't distance yourself emotionally in this country from issues of police violence and racial profiling and all of these things that cumulatively impact entire communities, and fully understand your environment and value all of the people around you. It brings up difficult but necessary emotions that most people have the capacity to move through. That's been true for me in a decade of making *ALWAYS IN SEASON*, and since I finished the film, I've started to fully understand the extent of the emotions I've carried, and as it's been throughout every stage of production, I'm working through and releasing them.

Can you discuss what it was like filming the annual reenactment of the Moore's Ford Bridge lynching and the choice to not make it immediately clear to audiences what was happening?

The first time I filmed the reenactment it took me a while to get my head around what it actually was. Once I learned that they dramatized the quadruple 1946 lynching so that the victims are never forgotten, I quickly found this imperfect, yet organic expression of their need to find justice and possibly healing very inspiring. Ideally the reenactors and others featured in the film will move viewers to learn about the lynchings that happened where they grew up or now live and explore what they can do for justice and reconciliation in their own communities.

It was wonderful collaborating on the edit with editor, Don Bernier. He's an extraordinary talent, and I was thrilled to crack the code of the film's structure together because it's a complicated narrative. We chose not to prepare viewers for seeing the first scenes of the reenactment in order to immerse them in the chaos and violence that the victims felt. It was important to me that the audience feels the terror in order to understand what's at stake, and a film about lynching should never make viewers feel completely comfortable. Also, Don and I carefully thought through carrying viewers through scenes in a way that they can also feel safe and start to recover and get oriented.

The footage was filmed and edited to give a visceral sense of the violence, and also shift lenses between the spectators who watched historic lynchings, the crowd watching the reenactors dramatizing the violence, and viewers of the film watching it all. The uneasiness that audiences

will sometimes feel about their roles in the story is intended to challenge them to think beyond their assumptions about the history, consider where they show up in the narrative, and grapple with questions of culpability and personal responsibility.

How did Danny Glover get involved in the project? He's been associated with a lot of great documentaries in recent years like THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPES 1967-1975, CONCERNING VIOLENCE, STRONG ISLAND and HALE COUNTY THIS MORNING, THIS EVENING.

As I was doing this work that I was committed to, I started to see things unfold in wonderful ways that were beyond my control and I got really comfortable with that. I got so used to it that as I was considering how best to feature documentation from lynchings, like the invitation to the lynching of Claude Neal in 1934, I immediately thought of Danny Glover as the ideal person to deliver the material, but waited almost a year to really reach out. I was living in the Bay Area and was very familiar with his extraordinary commitment to social justice activism locally, not to mention nationally, so it wasn't just his amazing voice with such rich timber and gravitas that made him appealing, but the honesty, clarity, and authenticity that Danny Glover lends was also the draw. By the time we actually connected for the first shoot, he'd already heard from my friends, funders, my roommate, and minister about the project. He's been incredibly generous and supportive of ALWAYS IN SEASON.

Do you think that audiences of different backgrounds will take different things from this film? What kind of conversations are you hoping follow the film?

On a continuum of tactics to maintain white supremacy, lynching was the ultimate tool of racial terrorism. There were many ways power dynamics between whites and blacks were reinforced from stealing land and wages to Jim Crow segregation; when those things didn't work, whites turned to lynching as a way to inflict the most harm on African Americans. Brutalized bodies were often left in the black communities for days after a lynching as a warning to everyone, especially blacks—who, for survival, often ended up policing themselves. So, the trauma is layered, as are the lessons about this history. It has always been important to me that people feel the scope of the terror because when viewers understand it in their gut - really feel it in their bodies – then those emotions can lead to conversations about the issues even as they exit the theater. Hopefully, they deepen over the days and weeks after the screening, and as we organize our impact and community engagement campaign addressing the need for repair and reconciliation around lynching, people will start to organize dialogues in communities where lynching happened that turn into coalitions for tackling other issues of systemic racism, like inequitable policing, mass incarceration, gun violence, fair housing practices, racial disparities in education, and much more.

FILMMAKER BIOS

JACQUELINE OLIVE (Director/Producer) is an independent filmmaker and immersive media producer with more than a decade of experience in journalism and film. After receiving a master's degree from the University of Florida Documentary Institute in 2007, Jacqueline worked on the production team of the Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary series, *Independent Lens*. She also co-directed and produced the award-winning documentary, *BLACK TO OUR ROOTS*, which broadcast on PBS WORLD. In 2017 Jacqueline was a Sundance Documentary Edit & Story Lab Fellow, as well as a Sundance Documentary Fund Program and Sundance Music & Sound Design Lab fellow in 2018. This year, Jacqueline also received the Emerging Filmmakers of Color Award from International Documentary Association (IDA) and the Jonathan Logan Family Foundation. Over the years, Jacqueline has gained experience with transmedia production as a fellow with the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) Institute for New Media Technologies and Mediamaker Fellows, the Black Public Media New Media Institute, and most recently, the Open Immersion VR Lab sponsored by the Ford Foundation, National Film Board of Canada, and the Canadian Film Centre. In addition to the feature film, *ALWAYS IN SEASON*, she is producing an accompanying VR project that uses 360° video and computer-generated imagery (CGI) animation to explore the film's themes of dehumanization and violence, offering users strategies for moving confidently through the racialized public spaces that black women navigate daily.

JESSICA DEVANEY (PRODUCER) is a Brooklyn-based producer and the founder of Multitude Films, an independent production company dedicated to telling stories by and about underrepresented communities. Her latest film, *ALWAYS IN SEASON* was selected for 2019 Sundance Film Festival U.S. Documentary Competition. She recently produced *THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED* (Tribeca 2018), dubbed "a real-world conspiracy thriller" by *Variety*, Cinema Eye-nominated *ROLL RED ROLL* (Tribeca 2018), *LOVE THE SINNER* (Tribeca 2017), and Critic's Choice-nominated *SPEED SISTERS* (Hot Docs 2015), which *The New York Times* called "subtly rebellious and defiantly optimistic." Additional credits include *CALL HER GANDA* (Tribeca 2018), *NAILA & THE UPRISING* (IDFA 2017), Peabody Award-winning *MY NEIGHBOURHOOD* (Tribeca 2012), and Ridenhour Prize-winning *BUDRUS* (Tribeca 2010). Jessica co-founded the Queer Producers Collective, produced Doc Society's Queer Impact Producers Lab, and was a Sundance Edit and Story Lab fellow, Women at Sundance fellow, and Sundance Creative Producing Lab advisor.

DON BERNIER (Editor) is an Emmy-nominated documentary film editor. Most recently, he edited *CHARM CITY*, which premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival. Bernier also edited Participant Media's *AN INCONVENIENT SEQUEL: TRUTH TO POWER* (Paramount Pictures), which opened the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and was shortlisted for a 2018 Academy Award. His editing credits also include *AUDRIE & DAISY* (Netflix ORIGINAL), which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival; *THE GENIUS OF MARIAN* (POV/PBS), which premiered at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival; the Peabody Award-winning *EAMES: THE ARCHITECT AND THE PAINTER* (American Masters/PBS); and *THE BOTANY OF DESIRE* (PBS), based on author Michael Pollan's best-selling book. Bernier also works regularly as an editorial consultant, and is a Sundance Institute Documentary Edit and Story Lab Fellow and an AMPAS Documentary Branch Member.

APPEARING IN THE FILM

Danny Glover
Claudia Lacy
Pierre Lacy
Cassandra Greene
Heather Rattelade
Justin Jones
Sherrilyn Ifill
Dr. Rev. William J. Barber, II
Bryan Stevenson
Ashton Lyons
Jaylan Davis
A.J. Willis
Allen Smith
F.W. Newton
Allen Rogers
Doug Lacy
Curt Vincent
Michelle Brimhall
Rev. Gregory Taylor
Harry Singletary
Rufus Duckworth
Bobby Howard
Tyrone L. Brooks, Sr.
Rev. Roger Malcom Hayes
Mike Cash

(LYNCHING REENACTORS – also appearing in the film)

Jerry Ansley
Randy Ansley
Ron Brown
Jonathan Brunby
Bob Caine
Jeanie Caine
Michael Chechopoulos
Rosie Crowley
Cherise Michele Davis
Rachel Howard
Valerie Kelly
Paula Logan
Betty Maddox
Wade Marbaugh
Phil Mosier
Walter Reeves
Rich Roberson
William Nathan Stowe
John Taggart
Olivia Taylor
William Tokarsky
Showyn Walton

CREDITS

TELL IT MEDIA PRESENTS

A CO-PRODUCTION OF
Independent Television Service (ITVS)

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:
Naked Edge Films
JustFilms | Ford Foundation
Good Gravy Films
Artemis Rising Foundation
Sundance Institute
Chicken & Egg Pictures
Firelight Media
Catapult Film Fund

A MULTITUDE FILMS PRODUCTION

DIRECTED and PRODUCED BY
Jacqueline Olive

PRODUCED BY
Jessica Devaney

WRITTEN BY
Jacqueline Olive
Don Bernier

EDITED BY
Don Bernier

NARRATED BY
Danny Glover

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY
Patrick Sheehan
S. Leo Chiang

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY
Osei Essed

GRAPHICS & ANIMATION BY
Scott Grossman

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Sally Jo Fifer
Lois Vossen

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Jim Butterworth
Daniel J. Chalfen

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Patty Quillin
Joan Platt

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Regina K. Scully
Geraldyn Dreyfous

SUPERVISING PRODUCER FOR ITVS

Michael Ehrenzweig

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FOR BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA

Leslie Fields-Cruz

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Leslie Berriman & Nion McEvoy
Katy Drake Bettner

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Nancy Stephens & Rick Rosenthal
Barbara Dobkin

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Jodie Evans

CO-PRODUCERS

Lisa Valencia-Svensson
Anya Rous