



Patreese Johnson, image for *Out in the Night* by Lyric Cabral



Renata Hill, image for *Out in the Night* by Lyric Cabral



Terrain Hill, image for *Out in the Night* by Lyric Cabral



Venice Brown, image by Lyric Cabral

Out in the Night is a new documentary by Blair Dorosh-Walther that examines the 2006 case of The New Jersey 4.

Through the lives of four young women, ***Out in the Night*** reveals how their race, gender identity and sexuality became criminalized in the mainstream news media and criminal legal system.

Short Synopsis

Under the neon lights in a gay-friendly neighborhood of New York City, four young African-American lesbians are violently and sexually threatened by a man on the street. They defend themselves against him and are charged and convicted in the courts and in the media as a 'Gang of Killer Lesbians'.

Full Synopsis

Out in the Night is a documentary that tells the story of a group of young friends, African American lesbians who are out, one hot August night in 2006, in the gay friendly neighborhood of New York City. They are all in their late teens and early twenties and come from a low-income neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey. Two of the women are the focus – gender non-conforming Renata Hill, a single mother with a soft heart and keen sense of humor, and petite femme Patreese Johnson, a shy and tender poet. As they and their friends walk under the hot neon lights of tattoo parlors in the West Village, an older man sexually and violently confronts them. He says to Patreese “let me get some of that” as he points below her waist. When she says that they are gay, the man becomes violent and threatens to “fuck them straight”. He spits and throws a lit cigarette. Renata and Venice defend the group and a fight begins, captured by security cameras nearby. The man yanks out hair from Venice’s head and chokes Renata. Then, Patreese pulls a knife from her purse and swings at him. Strangers jump in to defend the women and the fight escalates. As the fight comes to an end, all get up and walk away. But 911 has been called and the man involved has been stabbed. Police swarm to the scene as their radios blast out warning of a gang attack. The women are rounded up and charged with gang assault, assault and attempted murder. Three of the women plead guilty. But Renata, Patreese, Venice and friend Terrain claim their innocence. They are called a “Gang of Killer Lesbians” by the media. In activist circles they become known as The New Jersey 4.

David Magdael & Associates, Inc.

600 W. 9th Street, Ste 715
Los Angeles, CA 90015
Office: 213 624 7827
Fax: 213 488 0398
Cell: 213 399 1434
dmagdael@tcdm-associates.com

About blair dorosh-walther



Image by Jon Goff,
blair and Daniel Patterson, Director of Photography

Director and Producer, blair dorosh-walther identifies as gender non-conforming and uses both male and female pronouns, is a social issue documentary director, experienced production designer, and artist with a passion for inspiring action for social justice through media. blair graduated with a BFA in Film from NYU and was awarded the Adam Balsano Award for social significance in documentary filmmaking for hir short documentary *Metsi* on water privatization's impact on women in a South African township. His short documentary *Cry Don't Cry* on bereavement experienced through the eyes of a diverse group of teenagers is distributed worldwide through Aquarius Videos and won the National Health Information Awards' Silver Award in 2005. For *Out in the Night*, blair was awarded the Joyce Warshow Fund from Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, was a Film Independent Fast Track fellow in 2013, and was selected as a participant at the Sundance Producer's Summit in 2012. *Out in the Night* is her first feature documentary.

blair has supported hir artistic career by working in direct care with adults living with developmentally disabilities, mental illness, addiction, homelessness and HIV/AIDS for the past 12 years.

Director's Statement

Immediately following the arrest of seven young African American women on August 18th, 2006, I became interested in their case. I read the many salacious headlines like "Attack of the Killer Lesbians," "Gal Gang," "I'm a man, lesbian growled" and on and on. However, it was the first of many *New York Times* articles that really gave me pause. The headline read: "Man is stabbed after admiring a stranger." An *admirer*?? I really could not believe it. A man does not 'admire' teenage girls on the street at midnight. That is harassment. And I have never met a woman who hasn't been harassed on the street at some point in her life, never mind in New York City where it is commonplace.

A blog started as a community space for people to discuss what was happening in these headlines and news articles. There was a community meeting in the West Village at the LGBT Center in New York City that I attended. The conversation wasn't about what happened that night, as it was so early and nobody knew the details, but people were focused on how you can protect yourself and your friends when you are threatened, who feels comfortable calling the police, and how to combat media bias.

I wanted to understand why this man was considered, in the mainstream news media, as a potential suitor and not a threat. Why weren't these women seen as survivors of violent, homophobic

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harassment? And why were a group of friends with no criminal records, who were not a gang, being charged as a gang?

I believe this story would have unfolded differently had the women and gender non-conforming youth involved been white. Race and class, as well as gender and sexuality, were and remain critical issues in this case.

For the next two years I worked as a part-time activist around this case. Early on, the idea of a documentary was raised. A film collective of sorts was formed. At that moment, I was the only one in the group with a filmmaking background, but there was no part of me that wanted to direct this film. I did not think a white director should tell this story.

Two years later, however, as their appeals were approaching, I could not stop thinking about this story. I wrote to each of the women in prison and asked if I could come visit them and discuss the possibility of a documentary. I spoke with their family members to see if they were also interested. Immediately, the women were interested, but I wasn't totally sure they knew what a documentary feature would entail. In retrospect, neither did I. So, I continued to visit them. I wanted to make sure we were able to get to know each other. If they weren't going to feel comfortable with me, then I wasn't going to make the film. I also began speaking with their appellate lawyers to get a better handle on the case.

As the women and I developed a relationship and I was beginning to understand the intricacies of the case and the appeals, I was also mapping out how to tell this story. Within a few months of deciding to make this film, Renata and Terrain, two of the four women, came home from prison. It is then that we really began to get to know each other. On the day of the first interview with them, Terrain and I were running out to get lunch, leaving my director of photography, Daniel Patterson and Renata at Terrain's house. Renata became nervous immediately. She said she didn't want to be left there with a "strange dude." In that moment I realized how she is impacted by tremendous trauma from sexual violence and violent actions against her by men – in her childhood and into the night of the fight. It made me better understand her reaction on the night of the fight. I asked her to sit behind the camera and interview Daniel to get to know him before we began our interviews. They became close after that day. And later, she joked about what she might wear to her next interview to shock me: a dildo on the outside of her clothes.

Since the first interviews, I have written dozens and dozens and dozens of grants. And I do not know how many times I was turned down from a potential funder citing that these women weren't believable because they laughed too much or didn't cry on camera. When I would get these responses, I always thought back to this first day of interviews. If they only understood the fears that were hidden behind their humor and confidence. It informed my choices on how to express their personalities, from the screen to the hearts of audiences.

The best day of shooting happened on the day we were scheduled to fly to California with Terrain's mother, Kimma, who was speaking with Angela Davis about her daughter's incarceration. We got a call that Terrain was going to be released. So, instead of going to the airport, Kimma, my cinematographer, and I immediately began driving from Newark to Albion Correctional Facility. Albion is eight hours away, just south of the Canadian border. We spent the night in a nearby motel and at sunrise we began waiting in the Correctional Facility lot. We waited for five hours, as they had misplaced her release paper work. After hours (and actually years) of waiting, Terrain was released and her charges dismissed. It is a weird feeling, a prison release. You cry and hug and laugh, but then you quickly get the hell out of there because you want to be as far away from the prison as possible. We drove the eight hours back to New Jersey, arriving home around midnight. At 4:00 a.m. we were all on our way to the airport to fly to California for the talk with Angela Davis. A few hours after landing, Kimma, Terrain and Angela were speaking to a room full of supporters. It was about the coolest thing I could ever imagine.

I think one of the reasons this story feels so important to me is all the gray areas that it covers, including the

intersectionality of their identities and oppressing forces. These young friends, being black, conjured up stereotypes of what a 'gang' looks like. The gang assault charge must be re-examined as it is ill-defined and disproportionately used against youth of color, as we see in this story. This is also where gender identity stereotypes become so powerfully oppressive. Most of the images used to discuss this case were of Terrain. Terrain could potentially pass as male. So, when using her photo with the headline "Gang" – it maintained this image. Even now, of the seven women she is the only one without a felony on her record, and after her charges were dismissed, her picture continued to be used. These images and mis-quotes in headlines like "I'm a man, lesbian growled" were used to deny that they were women. Women using physical force to fight back has never been socially acceptable.

Even though it didn't really make it into the film as strongly as I had once hoped, each of the women have a great sense of gender identity. Way too often in the mainstream, LGBT rights are spoken about through 'marriage equality.' Gender identity blends with 'sexuality' as if they are one in the same. But their gender identities played a role in this story, particularly in the way they were represented in the media. Terrain and Renata identify as AG or Aggressive, meaning a masculine identified woman (as a general oversimplification). Venice and Patreese identify as Femme. In an interview which did not make it into the film, Venice says "An AG is someone who is comfortable in their skin."

So as we move beyond marriage equality as the central LGBT issue, their experiences reveal so many more that need to be addressed: Feeling safe on the street. In any town, in any city. The right to defend yourself without fear of imprisonment. Trust in calling the police when you are threatened. And representations of spectrums of gender that aren't neatly "male" or "female."

I deeply believe that arguing for self-defense does not work for the very people it should be used to protect. In order to find that someone rightfully acted in self-defense, their histories with past traumas need to be included in the courtroom with full weight given to them. I want people to understand how PTSD from sexual trauma impacts how a person responds to a sexually violent threat. I want people to understand that Renata was never given the full care and support she needed as a child survivor of sexual abuse and torture. Why was Renata's rapist, who sexually assaulted her from the age of 9 to 16 years old, given less time in prison than she received for defending herself. The man who threatened her that night said he would 'fuck her straight.' In her eyes, he said that he would rape her.

I want discussions to go deeper. This case is not cut and dry, as the women defended themselves with force. It is messy and complicated. We need to be prepared to talk about the gray areas.

Some of the greatest challenges for me while shooting were filming vérité; it felt voyeuristic. I didn't like the feeling of raising money for a shoot when that shoot would be an interview with a mother living in a homeless shelter. I didn't like waiting quietly for someone to be released from prison. I wanted to put the camera down and yell. Mostly, my challenge has been to find that almost-impossible balance of filmmaker / advocate / activist. Being a documentary storyteller sometimes means calming your sense of moral outrage and fury at injustice so that you do press 'record'.

My approach to filmmaking is both political and practical. I very much identify as an Anarchist. Oddly, the act of making an independent film feels like the truest way for me to live that out in my career. When it works correctly, filmmaking is about a small, passionate and dedicated group of people governing equally. We work equally in our specific roles for a common and shared vision. I love that part of filmmaking. I'm sure many people wouldn't necessarily agree with me, but for me it is the lens through which I see and feel the process.

As a developing artist, I originally found my creative voice in the abstraction of painting and sculpture. But I did not continue in fine arts because of that very abstraction. I want access to meaning and justice to be more transparent. In my 'other' life, in social services and activism, I've paid attention to those things. So, filmmaking - visual storytelling - merges these two parts of me in a way that feels whole.

Participants Interviewed

Renata Hill	Steven McAdams
Patreese Johnson	Susan Tipograph
Terrain Dandridge	Lori Cohen
Venice Brown	Karen Thompson
Kimma Walker	Alexis Agathocleous
Tanisha Johnson	Reva McEachern
T.J.	Glo Ross
Anthony Riley	Des Marshal
Dell Barron	Angela Davis
Mollie Hill	Christopher O'Hare
Ricky Hill	Laura Italiano
Marilyn Tanco	

Renata Hill

Renata is currently a full-time student on the path to earn an Associates degree in Human Services at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. She is employed full time and is working to secure permanent housing for herself, her son, her fiancé and her fiancé's daughter. Renata is ferociously protective of people around her and she has an incredible sense of humor that has probably been her greatest source of strength throughout her life.

Patreese Johnson

Patreese is a petite 4'11" 95 lbs, femme-identified poet. She is the youngest of four brothers and one sister. She grew up as the youngest on the block in her tight-knit community in Newark. She is fiercely empathetic with a big heart. She is enrolled at Essex County Community College, studying for Associates degree in Liberal Arts. Patreese dreams of opening a spa "so that women will have a place to take a break from the every-day struggles of life." She is currently working as a part-time personal assistant to children's author, Jacqueline Woodson.

Venice Brown

Venice earned her GED from Cape Fear Community College. She also received a Cosmetology License from the College of Wilmington, North Carolina where she lives and works full-time. She had a baby boy, Jasiah, who just turned four and co-parents with her girlfriend whom she has known since they were twelve years old. As Venice's mom would say, "Venice would give you the shirt off her back, but do not disrespect her friends."

Terrain Dandridge

Terrain is working full-time as a security guard in New Jersey and is engaged to her girlfriend. She hopes to attend Essex County Community College and study Science and Respiratory Care this fall with hopes of becoming a Respiratory Specialist. Terrain is incredibly sweet, terribly shy, and her mother Kimma considers her the "Casanova" of the group.

Timeline

2006

AUGUST 18TH

1:40AM

A fight occurs on the street between seven women, the man who instigated it, and several male bystanders.

2:30AM

The seven women are arrested.

AUGUST 21ST

The seven women go before the grand jury and are charged with attempted murder and varying degrees of assault and gang assault. They are immediately taken to Rikers Island.

SEPTEMBER

Patreese is bailed out.

DECEMBER 19TH

Terrain is bailed out.

2007

FEBRUARY

Three of the woman plead guilty to a violent felony and are released after six months in prison.

APRIL 10TH-17th

The remaining four women: Renata, Patreese, Venice and Terrain have their day in court. They are all found guilty. Patreese's grandmother dies the morning of their conviction. She is not allowed to attend the funeral.

JUNE 14TH

They are sentenced. Terrain - 3.5 years in prison, 4 years post release supervision; Venice - 5 years in prison, 4 years post release supervision; Renata - 8 years in prison, 5 years post release supervision; Patreese - 11 years in prison, 5 years post release supervision.

JUNE 25TH

Terrain's grandmother dies. She is not allowed to attend the funeral.

AUGUST 14TH

Venice's aunt dies. She can't attend the funeral.

2008

JUNE

Terrain and Renata have their appeals.

END OF JUNE

Terrain's conviction is dismissed and she is released from Albion Correctional Facility.

JULY

Renata is granted a retrial and bail is set at \$75,000. She is moved from Bedford Hills Correctional Facility to Riker's Island.

END OF JULY Renata's mother dies. She is not allowed to attend the funeral.

AUGUST Renata's bail is lowered to \$5,000 and she is bailed out of Riker's Island

OCTOBER Venice and Patreese have their appeals

LATE OCTOBER Venice is granted a retrial. Bail is set at \$5,000 and she is bailed out from Bay View Correctional Facility. Patreese's eleven year sentence is lowered to eight years.

NOVEMBER Venice accepts a plea deal (and pleads guilty to original charges), receiving two years time served and five years post release supervision.

2009

MARCH Renata is granted the right to see her son T.J. for the first time since she was released from prison. She begins working on regaining custody.

APRIL Renata accepts a plea deal (and pleads guilty to original charges), receiving two years time served plus one and a half years and must return to prison to Albion Correctional Facility (after being out of prison for six months).

MAY Renata surrenders herself and returns to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

2010

APRIL Renata is released from Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

JULY Renata regains custody of T.J.

2012

OCTOBER 29 Patreese's brother is killed. She is not allowed to attend his funeral.

2013

AUGUST 13 Patreese is released from Taconic Correctional Facility.



Giovanna Chesler, image by Lyric Cabral

Producer Giovanna Chesler works in documentary and narrative films that address the body, sexuality, and gender. Her feature documentary *Period: The End Of Menstruation* (Cinema Guild) facilitated an international discussion on pharmaceuticals and health when it was covered on the front page of *The New York Times* in 2007. Her award winning short documentaries and fiction films have screened at over 100 juried film festivals worldwide. She has won awards from the Chicago International Film Festival and the University Film and Video Association. Giovanna is an Associate Professor of Communication and Director of the Film and Video Studies Program at George Mason University. She teaches courses in documentary, visual communication, and transmedia for social change. She is in development on a feature dark comedy about a coffee addict navigating memory loss and a tragic past entitled *Java* and directs films for gender justice organizations.



Mridu Chandra, image by Nicholas Bruckman

Producer Mridu Chandra is a producer and writer based in New York who produces award-winning documentaries and narrative films that have premiered at Sundance, SXSW, aired on PBS, screened for members of US Congress, and showcased at Museums and film festivals worldwide. Documentary credits include producing *The Canal Street Madam*, *Let the Church Say Amen*, co-producing *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* and *Electoral Dysfunction*. She taught graduate level documentary courses at The New School and at New York University. As a writer, her first screenplay *The Tennis Partner* was selected for the 2011 Tribeca Film Institute's All Access development program. She has been invited to develop her craft at residencies at the Blue Mountain Center in New York and at The Banff Centre in Canada. Most recently, she produced and directed *Indian Summer*, a short documentary about a Hindu summer camp in upstate NY and the Sundance commissioned live-music-film *Himalaya Song*.



Yoruba Richen, image by Luke Ratray

Producer Yoruba Richen is a documentary filmmaker who has directed and produced films in the United States, Africa, South America and Southeast Asia. Yoruba's award-winning film *The New Black* will appear on Independent Lens in 2014 and premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival last summer. Her award-winning *Promised Land* premiered at the Full Frame Documentary Festival and has screened at numerous festivals around the world. It received a Diverse Voices Co-Producer fund award from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and won the Fledgling Fund Award for Social Issue Documentary. Yoruba has produced for the investigative unit of ABC News and Democracy Now. In 2012, Yoruba won the Tribeca All Access Creative Promise Award and became a Guggenheim fellow. She is a graduate of Brown University and teaches documentary at CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism.



Daniel Patterson, Director of Photography

Director of Photography, Daniel Patterson has been the director of photography on over two hundred projects, including work for Oprah Winfrey, Spike DDB, and The American Cancer Society. Daniel recently wrapped production as the Director of Photography on Spike Lee's new film *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus*. Other projects include the fiction feature *Gunhill Road* that premiered at Sundance in 2011, and Shaka King's *Newleyweeds*, which premiered in 2013. His documentary work includes *Evolution of a Criminal* by Darius Clark Monroe, which just premiered at SXSW and won the Grand Jury Prize at Full Frame and a Spike Lee Production Fellowship Award. Other documentaries shot by Daniel include *Generation Crack* and *25 to Life* (Sundance and Ford Foundation Fellow). Daniel is a graduate of NYU's MFA program and he and Blair met and began working together at NYU.

Executive Producer, Abigail E. Disney is a filmmaker, philanthropist and activist. She has pursued a wide array of activities in support of peace and non-violence particularly by advocating for the advancement of women's roles in the public sphere. Her longtime passion for women's issues and peace building led her to producing films. She has executive produced films that address various social issues, including *Family Affair*, *Playground*, *Sun Come Up* (Academy Award® Nominee 2011, Best Documentary Short), *Return, Invisible War* (Academy Award® Nominee 2012, Best Documentary Feature), *Open Heart* (Academy Award® Nominee 2012, Best Documentary Short). Her first film, a feature-length documentary called *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* tells the inspirational story of the women of Liberia and their efforts to bring peace to their broken nation after decades of destructive civil war. After winning best documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* went on to wide acclaim. Viewed across the US at community screenings, in theaters and on public television, it went on to screen in 60 countries around the world, and is broadly credited with helping its lead figure, Leymah Gbowee be named a Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2012. Abigail went on to produce the five-part special series for PBS, *Women, War and Peace*, which aired in 2011. This series was a first-of-its-kind look at the role of women in war in the modern age, not just at victims of conflict but as active agents for peace in their communities.

Animation, APPARAT Film is an animation production company based in Stockholm, Sweden that produces film, animation and design for any platform. Documentary film work by the creative group includes the 2012 Academy Award® Winning documentary feature, *Searching for Sugarman*.

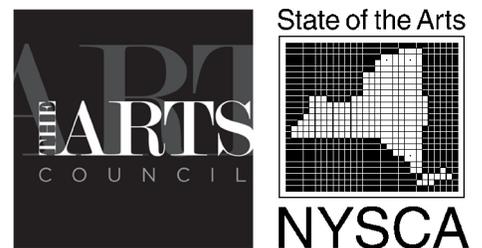
Editor, Kristen Huntley is an Emmy® award-winning editor of documentaries. Her most recent project, *Addiction Incorporated*, is now in theaters nationwide. Recent projects include an episode of the five-part PBS series *Women, War and Peace* focusing on Columbia, titled *The War We Are Living*. Her editing is featured in the Sundance Grand Jury Prize nominated *New School Order* and the Emmy winning documentaries *Ladies First*, *TV Nation* (series) and *Stories of the Pulitzer Prize Photographs*. Huntley's work on *Judy Garland: By Myself* (American Masters) won the Emmy® for Outstanding Picture Editing for Nonfiction. As an editor, she has worked with directors and producers such as Stephen Colbert, Michael Moore, Gini Reticker, Martin Scorsese, Amy Sedaris and Louis Theroux. Her work as an artist includes sculpture and film installations. She is a graduate of The School of Visual Arts and Hunter College MFA program.

Composer, Mario Grigorov's most recognizable film work comes from his long-standing collaboration with director Lee Daniels, scoring *Shadowboxer*, *Tennessee*, the Academy Award-winning *Precious* and *The Paperboy*. *The Hollywood Reporter's* Cannes review of *The Paperboy* noted that "the soundtrack, mixed with Mario Grigorov's original score and potpourri of period tunes, is a small feast." Mario's documentary credits include the festival favorite *Third Wave: A Volunteer Story* presented by Sean Penn, the Anna Halpern biographical film *Breath Made Visible* by filmmaker Ruedi Gerber, and the war documentary *Taxi to the Darkside* by Alex Gibney, which won a 2008 Academy Award®. An accomplished concert pianist and improviser, Mario studied performance and composition at the Vienna Conservatorium and electronic music at the New South Wales Conservatorium in Sydney, Australia. Born in Sofia, Bulgaria to a concert trumpeter father and concert pianist mother, Mario was exposed to multiple cultures and musical styles due to his family's relocation to Iran and then East Germany.

SUPPORTERS

Out in the Night is a co-production of The Fire This Time The Film, LLC and Independent Television Service (ITVS) with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). It is made in association with Fork Films, G6 Pictures and Promised Land Films.

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www.OutInTheNight.com
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CREDITS

Director and Producer

blair dorosh-walther

Executive Producer

Abigail E. Disney

Executive Producer for ITVS

Sally Jo Fifer

Producers

Giovanna Chesler

Mridu Chandra

Yoruba Richen

Programming Manager for ITVS

N'Jeri Eaton

Supervising Producers for ITVS

Jen Gilomen

Maria León

Director of Photography

Daniel Patterson

Editors

Kristen Huntley

and

Sarah Devorkin

Original Score

Mario Grigorov

Additional Music

Tina Pepper

Animation

APPARAT

Director of Animation

Arvid Steen

Animation Producer

Johan Edström

Animators

Johan Sonestedt

Axel Hallgren

Veronica Wallenberg

Additional Camera

Jon Goff

Sunita Prasad

Serena Kuo

Lyric Cabral

Assistant Director (IFC)

Jim Muscarella

Assistant Camera (NCCC)

Ayana Eromoto-Hurst

Additional Crew**Gaffer**Justyn Davis
Edward Roberts
Hunter Herrick**Grip**Toby Orzano
Walter OrsiniEmma Francis-Snyder
George Danatamy
Maeri Headstrom
Juan Loney**Still Photography**Jon Goff
Lyric Cabral
Scott Gracheff**Co-Producer**

Scott Gracheff

Production AssistantsDave Waldron
Josh Wells
Jarrett Robertson
Walter Orsini**Sound Recording**blair dorosh-walther
Giovanna Chesler
Paul Reid
Michael Gassert
Anthony Jones
Darius Monroe
Emma Francis-Snyder
Sharon Mashih**Additional Editing**Chris Iversen
Sunita Prasad
Aljernon Tunsil
Scott Burgess**Assistant Editors**Maxwell Anderson
Sheila Shirazi
Brad Kimbrough**Archival Research**Mridu Chandra
Marin Tockman
Laura Blum**Post Production Assistants**Emma Francis-Snyder
Joseph Singletary
Chloë WrightDioni Vasquez
Son Duong
Eric Buth**Post Production Interns**Stuart Kiczek
Logan Shelton
Jamila HowellMarianna Denadal
Solin Gibson
Carly Schneider**Bookkeeping**Richard M. Prinzi, Jr. CPA
Michael Rios
Moxie Bookkeeping**Vocal Performance**

Nigil Whyte

Transcription

Letter Perfect Transcriptions

Post Production Facility

Prime Focus Technologies

Online Editor
Eugene Lehnert

DI Colorist
Eric Alvarado

Managing Director, Production
Mary Martin

Post Producer
Alex Laviola

Offline Editing
DCTV
Orchard Films, Inc.

Audio Post
DOMICILE NYC

**Sound Re-Recording Mixer / Supervising Sound
Editor**
Rob Daly

Sound FX Editor
Timmy Quinn

Voice Over recording
Richard Fairbanks
Rob Daly

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Aladdin General Insurance Agency

Publicity
David Magdael and Associates, Inc.
David Magdael
Eseel Borlasa
Barbara Thompson
Aszia Pechak

MUSIC

THERE AND BACK AGAIN
Written and Performed by Toshi Reagon
Published by TRO - Black Elephant Music, Inc.
Courtesy of Black Elephant Music, Inc.

I DON'T WALK ALONE
Written and Performed by Toshi Reagon
Published by TRO - Black Elephant Music, Inc.
Courtesy of Black Elephant Music, Inc.

YONDER COME DAY
Written and Performed by Toshi Reagon
Published by TRO - Black Elephant Music, Inc.
Courtesy of Black Elephant Music, Inc.

BEDFORD HILLS BEDTIME STORY PT. 2
Written and Performed by Toshi Reagon
Featuring poetry by Patreese Johnson
Published by TRO - Black Elephant Music, Inc.
Courtesy of Black Elephant Music, Inc.

SET YOUR BODY FREE
Written and Produced by Bob Golden
Performed by Ashley Betton
Published by Savvy Kat Music, Inc.

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MUS

