

UNSPOKEN

HOW CAN A TOWN MAKE PEACE WITH ITS PAST WHEN THE TRUTH IS BURIED?



WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY STEPHANIE CALABRESE
MUSIC BY KWAME BRANDT-PIERCE | SOUND DESIGN BY DARRIN STILL

www.unspoken.film

CONTACT & MEDIA ASSETS

Director, Stephanie Calabrese – littlepurplecow@gmail.com | 404-861-5640

Director Twitter & Instagram: @littlepurplecow

Composer & Musician Instagram: @kwamebrandtpierce

Film Twitter: @DocFilmUNSPOKEN

Media assets (film poster, trailer & stills): <http://www.unspoken.film/mediaassets>

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Can a town marked by the last mass lynching make peace with its past? Unspoken is a documentary feature film that traces the journey of resident Stephanie Calabrese who picks up an iPhone camera to uncover buried truths and explore how the community has been impacted by its racial divide through the lens of her own whiteness. Stephanie's foray into filmmaking offers an insider's intimate look at the impact of the 1946 quadruple lynching, segregation and integration through today in Monroe, Georgia, and shatters a code of silence that has distanced neighbor from neighbor for generations.

Team

**Stephanie Calabrese, Writer,
Director, Producer, Editor &
Cinematographer**



Stephanie Calabrese is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist and first-time filmmaker. Her photography series “Hometown: A Documentary of Monroe, Georgia” featured on The New York Times LENS site in 2017 helped inspire UNSPOKEN. Stephanie's work has been featured in Time Lightbox, Forbes.com, LIFE.com, Digital Photo, Photo.net, Professional Photographer, and The Bitter Southerner. She has produced documentary projects for clients including UPS, The Coca-Cola Company, CARE International, and The Georgia Department of Family and Child Services. She is the author of the best-selling “The Art of iPhoneography: A Guide to Mobile Creativity” published by Pixiq (a division of Sterling Press) and Ilex Press (now Octopus Press) and “Lens on Life: Documenting Your World Through Photography” published by Focal Press and Ilex Press and is a past TEDx Talk speaker on “Building a Better World, One Picture at a Time.” Learn more: www.stephaniecalabrese.com

**Kwame Brandt-Pierce,
Composer & Music**



Kwame Brandt-Pierce is a pianist, composer, and writer from Brooklyn, NY. He has performed and recorded with several artists including Saul Williams, Amel Larrieux, Carl Hancock Rux, Alice Smith, Jean Grae, Pharoahe Monch, and Solange Knowles. He has also performed at several noteworthy festivals including SXSW, The Capetown Jazz Festival, The Montreux Jazz Festival, Lollapalooza, Afro Punk, Sons D’hiver, and Coachella. Kwame’s recent projects include composing music for the New York Times Serial Podcast series “The Improvement Association” and Trusty Sidekick Theater’s upcoming podcast for children entitled “Surveyors of Unused Potential (S.O.U.P.).”

Darrin Still, Sound Designer



Darrin Still is a driven audio engineer with 15 years of audio production, post-production and sound design. A Berklee College of Music graduate, he founded The MasterSound with the firm belief that sonic clarity and precision can bring a song to life and highlight the power of a scene in a film. Darrin has worked on a wide range of projects, from short and feature films to corporate and industrial pieces, and has mastered more than 300 songs for a wide range of music genres. He loves doing both audio mastering and post-production sound, and finds that keeping active on both sides has given him a unique skill set that delivers a meaningful impact on creative work with artists, musicians and filmmakers from all walks of life. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, he resides in Atlanta, GA.

Q&A With Director, Stephanie Calabrese

Q. WHY DID YOU CREATE THIS FILM?

A. I created this film because racial bias and injustice still exist today, and I believe that a deeper understanding of our past can offer clues to help solve our problems in the present. I decided to focus my lens on the racial divide in my own hometown because I did not know, and could not find this history. I care deeply about my community. Many of the people in Monroe, Georgia impacted by the Moore's Ford Lynching, segregation, and the integration of schools and our community are still with us. Documenting their stories, and connecting the dots through research to portray an accurate and honest reflection of who we are and where we've been helped me better understand how we got here and why. With this historical context, we can be better community members, and work together to untangle and solve problems we still face today. I hope this film will move hearts, open minds, and light a flame for change in you and your own community.

Q. WHY NOT LEAVE THE PAST IN THE PAST? WHY STIR UP TROUBLE?

A. To avoid education on the construct of "race" and the critical influence and trauma it's had in shaping our town, the state, the south, and our country is to deny our history. There can be no reconciliation and true peace along the racial divide without revealing and moving in close to examine the truth, and to help share the weight and pain of it. Much of our problems with racial bias and injustice still exist today because we haven't dealt with our past. As white people, we've swept much of this history under the rug because we don't want to feel the shame of past wrongdoings. When the subject is raised, we often get defensive. Acknowledging our active or passive role, or indifference to the perpetuation of racism is a critical first step in using our power and resources to help end it.

Q. HOW LONG DID THE FILM TAKE TO MAKE?

A. Three years and six months. I completed the first interview and began research to define this film in June 2018. I began editing the film in March 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. At that point in time, I thought I had completed production. When George Floyd was killed triggering protests across the country, local organizers gathered at the Walton County Courthouse in Monroe, Georgia on June 1, 2020. I realized the film required more time for the narrative to continue to unfold, so I resumed shooting while also editing through September 2021. I began working with composer and musician Kwame Brandt-Pierce when the majority of the film was complete by August 2021. We completed the original musical score and final edits on December 15, 2021.

Q. HOW MANY PEOPLE DID YOU INTERVIEW?

A. I conducted 40 interviews. The majority of interviews were conducted in Monroe, Georgia in contributors' homes and porches and in my home. Each interview was a one-on-one conversation and most stretched nearly two hours. I set up my iPhone camera on a tripod, placed a microphone on my interviewee, and asked questions. I did not provide questions in advance. Not all interviews were used in the creation of the film, but each contributed to my understanding of and portrayal of the subject matter and ultimately helped shape the film. I'm grateful for all of them.

Q. BEYOND INTERVIEWS, WHAT WERE SOME OF YOUR SOURCES OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH?

A. I referenced these three books: 1. "The Last Lynching" by Anthony S. Pitch. His sources are detailed in the bibliography of that book. 2. "Black America Series: Walton County Georgia" by Lynn Robinson Camp and Jennifer E. Cheeks-Collins, and 3. "Wayfarers in Walton" by Anita B. Sams. I also reviewed and sourced information from historical deeds and legal documents found at the City of Monroe Courthouse and Georgia Archives; The Walton Tribune and other state and national newspapers; Monroe City Council meeting notes; Monroe High School yearbooks; as well as images and assets generously shared by the Monroe Museum and personal collections from interviewees.

Q. IS MONROE A RACIST TOWN? WHAT'S IT LIKE TO LIVE THERE TODAY?

A. I love Monroe. Most people I interviewed in the film love Monroe. We can love our community and feel a sense of pride in it, and at the same, acknowledge and deeply regret the tragedies of our history and the lingering trauma impacting members of our community. I choose to believe people here in my community want to be and do better. Do racist thoughts and behaviors exist in the minds of some people? Yes. That's true in any hometown across our country. Is it fair to say an entire town is racist? I don't think so. Are we working hard enough as a community to eliminate racial bias and injustice, to be more intentionally inclusive, and to uplift and support members of our community who still struggle today as a result of generations of injustice? No, I don't think so, but I hope education can help fuel that.

Q. SHOT WITH AN IPHONE? TELL ME MORE.

A. I wanted to keep the production of this film as lean and unobtrusive as possible. I intended to shoot it myself and wanted the set up for interviews to feel intimate and comfortable. I used my iPhone camera for video capture with a Sennheiser wireless microphone system and a pocket-size Marantz audio recorder to capture audio. I used a Manfrotto tripod with a BeastClamp for most interviews, and a Manfrotto Fig Rig stabilizer with BeastClamp for b'roll capture. Mostly, I leveraged available light with support from a portable iKan LED light source when needed and possible. I also wanted to prove that important documentary work doesn't require massive budgets, big teams, and extensive gear. I hope this approach inspires students and any documentarian to capture stories in their own hometown as I feel the best stories about a community come from within the community.

Q. HOW CAN I SEE THE FILM?

A. Check the festival screenings list for a list of in-person and on-demand viewing opportunities. To stay in the know, sign up here and we'll keep you posted on all in-person and online screening opportunities in the future.

Q. I'VE SEEN THE FILM AND WANT TO SHARE IT WITH MY GROUP/CLASS. DO YOU HAVE A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS OR FACILITATORS?

A. While the film is not yet available beyond festival and hosted screenings, we will provide a discussion guide to support post-film dialog and shared understanding; a glossary of terms referenced in the film for further study; and a detailed timeline of the significant events referenced in the film in the context of national events for historical context. You can find these resources here: www.unspoken.film/learningguides

Q. HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT OR SUPPORT THE ZION HILL CEMETERY RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION PROJECT?

A. This project is ongoing, and your support is appreciated. Visit the Zion Hill Cemetery website and follow the Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery Facebook page for latest news and opportunities to volunteer and provide support. The community project leader, Elizabeth Jones, is happy to connect with family members who have loved ones buried in the cemetery as she continues her research and documentation to help preserve this important piece of our heritage.

Q. HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE COURT CASE THAT ATTEMPTED TO UNSEAL THE MOORES FORD LYNCHING GRAND JURY TESTIMONY DOCUMENTS?

A. You can read more information about this case on the Moore's Ford Lynching Information Center on the Bell, Shivas & Bell website, including the full legal chronology here. That's the best place to start. There's been nationwide news coverage on this case, so a quick Google search will generate more sources of information.

Q. HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CIVIL RIGHTS COLD CASE LAW?

A. The Civil Rights Cold Case Records Collection Act of 2018 was signed into law by former President Donald Trump on January 8, 2019. This law requires the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to create the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Collection and requires federal agencies to turn over copies of any remaining records from Civil Rights Era cold cases to NARA for inclusion in the collection and release to the public. In February 2022, the U.S. Senate approved President Joe Biden's nominees for the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board. The board is charged with reviewing the records of Civil Rights era cold criminal cases of murders and other racially motivated violence that occurred between 1940 and 1979. Many of these records are still closed to the public.