

JUSTICE AYOWALE WHITAKER

275 PARK AVENUE, APT 5P, BROOKLYN, NY 11205 * JUSTICE@SHANGOLIGHTFILMS.COM * 646-387-3175

WRITER | DIRECTOR | EDUCATOR

SHANGO LIGHT FILMS, NEW YORK, NY

WRITER / DIRECTOR / EXECUTIVE PRODUCER – JANUARY 2020 to Present

Film Director/Executive Producer. Currently Co-Directing feature length documentary with WESTBROOK STUDIOS on the first all black climbing team to ascend Mount Everest. Coming Spring 2023.

PRATT UNIVERSITY & INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN, BROOKLYN, NY

PROFESSOR OF NON FICTION FILM & SCREENWRITING – AUGUST 2021 to Present

Writing Curricula. Teaching film and digital video production courses in Non Fiction film production including documentary, experimental, branded content and other coursework on production and theory.

FIVE.12 COLLECTIVE MEDIA GROUP, NEW YORK, NY

WRITER / DIRECTOR / PRODUCER – MARCH 2006 to Present

Published writer of film and music articles (Film International/Culture Eater/NECSUS) Write, direct and produce music videos, direct and produce experimental, narrative, and documentary films. Narrative screenwriter. Freelance Video Producer for the Wall Street Journal. Writing HEDs and DEKs for Digital Stories.

***SLO International Film Fest Audience Award Winner, 2021**

***Urban Media Makers Film Festival Best Documentary Winner, 2021**

***Screencraft Writers Fellowship Finalist, 2020**

***Institute of Electronic Arts, Alfred University, Residency, 2021**

***Austin Film Festival Screenplay Competition Semi-Finalist, 2021**

COURAGEOUS STUDIOS/TIME WARNER MEDIA, NEW YORK, NY

DOCUMENTARY DIRECTOR– AUGUST 2021 to AUGUST 2022

Branded content story development. Pre-Interview and interview story subjects. Write and edit scripts. Conduct pre-interviews, write interview questions & conduct interviews, direct camera, direct post production.

DIRECTOR: *"Milestone Generations"* on HBO MAX with DC Comics & Ally about Black Super Heroes and the history of Milestone Media.

SESAME WORKSHOP, NEW YORK, NY

WRITER DIGITAL CONTENT + WRITER: FOLEY AND FRIENDS PODCAST – AUGUST 2020 to OCTOBER 2021

Writer "Power of We" Digital Web Series. Writer Foley & Friends Podcast. Content Development. Former Script PA: Working with Script Supervisor and Coordinator to make edits, track changes, and other technical writing responsibilities. In the writers room supporting writing team and producers. On set available to track changes, and provide script updates to writers, actors, and producers.

***Sesame Workshop Writers Program, Finalist, 2020**

VICE NEWS, NEW YORK, NY

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR VICE NEWS TONIGHT (FREELANCE)– MAY 2021 to AUGUST 2021

Story development, research and pitch story ideas. Contact story subjects. Write and Edit scripts. Conduct Preinterviews, write interview questions for correspondents, direct camera, direct post production process.

Manage and book freelance crews.

BRIC ARTS MEDIA/BRIC TV, BROOKLYN, NY

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / EDUCATOR – JANUARY 2019 to JANUARY 2021

Develop concepts and write pitch materials for Brooklyn's Emmy Award-winning cable TV and digital network. Story development, manage and book freelance crews. Script, shoot and edit. Formats include television documentary shorts and/or series. *BRIC Arts Media Teaching Artist at El Puente High School (2012/13)*

CURVED LIGHT PRODUCTIONS, NEW YORK, NY

VIDEO & PODCAST / AUDIO PRODUCER & EDITOR (FREELANCE) – MAY 2019 to OCTOBER 2019

Develop episode concepts for the Playing with Science podcast - focused on the intersection of math, science, technology and sports. Shoot and edit live recordings and social media content. Manage and direct comedic talent and show guests, supervise edit and delivery. Organize podcast episodes, create story beat sheets, prep hosts. *Executive produced by Neil deGrasse Tyson, 3.5M podcast downloads per month and 1.4M followers across social media platforms.*

SANTE FE UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN, SANTE FE, NM

FILM PROFESSOR – AUGUST 2013 to JANUARY 2016

Taught film and digital video production courses: Cinematography "Telling a story with a Camera," Introduction to Directing, Advanced Short Documentary Production "Macro Cinema." Shoot the Stars Special Program Directing Mentor. Managed university rental house.

THE BRONX ACADEMY OF LETTERS, BRONX, NY

ARTIST/WRITER IN RESIDENCE – AUGUST 2011 to JUNE 2013

Developed and implemented film and video production courses (Final Cut Pro, Adobe Creative Suite, digital still photography, digital video cinematography). Worked with writing and poetry teachers to tailor specific curricula design for multiple courses, youth filmmaker development, supervised student projects.

***Fund for Teachers, Curricula Design Research Award, Documentary Production, Cuba, \$10,000. 2012.**

LEGAL OUTREACH, BROOKLYN, NY

WRITING INSTRUCTOR – SEPTEMBER 2008 to MAY 2009

Taught writing intensive workshop on argumentative writing and essay writing instruction for college prep 11th grade students, followed organization curriculum while incorporating elements of individually designed lesson plans.

THE GREEN SCHOOL, BROOKLYN, NY

VIDEO TECHNOLOGY TEACHER – AUGUST 2006 to JUNE 2010

Developed and implemented film and video production curriculum (Final Cut Pro, Adobe Creative Suite, cinematography). Curricula design, youth filmmaker development, supervised student projects.

***Best Buy Tech Award Classroom Grant, \$10,000. 2007**

EDUCATION

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY: BFA FILM & TELEVISION PRODUCTION, JANUARY 2006

Focus: Screenwriting, Documentary, The African Diaspora.

Study Abroad Courses: Documentary Production - Johannesburg South Africa 2004, Documentary Workshop - Accra Ghana 2005, Topics In Brazilian Arts and Culture – Brasil 2005.

LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY: MASTERS WORK FOR EDUCATION DEGREE + NYS Teaching Credential, 2009

Focus: Media Production in Secondary Schools

Fellowship: New York City Department of Education Teaching Fellowship

Z MEDIA INSTITUTE 2003:

Research and lecture based workshop on alternative media and social political systems in America.

PUBLICATIONS, RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS

2022: *The Triathlon*, Semi-Finalist, ScreenCraft Film Fund Competition, Los Angeles
2021: *Madame High Heels* Original Screenplay, Semi-Finalist, Austin Film Festival, TX
2021: *Restrictions Apply*, BEST SHORT DOCUMENTARY, Urban Media Makers Film Festival GA
2021: *Afro – Nouveau: The Rise of the African New Wave in Cinema* Senses of Cinema Journal, Australia
2021: *African Cinema on Vinyl* Featured Article, Film International 18.3, Netherlands
2021: *Restrictions Apply*, Official Selection: SLO International Film Festival (AUDIENCE AWARD WINNER)
2021: *Restrictions Apply*, Short Doc, Official Selection, AMDOCS Documentary Festival CA
2020: *Mixed Bag* Animated Pilot, Semi-Finalist, We Screenplay Diverse Voices, Los Angeles
2020: *The Social Responsibility of Redesigning the American Film Festival* Neccus Film Journal, Canada
2020: *Alejandro Jodorowsky Inspired Kanye West to be so Damned Inspiring*, Culture Eater, Australia
2020: *Mixed Bag* Animated Pilot, Finalist, ScreenCraft Animation Competition, Los Angeles
2020: *Madame High Heels* Original Screenplay, Semi-Finalist, ScreenCraft Fellowship, Los Angeles
2020: *Kut to be the Best*, Short Doc, Official Selection, SLO International Film Festival, SLO, CA
2020: Sesame Writers Workshop Finalist, New York City
2019: Bahamas International Screenwriting Residency Program, Finalist
2016: *Hands Up!* Music Video, Las Vegas Black Film Festival, Las Vegas
2015: Institute of International Education/New York Times Video Contest Runner up, Washington, D.C.
2015: Brave New Films Fellowship Finalist, Los Angeles
2014: *Blast* Best New Writer + 3 More Nominations AOF Festival, Los Angeles
2014: *Art Imitates Life* Hollywood Screenplay Competition Finalist
2014: *Art Imitates Life* World Series of Screenwriting Official Finalist
2014: *Blast* Official Screenplay Selection of Workers Unite Film Festival New York City
2014: *What to The American Slave is the Fourth of July* Official Selection of Santa Fe Film Fest
2013: *Blast* Winner in Shoreline Screenplay Competition 2013
2012: New Vision Fund For Teachers Grant: \$10,000. *Aqui En Cuba* Documentary Production
2010: Best Buy Tech Award Grant: \$10,000 for equipment for filmmaking course at the Green School
2008: Urban Artists Initiative: \$1,500 production costs for *Feast or Famine* Independent Documentary
2006: *Tribal Thoughts* Featured Director: Reel Documentary Film Festival, Accra Ghana

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Storytelling & Editing: Final Cut Pro, Premiere CC22, Adobe Creative Cloud Design Suite, Final Draft

Cinematography: Digital Camera Operator/Field Shooter, DP/Still photographer: DSLR, Sony A & F Series, RED, Black Magic Designs, Canon Digital Video Cameras, Go Pro Systems, Analog Film Cameras

Lighting: Key Grip, studio lighting design, interview lighting

Audio Engineering/Production: Logic X, Pro Tools

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Milestone Generations (HBO MAX), 2022

Written, & Directed by Justice A. Whitaker. This long form Documentary produced by Courageous Studios (CNN) in conjunction with DC Comics and Ally explores the history of Milestone Comics, the first Black owned comic book company in the world, and the journey the comic creators and their characters have taken over the last 30 years. Narrated by Method Man.

Cannabis Con (VICE NEWS TONIGHT), 2021

Written, Directed & Produced by Justice A. Whitaker. This short form documentary produced by Vice News Tonight, investigates the flaws in the Illinois State Cannabis Equity program, through the eyes of Combat Veteran and west side Chicagoan Jermell Chavis, after Jermell is denied multiple opportunities to change his economic future with a Cannabis dispensary license despite his near perfect score in the Cannabis Social Equity Program.

Restrictions Apply, 2021

Directed, & Edited by Justice A. Whitaker. This Short Documentary made for the RACE Matters SLO organization is an in depth look at historical CCR's which outlaw all non-whites from living on specific properties. The film follows a journalist turned activist as she shares her findings with her neighbors, and then organizes an opportunity for all her neighbors to remove the racist covenant language from their deeds.

***SLO International Film Fest Audience Award Winner, 2021**

***Urban Media Makers Film Festival Best Documentary Winner, 2021**

Kut To Be The Best: The Last Black Barbershop in San Luis Obispo, 2020

Written, Directed, Shot & Edited by Justice A. Whitaker. This Short Documentary made for the RACE Matters SLO organization is an in depth look at the role a Black Barbershop plays for the community in a primarily white city. The Film opened in February 2020 to two sold out screenings at local theaters.

Afro-Pop Teaser, 2018

Written, Directed, Produced, by Justice A. Whitaker. This film trailer for Justice's screenplay introduces the primary characters in the story while illuminating the cultural highlights of Accra Ghana which are featured in the film.

Hands Up Music Video, 2016

Written, Co-Directed, Produced, by Justice A. Whitaker. This Music Video is a tribute to Michael Brown, and the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Video Reenacts viral videos of police shootings replacing the victims with the artist in the video. The Video was selected to the Las Vegas Black Film Festival 2016, and the album was awarded Best Rap Album at the NMMA in 2016.

***What to the American Slave is the Fourth of July?*, 2013**

Written by Frederick Douglass. Photographed and edited by Justice A. Whitaker. This experimental short is designed to pique interest in the history of Frederick Douglass, while giving an artistic interpretation of his speech. The film combines a re-enactment of Douglass in the woods of Virginia, but also integrates creative cinematography from contemporary 4th of July in California. The abstraction creates feeling, and the feeling tells a story.

***Belo, Nao*, 2009**

Written, Directed, Photographed, and Edited by Justice A. Whitaker. This short narrative film shot on location in Rio De Janiero, explores the dualities of this South American paradise city, through one night and one day in the life of an American tourist who is tempted by both the beauty of Rio's cultural icons and their sex workers.

***BLAST aka Patriot Act Music Video X Heems* (short) 2008/2015**

Written, Directed, Photographed, and Edited by Justice A. Whitaker. A narrative short film that is designed to challenge our stereotypes about 'terrorists' and Islam through the vivid depiction of a white American youth who chooses to execute a suicide bombing in New York City.

***Tribal Thoughts*, 2005**

Directed & Edited by Justice A. Whitaker in Accra Ghana. Visual arts/sketches by Virginia Holt. A 10 minute short miniDV 'experimental' documentary. Using found footage mixed with original footage this film examines the ideas behind tribalism in West Africa and how this century old tradition may be damaging communities' ability to progress. World Premiere: African Diaspora Film Festival 2006.

***Song of Savior*, 2004**

Written Directed, Photographed and Edited by Justice A. Whitaker, this documentary shot in South Africa during the ten year anniversary of their nationhood looks at democracy through the lens of the young country and explores the role religious institutions play in social movements both in the past and the present.

***Feast or Famine*, 2004**

Written Directed, Photographed and Edited by DL Fitch. Co-directed and Additional Photography by Justice A. Whitaker. While traveling with the UN World Food Programme this documentary, shot in over 5 African countries, examines the global hunger crisis as a means for the further understanding the impact of capitalism on developing nations and the alternatives available for the global agricultural trade systems.

Run Ner*, 2003**

Written, directed & edited by Justice A. Whitaker, Director of photography DL Fitch, Sound Design: Justice Whitaker. This 3 minute short film that addresses the 'trap' black men experience, as they are often criminalized by society without committing any crimes. World Premiere: African Diaspora Film Festival 2006.

A selection of film & video work can be seen at: www.JusticeAWhitaker.com

Justice A. Whitaker Artist Bio: Writer/Director/Producer

Justice A. Whitaker Writer, Director and Producer. Justice is committed to telling stories of the global Black experience. He most recently directed "*Milestone Generations*" (HBO MAX) in conjunction with Ally and DC, an hour long documentary film that examines the 30 year history of Milestone Comics. He is currently Co-Directing a feature Documentary on the Full Circle Expedition, the first All Black ascent of Mount Everest in collaboration with WESTBROOK STUDIOS. He is the Creative Producer on the Feature film "*Milo*" a Sundance Producer's Lab Finalist (2021) written by friend and colleague Harry Shum Jr. He has written for Sesame Street and Moonbug Entertainment (WGA). Justice is also a professor of Non-Fiction Storytelling, and Narrative Screenwriting at Pratt University's Film School in Brooklyn, where Justice lives with his wife and fellow documentarian, Rolake Bamgbose Whitaker.

Justice Whitaker was born and raised on the sunny shores of California where he developed, at an early age, a passion for storytelling and performing arts. The son of an interracial couple, concepts of race, identity, and history were ideas that Justice began to question from an early age. In high school Justice explored photography and his passion for the camera lens drove him to New York City where he received his Bachelors degree in Film and Television Production from New York University, 2006. During his time at NYU, Justice began to focus his work and research on African and Black communities in the Diaspora while living and studying in Johannesburg, Accra, and Rio De Janiero for more than half of his undergraduate degree.

In 2007, Justice developed a video technology curricula for The Green School, which was focused on the themes of community sustainability and environmental careers. Justice implemented this program for four years and expanded the curriculum to include themes of urban sustainability, identity development, and cultural studies through media production for underrepresented youth. Justice's Video Technology program was awarded a \$10,000 dollar grant from Best Buy Tech Awards to support the program and curricula.

In the Spring of 2012 Justice conceptualized "*Aqui En Cuba*," a documentary that gives an authentic perspective to life in Cuba. The Fund for Teachers awarded \$10,000 for professional research in Cuba where the principal photography for the film was shot. In late 2013, Justice moved to Santa Fe, NM and took a position teaching cinematography, directing and documentary storytelling at Santa Fe University for Art and Design.

In 2016, Justice recorded the "*HandsUp*" song and directed the music video of the same name. Justice's solo album *Grounded*, featuring the track, was awarded Best Hip Hop Album of 2016 at the NM Music Awards, as well as nominated for Best Music Video at the Las Vegas Black Film Festival. In 2018, 2019 and 2020 Justice directed a pair of short documentaries for R.A.C.E. Matters SLO a CA based social justice organizations. "*Kut to be the Best*" and *Restrictions Apply* both premiered at the SLO International Film Festival, and "*Restrictions Apply*" went on to win an audience award as well as Best Short Doc at the Urban Media Makers Film Festival.

Justice considers himself a Transmedia artist that explores ways stories can be told across different media languages. Justice is committed to social justice through his work as an artist and is invested in influencing and sharing his craft with young creators in the interest of expanding the impact of his work.