



QUEST

A film by Jonathan Olshefski

105 min. • USA • 2017

2017 Sundance Film Festival – U.S. Documentary Competition

www.questfurysound.com

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LOGLINE

QUEST is an intimate documentary film that captures ten years in the life of an African-American family living in North Philadelphia.

SYNOPSIS

Filmed with vérité intimacy for close to a decade, QUEST is a portrait of a family in North Philadelphia. Christopher “Quest” Rainey, along with his wife Christine’a (aka “Ma Quest”), open the door to their home music studio, which serves as a creative sanctuary from the strife that grips their neighborhood. Over the years, the family evolves as everyday life brings a mix of joy and unexpected crisis. Set against the backdrop of a country now in turmoil, the film is a tender depiction of an American family whose journey is a profound testament to love, healing and hope.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film started off as a chance encounter while I was teaching a photography class in North Philadelphia a few blocks away from the Rainey's home/music studio. It is a reflection of a relationship. It mirrors the friendship that I have developed with the Rainey family and their community over the last ten years. That friendship is the most precious thing to me—the film and all that comes from it is a bonus.

I came to Philadelphia in 2000 after growing up in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is a relatively diverse town and is pretty integrated. I went to elementary school in the '80s and '90s and old school hip hop was just a part of the culture I was immersed in, even though I liked oldies at the time. Many of my classmates, my bus drivers and the recess ladies wore the gear and sang the songs. I loved so many of them and thus was imprinted positively by that world. When I came to Philly to go to Temple University I fell in love with the city, but recognized that many of its communities were really struggling. I was surprised by how segregated it was with its stark barriers between communities of different races and ethnicities. It was a contrast to my experience in Pittsburgh. I had a deep desire to see healing and connection across these artificial barriers and after graduation was searching for opportunities to make that happen. At the time, I was making experimental films and getting into photography of interesting spaces (abandoned warehouses and buildings etc.), but did not see any correlation between my art and my desire for connection. I had no interest in documentary.

When I first met Chris and Christine's Rainey (Quest and Ma Quest), I was working construction and making art on the side. When I learned about Quest's balancing of the studio and the paper delivery route I saw myself. I could relate to the juggle of the passion project and the day job. We began a photo essay project that would convey that dynamic, which led to me sleeping in their studio in order to be up and ready to join the paper route at 3am. After spending so much time with the Rainey's and their community, I quickly realized that the essential story was not the studio and the paper route, but the family and their community. I also began to realize the limits of still photography and want to find another medium that would better reflect the complexity and points of view of my subjects. This led to the decision to make my first documentary film.

Over the years I have often been asked, "What right do you have, as a white man, to make a film about a Black community?" I don't know if I am the one to answer that question. I made the film and I stand by my choices, but I don't think I have any inherent right and I am very aware of the long history of privileged filmmakers going into communities that are not their own to take stories and craft them for other audiences outside of the community. This can be an incredibly destructive process and marginalize the place and its people, especially when it is a place that was already marginalized.

Stories are incredibly powerful. Who tells them, how they are told, and who they are told to is important.

I will say that I did make this film for North Philadelphia and places like it. My original vision for the film was to use it to promote the Rainey's studio to share their message of hope and

community and to bring the film to different neighborhoods around Philly and maybe even go to other cities with the Rainey's and their artists. I could have never dreamed it would show in Sundance when making it, but my hope is that this experience enhances our ability to create a context around the film so that North Philly benefits from it. I believe that a story well-told and brought to a place in a compassionate way can build bridges and strengthen community.

Films surely reflect the voice of the director, but my goal as a director is not to just push my own personal feelings, but to reflect a respect and honor for my subjects and accurately reflect and amplify their perspectives and feelings. My only agenda is to provide viewer the opportunity to connect to these really incredible individuals and share the love that I have for them. That is what I want the viewer to take away. These are people whose voices should be heard.

- Jonathan Olshefski

FILM TEAM

Jonathan Olshefski, Director/Cinematographer

Jon Olshefski is a documentary filmmaker and artist based in Philadelphia. He strives to tell intimate and nuanced stories that honor his subjects' complexity by employing a production process that emphasizes collaboration, dialogue and relationship to amplify their voices and reflect their points of view in an artful way. Olshefski has an MFA in Film and Media Arts from Temple University and is currently an Associate Professor of Radio, TV and Film at Rowan University.

Sabrina Schmidt Gordon, Producer

Sabrina Schmidt Gordon is an award-winning documentary producer, editor and director. She is the co-producer and editor of *DOCUMENTED*, about undocumented journalist Jose Antonio Vargas, and *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*, which premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. Gordon won the award for Best Film Directed by a Woman of Color for *BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez* at the African Diaspora Film Festival, and is on the faculty at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and Columbia University.

Lindsay Utz, Editor

Lindsay Utz edited the award-winning documentary *Bully*, which was released nationally in 2012 and shortlisted for an Academy Award for Best Documentary. Her other documentary credits include the TIFF award-winning *First Position* (2011), Sundance-supported *In Country* (2014), an Emmy-nominated episode for PBS Frontline (2015), and multiple shorts for the New York Times. In 2012, Utz was named the Karen Schmeer Film Editing Fellow in honor of Errol Morris' late editor.

T. Griffin, Composer

T. Griffin has composed music for over 30 films with at least one represented at Sundance every year since 2009. Notable titles include multiple festival award-winners *Life, Animated, The Overnighters*, and *Welcome to Leith*. Griffin has worked with musical luminaries including Patti Smith, Vic Chesnutt, and members of Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Fugazi. He was a fellow at the Sundance Composer's lab in 2008 and has been nominated twice for Cinema Eye Honors.

FEATURING

Christopher Rainey
Christine'a Rainey
Patricia (PJ) Rainey
William Withers
Price

CREDITS

Director	Jonathan Olshefski
Producer	Sabrina Schmidt Gordon
Editor	Lindsay Utz
Original Music	Christopher Rainey, Everquest Recordings
Original Score	T. Griffin
Cinematography and Sound	Jonathan Olshefski
Consulting Producer	David Felix Sutcliffe
Consulting Editor	Enat Sidi
Assistant Editor	Timothy Fryett Ellen Knechel
Supervising Producer, ITVS	Michael Kinomoto
Executive Producer, ITVS	Sally Jo Fifer
Executive Producers, American Documentary POV	Justine Nagan Chris White