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Film tackling race, DNA, and American history to premiere at the Essence Film Festival

(New York - May 10, 2024) As DNA technology progresses, the ancestry of most Americans is no longer shrouded in mystery or story.

Although such knowledge of the past is empowering, the truth can be, in some families, difficult to confront.

In just 7 minutes, Adult Children of the American Revolution follows a young African American man (played by Matrell Smith) who, while researching his family tree, is met with the absurdity of slavery.

Another character, a Caucasian woman (played by Lisa Tracy), discovers that her ancestors were among his family's enslavers.

"These are the conversations people are increasingly having across the country," said Juliette Fairley, who wrote, produced, and directed the narrative short.

Fairley plays genealogist Hattie Gilchrist in the film, which is easily digestible as well as comedic, and is having its Louisiana premiere at the Essence Film Festival in July.

"I made it a drama with a touch of comedy because it's a controversial topic," she said. "I felt that it would be easier to watch if there was a spoonful of sugar."

The colorful dramedy, filmed at a church on West 15 Street in Manhattan, is based on Fairley's own ancestor search process.

After her father's premature death, she began researching on Ancestry.com with DNA test results in hand.

"I knew that my father's ancestors had been enslaved but what I didn't know is that the white enslavers were descendants of King James the 5<sup>th</sup> of Scotland and that some had served in the American Revolutionary War during the 1700s," Fairley added.

Armed with the information, she submitted her application to the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). However, she quickly learned that becoming a DAR member requires marriage, birth, and death records.

"My application has been pending for two years," Fairley said. "It's hard to prove on paper for Black Americans that you are related to these white men who served in the American Revolution. I discovered it through my DNA."

The number of African American women who are joining the DAR is on the rise nationwide. In response, the elitist organization has established an African American committee to field the applications; however, it has yet to update its membership policy to reflect the advent of Ancestry.com's DNA testing leaving Ms. Fairley without the means to prove membership.

She has written a 90 page feature that details her pursuit of the absurdity of DAR membership.

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