

PRESS KIT

THE POWER TO HEAL

A FILM BY BARBARA BERNEY

Narration by: Danny Glover

RUNNING TIME: 56 mins

2018 - United States

WEBSITE: <https://www.blbfilmproductions.com>

LOG LINE

Medicacare and the civil rights revolution.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Power to Heal is a documentary about a dramatic chapter in the historic struggle to secure equal and adequate access to healthcare for all Americans. Central to the story is how a new national program, Medicare, was used to mount a momentous, coordinated effort that desegregated thousands of hospitals across the country practically overnight.

THE POWER TO HEAL

LONG SYNOPSIS

Power to Heal is an hour-long public television documentary that tells a poignant chapter in the historic struggle to secure equal and adequate access to healthcare for all Americans. Central to the story is the tale of how a new national program, Medicare, was used to mount a dramatic, coordinated effort that desegregated thousands of hospitals across the country in a matter of months.

Before Medicare, disparities in access to hospital care were dramatic. Less than half the nation's hospitals served black and white patients equally, and in the South, 1/3 of hospitals would not admit African-Americans even for emergencies.

Using the carrot of Medicare dollars, the federal government virtually ended the practice of racially segregating patients, doctors, medical staffs, blood supplies and linens. *Power to Heal* illustrates how Civil Rights Movement leaders and grass-roots activists pressed and worked with the federal government to achieve justice and fairness for African-Americans.

Through the voices of the men and women who experienced discrimination and fought against it, *Power to Heal* introduces a broad audience to a missing link in the Civil Rights Movement -- a struggle over healthcare from a half-century ago, that raises questions that resonate today: is healthcare a human right? Must the federal government intervene to ensure equality?

THE POWER TO HEAL

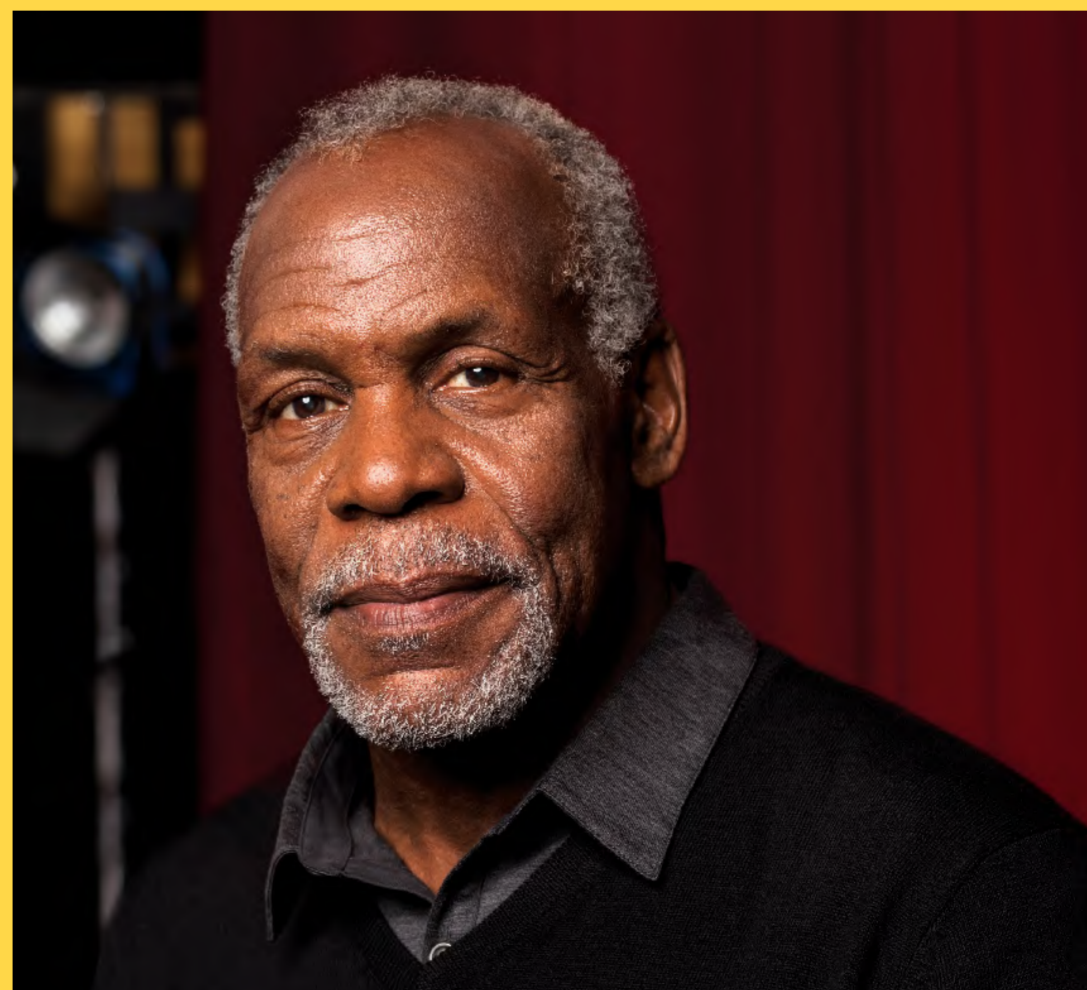
PROJECT CREATOR - PRODUCER



Dr. Barbara Berney is a distinguished scholar in public health, environmental justice, and the U.S. health care system. She is an Associate Professor at the City University of New York Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. She was inspired to produce the film after hearing eyewitness accounts from physicians, nurses and government staffers involved in the integration effort and those who struggled to provide health services to people in rural areas lacking the most basic medical care.

ON SCREEN NARRATOR

Danny Glover, is an American actor, film director, and political activist. He is well known for his leading role as Roger Murtaugh in the *Lethal Weapon* film series. He has also starred in *The Color Purple*, *To Sleep with Anger*, *Predator 2*, and *Angels in the Outfield*.



THE POWER TO HEAL

DIRECTOR



Charles Burnett won an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement in 2017. He is a renowned independent film director and producer of major award-winning documentaries and feature films including *Killer of Sheep*, which won first-place honor at the Sundance Film Festival and was declared a "national treasure" by the Library of Congress.

He has written, directed, and produced both narrative and documentary films including *To Sleep with Anger* (Independent Spirit Awards-Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor); *Nightjohn* (Special Citation Award, National Society of Film Critics); and *Selma, Lord, Selma*. Both the Louve in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York have held retrospectives of his work.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/EDITOR

Daniel Loewenthal has edited over 40 feature films. He has worked for major film studios (Paramount, Orion, Turner Productions) and independent producers (Dino Dilaurentis and Cannon films). Dan has edited in nearly every genre and format: action, comedy, independent films, music videos, commercials, infomercials, corporate videos, pieces for museum art installations and content for the web.



THE POWER TO HEAL

TEAM

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THE POWER TO HEAL

FROM BARBARA BERNEY

I was inspired to create and produce *Power to Heal* by the compelling stories of my colleague and friend, Dr. Richard Smith, who was Director of Field Operations for hospital desegregation in 1966. I had been working in public health for decades and in civil rights even before that, yet the story of hospital desegregation and its connection with Medicare was a part of America's history that I had never heard. His anecdotes were compelling and humorous. I was convinced that this little known, important and dramatic story needed to be shared with a wide audience.



I had begun thinking about how to make a documentary when a possible grant crossed my desk. Several of my colleagues at the City University of New York (Tami Gold, Gerry Openheimer, Jonathan Rosenberg) and I successfully applied for this grant, and so film-making began. This work made possible our larger request to the National Endowment for the Humanities-- co-written by Anna Reid Jhirad.

As we began research and interviews, I became more and more excited. I was drawn to the history and to the stories of those who had worked so hard to make desegregation happen. It became clearer and clearer that this was a national not just a southern story and that it had a long history, that it began long before the 1954 Brown v. Board decision and is still going on today.

In fact, this epic story is more relevant every day as we find ourselves at a critical moment in the fight for equality and access to health care. In taking a close look at how segregation was dismantled in hospitals in both the south and the north and how astonishingly successful the effort was, the film is important for activists and health professionals working in health reform today. It is the story of the people on whose shoulders we stand.

THE POWER TO HEAL

FROM DAVID BARTON SMITH, HISTORIAN



Unlike the more visible, protracted battles that took place over the integration of public accommodations, housing, and schools during the civil rights era, the parallel struggle in health care portrayed in this film was brief, quiet, private, and incomplete. Medicare came in the midst of the Civil Rights Revolution. A grass roots movement, a universal insurance program, and some courage made it possible for the federal government to end 100 years of supporting and subsidizing segregation.

Medicare changed our entire culture in terms of the way we look at diversity and how we accept it and accommodate for it. It perhaps did more for improving social justice than any other thing that happened in the 20th Century. You have to remember this was the first time that federal dollars had ever been used to seek social justice. It was a revolution. I think every revolution is always conducted by a small group of passionate, committed individuals. I think the reason why they win is there is some kind of moral force that pushes them forward and makes their position something that eventually forces the barriers down. That moral force was created by the Civil Rights Movement by individual leaders of the NAACP, by the Southern Christian Leadership Council and Martin Luther King. They were trying to save America. Their victory and the ideas and heroes that made it possible deserve celebration.

I encountered the story portrayed here assisting as an expert witness in two class action law suits--one involving discrimination in access to nursing home care and one involving the failure to monitor health facility compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. My fascination with the importance of this long ignored part of our history led to research supported by a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Research Investigator Award and to collaborating with Barbara Berney in the production of this documentary. The book that grew out of this, *The Power to Heal: Civil Rights, Medicare and the Struggle to Transform America's Health System* (Vanderbilt Press, 2016), won the Goldberg Prize for the best book in medicine that year. The release of this elegant documentary that can engage a much broader audience at this critical time in our on-going national debate about health care is a dream come true.

THE POWER TO HEAL

REVIEWS

"Having spent most of my career studying the civil rights movement, I assumed that I was well informed about its many dimensions. But watching *Power to Heal* was a revelation to me. The film is a fascinating and instructive story about the long American struggle for social justice."

Clayborne Carson, Professor of History, Founding Director, The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, Stanford University

"What a wonderful film. This chronicle of the leadership of black physicians, nurses, and dentists with their white allies should be shown to each entering class in US health professional training programs. It is a glorious story of this enduring struggle for equality with an important victory along the way. *Power to Heal* is full of lessons for today's students, their clinical colleagues, and professors as we try to cope with the current situation that would take us back to this cold dark past."

Dr. Peter Orris, Professor and Chief of Service, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System

"*Power to Heal* has a critically important yet heretofore untold story to tell. And it does so in a way that is both painstakingly accurate and profoundly moving. The range of historical film footage and interviews is remarkable."

Paula Braveman, Professor, Family and Community Medicine, Director, Center on Social Disparities in Health, University of California, San Francisco

"*Power to Heal* shows both the destructive legacy of racism in American health care and the potential for collective action to redress these wrongs. We should be inspired by Medicare's role in desegregating our nation's hospitals, and should insist on further reform - like improved Medicare for all - to address the systemic racism that plagues patients of color to this day."

Dr. Claudia Fegan, National Coordinator, Physicians for a National Health Program

THE POWER TO HEAL

REVIEWS

"*Power To Heal* is long overdue. It unearths another painful past - racial segregation and discrimination in healthcare during Jim Crow, resulting in Blacks being denied basic medical care. This is a must see. It's riveting from start to finish."

Michele Goodwin, Director, Center for Biotechnology and Global Health Policy, Professor of Law, University of California - Irvine

"A powerful documentary. A moving story of the twin struggles for racial justice and health care, and how the two struggles intersect. This is an important film because the struggles for racial justice and access to health care continue."

Alan Goodman, Professor of Biological Anthropology, Hampshire College, Past President, American Anthropological Association

"An outstanding presentation...Brings this history to light. It is critical to view this film to see how a powerful movement brought needed change to American healthcare. This film should be seen by citizens everywhere and shown in every classroom."

Janet Golden, Professor Emerita of History, Rutgers University - Camden, Author, *Babies Made Us Modern: How Infants Brought America Into the Twentieth Century*

"A powerful film offering deep and accurate insight into our nation's history regarding racial segregation in health care delivery and health policy. A great tool to teach students, policy workers and those simply interested in gaining a better understanding of our country's sordid past regarding racism and health inequity. This film serves as an important reminder and lesson - of where we've come from and the power of grass-roots activism - for those of us in the fight to achieve health equity amidst the current day challenges in our society."

Dr. Rachel Hardeman, Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management, University of Minnesota School of Public Health

THE POWER TO HEAL

REVIEWS

"Many unsung heroes of health care and civil rights history appear on camera here for the first time, along with extensive archival footage on medical discrimination and the contentious passage of Medicare. The story it tells reminds us how far we have come, but also how far we have to go to end racial inequality in health care. The film should be of great interest to community groups that advocate for equal rights and health care for all, and will be a valuable teaching tool for university-level courses in civil rights and public health history."

Beatrix Hoffman, Professor of History, Northern Illinois University, Author, Health Care for Some: Rights and Rationing in the United States since 1930

"A remarkable film...Essential viewing for anyone interested in the deeper conversations about health disparities and the pursuit of equality today."

Michael Olender, Manager of Outreach and Advocacy, AARP North Carolina

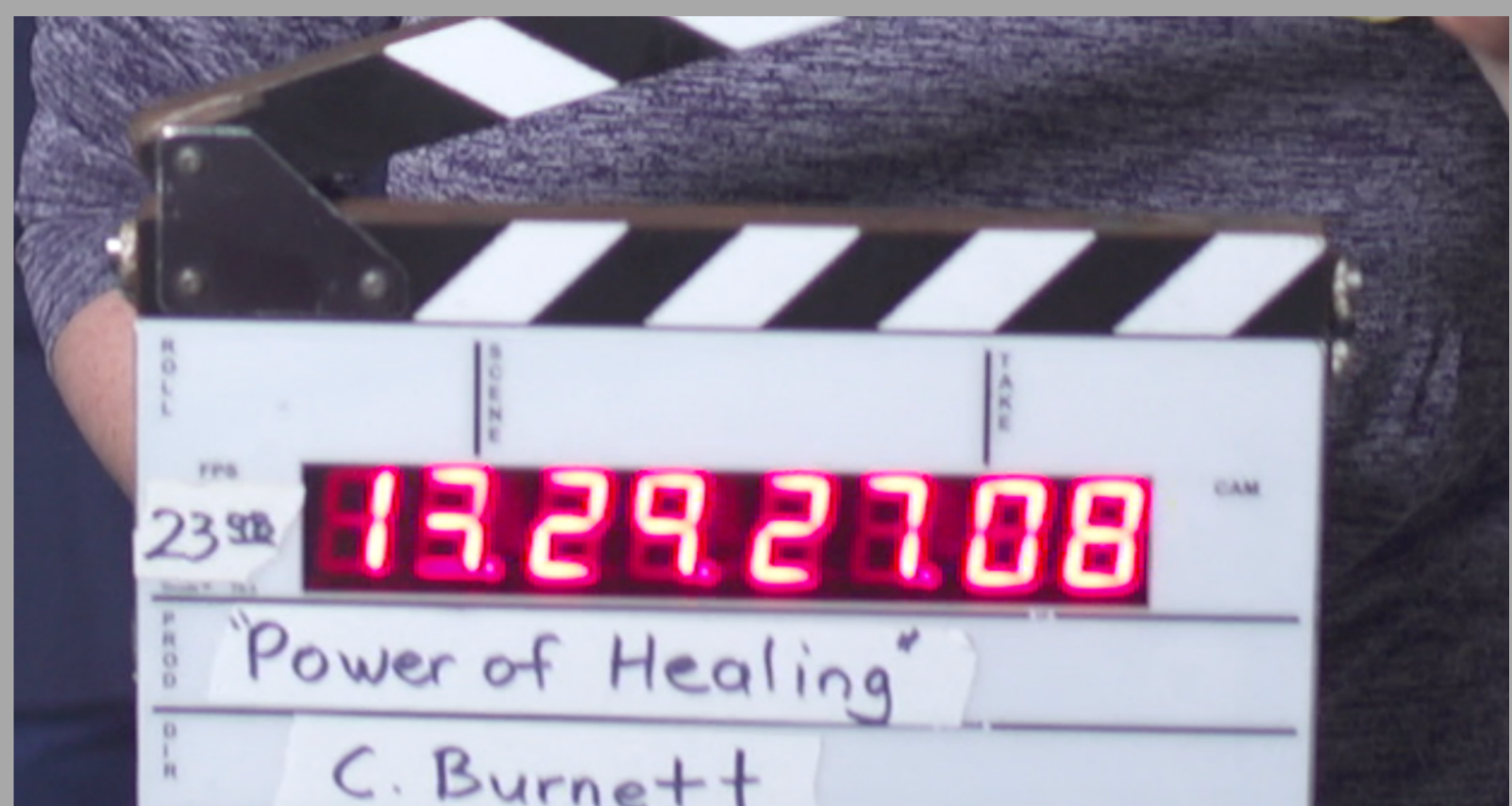
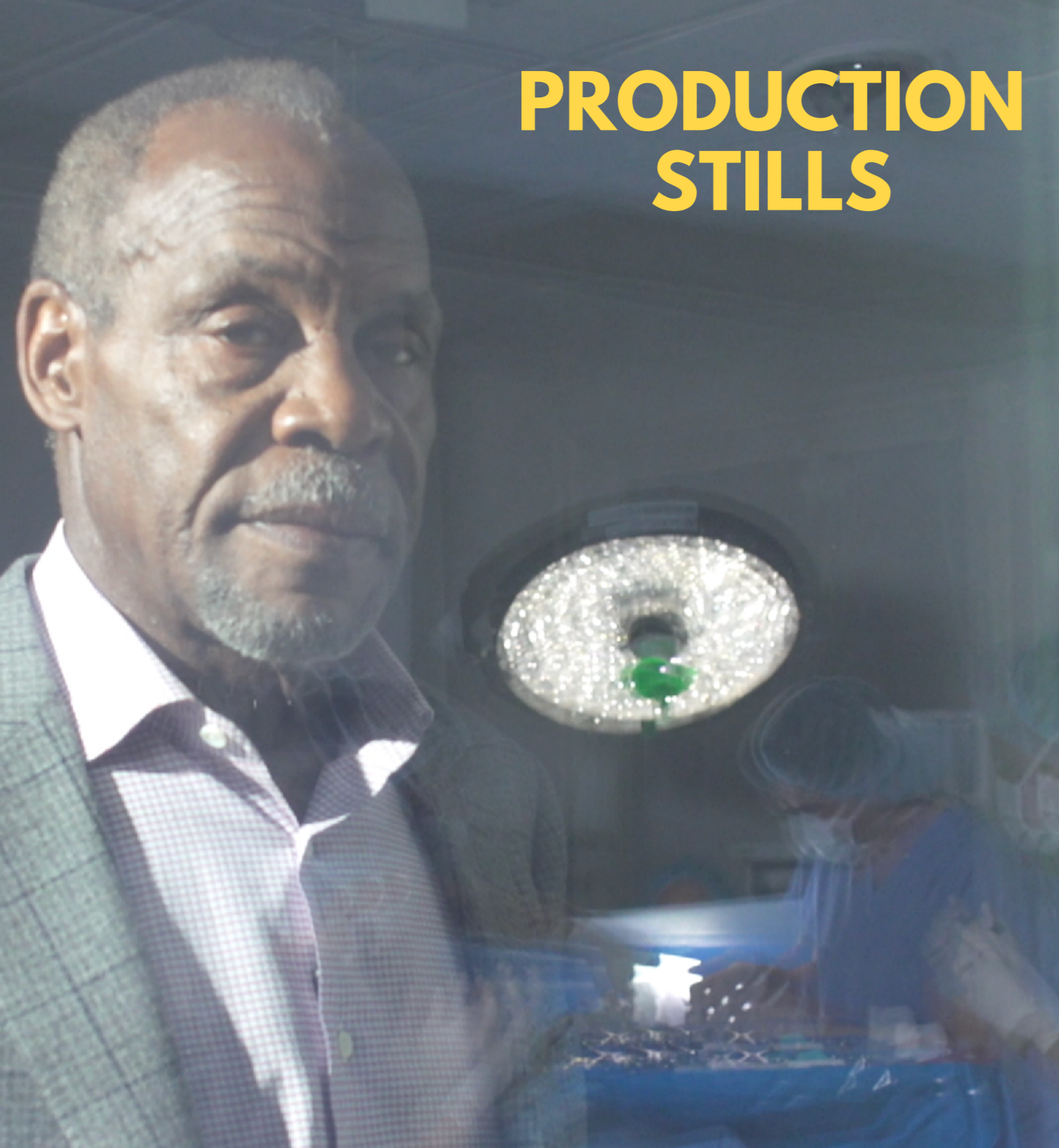
"It is essential that students and young physicians from all backgrounds know their history and how our profession both supported and worked to dismantle segregated healthcare in our country. This is a critical film that not only speaks to a time that has passed in our American history; it foreshadows to the present. Segregated healthcare still persists and is highly invisible in this country - except to the people who experience the ills of it. And so this film challenges us all as physicians and soon-to-be physicians to recognize that our collective work to ensure justice in health must always move beyond our typical work within hospital walls."

Aletha Maybank, Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Director, Center for Health Equity



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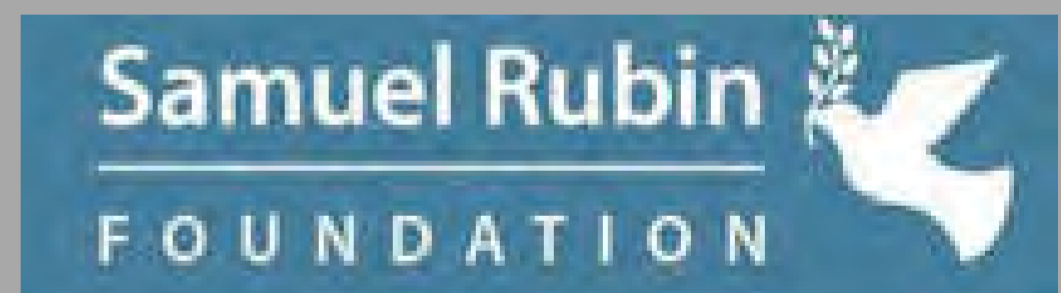
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