

A FILM BY **TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA**

BRICK BY BRICK

PRESS KIT

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RAMON VASQUEZ

DAVID SHAKES

JOHNNY O'NEAL

DEB MAISHA

DIANE CHEVRON

MARIA VEGA

TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA

EMMETT MICHIE

BRIAN HEWITT



A FILM BY **TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA**

BRICK BY BRICK

FILM SCORE SEAN JEFFERSON

ORIGINAL MUSIC JOHNNY O'NEAL

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MANOJH REDDY

EDITED BY FRAAZ KHAN

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR BRIAN HEWITT

PRODUCED BY TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA AND MICKY LEVY

CO-PRODUCED BY MARINA VISCUN

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA

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FILM INFORMATION

Logline: A young brick mason comes to the big city to rebuild his relationship with the father he thought he knew.

Length: 00:16:53
Genre: drama, coming of age, period 1941
Language: English
Captions: Available for deaf or hard of hearing viewers
Audience: PG

FILM FORMATS AVAILABLE:

Stereo:
Codec - H.264
Aspect ratio - 2.35:1
Resolution - 1920x1080
Framerate - 23.976

DCP:
Format: QUICKTIME
Codec: DNxHR
Type: DNxHR HQ 8-bit
Aspect ratio - 2.39:1
Resolution - 2048x858
Framerate - 24.00fps
Surround Sound 5:1

TRAILER:

Private link: https://vimeo.com/361673626
Password: 1941OHIO

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/tinachapmandacosta
Diversity Theater: https://www.rit.edu/diversity/diversitytheater
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/brickbybrickthefilm/
IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8457758/?ref_=nm_knf_i2

SYNOPSIS

SHORT

Nineteen year old brick mason Elza “Buddy” Cannaday, leaves his small town and comes to Cleveland in 1941 in search of his father, presumed dead after a riot in Springfield, Ohio 8-years ago. Buddy must navigate the trappings of a big city and transcend rejection and painful family secrets in his attempt to rebuild his relationship with the father he thought he knew. Based on true events.

MEDIUM

Take the journey with Buddy, a 19-year-old brick mason and farmer, as he confronts numerous systemic obstacles, leaving the comforts of a small farm in Urbana, Ohio, and experiencing city life in 1941 Cleveland. He is in pursuit of reconnecting with his father, presumed dead after a race riot in their small town. Based on a true story, screenwriter and director Tina Chapman DaCosta tells the compelling story of her father, young Elza “Buddy” Cannaday, who became the first licensed and bonded African American contractor in Cleveland, Ohio, circa 1950’s. Buddy must navigate the trappings of a big city and transcend rejection and painful family secrets in his attempt to rebuild his relationship with the father he thought he knew. The film takes you, the viewer, back to 1941 experiencing an after-hours smoky abode, jazz music of the time, and significant conversation with a cameo appearance by jazz pianist Johnny O’Neal, who resurrects his role as Art Tatum from the film *Ray*.

LONG

Take the journey with Buddy, a 19-year-old brick mason and farmer, as he confronts numerous systemic obstacles, leaving the comforts of a small farm in Urbana, Ohio, and experiencing city life in 1941 Cleveland. He is in pursuit of reconnecting with his father, presumed dead after a race riot in their small town. Based on a true story, screenwriter and director Tina Chapman DaCosta tells the compelling story of her father, young Elza “Buddy” Cannaday, who became the first licensed and bonded African American contractor in Cleveland, Ohio, circa 1950’s. Buddy dreamt of being a brick mason like his grandfather and uncles in Springfield, Ohio in the 1930’s. He even considered being a baseball player like his father Elzie who played centerfield for semi-pro team Eddie’s Tailors. Tragically, in one night he loses his family in a race riot and quickly relocates to a farm outside of town. After several years, he discovers his father is alive, and leaves the farm to find his father in Cleveland, Ohio. Buddy must navigate the trappings of a big city and transcend rejection and painful family secrets in his attempt to rebuild his relationship with the father he thought he knew. The film takes you, the viewer, back to 1941 experiencing an after-hours smoky abode, jazz music of the time, and significant conversation with a cameo appearance by jazz pianist Johnny O’Neal, who resurrects his role as Art Tatum from the film *Ray*. The film presents a snapshot view of Buddy’s life and inspires audiences to review snapshots of their lives as we work to build more inclusive communities today.













DIRECTOR
TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA

Tina Chapman DaCosta has been called a “renaissance woman.” She has worked as a diversity consultant, college professor, actor, filmmaker and computer engineer. Tina is the Director of Diversity Theater at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in the Office for Diversity and Inclusion. RIT Diversity Theater is a college-wide program, for RIT’s 23,000 faculty, staff and students from 100 nations. The program presents interactive learning programs using film and theatre to advance equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) education and community building.

Tina has worked as a diversity consultant in EDI since 1998. Her specialty is writing, directing and producing EDI training programs utilizing performance and visual arts to engage participants in active learning to achieve sustainable culture change. Some of her methods include film, Playback Theatre, vignettes and reader’s theatre. She is the recipient and presenter of several grants and conference presentations for advancing EDI initiatives, these include:

- The Forum for Workplace Inclusion conference presenter (2018),
- RIT president’s grant (2017),
- Howard Hughes Medical Institute Inclusive Excellence grant (2017-2022),
- Community Summit on Race conference presenter (2017),
- National Science Foundation and ADVANCE Connect Grant (2016), and
- International Museum and Theater Alliance (IMTAL) conference presenter (2015).



Tina began her acting training as a child at the legendary Karamu House in Cleveland, Ohio and performed in school and community theatre as well as commercials. She earned a Master of Fine Arts in Film & Animation, concentration in Scriptwriting in 2014 from RIT. Her latest film project is *Brick By Brick*. Written and directed by Tina, this 16-minute film set in 1941 Cleveland, Ohio, tells the story of Tina’s father, Elza Buddy Cannaday, and his attempt to rebuild his relationship with his father as he becomes the first licensed and bonded African American contractor in Cleveland. Tina has also written a feature length script about her father’s life. Three of Tina’s plays were selected for the Rochester, NY Sankofa Play Festival : *Gone Fishing*, *Afternoon Tea and The Release*. Her student documentary film *Remembering The Pythood*, about a legendary jazz club in Rochester, NY, was selected for the 2013 High Falls Film Festival.

Tina has been a professor at RIT since 2002 in the Golisano College of Computing (GCCIS) and the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). As an assistant professor, she helped create the Network, Security, and Systems Administration Department in GCCIS and was nominated for the Eisenhart Award for Outstanding Teaching. In addition to directing Diversity Theater, Tina currently teaches acting, directing, and film production as a senior lecturer in RIT’s School of Film and Animation and CLA.

Before becoming a professor, Tina worked as a Systems Engineer and Marketing Programs Manager for IBM. She designed and supported local and wide area networks for Fortune 500 companies and educational institutions. She was recognized with several IBM awards, the Golden Circle, Marketing Excellence, Inroads Business Advisor of the Year, and the Difference Maker Award.

In addition to an MFA in Film and Animation, Tina earned degrees in Master of Science in Engineering, Product Development from RIT College of Engineering and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, minor in Computer Science from The College at Brockport, graduating with a 4.0 GPA.

Tina is married to Jose DaCosta and deeply grateful for their blended family of ten children and grandchildren.







PRODUCER
MICKY LEVY



An award-winning screenwriter, accomplished director and producer, Levy is a perpetual student of the human condition. She is able to navigate gender, race, sex, and ethnicity via pen and via lens to allow audiences into the hidden, foreign, and often marginalized places of society, and is able to do so in an entertaining way.

Born in Israel, Levy immigrated to the United States at the age of 17. Arriving in Los Angeles with only $700 to her name, she immersed herself in her passion for filmmaking and television. That dedication paid off.

Levy caught the eye of Alison Eastwood and Warner Bros. with a script she wrote entitled *Rails & Ties*. Directed by Eastwood, the film starred Kevin Bacon and Marcia Gay Harden. It premiered domestically in the Telluride Film Festival and overseas at the acclaimed Toronto International Film Festival.

Since then, Levy has completed several book adaptations, including Lifetime's *Amish Grace* for which she received a Humanitas Prize nomination.

Other adaptations include: *Nobody*, from the award-winning book *Dancing in the Dark* by Caryl Phillips,
The Coincidence Makers from a best-selling novel by Israeli author Yuav Blum, and *Stolen Waters* from the Romanian short story collection by Ada Shauluv.

Levy's directorial work in film includes the documentary short, *First Time*, lensed by Svetlana Cvetko, and the narrative short, *Page's Great and Grand Escape*, which played at over thirty film festivals and was distributed by Virgin Produced, and the short thriller *Union*, starring Sean Patrick Thomas.

Recently, Micky produced the short film *Brick by Brick* with writer/ director Tina Chapman DaCosta.

Currently, Levy is developing *Songs of Maasai Mara* with Kenyan screenwriter Correne Gichuru, and PARAS, a sci-fi/ horror feature film.

The driving force behind Levy's writing is telling compelling stories that expose injustice and follow rebellious, non-conformist, principled characters that powerfully connect with audiences.

Selected Screenwriting Awards & Recognition: Humanitas Prize nomination (90-minutes category); Film Independent Screenwriting Lab Fellow; Movieguide Awards' Epiphany Prize; Columbus Award; Top Ten Tony Cox Showtime Screenplay Competition; 1st Place Scriptapalooza Television Writing Competition (original pilot); Cinequest Screenwriting Competition Semi-Finalist.



Director Tina Chapman DaCosta and producer Micky Levy discuss a shot on the set of BRICK BY BRICK. Photo by Denise Logan.



CO-PRODUCER
MARINA VISCUN

Marina Viscun is an award-winning Moldovan-American filmmaker living and working in Los Angeles, CA. Her range of experience includes television, film, digital, branded entertainment, and music videos. Marina's approach toward filmmaking combines her personal and professional experiences as an immigrant, US Navy veteran, higher-education instructor, and long- and short-form content creator. As a producer, she has been honored with two Telly Awards: Bronze for PBS-released "*Big Voice*" documentary in 2018 and Silver for "*Journey to Safety*" PSA in 2012. In addition, "*Big Voice*" has also garnered other awards, like Best US Documentary Premiere by Heartland Film Festival 2015, Best Documentary of 2015 by NewFilmmakers LA 2015, and Best Family Feature from South Dakota Film Festival 2015, while "*Ode to Los Angeles*" received Grand Jury and Audience Awards from NewFilmmakers LA in 2011. Marina's writing has also seen success: her feature "*Seeds*" was 1st round finalist at the Sundance Screenwriting Lab in 2016 and semi-finalist at The Athena List 2018, and her TV pilot "*Dress Blues*" was named quarter-finalist in the Big Break Final Draft 2017.

Marina is the President of Pingvin Productions, Founder and Host of #WeAreWITI, and is a member of the Producers Guild of America, Alliance of Women Directors, Women in Media, and Veterans in Media and Entertainment. She serves as the member of the Diversity and Education Committees and Women Impact Network with the PGA West, and as the Newsletter Editor and Communication Committee member with the AWD. Marina has served as the Chair of the Events and Programming Committee with NewFilmmakers LA and Operations Co-Director for San Pedro International Film Festival. She likes chocolate, animals, traveling, good company, and is a US veteran.

Manojh's proficiency includes storytelling in the form of Cinematography. He is highly proficient with Arri, Red, Blackmagic, Sony and the Canon domain of cameras. Using the latest tools, Manojh's artistry constantly paints pictures with light, color and compositions and beautifully captures the director's story and vision. Manojh completed his MFA in Film and Animation at Rochester Institute of technology, Rochester, NY.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
MANOJH REDDY





Fraaz Khan is a film editor based in Los Angeles. He received an MFA in Film and Animation from the Rochester Institute of Technology. With a focus on storytelling, Fraaz weaves together stories that transcend audiences into breathtaking experiences and emotions.

EDITOR
FRAAZ KAHN

CAST



BUDDY
RAMON VASQUEZ*



ELZIE
DAVID SHAKES



ART TATUM
JOHNNY O'NEAL



GLORIA
DIANE CHEVRON



ANNA
MARIA VEGA



JULIA
DEB MAISHA



TONI
TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA*



POLICE OFFICE #1
EMMETT MICHIE



POLICE OFFICER #2
BRIAN HEWITT*

Julia's Place Patrons:
ROSALEE BEDIAN, MERLE HEATH, JUANITA MONTOYA, DJED SNEAD, KATHERINE DACOSTA, WILLIAM TURNER, ALMETA WHITIS

Brick Masons:
EDISON TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL MASONRY CLASS 2019
INSTRUCTOR: RICHARD SCHMITT
BRICK MASONS: KEISEAN JOHNSON, QUERON JENKINS, TRESURE MIYOUKURU, JOEL KINGSLEY



ELZIE
DAVID A. SHAKES

David A. Shakes, born in Philadelphia, PA, was raised in Brooklyn, NY, where his interest in dramatic arts was nurtured as a young student. David continued his work as a young adult during the Black Arts Movement of the late 60's and early 70's and became one of the founding members of the Spirit House Movers and Players, a prominent theatre company that presented dramatic and poetic works around the country, under the direction of Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones). During that time, he worked and studied with many dramatists and authors including Haki Mhadabuti, Woodie King, Jr. and Yusef Iman; he also studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Mr. Shakes is a long-time resident of Rochester and has worked with numerous theatres in the Rochester community as an actor, director, guest artist, and producer in performances and productions that have received critical as well as public acclaim. At GeVa Theatre, he acted in, as well as consulted in the mounting of August Wilson's Century. He also was a contributing artist at the JCC Centerstage, Shipping Dock, Blackfriars, RAPA, Downstairs Cabaret Theatre and Rochester Community Players. In addition, Mr. Shakes founded the Village theatre where he showcased many budding, local actors. Currently, he is artistic director of the North Star Players.

Mr. Shakes is an actor in local films and advertising campaigns and is a historical interpreter of such persons as Langston Hughes, William Wells Brown, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Frederick Douglass. Douglass' words are particularly inspiring and relevant and his message of dignity, justice, and freedom rings throughout the ages. The study, coaching, and presentation of the works of Frederick Douglass are especially important and ongoing work for him.

Mr. Shakes is a graduate of Empire State College and Syracuse University's School of Social Work. He is a retired Rochester City School District social worker.



BUDDY
RAMON EMILIO VASQUEZ

Ramon describes himself as a Dominican-American filmmaker, actor and writer. Born in Brooklyn, NY to immigrant parents, Ramon is grateful for his family's sacrifices to afford him opportunities in the U.S. His specialty is bridging the gap between the sender and receiver in effective media communications. He is currently working on a documentary to advance mental health awareness.
Ramon earned his Bachelors in Film and Animation from Rochester Institute of Technology in 2018. A former acting student of Tina Chapman DaCosta at RIT's School of Film and Animation, Ramon is deeply grateful to portray Tina's father in BRICK BY BRICK, a heartfelt short film written and directed by Tina.

Some of Ramon's work experiences include:

Videographer/Editor: Generation Outreach - Rochester, NY; May 2018 to May 2019
Responsible for running multiple programs teaching high school students how to create their own film productions from planning to editing and every crew position in between. The programs also required me to interview all the students and edit together videos.

Director of Marketing: HiBeams - Rochester; August 2017 - May 2019
Joined a start-up while attending college and crafted their brand from market testing into product development. The company was created in part through the Rochester Institute of Technology which sponsored us in business competitions.

Videographer: Reporter Magazine - Rochester, NY; August 2017 to May 2018
Produced and captured video content for monthly issues ranging from political to societal issues. Conducted interviews and b-roll for editors to include in online medium.

Videographer: CampusReel - Rochester, NY; August 2016 to May 2018
One of their freelance videographers dedicated to capturing college life in videos and vlogs for future students to consider when choosing their college.





ART TATUM
JOHNNY O'NEAL

Johnny O'Neal is an American neo-bop jazz pianist and vocalist. His playing ranges from the technically virtuosic to the tenderest of ballad interpretations. Though unique in style, he is influenced by many jazz elders, including Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum. He has led many recording dates with musicians such as Russell Malone and many others. He was a 1997 inductee of the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame.

In 1974, O'Neal moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where he worked as a full-time musician. In Birmingham he worked with local jazz musicians, such as Jerry Grundhofer, Dave Amaral, Cleveland Eaton, and Ray Reach. He moved to New York City to perform with Clark Terry in 1981, and also landed a regular job at the Blue Note, accompanying such musicians as Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Brown, Nancy Wilson, Joe Pass and Kenny Burrell. He was a member of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers for two years from 1982 to 1983 and made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1985.

On the recommendation of Oscar Peterson, O'Neal portrayed Art Tatum in the 2004 movie Ray, recreating Tatum's sound on the song "Yesterdays".
A 2006 DVD Tight, captured O'Neal at the height of his powers. Included is an interview with pianist Mulgrew Miller, who stated,
"In my generation of musicians there are two who are probably the most naturally talented. They both happen to be from Detroit. One is Kenny Garrett, the well-known saxophonist. The other is pianist Johnny O'Neal."









GLORIA
DIANE CHEVRON

Dubbed "a local theatre legend" by Rochester's City Paper, Diane has graced the stage of nearly every Rochester theatre. Diane is an award winning actor and director, and has played roles from villain to stripper, in performances ranging from high comedy to serious drama. She spent many years of her career on the road starring in classic musicals and many children's productions.

Diane has been awarded several TANYS (Theatre Association of New York State) honors for The Queen of Bingo, Save Me a Place at Forest Lawn, Jake's Women, The Mousetrap, Love Letters and True West among others. As part of the International High Falls Film Festival, Chevron was in the feature films Signs of Undoing, The Big Bit and Smoking Laws which were screened at the Little Theatre. Diane was also the female lead in Tug of War, a short film written and directed by local playwright, Laurie Stone, which premiered at the Cinema Theater and went on to the Sundance Festival in Utah. She has also written, directed and performed in several musical revues and is the co-founder of the cabaret group CITY SIX.

When she is not on stage, Diane is participating in planning fundraising events for various charities. She has raised millions of dollars to help people in this community. One of her favorite events is Epilepy/Pralid's Chocolate Ball. It started in the late 80's with Diane and four women who also became her mentors in Charity work, and had what she calls "a crazy idea." The event has evolved over the years, but is still going strong. She was honored at the 25th Anniversary of the event, and she says today being honored at the event is one of her favorite accolades. She is also passionate about her work with HPA (Helping People with Aids) and now Trillium, which she says is her most rewarding volunteer role.

She is working on a 3-person play, The Last Romance by Joe DiPietro. VARIETY said of the play: "The boulevard comedy gets a shot in the arm. Remarkably free of cliché...the golden-years love story casts a bewitching spell. It should enjoy a long life." She is also working on an autobiography, although she jokes that the only people who will read it are those "afraid they are in it."



TONI
TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA

Tina began her acting training as a child at the legendary Karamu House in Cleveland, Ohio and performed in school and community theatre. In college she abandoned her interests in the performing arts for computer science, a more “serious career” she surmised. Over time, Tina trusted her inner calling and developed a rewarding career that combined her interests in technology and the arts. Tina is currently the Director of Diversity Theater at RIT in the Office for Diversity and Inclusion. Diversity Theater is a college-wide program, for RIT’s 23,000 faculty, staff and students from across 100 nations. The program presents interactive learning workshops using film and theatre for advancing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) education and community building.

In addition to training at Karamu Playhouse, Tina studied acting at Geva Theatre’s Enterprise Zone, RIT School of Film and Animation, and RAPA School of Performing Arts. She earned degrees in Master of Fine Arts in Film and Animation from RIT’s School of Film and Animation, Master of Science in Engineering, Product Development from RIT’s School of Engineering, and Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, minor in Computer Science from The College at Brockport, graduating with a 4.0 GPA.

Tina’s acting credits include:

FILM:

- Brick by Brick (Toni), Writer, Director, Producer
- The Release (Wife)
- King’s Faith, The Trailer (Vanessa)
- Sticks and Stones (Dolores/Mother)
- Van Putti Gardens Commercial (Shopper)
- Doan Car Commercial (Customer)
- Frontier Telephone Commercial, Infatino Associates (Friend)
- Time Warner YNN Commercial (Client)
- Corporate Training Films by Media Center (News Reporter, Bank Representative, Bank Manager, Narrator)

THEATRE:

- Blues for Mister Charlie (Juanita)
- Me and My Girl (The Hon. Mae Miles, Ensemble), Rochester Association of Performing Arts
- Joe Turner Come and Gone (Martha Pentecost), Rochester Association of Performing Arts
- Intimate Apparel (Mayme), Jewish Community Theatre
- For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuf (The Lady in Green)
- TALK (Pepper), The Sankofa Play Festival
- The Case of The Missing Pearls (Detective), Director, Writer, AKA Sorority National Convention
- The Release (Wife), Director, Writer, Theatre One Play Festival
- Afternoon Tea, The Prequel (Jackie), Director, Writer, Theatre One Play Festival
- Afternoon Tea (Jackie), Director, Writer, Theatre One Play Festival
- Gone Fishing, (Mother), Director, Writer, Theatre One Play Festival
- The Best of One and Another, Director, Writer, Actor, Rochester Boule’
- The Flava of Jazz (Toni), Imani Theatre Ensemble
- Put That Woman First (Peaches), Imani Theatre Ensemble
- IBM Business Shows, IBM Corporation, Doswell Productions, NY (Actor)

























PRODUCTION CREW

Writer, Director, Producer	TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA*
Producer	MICKY LEVY
Director of Photography	MANOJH REDDY*
Gaffer	KRISTOPHER HURYSZ*
Production Designer	THERESA PIERCE
Co-Producer	MARINA VISCUN
Line Producer	JENNA CIGANEK*
Assistant Director	BRIAN HEWITT*
Assistant Camera	JACOB MALLIN*
	APRIL EDQUIBAN*
Grips	NATE BELLAVIA*
	BO GAO*
Wardrobe	EMMA BELAIR*
Makeup	ANELI CAMPOS-ANDRADE*
Hair Stylist	RUTHIEA MONSON
Production Sound	SHELBY WILSON*
Boom Operator	CREIGHTON YANCHAR*
Script Supervisor	DANIEL LATOURETTE*
Craft Services	JENNIFER CONNELLY
Catering	FUSION 4 CAFE
Stills Photographer	DENISE LOGAN
Production Assistants	VICTORIA MILLER
	JORDAN WILLIAMS*
Front Office	NEC ENTERPRISES

SECOND UNIT CREW

Director of Photography	BO GAO*
Production Sound	BRIAN HEWITT*
Brick Masonry Consultant	RICHARD SCHMITT

POSTPRODUCTION TEAM

Postproduction Supervisor	TINA CHAPMAN DACOSTA*
Postproduction Supervisor	MICKY LEVY
Editor	FRAAZ KHAN*
Composer	SEAN JEFFERSON
Color Editor	MANOJH REDDY*
Visual Effects Artist	PAUL BENNS*
Sound Designer	VICKY MEJIA YEPES*
Assistant Sound Designer	ALEX GILROY*
DCP Conversion	ANDREW SEVIGNY*
	AMANDA KEARNEY*
	CREIGHTON YANCHAR*
Captions	AJ POW*
End Credits	CANNADAY CHAPMAN
	FRAAZ KHAN*

Audio Post Production by Monkeyland Audio, Inc.

Sound Effects Editor	K. JOSHUA FERNBERG
Assistant Sound Editor	AMANDA ZOHAR
Post Sound Coordinator	ROB EMBREY
VP Post Production Services	MICHAEL TOJI
Re-Recording Mixer	JAMES PARNELL

Original music by Johnny O'Neal, Sean Jefferson and George Caldwell.

*RIT students or alumni at the time of filming.





Director Tina Chapman DaCosta answers audience questions during a screening of BRICK BY BRICK at Rochester Institute of Technology, while her former film school advisor, retired RIT professor Howard Lester, looks on.
Photo by Devon Watters

Seven Most Frequently Asked Questions to Director Tina Chapman DaCosta

Regarding the Making of BRICK BY BRICK

1. What was your inspiration for writing BRICK BY BRICK?

My father died of a rare strand of Leukemia in 2006. When I got the call from my sister about dad's diagnosis, I was sitting in my office preparing to teach a night class in computer networks. I couldn't drop everything and drive to Cleveland so I decided to write some of his childhood stories he told me when I was growing up. I thought his stories might cheer him up until I got there. I quickly wrote a 20-page collection of his stories and farm jokes and faxed it to his hospital. There wasn't much email communications happening at that time. My father passed 6-weeks later. I've been writing about his life ever since. His story is so fascinating to me. A person who overcame many challenges during the Great Depression and working in the Jim Crow North. He became the first licensed and bonded African American contractor in Cleveland, getting into the bricklayers union, building homes for those who couldn't afford them, having his own construction business and building the Blue Goose Roller Skating Rink in the heart of downtown Cleveland; as he described it, "putting the whole neighborhood to work." Dad was a great humanitarian, he understood the importance of putting family first and young men having good role models. He was a good role-model for me too.

2. How did you get the funding?

I was asked to pilot a new program at my university, Diversity Theater. It was a concept, the former Chief Diversity Officer at RIT, and I discussed about 3-years prior. Kevin found out about my diversity consulting work and encouraged me to use these talents at RIT. Our provost's office learned of our "concept" and asked me to begin the program. Our small team of 2-3 people decided to do a play reading and suggested we use my MFA thesis feature script BRICK BY BRICK, called BRICK WALLS at that time.

The 90-minute table reading was a success. The President of the university attended and after the show commented, "This story has so much humanitarianism. What do we need to do to produce this at RIT?" I followed up with a proposal, identifying resources needed, and to develop a course to teach the preproduction work and hire the students at the end of the semester as crew. My proposal was accepted. I taught the course in the Spring 2018 and the production and postproduction work was completed in 2019.

3. What was it like making a film with students?

I had to remind myself, there is another goal, an educational goal for the crew. About 90% of the crew were students or recent RIT alumni with varying levels of ability. The preproduction work took longer than expected. Students, not being from Rochester or not accustomed to diligently seeking services, e.g., finding ways to not take "no" for an answer when asking, "can we shoot on your property," "use your one of a kind vintage automobile," etc. I suggest having a separate instructor and director because they have two different focuses. There are always challenges to authority working as a woman director or African American director and instructor with students who are not accustomed to seeing you in these roles. We overcame them, and I capitalized on the teachable moments. All in all, the students did amazing work. My cinematographer, Manojh Reddy, had recently graduated from our film school with his MFA. Manojh's work is amazingly beautiful and poignant. He worked with my gaffer Kristopher Hurysz, an undergraduate student in our film school, they captured the feel of a smoky abode inside the after-hours place and the homey feeling in the dining room scenes. You get to know the students and sometimes make lasting friendships.

4. **How did you get the classic cars? Rochester, NY may be the birthplace of American cinema but it's not a hub for filmmaking especially for a period film.**

Through my producer Micky Levy. I met Micky the year before through a mutual friend. She told me about her amazing filmmaker daughter-in-law in L.A. Micky agreed to give me feedback on my script. This relationship grew into Micky doing a few Skype meetings with my students and offering to produce BRICK BY BRICK. Before Micky got off the plane in Rochester, she had secured 4-cars for the film. Micky used social media, classic car clubs and whatever contacts she found to get the cars. I was ready to settle for one car and shoot it at different angles to give the impression we had more than one car. On the first day of outdoor shooting, we were setting up for the opening scene of Buddy hitchhiking. The road was blocked and we had one car waiting for the shoot to start. Somehow a car came down the road. As it got closer, I saw it was a classic car, a 1935 Ford Roadster. I flagged it down, and asked the couple inside, "Would you like to be in a movie?" The couple was so gracious. And that became our bonus fifth car. Another car was from the Black Bottom Distillery company, a current Rochester business. We kept the logo on the car. The car fit perfectly as Elzie's moonshine business car.

5. What were some of your biggest barriers producing BRICK BY BRICK?

Staying confident. This was my first film after film school. I was a new director attempting to create a film at my university, something that had not been done this way before, through the Office for Diversity and Inclusion. Once I got the funding, I felt compelled to execute a perfect project. But I couldn't guarantee I could do it. I had several consultations with Brian, a seasoned filmmaker and adjunct professor in the film school. We were 6-weeks out from shooting, and Brian gently pointed out a few major items I didn't have: classic cars, a 1930's kitchen for the kitchen scenes, a location for the after-hours scenes. Yes, all major items that would make or break the believability of a period film. I decided not to shoot. I thought it would be better to not waste the university's money. However, this meant the money would not be used, because it was so late in the fiscal year; sort of like burying it in the ground. I went into my prayer closet to pray (it's just a regular closet with clothes and shoes, but for some reason I like to close the door and sit on the floor and pray in the dark). I thought of the parable in the Bible of the rich ruler and the different talents he gave his servants to invest. Was I like the lazy servant who buried the talents for fear of not being successful? I decided not to waste the money, but to do my best to make a good film. Before I got off my closet floor, other ideas came to me, to change the kitchen scene to a dining room scene, it's easier to get period furniture than a period refrigerator and stove. I thought about my church, built in the 1930's and its second floor classrooms that resembled an apartment building. All the major items I needed were starting to materialize. I quickly got out of my closet and went to work. Everything I needed was provided.

Dealing with life. Our stills photographer, who was adopted as a child, found her birth mom the second-day into shooting, my assistant director and wardrobe director were in a car accident and Brian was in a coma for 3.5-weeks and a wheel chair for 3-months, both have had a miraculous full recovery, Ramon's (Buddy) best friend died from suicide, and my husband underwent cancer surgery, and is now cancer free.

6. Is this part of a larger story?

Yes. I wrote BRICK BY BRICK as a feature length script, about 110-pages. It begins in 1931 when Buddy is 9-years old and ends around 1948. As he faces challenges to become the first African American license and bonded contractor in Cleveland, Ohio, he must face his relationship with his father. It's a coming of age story, a young man becoming a man on his own terms, but also about rebuilding relationships.

7. What is the future of BRICK BY BRICK? What's next?

This short 16-minute film is part of a longer feature film script. I'd love to have the opportunity to shoot the feature or have it produced as a series like the 1970's TV series *Waltons*. For now, we will use the film to engage RIT students, faculty and staff in discussions about diversity, inclusion and equity. I developed a set of educational materials and audience interactions with actors to accompany the film. I hope as many people as possible learn about Buddy's story and are inspired to help build more inclusive communities. Ashe.

Press Articles

RIT Diversity Theater Produces Short Film with Impact
— Article written by Debra A. Jacobson, February 2019
https://www.rit.edu/diversity/newsletter/february-2019/story/rit-diversity-theater-produces-short-film-impact

Take the journey with Buddy, a 19-year-old brick mason and farmer, as he confronts numerous systemic obstacles, leaving the comforts of a small farm in Urbana, Ohio, and experiencing city life in 1941 Cleveland. He is in pursuit of reconnecting with a lost family member.

Based on a true story, screenwriter and director Tina Chapman DaCosta tells the compelling story of her father, young Elza "Buddy" Cannaday, who became the first licensed and bonded African American contractor in Cleveland, Ohio, circa 1948. Buddy dreamt of being a brick mason like his grandfather and uncles in Springfield, Ohio in the 1930's. He even considered being a baseball player like his father Elzie who played centerfield for semi-pro team Eddie's Tailors. Tragically, in one night he lost his family in a race riot and relocated quickly to a farm outside of town. Now, after several years, he leaves the farm in search of discovering a long last family member in Cleveland.

The film puts you, the viewer, back in time to 1941 experiencing an after-hours smoky abode, jazz music of the time, and significant conversation with a cameo appearance by jazz pianist Johnny O'Neal, who resurrects his role as Art Tatum from the film Ray. What are those obstacles Buddy encounters? Does he find who he's looking for? What insight and perhaps emotions pertaining to inclusion and diversity does the viewer experience?

The film stars Ramon Vasquez (RIT SOFA BFA 2018) as Buddy, David Shakes and other RIT faculty, staff and community actors, and original music by O'Neal and Liberal Arts professor Dr. Jonathan Kruger. This film is the first in the Brick by Brick Diversity & Inclusion Film and Workshop Series, and will be used for future workshops encouraging meaningful discussions on diversity and inclusion.

Brick by Brick began as a feature length script written by Chapman DaCosta to satisfy her 2014 SOFA MFA Thesis requirements. After a 2015 script reading hosted by College of Liberal Arts (COLA) and Office for Diversity and Inclusion, the film project gained support from former President Bill Destler and the School of Film and Animation (SOFA) to launch the Diversity Theater Brick by Brick Film and Workshop Series. SOFA Department Chair Malcolm Spaull highly supported the program and its benefits for students. In a 2018 letter of support, Spaull wrote:



"Consistent with RIT's inclusive excellence mission, the "Brick by Brick Diversity and Inclusion Film and Workshop Series" will allow students to identify and analyze social justice issues related to racial, social, economic, and other issues that affect characters in the film series."

RIT film students were hired as crew members, receiving hands-on experience working alongside professionals, including Los Angeles producer Micky Levy, who spent two weeks in Rochester to work on the production.

This short film is a powerhouse of real-world conflicts and challenges, both past and present day. The film premiere will be followed by a discussion with the director. Don't miss it!

Written and Directed by
Tina Chapman DaCosta
Cinematographer: Manjoh Reddy
Assistant Director: Brian Hewitt
Editor: Fraaz Khan
Lighting: Kristopher Hurysz
Producers: Tina Chapman DaCosta,
Micky Levy, Marina Viscun



The Modern Day Renaissance Woman
Tina Chapman DaCosta

By Debra A. Jacobson

What does it mean to be a Renaissance Woman? Wikipedia defines one as a "woman who has broad intellectual interests and is accomplished in areas of both the arts and the sciences." What experiences contribute to the development of such an amazing woman?

I interviewed Tina Chapman DaCosta, often described by friends and colleagues as a "Renaissance Woman," to get some answers. Although I know her from my work at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), my recent time with her, interviewing her and delving into who she is at the core, was most inspiring—and a bit surprising. Her life story and life practices would make for a wonderful biography, yet my task at hand was to do her justice in a much shorter adaptation.

She shared with me her tendency to process everything she does in a rather analytical manner. I found that interesting, as that is a trait most commonly associated with linear and analytical (left brain) characteristics. Yet I know her as a theater director, filmmaker, actor, dancer, and writer—associated with free-spirited, artistic (right brain) characteristics. How wonderful to be both!

The youngest of five children—so much younger that two of her siblings were already married when she was born—she grew up in a loving family where they played games and held extended family gatherings. She would listen endlessly to her father's storytelling and often fished alongside him. Her closest sibling was her older brother by 11 years. The oldest sister had passed a couple of years before she was born. Her parents called Tina the "bonus baby," and she certainly has been a "bonus" to my life – as I get to know her more.

"Gone is the myth of the youngest being spoiled," Chapman DaCosta emphatically states. "Since my parents were older, I became very independent and started working at the age of 11." That first job was in the concession stand at their family-owned business, The Blue Goose, a roller skating rink in Cleveland, Ohio. By the time she was in ninth grade, she was applying for a job at the local True Value hardware store. She recalls the day she inquired about a job, being talked down to by the manager because she was a girl in a man's workspace. As she told me the story, she stood up quickly and imitated him, showing me how he stomped around in his big work boots—imitating his gruff manly voice. He told her that this hardware store was no place for a girl and that only men worked there—leaving no room for her to get a word in edgewise. When he finally took a breath,

continued on page 38

Photo by Elizabeth Torgerson-Lamark/RIT Marketing and Communications

continued from page 13

she asked him confidently "So, do I have the job or not?" She started the following Monday.

Many who know her, may not know of her technical skills and background in computer science, systems administration, and online security. Her long line-up of college degrees show an impressive balance of multiple technological skills and creative, artistic accomplishments. They include: Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from SUNY Brockport (1990), Master of Science in Product Development from RIT College of Engineering (2004), and Master of Fine Arts in Film and Animation with a focus on scriptwriting from RIT School of Film and Animation (2014).

She began her original journey toward a technology-based degree in Akron, Ohio at the University of Akron, on an academic scholarship and athletic scholarship competing on the girls' track team. While there, she had a minor in dance—such a blending of the aforementioned arts and sciences!

Her professional work in information technology at IBM, later as a consultant for The Winters Group and a diversity consultant for Rochester Technology of Science—all contributed to her wealth of knowledge and commitment to success.

"I got to a point in my career at IBM where I was not interfacing with customers and the people contact that I love was missing," Chapman DaCosta said. "Although I was promoted, I found myself working solo, as IBM began reducing their footprint by asking employees to work from home." It worked out for the time being, as she had three kids at home. Yet, her creative side combined with people skills was certainly not flourishing.

She decided to explore a different pathway and began teaching at Monroe Community College as an adjunct professor. She found she loved being an educator. She had a gift she could give her students—helping them actually like math! She eventually began teaching at RIT and through opportunities there found her way into a creative environment she longed for—RIT's Multicultural Center for Academic Success (MCAS), where she is now Director of Diversity Theater. She runs workshops, directs theater, facilitates group discussions, emcees events, and continues to teach film and animation.

Working at RIT has put me in close connection with Tina, most recently as part of a $1 million dollar grant focusing on inclusiveness and diversity among students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Chapman DaCosta's creative direction of Playback Theatre, where actors use improvisation of the sharer's story, has opened up communication, storytelling, and appreciation of others—ALL others. This form of theater allows for discussion about topics and experiences that are often difficult to talk about, and builds awareness of unconscious bias and racism, creating a healthier inclusive community. Chapman DaCosta brilliantly leads these workshops in a compassionate, respectful manner.

She is currently in production of a film entitled Brick by Brick, which she began writing five years ago. The film, a period piece, takes place in the 1930s and 40s and is the story of her father Elza Buddy Cannaday. He grew up in a family of brick masons in southern Ohio during the depression era. Through family loss and other challenges he learned to become his own man—transcend his pain and become the first licensed and bonded African American contractor in Cleveland. The true story depicts him rebuilding both his house and family one brick at a time after losing home and family members in a race riot. The teaser to this was in the form of a short film (approximately 15 minutes) and was produced by students at RIT in her Diversity Film Pre-production class.

When I asked her what she does to debrief, relax, or find time for self-reflection, she responded with little hesitation. "I have quiet time in the morning," she said. "I sleep with the blinds to my bedroom window partly open, and when I wake up there is this golden film starting to come up over the horizon. I feel how fortunate I am to live in this day —today." She makes a point of waking up early enough to have time to journal, pray, and have inspiring phone calls with her 93 year young mother in Cleveland. "I also reflect on the many beautiful dreams I have," she said with a smile. She described it as being her own doctor, taking a look at what is going on inside. It is a time when her spirit is alive for her.

She ends her day the way she begins it. She often comes to bed with a cup of Chamomile tea and reads something inspiring, or writes as she eases into restfulness. She doesn't start or finish her day watching the news or checking, as she puts it, "the endless drip of emails." She feels it interrupts the day at both ends that way, with little time to digest it. And sometimes she watches a comedy such as Happy Feet or one of the Minions movies as the last thing she exposes her mind to.

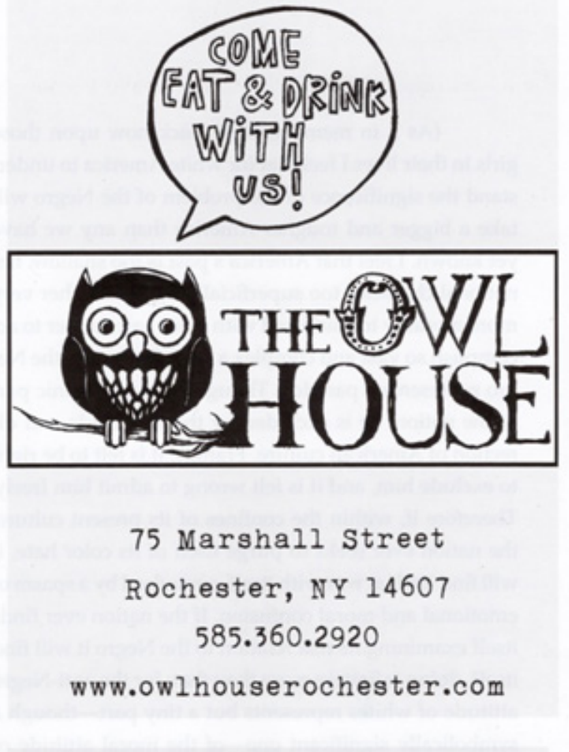
Music has entered her life in a much larger way in the past year. Initially certain phrases or tunes would come to her and she would write new verses to known tunes. And she'd compose new tunes of her own. In fact, she walked into my office one day and sang a song she had written – with enough confidence to sing those verses a cappella. She ended up singing that song, entitled "Growing Wings," at a friend's funeral.

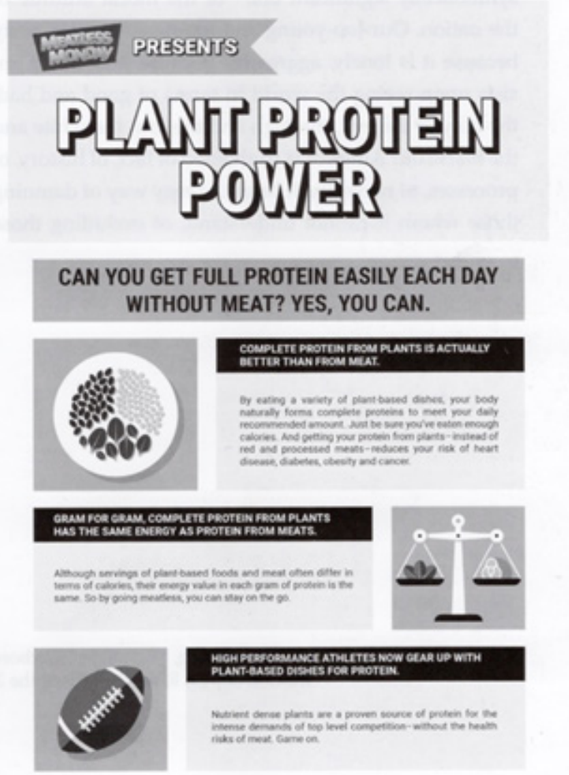
Among too many other adjectives to list, Tina Chapman DaCosta can be described as a contributor, participant, teacher, director, mediator, coach and healer. Yet she will tell you that most importantly she is a mother—of three fabulous children from a previous marriage (Cannaday (age), Aaron (age) and Ana (age)) and wife to the talented Jose DaCosta, who runs the Exodus to Jazz series in Rochester.

Married to Jose DaCosta for 10 years, they share the same passion for enjoying life and being grateful for what they have while making the most of it. The two have even been known to dance together while cooking dinner. They work hard and play hard. "I'm envious of squirrels because they have so much time to play," she commented with a smile. "Parked in front of a school for a parent-teacher conference years back, I had a moment and noticed a couple of squirrels having fun chasing each other around a tree. I thought, wow, why can't I do more of that?"

Tina Chapman DaCosta is on a journey—life's journey. And she seems to know how to navigate that journey to get the most out of life. She engages people along that trail, inviting them in to find their own special journey as well.

Debra Jacobson is a freelance writer, artist, owner of Debra A. Jacobson Jewelry and Art, Pilates instructor, and marketing specialist at Rochester Institute of Technology.





Audience Feedback

At RIT, Tina and her art have made quite a difference. RIT is a primarily white, male technical university where students and faculty often go about daily projects in computer science, calculus, engineering, and other interests not necessarily related to the liberal arts, much less to the theatre and literary arts. Because of Tina's dedication and impact on the RIT community, she has been appointed to the Office for Diversity and Inclusion as a central part of RIT's mission to enhance 'greatness through diversity' (RIT's university motto for 2016). In this position, Tina has created RIT's first Diversity Theatre program, where students, faculty, staff, and community partners interact and deal with diversity and inclusion topics. Tina lives her art and her goal of bringing people together. She is greatly respected and admired by her peers, students, and community.

Paulette Swartzfage, Lecturer, University Writing Program, English, RIT College of Liberal Arts

I am thankful to have been able witness this wonderful work. I wait in anticipation of the final film.

Rev. Lawrence Hargrave, Rochester, NY

I know a lot of excruciatingly hard work went into accomplishing its polished look, but it was worth every minute. I felt really sorry when it ended, wanting to see the rest of the story. And I loved the exercises afterwards to get the members of the audience talking. It really illustrated how films done through Diversity Theatre could engage people in discussion.

Tina Lent, Professor, Director Museum Studies, RIT College of Liberal Arts

I hope that if this is just a sliver of the story that one day you might have the opportunity to produce the whole thing. These stories have great power to make us reflect on the past and consider the present. Anyway, congratulations on a fine achievement.....

Mike Johansson Senior Lecturer, School of Communications, RIT College of Liberal Arts

I really enjoyed your film, "BRICK BY BRICK." The film touched me and brought tears to my eyes. You are a Magnolia Tree in the spring time and your petals do touch the grass all around you. Everyone, especially everyone at RIT should see your film.

Cedric L. Bowen Jr., RIT Staff

I valued your movie SO much. Besides it being entertaining, interesting, funny, and amazingly well done, it provided a forum to TALK ABOUT RACE. The issues that the characters faced in the movie are relevant today- which is sad- but, it allowed us to look at things in a very different light. Talking about race is not easy for so many people. Putting things in the context of this movie allowed us to talk about uncomfortable topics in a less-serious way- does that make sense? It allows us to talk about heavy/deep topics, but in a lighter manner. The more we talk about things, the better. Cheers to you for creating a really fun, entertaining way for us to open up conversations about important issues!

Lea Vacca Michel, Associate Professor, RIT School of Chemistry and Materials Science

Diversity Theater impacts campus climate and intergroup relations. It acknowledges and celebrates diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout its daily operations. Diversity Theater has become "known" at RIT, primarily because of the commitment, collaboration, and vision of Tina. Tina remains an exemplary representative of RIT, consistently exhibiting behaviors that embrace RIT's core values.

Executive leadership team member, Division of Diversity & Inclusion, Office of the President, RIT



RIT college screening.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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