

**THE  
LESSER  
OF  
2 EVILS**

**a knife.**

**a gun.**

**a decision.**

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AN EXPERIMENTAL JAZZ DOCUMENTARY



**it takes  
forever to find  
a way out.**

PORTIA NELSON

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**THE FILM**

**FILM TITLE**

**The Lesser of 2 Evils**

**LOGLINE**

**A Knife. A Gun. A Decision.**

**CONTACT INFO**

**Mario Tahi Lathan – Producer/Editor**

**behappy@willscircus.com**

**JD Allen – Producer/Composer**

**jawndaniel@gmail.com**

**TECHNICAL INFO**

**TRT – 10 minutes**

**Shooting Format – HD**

**Aspect Ratio – 16 x 9**

**Exhibition Format – DCP**

**CAST/NARRATOR**

**JD Allen**

**AWARDS**

**2025 - San Antonio Black**

**International Film Festival**

**- Best Editing**

**- Honorable Mention – Short Film**



THE STORY

## Synopsis

**A Knife. A Gun. A Decision.**

Inspired by Portia Nelson's poem, "Autobiography in Five Short Chapters", a meditation on life and destruction summarizes the narrative plight of the experimental film, *The Lesser of 2 Evils*. Narrated by preeminent Jazz Saxophonist, JD Allen and accompanied with a visual score by filmmaker, Mario Tahi Lathan, *The Lesser of 2 Evils* serves up deconstructive commentary on the idea of consumption versus non-consumption; through the lens of fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. *The Lesser of 2 Evils* challenges the viewer on the perspective of choice and the consequences thereof. What will it be: the knife or the gun?

**The real choice may be the one that is not made.**



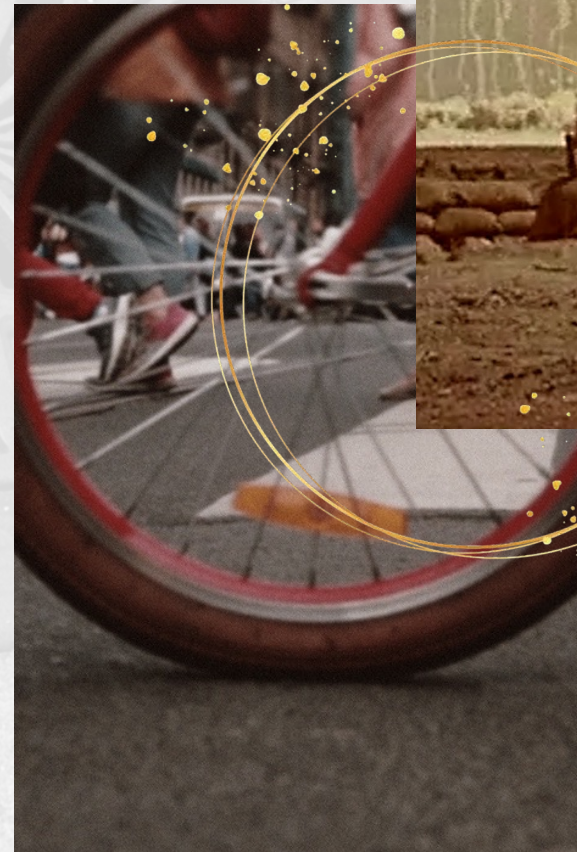
## The genesis of *The Lesser of 2 Evils*

can be scattered throughout the phone conversations for the umpteenth film/musical collaboration between Jazz Saxophonist, JD Allen and myself. JD presented me with the topic of choice: What is the lesser of two evils, historically, regarding the plight of the Black community?

The topic soon dwindled to Jim Crow and the Pre-Voting Rights era. A simple act of casting a ballot to determine one's future was often wrought with the prospect of violence: mental and physical. Even with a myriad of requirements met, consisting of literacy tests and such (the ones like reciting the Ten Commandments on the spot), "uppity" black folks could be made an "example of" what happens when you vote.

The symbolic idea of the GUN, which could end "it" fast or the KNIFE, which could end "it", maybe just a little slower, serve as representations regarding the irony of *any* situation. We determined overt political discourse would diminish any critical thought from conversations that the film should and will generate. The conversation that roots itself in the narrative of the rich versus poor; country versus country; good versus good or simply, life versus death. This lead to an often, overlooked thesis: Is choice even worth the conclusion?

Mario Tahi Lathan



HABS No. MO-1656-1

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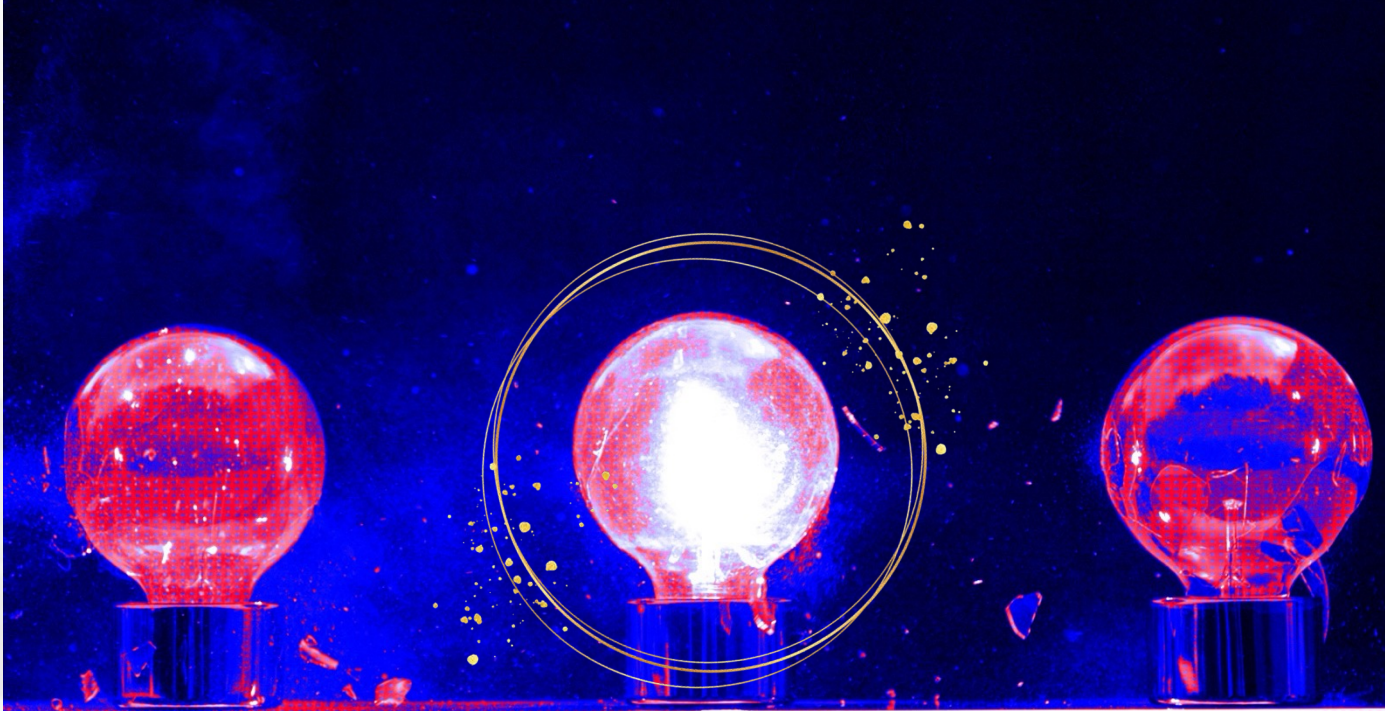
## The experimental score

is structured around 5 sonic movements created by revered Jazz Saxophonist, JD Allen, consisting of:

- 1) Chain Gang;
- 2) Cymbal 2;
- 3) Monk – Take 5;
- 4) Cymbal 1 & Monk 3 (movement combination)
- 5) Static.

The track titles complement the visual narrative, deliberate choice by JD at the moment of conception. JD anchors each movement with narration from Portia Nelson's seminal poem, "Autobiography In Five Chapters". The narration intentionally changes tone and emphasizes specific stanzas to augment Nelson's poem as critique and sarcasm on the imagery that follows.





MUSICAL SCORE/VISUALS

## The visual narrative

serves a counterpoint to the music, weaving through a combination of archival stills, propaganda newsreels, 1960s commercials, 2D animation and even a set of unfinished Puppets.



THE FILMMAKERS

# Our team



**JD Allen**

Narrator/Producer/Composer



**Mario Tahi Lathan**

Producer/Editor



**Nicholas Cacioppo**

Musician

GALLERY

a gun.  
a knife.  
a decision.



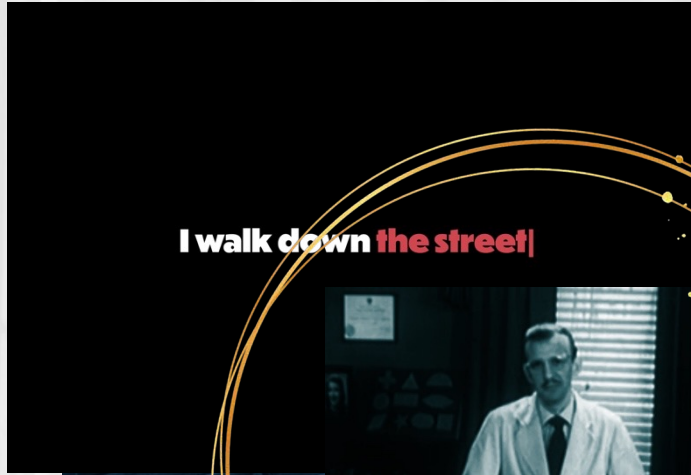
“THE LESSER OF 2 EVILS”

WILLIAMS CIRCUS PRESENTS “THE LESSER OF 2 EVILS”  
A COLLABORATION BY JD ALLEN & MARIO TAHI LATHAN    NARRATION BY JD ALLEN    COMPOSITIONS BY JD ALLEN  
PERFORMANCES BY JD ALLEN & NICHOLAS CACIOPPO    PRODUCED & EDITED BY MARIO TAHI LATHAN  
INSPIRED BY THE PREM “AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS”    WRITTEN BY PORTIA NELSON



the shifting foundation

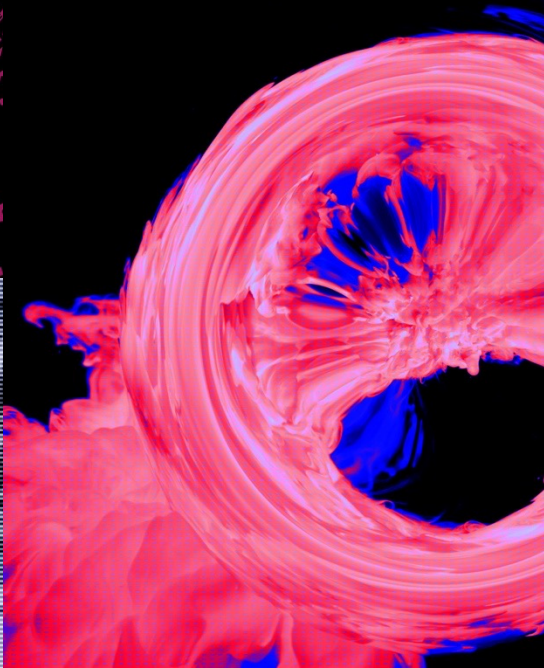
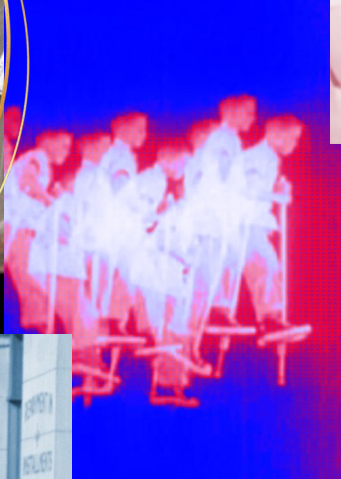
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street.



GALLERY



**I pretend I don't see it**

# Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

I.

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in. I am lost ...  
I am helpless. It isn't my fault.  
It takes me forever to find a way out.

II.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place but, it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

III.

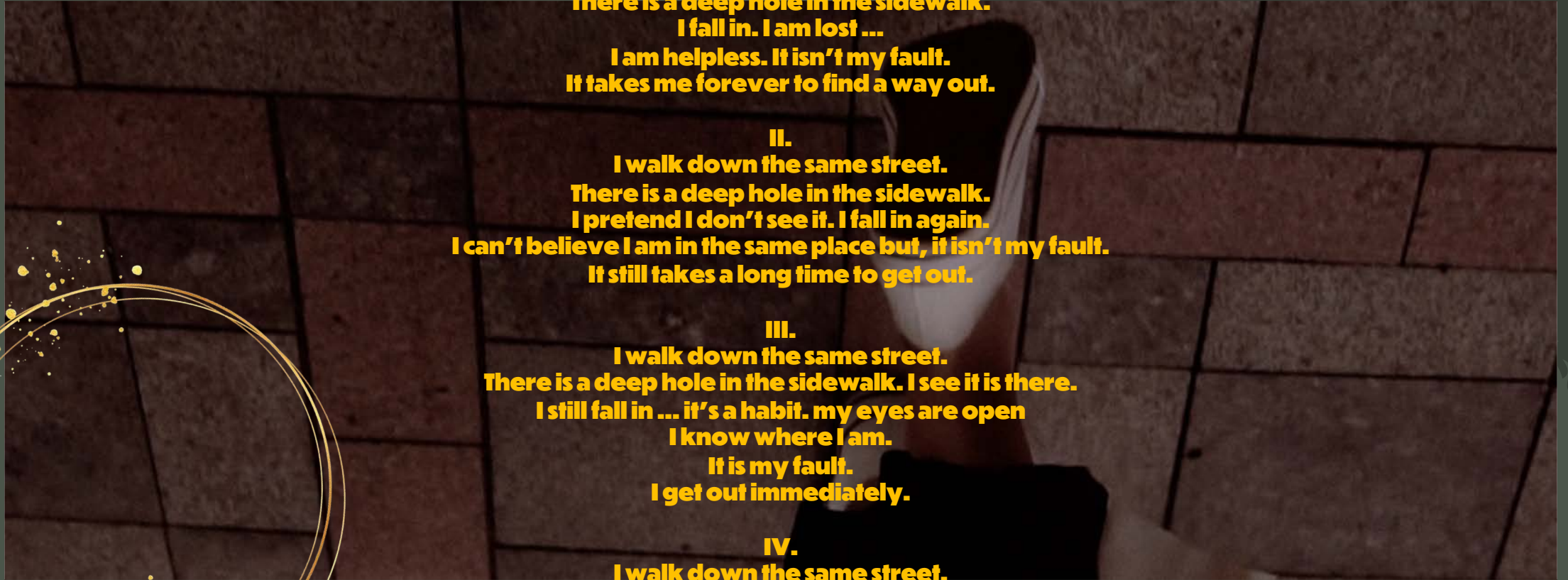
I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there.  
I still fall in ... it's a habit. my eyes are open  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

IV.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

V.

I walk down another street.



the shifting foundation



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