



Director's Statement by Adam Matalon

This is more a stream on consciousness than a clearly fashioned statement. I found myself untouched by the first pages I wrote.

I think this film is brooding. It's lyrical and it's guttural. It's about loss. It's about tenacity. It's about a willful spirit to live and very importantly it is about the dignity of labor and the nature of hope.

I think I also proved my own tenacious nature to myself in completing the film against some occasionally stiff adversity.

The cultural differences and expectations between an American's perception of success and those brought up in a depressed second tier economy like that of Jamaica are vastly at odds. This is a film about people who understand the difference between their needs and their wants.

It is comforting and reassuring to me that the American and Jamaicans, who inhabit this piece, are truly magnificent in their connection and appreciation of each other. Together they wage a war that they all somehow know they must lose as the realities of economic globalization take hold. But they do keep smiling and they keep working and together they muddle through. It's a microcosm of life, an inexact science, and in this vein we have made this piece.

While the film could have been solely about globalization or connected squarely with the racial issues the Jamaicans face outside of the farming community, I wanted to address this film as a success story and a film that spoke of the immigrant labor without the middle class assumptions and political patronizations, which have traditionally suggested them as slaves. I wanted a film that was orchestrated and related like the parts of a symphony and it is for this reason that the music and b-roll often speak so loudly. I wanted a film that held the mirror up to nature and reeducated us to the realities of food production. I wanted people to understand that when they buy that cheap and beautiful red apple from China or Venezuela or France or any number of producing countries that they might well be putting at risk an American farmer or negatively impacting the upward mobility of

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a young man or woman in Jamaica. I fervently believe in our right to choose that cheap red apple. However I wanted to simply make observations about these cost based decisions, which I hope will have impact on people's understanding of the global nature of our ever-evolving consumer society.

In North America, the notion of color and racism is a monstrous chasm in our society and one I fervently hope is lessening but again, mostly created by and used by Americans against each other, and as tools to negate the value of 'outsiders'.

In Jamaica, Black is simply a color and one of the many rainbow colors of an Island people with background from India, China, Africa, Europe, the Middle East (my particular background), and their indigenous Taino and Arawak Indians. The concept of being labeled 'African American' is anathema to the average Jamaican and they use "American" with a kiss of their teeth and an upward glance as a negative reference to someone 'uppity'.

There has been a tradition of films in the area of immigrant and farm labor that paint a picture of failure, and have become propaganda for various parties to brandish as it suits them. To me it appears that they have done little to solve the negative issues or market the positive. While in many cases they may have elevated the status of the filmmaker, they have not elevated the livelihood of the subjects. I cannot suggest for a second that this film will do anything to solve a grossly disproportionate economy. Or to put food in people's mouths.

The film is a testament to the contributions of the men who come here and a celebration of the future that they are providing for those around them. While they inhabit an imperfect system with obvious real and potential failings, I wanted to make a strong case to suggest that there is good and bad in everything.

The notion of betterment is not an American invention. It is a universal theme shared by those across the globe, and for the farm workers, the acceptance of struggle and sometimes seemingly unfair adversity on that road to self-sufficiency is an acceptable price to pay.

I am forever touched that Philbert Bailey, who started working at nine years of age without the ability to read, has found knowledge, relative prosperity and helped to put several children who are not his own through school. This man who lost his childhood forever, has granted it to others without an expectation of recompense. This moves me deeply even as I write the words.

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I am blessed in my life to have been raised across two continents and to have been taught to celebrate differences of language, society and color and I believe it helped me to keep making this film even when it seemed that it would never end in anything but endless boxes of wasted tape.

I am enormously indebted to all the people who helped me make this film and to those who have shared their thoughts on camera. The faces in this film and those who inhabit the many hours are a select group who will remain with me forever, whatever may come my way.

I must also thank those family and friends who have humored me including my wife and kids who don't quite get it "Daddy are you still making a film about apples?!"

There are two people whose lives passed during the making of this film. Lola Richardson who originally introduced me to Russell Holze and later became his wife left us early in 2008. I hope she will be watching over Russ's shoulder. My father died two odd years ago from Alzheimer's. 'Zackie' and I shared a difficult relationship and he knew little or nothing of this film as his disease crippled him, but I always knew Jamaica was his secret sanctuary and the home of his boyhood memories. It was this mysterious and magical Jamaica that I grew up with and may well have been the reason I took this on. His voice can be heard singing in the credits on a recording of Cordelia Brown recorded in 1948.

There remains a single person without whom it could not have been completed and that is my producing and writing partner Kevin Burke. Thanks Brother!

Adam Matalon Garrison NY
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