

# LOW COUNTRY LAMENTATIONS: A CONVERSATION WITH JON-SESRIE GOFF

Michael Boyce Gillespie

*"I'm Gullah, born in exile."*

Spoken by Jon-Sesrie Goff, this line is heard at the start of his *After Sherman* (2022). It signifies the constitutive distinction of the Gullah Geechee culture of the Low Country in South Carolina and its diaspora, while also posing a poignant sense of the film's crucial historiographic operation. Although *After Sherman* is his first feature film, Goff is a multidisciplinary artist with extensive experience as a cinematographer and editor.<sup>1</sup> He is also an arts administrator, with previous stints as the museum specialist for film at the Smithsonian Museum of African American Art and Culture and as the executive director of the Flaherty.<sup>2</sup>

He has clearly been thinking about documentary for a long time, along with cinema's rich essayistic capacities "as process, as experience, as experiment."<sup>3</sup> As Goff has written elsewhere, "What role does documentary play when it is documented or viewed outside of the experience and space it depicts?"<sup>4</sup> *After Sherman* manifests an answer through its expansive and reflexive accounting of culture and place as well as its formal deliberation on blackness, the afterlives of slavery, land as material and cultural inheritance, and home as site of origin and foundation for possible futures. As his father, Norvel Goff, comments in the film:

Behind the property, water runs deep. It's just like your inheritance. The water that runs behind the property not only runs into North Santee but leads out to the Atlantic that runs beyond, that runs as far as back to Africa. So, water has a meaning. The Middle Passage, slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation, the civil rights movement, the water still runs deep, just like your family tree.... We are water people.

In the spirit of this delimiting of inheritance, the multimodal organization of the film's narrative moves across and through conversations about Gullah Geechee history and culture, the Goff family's personal archive of videotapes and photographs, animation, formal experimentation, historical records, and the ceaseless consequence of American history. *After Sherman* thrives as a veritable poetics of Gullah Geechee culture with a textured sense of black geographies and the Low Country. As Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods have crucially noted:

[B]lack geographies are not simply oceanic, eternally attached to the middle passage; nor are they always already catastrophe, storm-torn, and demarcating sites in which black communities are abandoned and left to fend for themselves. But these kind of socio-spatial events, among many others, provide a way in which we can start thinking about how the lives of subaltern subjects are shaped by, and are shaping, the imaginative, three dimensional, social, and political contours of human geographies.<sup>5</sup>

Goff forgoes crafting a documentary tending toward the impossible task of a wholly conclusive accounting of Gullah Geechee culture. The film's contemplative detailing of the Low Country distends the logic of cartography as an absolute marker of being by delicately enacting a speculative tone that lends itself to a tensioned and essayistic meditation on kinship and situatedness.<sup>6</sup>

*After Sherman* proffers a concentration on the swirling concurrences that form the South, reminding the viewer that "[t]he South has long been portrayed as a place of timeless, and entrenched tradition, like an old barn on the side of a country road that is falling in on itself. There is physical and cultural evidence that such stasis does exist, and yet both the face and foundation of the South are rapidly changing and evolving."<sup>7</sup>

This dynamic of stasis and evolution is evident throughout the film, but especially in the way it marshals the legacies

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The Low Country landscape, in *After Sherman*.

that vigilantly continue to shape the Low Country landscape into questions that echo at the mythological core of America itself. Goff's film deftly negotiates the multiple temporalities and historiographies of the South, fluidly fashioning Gullah Geechee culture through a sustained cinematic act of naming of place and self, demarcation and being.<sup>8</sup>

The arc of the film's inquiry takes the shape of a black visual historiography, an enactment of film blackness that formally resembles the writing of history. While the theme of inheritance in the film speaks to a concern for heirs' land, family-owned property that is passed down and often jointly owned by family descendants, it also importantly speaks to birthright and the way a place can anchor one's becoming. Enlivening and sorrowful in its exquisite fabulation of Gullah Geechee worldmaking, *After Sherman* acutely plots the tensions and promises of home.

**MICHAEL BOYCE GILLESPIE:** What was your initial conception of *After Sherman* in 2014 when it was to be a short film focused on heirs' land?

**JON-SESRIE GOFF:** I was always trying to be in conversation with *Sherman's March* [Ross McElwee, 1986]. But, formally and visually I was really trying to create something that was approximate to Deborah Stratman's *O'er the Land* [2008], with *After Sherman* comprised of vignettes at different

increments along the Gullah Geechee corridor, different outposts along the coast.

**GILLESPIE:** When did it become clear to you that you weren't making a short film and that this was a feature?

**GOFF:** I think it was once I started having conversations with people. The first person that I interviewed on camera was my cousin Bunny. It was so rich, and I knew it could go in many different directions. I wanted to hold on to these issues of heirs' property and Gullah Geechee culture even though people thought that those should be two separate films. Also, people were very skeptical of me in the heirs' property sector. Some organizations thought I was a white man. "Goff? Duke University?"

**GILLESPIE:** Did you always consider yourself as a central focus for the film? How did your role as an embedded character change over the course of the film?

**GOFF:** In the first iteration of the film, I used Elijah Heyward III as a proxy and tried my hardest to not be present in it while also keeping my father [Norvel Goff] in the story. At that time in the production, I was almost not present at all in the film. Elijah and I had some of the

same experiences, and he had a lot of experiences that overlapped with my dad's. But it didn't really resonate the way I wanted it to with people. The question I kept asking myself was, "Where are you?"

**GILLESPIE:** At one point, you discuss your family and the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church by suggesting that the church is a sacred space that provides for the possibility of a real-time processing of the world. The film's steady sense of this processing is as a secular and speculative practice. I've been thinking about the expression "born in exile" that comes up in the film. Over the course of *After Sherman*, the meaning of that expression accrues. It resonates with Gullah Geechee culture and how the film frames it as a distinct sense of black diasporic life in the Americas.

**GOFF:** The community I grew up in, in Hartford, Connecticut, was predominantly West Indian. But, it also had a large number of African Americans, mostly from South Carolina, that would have been in Hartford since the fifties due to the recruitment of teachers from the HBCUs [historically black colleges and universities] in the South. Most of the school system there was basically HBCU graduates brought in to teach the new influx of immigrant Black West Indian and Black Southern migrant children.

So, there was a need to identify and label my identity beyond "American" because that never seemed to be enough to satisfy people when they asked, "Where are your people from?" "Are you Haitian?" was the usual one. Then later when I moved outside of Hartford: "Are you South African?" Everyone was trying to find a cultural context for me.

Once I was able to locate my origins in South Carolina and explain why my family sounded the way they did, people accepted that as my identity. I'm older than the people who watched *Gullah Gullah Island* [Nickelodeon, 1994–98] as young children. That television show didn't air until I got to high school. It also became a joke, something people teased me about. "That's that *Gullah Gullah Island* Jon."

**GILLESPIE:** I've been thinking about Gullah Geechee culture in terms of Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* [1991], which is set on St. Helena Island, a little farther south than where your film is primarily set. What does a film history of Gullah Geechee culture mean to you?

**GOFF:** At some point I'm going to have the awkward conversation with Julie Dash about the limited time that she was on Ancestry.com and popped up as my relative. Apparently she's a distant cousin. It makes sense. I once interviewed her about being Gullah Geechee born in exile and those cultural



St. James AME Church. Johns Island, South Carolina

practices and traditions that are retained and passed on, even as people moved away from the Low Country.

The end of *Daughters of the Dust* was very important to me because of the question of whether the family will return to the island. That moment is set at the turn of the century, and that's around when my own grandparents migrated to Philadelphia from the Sea Islands. They eventually came back south and settled in Georgetown. I wanted to modernize and update the image of Gullah Geechee culture because when we first started preproduction, people kept trying to point us to people who do reenactments of Gullah Geechee culture. That was not what we were talking about.

When we interviewed Dr. Emory Campbell, he gave us the artistic and intellectual license to define Gullah Geechee culture for ourselves.<sup>10</sup> He said, "We don't have a leader. There's no uniform. There's no way to be Gullah Geechee other than the way that you are." So, we had to be true to that idea at moments where it might have been easier to slip into historical cosplay. I think we allowed people to show up as their own self.

**GILLESPIE:** There's a great moment in your film when a farmer discusses leaving the Low Country at eighteen and returning when he was forty-three. He uses modern agricultural techniques and the cultivation notes from his grandmother's journal.<sup>11</sup> It speaks so much to the current discussions around food sovereignty. But it also raises the larger issue you mentioned of self-definition. Were there other significant things you learned while exploring the legacy of farming in the region?

**GOFF:** O'Neal Smalls, one of the biggest experts on the first century of freedom, the early Reconstruction period, operates a living-history farm in the Myrtle Beach area. He replicates the farms based on the period of enslavement, with the tools and crops people grew. That harvested produce was used as a means to build institutions. People would literally lay the crops on the altar to build a school, to send someone to college. That sort of community support is something that I prize and question, wondering how will it remain when there's not a physical community there.

**GILLESPIE:** Your film does not traffic in fantasies of a definitive accounting or taxonomy. It's not *The Dummy's Guide to Gullah Geechee Culture*. It's much more genuine and discursive than that. For example, the film's opening emphasis on General Sherman's Special Field Orders 15, issued on January 16, 1865 from his headquarters in Savannah, Georgia, acts as a crucial organizing principle of the film. Issued after a meeting with local Black ministers, these orders sought to institute a massive redistribution of

confiscated land to be delivered as forty-acre plots to newly freed Blacks. The Freedmen's Bureau Act of March 1865 would later formalize the goal of these orders but did not account for the land distribution and the promise of a mule. President Andrew Johnson would later rescind Sherman's order and have the confiscated lands returned to their original owners.

I'm thinking here especially of a line from those orders that shadows and anchors the film: "[T]he Negro is free and must be dealt with as such." How will the free be treated? What is freedom? In the long shadow of that "forty acres and a mule" promise, your film hints at an interminable Civil War and a still-awaited Reconstruction. What were some of the questions you wanted to pose about the writing of history?

**GOFF:** Reframing Sherman's field orders as treaties that were negotiated by Black people rather than something that America gave to Black people helped me to understand the idea of a dishonored treaty. It's no different than what Indigenous folks deal with and what other groups are starting to experience as rights are unraveled and rolled back. Historically, the United States has not been a country that keeps its word.

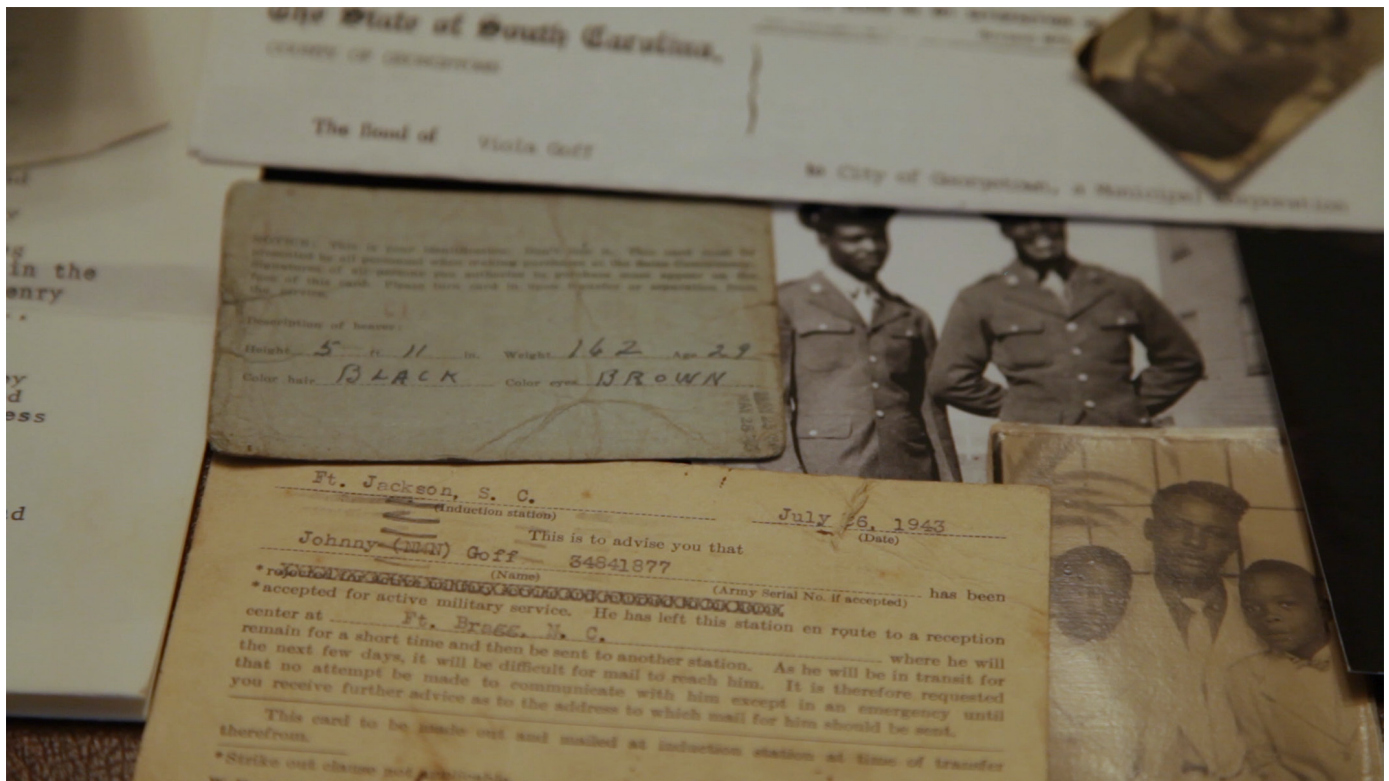
**GILLESPIE:** As someone who engages documentary form with a generative ambivalence and essay film tendency, how did you navigate the mythology of documentary in terms of the presumed guarantees of the form?

**GOFF:** I think if the subject matter were not my actual people—my family and my body at times—I think I could have used more of the traditional documentary methodologies, but I didn't feel that they offered enough protection.

**GILLESPIE:** What do you mean by "protection"?

**GOFF:** It's about understanding that the film will live long beyond the time that I'm able to travel with it and contextualize or explain it. Once I was able to give up the idea that a documentary could be objective, I could lean into my own subjectivity. I could embrace what that might look like rather than present the film as something neutral.

**GILLESPIE:** What about the black documentary tradition? Were there any films or filmmakers that were an inspiration as you were devising *After Sherman*? The way that you and your father are sitting together in the film made me think of *Suzanne, Suzanne* [Camille Billops and James Hatch, 1982]. Also, the sequences of your handling the photographs and the visual archive of your family's history made me think of Yance Ford's *Strong Island* [2017]. This isn't about suggesting an annotation of your film,



The Goff family archive, in *After Sherman*.

but more precisely about appreciating your film's important place in the legacy of black film.

**GOFF:** I would say that St. Clair Bourne was an explicit influence. I've spent a lot of time thinking about him, William Greaves, and Madeline Anderson. I threw in an homage to her with the hospital workers' strike footage from her *I Am Somebody* [1970]. Also, I think there's a lot of inspiration from Kevin Jerome Everson's *The Island of St. Matthews* [2013].

Darius Clark Monroe made a huge impression on my approach to my work, both personally and formally. There were things that we did on the set of his *Evolution of a Criminal* [2014]—I was one of the cinematographers on that film—that I just knew that I would probably do again for myself, when I had an opportunity. We didn't invest as much in re-creations for *After Sherman* as we did for *Evolution of a Criminal*. *Evolution* was a full-on film shoot, but I really like how Darius handled the idea of what a re-creation could be and how he thought about what you're trying to honor in your staging of it. Also, RaMell Ross's *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* [2018] influenced me too.

**GILLESPIE:** How did your practice as a cinematographer inform your sense of the kind of director that you wanted to be?

**GOFF:** For so long, I was just a guy with a camera. But intentionally considering myself a cinematographer gave me a chance to sort of hide. What I really loved about working on both Darius's film and Blair Dorosh-Walther's *Out of the Night* [2014], both done for eight years in parallel, was the fact that I could be present for all these moments but not have to have the confrontation of being the director. I understood that there is an extra layer of responsibility in directing that was different from my initial idea that everyone on the set is an equal contributor.

I think there were only two times I felt confronted about this fact while making those documentaries. Once was when Darius's grandmother, who had already embraced me and Daniel Patterson, the other cinematographer, as her other grandchildren broke the fourth wall, and was talking to us about Darius. And I was kind of like, "You're supposed to talk to him. We're just over here." I felt seen in a way that was validating but also scary.

With Blair Dorosh-Walther's film, working again with Daniel, we were documenting a Black lesbian space, and some of the film's participants were asking, "Why are these dudes here? ... Why are you in my bedroom?" It was if they were saying, "I see you there with this big old camera in my room." My documentary presence could not be a bigger priority than their agency. We as filmmakers had to recognize that this was an invitation to be in this space.

According to Blair, I had to start working with other DPs because I was trying to direct from a cinematographer's vantage point which would often be far away and disengaged with the conversation but very concerned with the frame. And so I was able to open myself up to deeper collaborations. The cinematographers that I worked with [Erica Branco, Jerry Henry, Arshley Emile, Alex Cunningham] were all folks that I respect in their own craft.

**GILLESPIE: How has working with the filmmaker Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich, your wife, changed your sense of collaboration? Are there significant things that you've taken away from working with her?**

**GOFF:** It's interesting because I've only done this film our entire relationship. So in the beginning of our work, I was definitely coming from a more fictional approach. I think she was bringing in a lot more hard-core documentary. At some point, we overlapped or switched places. I think I became more interested in documentary, and she's sort of genre agnostic at this point. Madeleine's a Caribbeanist, and a lot of my response to that also exists in the film, or in thinking that evolved as a result of our relationship. And then, Madeleine's a brilliant writer as well. She really contributed to developing certain ideas in the text.<sup>12</sup>

**GILLESPIE: One element which I really adore is your use of animation in the film. It generatively adds a tone of animacy throughout the film in terms of both history and culture.**

**GOFF:** Yeah, Kelly Gallagher's animation is amazing. Actually, I had to pull back from some of my use of animation. I knew I wanted this sort of analog, material, and hand-made aspect to the film, but I also wanted very subtle things which didn't necessarily go together. At one point, I have Adinkra symbols popping up in the churches as a sign of spirit. I was thinking about the First African Church in Savannah, Georgia, and the carving of symbols on the pews as a way that people could know how to try to locate people from a similar background.

I kept trying to bring the spiritual realm in through animation. And I think some of that remains. We had different treatments of the rice dancing across the screen. I wanted to see the rice become animated because it's often such a small thing, but in the spiritual realm, I felt like it occupied a much larger space. Women would braid rice seeds into their children's hair before the Middle Passage. How do you show that in a very stripped-down way?

**GILLESPIE: In your sequence of the Gullah Geechee gathering in New York City, there are several different**

**opinions that are offered about leaving the South, returning to the South, what the South offers that the North can't give Black folks. Have your ideas of the South changed over the course of this film?**

**GOFF:** This project and my ideas of the South were challenged in real time through Madeleine's presence and her perspective as a New Yorker. I'm the only member of my family who did not return to live in South Carolina at some point. I think that when I started the film, returning and enjoying it wasn't very real to me as a possibility. Charleston was a place I would go and sit in my parent's house and not interact with people.

I started to find a space. It was really through spending more time there that I was able to figure this out in some way as a home. But I didn't feel that way at the start of the production. At that time it was very much about "Why are we holding on to this culture that we don't invest in and that no one's really interested in?"

**GILLESPIE: What was your family's response to the idea when you first approached them about a film project?**

**GOFF:** I immediately had flashbacks of being a kid and asking whether anybody wanted to go to a plantation with me because I was curious about American history. "No." My mom would be the one who had to take me. We had fun. We were like, "Oh, this is where they shot *Roots*."

It was only later that people said, "Why do you want to talk about this?" My brother told me that the idea of *After Sherman* was the least interesting thing I could make a film about. "No one cares about South Carolina or this land." I don't think my dad could understand it because I don't think he ever left it in his mind. For him it was just everyday life. It took six years to get an interview out of him that I felt broke through any of the rhetoric I had already heard.

But the short answer is that my mom was really on board. Actually, she's the one who made the introduction to state senator and pastor Clementa Carlos Pinckney for me. She felt that if I wanted to do this, then I had to work with him—because he was the one doing legislation about protecting black land and conserving Gullah Geechee culture. And so she and he were my first two fixers on the project, in terms of "Go here, talk to this person, tell them I sent you so they don't think you're some weird person from Duke or somewhere."

**GILLESPIE: Duke gets no love?**

**GOFF:** Not in that region. None of the North Carolina schools do, because they hold the archives of many black institutions in South Carolina. After Emancipation, many



Funeral service for Reverend Pinckney at College of Charleston. Photo courtesy of Jon-Sesrie Goff.

of the black public archives were purchased by these institutions. Also, they are continually sending out groups of researchers, both on the environmental side and the political/cultural side. Their constant presence is always a reminder of past actions.

**GILLESPIE:** How did the June 2015 murders at the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church ["Mother Emanuel"] in Charleston change the film?<sup>13</sup> Your question about the historical erasure of land becomes painfully coupled with the brutal erasure of the hate crime. How did what happened effect you and your family?

**GOFF:** In the aftermath of the shooting, my mom refused to do any press. She was in the office with Reverend Pinckney's wife and children twenty minutes before the shooting. Also, my father became the church's interim pastor. The press were fishing really hard. I actually ended up doing some press, just because I had friends who were producers at CNN. I regret it now.

During that period I started to feel that I was becoming a character in the film, because it was no longer just something that I was witnessing. I was trying to determine how present I could be and how much I could share around

what was actually happening because I wasn't necessarily recording and documenting every moment for those initial few weeks after the shooting.

**GILLESPIE:** How was returning to South Carolina during the COVID shutdown? You were approaching the end of the production and ended up bunking down there.

**GOFF:** It was crazy in that it felt almost like the opposite of the shooting summer. The summer of 2015 felt like "Kumbaya." People literally stopped to hug you on the street. There was a sense of community and healing and all these things. It was very real.

Maybe it's because we were spending more time up in Georgetown County, but 2020 felt like an extremely hostile environment. Being masked, being Black, it felt like all those tensions were on the surface. Even though a racial reckoning was happening everywhere else, you couldn't really locate it there. But during COVID, you could locate a lot of bigotry and hatred. People were just on their worst behavior, and you could feel that. You could feel like you didn't necessarily belong there during that summer. But it did give me an opportunity to go deep into my family's

VHS collection and digitize some tapes. It was hard, too, because working with so many old people meant that a number of the families that we were originally supposed to film had complications and COVID-related deaths. We wanted a Black crew, but that's the one time we had to use a basically all-white crew—because those were the only local vaccinated crew people we could find.

**GILLESPIE: There are numerous ways that Gullah Geechee culture is rendered in the film: religion and faith, crafts, medicine, cuisine, hunting and fishing, farming, language. I think there's important work that spectators must do in order to appreciate the distinction of Gullah Geechee culture. What was your process of reckoning with the cultural nuance but not necessarily choosing to have it bullet-pointed in a more classical documentary style?**

**GOFF:** I felt like an unreliable expert. We had scenes where I'm on the boat explaining canals and talking about what a trunk minder did and the significance of brackish water.<sup>14</sup> I felt like a classical scholar, walking through Africa and just pointing at things. We had to cut out all the scenes where I'm just simply explaining history. We did interview, in my opinion, some of the foremost thinkers of Gullah Geechee culture, and they didn't speak like that. I wanted to honor their form of storytelling.

**GILLESPIE: The final sequence of the film, with the auction, is devastating. Over the course of the film, there is a poignantly sustained emphasis on the importance of inherited land as legacy, and the idea of home, that then becomes a spectacle of transaction and deletion. The scene demonstrates the cold logic of capital whereby the land is measured as a commodity with a value greater than the legacies of Black families in the region.**

**GOFF:** It was October 2016 during that tax sale. It's the only scene that I directed remotely. I couldn't get down there physically, so I sent Elijah Heyward III as my talent and field producer, along with two cameramen. I didn't see it in real time. I watched it by reviewing the dailies, and I was crushed. I didn't know what the auction would be like, but it felt a lot like a slave auction—or what it must feel like to be separated from something or someone that you love.

This is why working with Blair McClendon as my editor was so important. I said to McClendon that the greatest atrocities or horrors in the film are the tax sale and the land auction, and that we had to somehow build up to that. He got it right away. That became sort of a guiding light for us in understanding that the violence of the AME shootings was very tragic and traumatic, but that small acts of

violence occur in the shadows all the time. We had to let people sit with that moment.

**GILLESPIE: Your concern for this erasure that runs throughout the film becomes amplified by the murders.**

**GOFF:** I think that the true record of the murders isn't just my film. My film is my expression, but we have a whole record that exists from the materials we created during this production, not only a history of different plots of land but of different interventions that people have tried and that haven't been successful. We don't include this in the film, but hopefully the film can point someone to a greater understanding of this time period in the future.

**GILLESPIE: I've been thinking a great deal about forgiveness and that point in the film where you ask your father what kind of world he hoped you would live in. Having recently become a parent yourself, how would you answer that question in terms of the world for your daughter? I'm wondering about the distance between your father's answer to the question and the way that you might answer it.**

**GOFF:** It's weird you ask. I think about it all the time. I want a world where she knows who she is and the histories that allowed her to be here in this present moment. But I also want a world where none of that matters, you know, where she's able to have true freedom. Sadly, I don't think that's the world she lives in now.

## Notes

1. Goff has been a cinematographer for films by Darius Clark Monroe, Blair Dorosh-Walther, and Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich, among others.
2. Goff currently is a program officer with the Ford Foundation's JustFilms Program as part of the Creativity and Free Expression team.
3. As Elizabeth Papazian and Caroline Eades write, "Given the subversion of nearly all accepted aesthetic boundaries in the essay form, it seems that the essayistic in film—as process, as experience, as experiment—also opens the road to its own subversion, as a form of dialectical thought that gravitates towards crisis. Thus it fosters the development of new forms, ranging from avant-garde experiments to experimentation within narrative cinema, and actively supports the emergence of inquisitive gestures as an intrinsic component of cinema as an art." Elizabeth Papazian and Caroline Eades, "Introduction: Dialogue, Politics, Utopia," in *The Essay Film: Dialogue*,



- Politics, Utopia*, ed. Elizabeth Papazian and Caroline Eades (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 8.
4. Jon-Sesrie Goff, "Documentary Says Amen! St. Clair Bourne and Black Liberation Theology," *World Records Journal*, vol. 3, *Documenting Blackness at the Smithsonian NMAAHC*, ed. Jason Fox and Mia Mask (Brooklyn, NY: UnionDocs, 2020), 62. Also available at <https://worldrecordsjournal.org/documentary-says-amen-st-clair-bourne-and-black-liberation-theology/>.
  5. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, "'No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean,'" in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 5.
  6. See Laura Rascaroli, "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, and Textual Commitments," *Framework* 49, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 24–47; and John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel, "Introduction: The Matter of Places," in *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, ed. John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), vii–xxix.
  7. Trevor Schoonmaker, "Southern Accent: The Sound of Seeing," in *Southern Accent: Seeking the American South in Contemporary Art*, ed. Miranda Lash and Trevor Schoonmaker (Durham, NC: Nasher Museum at Duke University Press, 2016), 69.
  8. Thinking with Sylvia Wynter and Édouard Glissant as part of a brilliant devising of black feminist geographies, Katherine McKittrick proposes that "naming place is also an act of naming the self and self-histories. Insisting that different kinds of expression are multifariously even, that is, not hierarchically constituted[,] ... opens up the possibility for thinking about the production of space as unfinished, a poetics of questioning." Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxii–xxiii.
  9. Goff received his MFA at Duke University in Experimental and Documentary Arts. He was also a graduate arts fellow of the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke.
  10. Dr. Campbell has long been a significant figure in the Gullah Geechee community through his academic and activist work. With his writing and leadership of various Gullah Geechee organizations, Dr. Campbell has worked to preserve the history and culture of the Low Country for over forty years.
  11. See Kim Severson, "A High-Summer Feast to Forge Connections in the Deep South," *New York Times*, August 23, 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/dining/matthew-raiford-bress-n-nyam-georgia.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/dining/matthew-raiford-bress-n-nyam-georgia.html).
  12. Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich is an exceptional filmmaker whose body of work to date richly demonstrates the legacy and future of black experimental cinemas. Her recent work includes *Conspiracy* (2022), a collaboration with Simone Leigh; *Footnote to the West* (2020); *Spit on the Broom* (2019); and *A Quality of Light* (2018).
  13. Say their names ... Reverend Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Depayne Middleton Doctor, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Reverend Clementa Pinckney, Tywanza Sanders, Reverend Daniel Simmons, Myra Thompson.
  14. Trunk minders were responsible for controlling the flow of water needed for cultivation on the plantations. The name is derived from the tree trunks used for the man-made canals.