THE GREAT HANGING

Johnathan Paul Martin

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APPROVED:

Melinda Levin, Major Professor
Tania Khalaf, Committee Member
Jenny Vogel, Committee Member
Eugene Martin, Committee Member
Melinda Levin, Director of Master of Fine Arts degree in Documentary Production and Studies, Department of Media Arts
Eugene Martin, Chair of the Department of Media Arts
Costas Tsatsoulis, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

*The Great Hanging* is a documentary film that tells the story of the largest extra-legal mass hanging in U.S. History. This story is told through stage play recital of *October Mourning* written by historian and professor Dr. Pat Ledbetter. Using the stage play as a vehicle, the film showcases cinematic re-enactments based in the events in Gainesville, Texas during October 1862. These events show how a small community became overwhelmed by the fog of war and delved into madness as the Civil War crept closer and closer to their doorstep.
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CHAPTER I
M.F.A. PROSPECTUS

Title: The Tainted Breeze (Working Title)
Length: 90 minutes
Medium: HD Video

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

On October 1, 1862 during the height of the Civil War, the largest mass hanging in United States history commenced in Gainesville, Texas as forty-one men met their demise at the end of a rope. This same day three additional men were shot just along the outskirts of town as they fled for their lives. These events became known as The Great Hanging.

By the late 1850s and early 1860s, only 10.9% of landowners in Cooke County, Texas and its county seat, Gainesville, owned slaves. Before the Civil War began, Cooke County had taken a stand against slavery with 61% of the county voting against secession and the Confederate cause.¹ A Peace Party was formed with the intent of staving off Confederate conscription. Local slave owners who were pro-confederate accused this Peace Party of aligning with pro-Union forces outside of Texas. These accusations prompted Colonel James G. Bourland to gather state troops and begin arresting these suspected Union sympathizers.

In all, one hundred fifty men were arrested over a thirteen-day period. In order to exact justice quickly and mercilessly, a Citizens Court was constructed of twelve jurors who began trying each of the one hundred fifty accused. None of the members of the Citizens Court had any legal training or status in the State of Texas, and each of the accused were found guilty of

insurrection and treason by a 2/3-majority vote.² These newly convicted, supposed, Union sympathizers were sentenced to death by hanging, which would commence in two days. However, many were killed within a matter of hours.

By October 16th proceedings of the “Citizens Court” had halted due to the death of Colonel William C. Young, the man who had been the moderator and seen to the lawful acquittal of many of the accused. His assassination outraged the public and in looking for revenge, the jurors of the “Citizens Court” were replaced and the acquittal of nineteen of the accused was reversed, which resulted in their deaths by lynching.

The fuel that fed the Great Hanging came from prominent families in the county, and it was these influences that urged the violence and vigilantism.³ Many of these families had sons, brothers and fathers fighting for the Confederate Army, while many of the victims were condemned simply because they had family ties to prominent Unionists. As author Richard B. McCaslin wrote in his book Tainted Breeze, “It has been asserted that those who supported the Confederacy lost the war but achieved their goals through violence and the courts during Reconstruction.” He goes on to say that those who cried out against the convictions of the Great Hanging were attacked and tormented, “while those brought to trial for their role in the Great Hanging and other atrocities were acquitted.”⁴

President Abraham Lincoln and the Federal Government were unable to successfully aid Unionists and those accused in the region during the Civil War, and they could do little after the

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war to avenge the atrocities of the Great Hanging. In the end, the citizens of Cooke County closed ranks and turned a blind eye to the events of October 1862.

To this day the subject of the Great Hanging has been a taboo one. Many of the families whose ancestors tried and convicted the innocent still live in Gainesville and surrounding areas. To the majority of the citizens it is seen as a blemish in the town’s history first and a tragedy second. In the end it comes down to reputation as Gainesville, the county seat, is now the Medal of Honor host city. What this means is that each year the living recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, a military decoration awarded to armed forces members for gallantry and bravery in combat, descend upon Gainesville, Texas and are celebrated by the local and extended community. This is a great distinction for Gainesville, Texas as they are the only city other than Washington D.C., capital of the United States of America, to have this distinction. Because of this, city leaders and citizens don’t want that reputation tarnished by digging up the past.

In October of 2012, one hundred and fifty years after the Great Hanging, a monument was crafted to memorialize those who had died through false accusations during the Great Hanging. However public outcry was so great that the planned memorial service was canceled indefinitely.\(^5\) Then in the fall of 2014 the largest collection of Great Hanging victim supporters as well as descendants convened upon the town of Gainesville, Texas and a memorial lunch and service was held with nearly 300 people in attendance.\(^6\) This historical event is still a controversial one, but now a large monument rests in a small abandoned lot next to Elm Creek, while a statue of Colonel James G. Bourland resides on the northeast corner of the courthouse looking down California Street toward the site of the Great Hanging.

The film will begin with a large group of people standing around a memorial site. This memorial will act as a bookend for the film with the audience being completely unaware of the reasoning behind this memorial. However, this is where the audience is introduced to their guide for the film, a historical researcher. This researcher will take on the persona of historian Richard McCaslin, and he will act as a conduit between the interviews and the historical re-enactments.

As this film will be told in two time periods, both will rely on these re-enactments to visually represent them. The researcher will, as discussed before, act as a conduit that guides the audience through the historical narrative of the Great Hanging. Then as the researcher investigates different locations important to the Great Hanging the two re-enactments will begin to merge.

For example, the researcher stands taking notes near a community park, where two of the accused were shot and murdered in 1862. As he finishes the notes he raises his head to find himself in the environment of 1862 as two men run past him followed closely behind by two men on horseback who shoot and kill the accused. By using this type of blending between re-enactments the audience is given a direct reconstruction of the events through the aid of the researcher.

Each one of these re-enactments, both present and past, will be filmed cinematically. By filming them cinematically we can push the visual representation of the historical events and give the audience a brutal reconstruction. This blending will continue throughout the film until we move to the present day and the controversy surrounding the memorial dedication. It will be at this point in the film that a higher emphasis on observational footage will be needed. The film will end with the memorial dedication and the researcher standing amongst the crowd as we saw in the beginning of the film.
TREATMENT

A glowing orange sun sets in the distance, just between the building in the quiet town of Gainesville. The roads are empty and the citizens of this sleepy town reside in their homes eating dinner and enjoying each other’s company. Not to far away from these city streets rests a graveyard and a number of graves. These graves have moss growing upon them, signaling the time in which the dead have had to lament upon their suffering. A voice rises up from the darkened night of the cemetery; rises up to tell a story, a story about the community that sentenced its very own citizens to a false death for being suspected Union sympathizers. In this story good does not conquer evil. Rather the good are ripped from their homes and families, blindfolded and gagged, then set loose at the end of a rope. This is a story about the deep seated divisions within a nation, a rogue Colonel and a community of land grabbers looking to profit from it. And what is “it” you might ask? The answer is…war.

Muffled cries ring out in the distance. Thunderous thuds impact upon the surface of the earth as soldiers are seen running toward one another as smoke from their muzzles disappear in the wind. The yelling grows louder as the fighting intensifies and the voice returns.

A museum researcher sits at his desk continuing to read from a fairly worn book. Turning the crisp page, the voice in his mind spins tales about the tensions that brought upon massive execution. He laments upon how the Civil War was anything but, and that it affected every small town in the south including Gainesville. This affect laid upon the city like a darkened cloud keeping the town and its citizens from admitting that a crime had taken place, that those dead in the cemetery were innocent of any crimes.

Closing the book and setting it upon his desk the researcher stands and stretches and then reaches for his coat. Upon the desk just next to the book sits a flyer, and upon it’s glossed façade
reads, “Join us on this, the 150th Anniversary of the Great Hanging, for a Memorial Service to honor the fallen innocent.”

Suddenly a ticking clock sounds off in the researcher’s office and he pulls back the sleeve of his shirt and coat to check its accuracy against the watch on his wrist. Reaching quickly for the pamphlet and his leather bound journal he makes his way through the office door. As he walks through the museum and toward the front door, he beings to discuss in his mind the facts of the memorial and the number of people attending.

Driving his car through town he continues talking about the long-term effects on the survivors. Finally pulling his car up to a parking spot near a gymnasium, the researcher sees a crowd of people gathering and making their way inside. Doing the same he steps through the doors and signs an attendance book in the foyer, before making his way into the large gym where the basketball court is covered in tables and people moving around conversing with one another. We follow the events of the luncheon. Then a familiar voice comes over a microphone and asks that everyone please join them at the memorial site.

Transitioning to the memorial site we see a large crowd of people as the researcher walks amongst the still observers. He stops and looks towards the man conducting the memorial service, the researcher stares off into the distance and we hear historian Richard McCaslin introduce himself and his research over the Great Hanging.

The researcher stands alone near the memorial site seeming to be lost in a daze as the voice of Richard McCaslin returns and introduces the audience to the events of the Great Hanging. Quickly looking down at his journal and then looking back up, the researcher finds himself surrounded by confederate soldiers and men standing on boxes underneath a large tree as rope dangle from their necks. The Researcher walks through the space as the voice of Richard
McCaslin continues to provide context for what we are seeing. Then McCaslin tells the audience and the Researcher that in order to understand what is happening, they need to go back to the beginning.

Cutting back to the memorial site we find the researcher turning the pages of his journal to the beginning. This action will act as a way to introduce additional historians such as Pat Ledbetter, Ron Melugin and Colleen Carri-Clark. Each historian gives an account of events as the researcher’s hand underlines, circles and highlights in his journal and watches again as the researcher is transported to another re-enactment that tells the story of tensions between the people of Cooke County. The voices of the historian’s frame the visual of a dimly lit barn as men against slavery and conscription gather together to form a Peace Party as the researcher looks on. Then we will cut back to the historian interviews momentarily as they discuss the mindset of the confederate loyalists as they devise a plan to have the suspected pro-Unionists arrested.

We then cut back to the researcher writing the name of Colonel James G. Bourland in his journal. He looks puzzled for a moment and then suddenly finds himself on the northeast corner of the county courthouse looking at a statue of Colonel James G. Bourland. At this moment the voice of Richard McCaslin returns continuing the historical accounts of the day of the Great Hanging. The Researcher finds himself amongst the memorial crowd again momentarily before looking on as Colonel Bourland and his soldiers begin rounding up men suspected of being pro-Unionist. With each raid on each house the researcher watches and documents the brutality waged against the suspected unionists.

Smooth cuts back and forth between the interviews and re-enactments have historians Pat Ledbetter and Colleen Carri-Clark giving the audience clear insight on the treatment of the suspects and how they were transported by wagons driven by slaves. We then see the researcher
as he stands in a crowd of people while residents hastily form a citizen’s court. It is important to successfully blend the re-enacted time periods along with the interviews; this way the audience can be textually informed about these events while also gaining some form of visual representation.

Dipping to black we see McCaslin talking about the majority vote needed for convictions. He also discusses each of the accused being tried by a non-state appointed jury for the crimes of treason and insurrection. These interview statements will be supported by additional voices as the researcher turns the page in his journal to reveal the words tribunal court. We then see him standing amongst a crowded room as men argue with prisoners sitting in chairs, their wrists shackled and their heads covered with bags.

Another dip to black and we are once again where we started as the researcher looks up and sees the soldiers lining the men up on boxes with ropes around their necks. We’ll end the film with a cinematic reenactment of the final hanging, to which the researcher will be a witness. The last moments of the film will have the closing comments from our historians, which will play on top of the bookended Civil War battle. The historians then comment on this being the largest mass hanging in US History, at which point we find the researcher standing alone looking at a tree and forty-one empty hanging ropes. Slowly dropping his head, the film fades to black.

FEASIBILITY

Being from the town of Gainesville my ability to gain characters and subjects for the film has been a smooth part of the process. Each one of the historians has expressed deep interest in working with me on this project, particularly Dr. Richard McCaslin who is the author of Tainted Breeze, the definitive historical text on the Great Hanging. My access to McCaslin has been
made easier since he is a Professor and Chairperson in the History Department at the University of North Texas. Access to the additional historians has been made easier since I have a prior history with all of them. Pat Ledbetter and Ron Melugin are both professors from North Central Texas College in Gainesville, and Colleen Carri-Clark is the curator of the Morton Museum of Cooke County, which is also located in Gainesville.

My narrative foundation is extremely solid with the inclusion of each historian and expert on the subject of the Great Hanging. Each one also has an area that they research more than others, which should play well in developing the structure of the film. For example, McCaslin has a wide knowledge of the events as a whole, while Melugin has focused on the military and government aspects of the events. Ledbetter researched the extended stories of the victims, while Carri-Clark has been the point person on contacting the victim’s ancestors. Again, with each historian’s focus being different, it should present us with the ability to really develop a solid narrative.

With the films story and structure being crafted from the historian interviews we will rely on re-enactments to develop the visuals of the film. These reenactments would seem to be the most difficult part of this film to produce, as the process of finding actors is never easy. However, in this case my production has been fortunate. The Butterfield Stage Theater troupe in alliance with the North Central Texas College drama department has produced a play about the Great Hanging. In fact, I was on hand last fall to film the very first public production of that play. I have been given numerous positive responses from the Butterfield Stage about using the actors from the play in the reenactments. Additional cast support has also been given from John Gallahan who is the head of the 4th Texas Brigade SCV (Sons of Confederate Veterans), which is
a large-scale civil war reenactment group that travels across the country, but is based in Cooke County.

With these assets already locked in and committed to the film the feasibility is very high for this film. The only drawback I can see at this point is necessary equipment. While I appreciate and will utilize the resources from the University there are a few assets that neither the University nor I have. These resources include a 3-Axis gimbal, jib crane and Steadi-Cam®, all of which would be utilized to cinematically develop the reenactments.

With the alliances that I have already been able to establish and the planning that has already started to take place, the feasibility for this project is incredibly high. Given the location and history of this topic in relation to it being based in my hometown, I feel that I have a large advantage over any filmmaker coming into this production without this background. Lastly, given my leaning toward narrative film I truly believe beyond any doubt that I can make this film something special.

GOALS OF PRODUCTION

There are a number of goals that should be met with this production, the first of which is to extend the narrative of this historical event beyond the county line. There have been major efforts for over 150 years to keep this tragedy a secret. Many community leaders felt that it would cast a bad light on the city of Gainesville and the County of Cooke. However, by presenting this film with the support of facts audiences will realize that Gainesville was in fact one of the few townships in the south that opposed conscription as well as slavery. In fact this notion has been gaining traction since the City of Gainesville finally approved the dedication site and service for The Great Hanging Memorial in October of 2014.
In the end I believe the production of this film should yield a clear and concise message that will clear the air and ensure that all misconceptions about the events of October 1867 are presented. In order to do this effectively the historians I have mentioned prior will lay that foundation. Through their extensive research all aspects of the events during The Great Hanging will be explored.

Another goal of production is to present the audience with the past and current state of tension that still resides in the county. Even though the memorial has been approved and dedicated by the leaders of the city, there is still a deep divide between members of the community over the event. Many of those belong to the Texas Sons of Confederate Veterans community, the same group who is providing the soldiers for the Civil War reenactment. Gaining these dissenting views will be crucial as they truly express the present tension.

An additional goal is for the film to be artful and respectful in its presentation. I am filming the reenactments based solely on the historical documentation that the historians have provided. These will be broken down and filmed through the use of cinematic reenactments, which will be stylized to mimic the visual styles of feature fictional films, while also being respectful to both sides of the issue. By filming these reenactments in a cinematic way the audience should have a better visual understanding of the events, which should render a more emotional response.

The overall goal of the production is to craft a film that is insightful, educational and entertaining to watch. While it deals with a deep and dark subject matter the final conclusions of the film showcase the positives, by showing that the future generations of the community finally acknowledge the tragic events and embrace it as not only a tragedy but as a positive toward the
progressive nature of its citizens. I plan on drawing from some of these citizens, gaining their views and how the community has grown since the late 1800’s.

Finally, on a personal level I want this film to expand my visual style and knowledge of film in general. Utilizing both traditional documentary structures and cinematic reenactments I feel that I can hone my craft, which in the end will make me a more rounded filmmaker. With that said I am going to use this production as an opportunity to not only showcase myself as a storyteller, but to also show my comprehension as a filmmaker and director. I consider myself a jack-of-all-trades and this is another opportunity for me to showcase those abilities. My long-term personal goals are to establish a fruitful career as a filmmaker, who can work as a documentary or narrative director, and by accomplishing the goals at hand for this film I can reach those career goals.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

My hope for this film is that it can be watched and enjoyed by a wide audience. In order to develop that wide audience, I will release this film through several outlets such as festivals, streaming and video on demand services. I also see this being used as a possible teaching tool for students in High School and College, or as a historical docudrama that is popular amongst adults. While the audience should be split between the young adult demographic and their parents, it is expected that a slight lean toward the more mature demographic will happen.

While this narrative seems to be a very niche subject in the fact that it covers a small town in a small section of the country, its story is actually quite vast. In the end the story is about the country as a whole during the Civil War as it speaks directly to the divide that pushed our nation toward that division. Because of this, I feel the potential audience for this stretches across
the entire country, and across several racial, religious and political lines. I again, however, fully expect the majority of the audience to be that of an older generation. More specifically I see the majority of the audience consisting of older white males from either the north or the south, both of which should have contrasting overviews of the film. Meaning depending on their family background they will be prone to side one way or the other in terms of the Civil War debate.

Many people consider themselves history fanatics, so this is another community that this film can easily connect to. Especially with the recent rise and success in television docudramas such as the Hatfield’s & McCoy’s (2012) and America: The Story of Us (2010). There seems to be a real desire for this kind of historical retelling through the use of both traditional documentary and narrative structures. By making use of both structures I plan for this film to reach this specific demographic, which usually falls under the more mature adult demographic.

In the end I believe the story of the victims will draw in their own audience, with this being a true-life tragic story that is rooted in the very foundation of the Civil War conflict so that the audience will eventually find the narrative. No matter which side that potential audience may be on, the narrative will draw them with the basic disregard for life and liberty, the corruption of local government as well the slaughtering of the innocent and outspoken. While it is not the tension that it once was, the deep seeded angst between community neighbors who side one way or the other in terms of the Civil War will be another defining characteristic to draw the audience in.

STYLE AND APPROACH

In order to effectively talk about the style of the film, its influences should be clearly set beforehand. These influences include the documentary films The Road to Guantanamo (2006),
Jinxed (2015), The Thin Blue Line (1988) and The Arbor (2010); fictional films Lincoln (2012), Paths of Glory (1957), Saving Private Ryan (1999), The Tree of Life (2011) and Passion of the Christ (2004) as well as television docudramas such as Band of Brothers (2001), Hatfield’s & McCoy’s (2012) and America: The Story of Us (2010). With these influences clearly presented we can now discuss the style and approach.

My plan for this film is for it to be as cinematic as possible, even for the interview sections. How I will accomplish this tradition cinematic style for the interviews is by using a two to three camera setup, but for this argument I will keep it to a two-camera setup. In this type of scenario camera “A” will be a traditional static shot taken directly in front of the subject with myself positioned slightly to the left rear of the camera, similar to many of Errol Morris’ films, such as The Thin Blue Line (1988). By setting camera “A” in this fashion we will ensure that the subject is looking directly at the camera and therefore the audience. We will break up this direct eye contact by switching to camera “B”, which will be a free roaming camera that will at times move capture the subject from a different angle, capturing their mannerisms. By breaking this direct eye contact and allowing the audience to see these mannerisms, they will be able to gain a greater sense of emotion behind the subject’s words as they discuss the Great Hanging in detail.

The interviews will be supported by both observational footage and reenactments. In terms of observational footage, we will follow each of the historians in their daily life teaching or running a museum. To add to this daily observational footage, additional observations will be captured of them participating in various gatherings and events surrounding the Great Hanging. Lastly, additional observational footage will be captured at various specific Great Hanging locations in present day Cooke County. These sections of footage will show how the community
has largely ignored the events of the Great Hanging, which is just another example of the tension and desire to forget the past.

With the interviews and observational footage completed, they will be cut together to create the narrative as a whole. Once that narrative is complete a process of storyboarding and producing reenactments to support the narrative will take place. These reenactments will rely on highly stylized cinematic compositions to convey the events of the Great Hanging. Influences for these reenactments will vary. One example will be the zoom tracking that will take place on the battlefield during a Civil War reenactment. The zoom-track process is the action of tracking a single character with dolly motion while engaging that character with quick jump zooms. This process was first used effectively in Stanley Kubrick’s *Paths of Glory* (1957). Additional cinematic styles will merge for the emphasis on specific moments and reactions by using slow motion, like scenes composed in *Passion of the Christ* (2011), and handheld fluid motion shots used effectively in *The Tree of Life* (2011). These finite scenes will be setup through establishing shots, which will be composed in one-point perspective, a staple of Stanley Kubrick films.

By utilizing a mixture of these styles the film will give the audience a solid visual foundation with the interviews and observational and then the reenactments will queue an emotional visual response. Specially crafted musical compositions of classic southern bluegrass and violins support the visuals, which will have an added level of emotional depth.

The majority of the voices for this film will come from the world of academia. My hope is to also have additional voice from various groups that have participated in the positive moment of the Great Hanging memorial. These additional voices include the surviving ancestors of those who were killed and range from male to female, Anglo and African American. From what I have been told they are reluctant to speak, as they do not want their family names to be
cast in a bad light again. My hope is that as production moves along and word spreads they will wish to participate.

Lastly, the sound of this film will be crafted with a foundation from the time period. My composer Benjamin Shirey has begun writing sequences and pieces to be played by a small group of stringed instruments. The instruments of this ensemble will consist of violins, cellos, a guitar and a mandolin. Benjamin will craft a layered composition where each of the instruments will have multiple sections to play. Each of these sections will then be layered upon one another to the point where they sound like a full symphony. These instruments will also be used in very unique ways in order to develop many of the sound effects for the film. While there will be a lot of post processing in regards to the mixing of the film, the overall score will stay as close to “as recorded” as possible.

DISTRIBUTION

There are several goals that I would like to meet in terms of distribution. First I’ll cover the most desired distribution avenues and then I will discuss the more practical distribution methods. A discussion will also be made for the use of social media to extend the audience as well as the reach for potential distribution. Finally, I will discuss the number of film festivals that the film will apply for, which could aid the securing of the desired distribution.

The most desired form of distribution would be for the film to be picked up by a production studio that can either deploy the film through physical mediums in brick and mortar storefronts and theaters or through television programming. I feel this story could render itself to a cable channel such as H2, AHC or National Geographic. Cable networks such as History and Discovery have seen a large audience for docudrama’s regarding historical events and the Great
Hanging should be produced in such a way that it could warrant an audience on one of these networks. Aside from cable networks, major motion picture distribution could be a route. With major streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon as well as Yahoo Screen, Google Play and iTunes, the possibilities for digital distribution are very high with the backing of a major studio or production company.

With this being the most desired form of distribution a secondary source of distribution would be through practical methods. These practical methods would be through sources like Vimeo’s On Demand Service or CreateSpace to release the film and try to gain an audience. Another method or attempt to release the film for the television market would be to try and find distribution through PBS POV. While competition will be steep for broadcast time this would be a more practical distribution channel for television.

Each one of these distribution options doesn’t happen without a festival run attached to it. This is where the film will find its distribution. Film festivals will afford this film the opportunity to find an audience and hopefully a production company who will come in and aid with distribution. In order to gain this audience and potential financial backing I plan to submit the Great Hanging to the list of film festivals seen below.

While entry into any of the major festivals below will be a long shot, the idea is to gain as much exposure as possible, and an entry into one of these would make that happen. However, additional entries to smaller film festivals will be needed. These particular film festivals are all Academy qualifying film festivals. Again, while this may be a long shot, it is worth a try, and worth the time and effort to submit if the film is selected by one of these. By being selected to one of these festivals the opportunity for distribution goes up considerably.
ACADEMY QUALIFYING FILM FESTIVALS:

- Austin Film Festival
- Big Sky Documentary Film Festival
- DOC NYC
- Full Frame Documentary Film Festival
- Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival
- Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival
- Los Angeles Film Festival
- New Orleans Film Festival
- Raindance Film Festival
- Rhode Island International Film Festival,
- RiverRun International Film Festival
- St. Louis International Film Festival
- Seattle International Film Festival
- Slamdance Film Festival
- Sundance
- SXSW
- Tribeca

NON-ACADEMY QUALIFYING FILM FESTIVALS:

- Dallas International Film Festival
- Dallas Video Fest
- DeadCenter Film Festival
- Heartland Film Festival
- Lone Star Film Festival
- Montreal World Film Festival
- Nantucket Film Festival
- Oak Cliff Film Festival
- San Antonio Film Festival
- Thin Line Film Festival
- Texas Independent Film Festival
- Toronto International Film Festival
- Tulsa International Film Festival
- WorldFest – Houston International Film Festival
CONTINUING RESEARCH

FILMS AND VISUAL MEDIA

• *The Road to Guantanamo*, Mat Whitecross and Michael Winterbottom, 2006
• *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst*, Andrew Jarecki, 2015
• *The Thin Blue Line*, Errol Morris, 1988
• *The Arbor*, Clio Barnard, 2010
• *The Imposter*, Bart Layton, 2012
• *Harlan County USA*, Barbara Kopple, 1977
• *Lincoln*, Steven Spielberg, 2012
• *Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson, 2004
• *Paths of Glory*, Stanley Kubrick, 1957
• *Saving Private Ryan*, Steven Spielberg, 1999
• *A Clockwork Orange*, Stanley Kubrick, 1971
• *The Tree of Life*, Tarrence Malick, 2011
• *The Shining*, Stanley Kubrick, 1980
• *Band of Brothers*, Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks, 2001
• *Hatfield’s & McCoy’s*, Kevin Reynolds, 2012
• *Hell on Wheels*, Joe & Tony Gayton, 2011-Present
• *America: The Story of Us*, Ed Fields & Daniel Hall, 2010

BOOKS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES

• C. N. Jones, “*Early Days in Cooke County (1848-1873)*” 976.4533 H2j, FHL US/CAN. Book.
# PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

From May 1, 2015 to April 15, 2016

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 1st</td>
<td>Begin Pre-Visualization</td>
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<td>May 14th</td>
<td><strong>Release teaser poster and marketing materials through website and social media, open Film Facebook Page</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 15th</td>
<td>Initial Interview with Historian and author Richard B. McCaslin</td>
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<td>May 20th</td>
<td>Interview with Historian and Professor Pat Ledbetter</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 21st</td>
<td>Interview with Historian and Professor Ron Melugin</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 22nd</td>
<td>Interview with Historian and Morton Museum Curator Colleen Carri-Clark</td>
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<td>June 1st</td>
<td><strong>Review interviews with Historians and begin developing the narrative, also begin discussions with the Butterfield Stage and Texas actors for roles in the reenactments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 11th</td>
<td>Film supporting interviews with victim ancestors</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 12th</td>
<td>Film supporting interviews with victim ancestors</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 18th</td>
<td>Follow up Interview with Richard B. McCaslin and observational footage</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 19th</td>
<td>Follow up Interview with Pat Ledbetter and observational footage</td>
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<td>June 25th</td>
<td>Follow up Interview with Ron Melugin and observational footage</td>
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<td>June 26th</td>
<td>Follow up Interview Colleen Carri-Clark and observational footage</td>
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<td>July 9th</td>
<td><strong>Begin reviewing all interviews and observational footage, continue refining the film narrative</strong></td>
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<td>July 13th</td>
<td><strong>Begin storyboarding the reenactments with VFX studio MMW</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 22nd</td>
<td>Begin filming observational footage of specific historical sites</td>
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<td>July 23rd</td>
<td>Film additional observ. footage</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 24th</td>
<td><strong>Wrap on observational footage</strong></td>
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<td>July 30th</td>
<td>Open Casting Call of reenactment character roles, location (TBD)</td>
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<td>July 31st</td>
<td>Open Casting Call of reenactment character roles, location (TBD)</td>
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<td>August 6th</td>
<td>Finalize roles for reenactments</td>
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<td>August 7th</td>
<td>Begin reenactment rehearsals</td>
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<td>August 8th</td>
<td><strong>Finalize reenactment storyboards and prepare for principle photography</strong></td>
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<td>August 20th</td>
<td><strong>Principle Photography begins on the reenactments and will continue through October and November</strong></td>
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<td>September 18th</td>
<td>Begin production on teaser trailer, which will follow the trailer style of America: The Story of Us</td>
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<td>October 1st</td>
<td>Release teaser trailer on the anniversary date of the beginning of the arrests</td>
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<td>October 10th</td>
<td>Film the Great Hanging Luncheon, theater reenactment if accessible, and memorial</td>
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<td>November 15th</td>
<td><strong>Wrap on principle photography</strong></td>
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<td>November 20th</td>
<td>Begin Musical score early comps</td>
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<td>December 1st</td>
<td>Log all footage and begin stringout</td>
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<td>December 18th</td>
<td><strong>Begin rough cut of the film</strong></td>
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<td>Review initial cut of the film and continue with rough cut</td>
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<td>January 29th</td>
<td>Review final rough cut and begin 2nd cut</td>
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<td>February 1st</td>
<td>Launch the Kickstarter Campaign</td>
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# PRODUCTION BUDGET

The Tainted Breeze (Working Title)

Total Run Time(s): 90 minutes  
Intended Delivery Date: 5/9/16

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Production research for the film truly began before and during the prospectus stage of the process. As noted in the prospectus, the attendance at the stage play performance of *October Mourning* and the Great Hanging Memorial Dedication in 2014 was incredibly vital and crucial. It was here that the groundwork and inspiration for the re-enactments was forged, alongside the correspondence with future subjects and supporters of the film.

From this early correspondence, various research materials were suggested and even in some cases given freely by the potential subjects. These research materials included Dr. Richard McCaslin’s book *The Tainted Breeze*\(^7\), the *Civil War Recollections of James Lemuel Clark*\(^8\) written by James L. Clark, the son of victim Nathaniel Clark, *A Bright Tragic Thing*\(^9\) written by literary scholar and Texas A&M professor L.D. Clark, grandson of James L. Clark, *The Great Hanging at Gainesville, 1862: The Accounts of Thomas Barrett and George Washington Diamond*\(^10\) written by juror Thomas Barrett and journalist George Washington Diamond, and finally *October Mourning*\(^11\) the stage play script written by historian Dr. Pat Ledbetter who teaches history and humanities at North Central Texas College. Each one of these resources became the foundation for the prospectus document that was presented to the thesis committee in April of 2015.

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\(^7\) McCaslin, Richard. *“Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Texas 1862.”* (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.) Print.


Once acceptance of the subject matter and film proposal was given by the thesis committee, all focus turned back toward the research materials and annual stage play. Knowing full well that the prospectus was a road map, pre-production on the film began in late April of 2015. As it goes with any film production, things can change from the concept stage to the pre-production stage and the \textit{The Great Hanging} is no different. It was here that the final discussions on how the film would be crafted and what the film would say took place. These discussions began in earnest with fellow University of North Texas Department of Media Arts MFA cohort, co-writer, and collaborator David Goodman in May of 2015. Knowing that while the events of the great hanging did not have the vast historical documentation as many other events during the Civil War, it did have its fair share of available materials. Additionally, it had something that many of the other seminal Civil War events didn’t have, and that was a theatrical stage play. This play had become a crucial part of the prospectus.

In the upcoming text, discussions of all the research that took place during the pre-production process will be made. This includes a closer look at the research into the subject matter, which was briefly touched on above. Then a look at research conducted regarding subjects and locations for the film will be assessed, as well as the research into distribution possibilities, adjustments to target audience, and finally goals of production.

\textbf{SUBJECT MATTER RESEARCH}

Research into the subject matter of \textit{The Great Hanging} started before and during the prospectus process and continued until production of the re-enactments began. Each one of the resources listed above provided a tremendous depth of insight into great hanging events of October 1862. Several specific discoveries were made through Dr. McCaslin’s book the \textit{Tainted}
Breeze, such as the revelation of how deeply connected the non-legal citizen’s court was to the Confederacy and southern cause of the American Civil War. There were also discoveries made in terms of the legality of the proceedings, a deeper understanding of violence, frontier justice and unmitigated fear, all of which played a prominent role in the development of the prospectus.  

While these themes deeply affected the prospectus, these themes also affected the pre-production process as questions and narrative structure for the re-enactments were developed around the specific themes of political ideology, vigilantism and unmitigated fear. These fears are a by-product of rising tensions within the region, such as tensions originating from the impending Civil War from the east and south, as well as Indian raids from the north and west. In addition to these fears, there were also tensions as a result of social and class conflicts within the community. For example, persons of influence in the community who had wealth and power were slaveholders and aligned themselves with the Confederacy or southern cause. Whereas members of the community who did not hold power or influence, consisting of farmers and frontiersmen, openly opposed succession or the act of dividing the United States between the North and the South. Because of these ideological leanings, families who did not align with the Confederacy were labeled as Union sympathizers that could potentially incite a slave insurrection or rebellion. Fears of this internal insurrection resulted in Confederate sympathizers using vigilantism, or violence, to restore order to the community.

While this research yielded incredible data and laid the foundation for the narrative that co-writer David Goodman and myself would write, new questions arose. One such question

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would be if we are focusing on the perspective of the great hanging victims, is this an ethical perspective? Questions such as these loom very large over the pre-production process.

As a filmmaker, no matter if I am making a narrative or documentary I always ensure that during development all possible perspectives have been researched. This is especially true when working with a subject such as the events of the great hanging, which include political, class, and ideological conflicts as well as non-legal executions through vigilantism. To ensure that all possible perspectives have been researched a full non-partisan approach must be taken.

With this in mind additional research was conducted for the film. These research sessions included phone conversations with journalists from the *Austin Statesmen* and *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, both of which are newspaper publications located in Austin and Fort Worth, Texas. Additional discussions of the events of the great hanging took place in person with members of the *United Daughters of the Confederacy* and *Sons of Confederate Veterans*, which are memorial organizations dedicated to preserving the legacy of Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. Finally, in June of 2015 an open forum was conducted in the lyceum of the North Central Texas College Library. This open forum showcased descendants from both the Confederate and Union sides of the Civil War who came together to discuss the subject of the great hanging and the approach I as a filmmaker would take.

Through each meeting and discussion, it became clear there was no gray area of interpretation. Individuals either believed those men killed during the great hanging were either patriots or traitors. While the journalists from each newspaper quoted several historical sources that aided their conclusion, the descendants revealed a lack of historical basis when discussing the events of the great hanging. Because of this revelation the decision was made to rely solely
on historical facts and the stage play *October Mourning*. In order to ensure historical basis was achieved Dr. Richard McCaslin and Dr. Pat Ledbetter became the authoritative voices for the film.

**INTERVIEWEES AND LOCATION RESEARCH**

Correspondence with historians Dr. McCaslin and Dr. Ledbetter began in August of 2014, then continued through the prospectus process ending in April of 2015. Before interviews were scheduled or filmed research on each interviewee was conducted. In order to obtain research information needed, initial one-on-one discussions with both historians took place. During these discussions specific questions, regarding academic background, area of focus, and ideological stances in regards to the great hanging aided in the vetting process.

Additional research into each historian was conducted through meetings with the board members of the Great Hanging Memorial Foundation. These meetings were held in the home of foundation president and chairman Steve Gordon, who, until 2012, was the chairman of the Cooke County Historical Society. Also in attendance were Memorial board member and political strategist Nancy David Brannon, who previously worked with the National Committee of Young Democrats of America as well as the re-election campaign for President Bill Clinton. Through these contacts crucial data and information confirmed Dr. Richard McCaslin and Dr. Pat Ledbetter’s experience and background and the authoritative voice they would bring to the film.

Once this vetting process was complete, additional ideas for potential interviewees were given by Dr. McCaslin and Dr. Ledbetter. Among these potential interviewees were Great Hanging Memorial Foundation chairman Steve Gordon, Memorial Foundation and historian

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14 *October Mourning*. By Pat Ledbetter. Dir. Pat Ledbetter. Campus Theater, Gainesville. 14, Oct. 2014. Performance. (Stage play re-enacting the events of the Great Hanging, based on Dr. McCaslin’s book the *Tainted Breeze*.)
Leon Russell, North Central Texas College history professor Ron Melugin, descendent Colleen Clark-Carri, great granddaughter of great hanging victim Nathaniel Clark, Gainesville City Council member Carolyn Hendricks, City of Gainesville Mayor Jim Goldsworthy, and Cooke County Attorney Ed Zielinski. Once these names were obtained initial introductions began. Many of the potential interviewees listed above declined any invitation to be interviewed for the film. Reasons for declining the invitation varied from person to person, though each centered around personal and political conflicts. Two individuals did agree to appear on camera; Colleen Clark-Carri and Ed Zielinski. Research on each individual yielded solid information as Colleen Clark-Carri was a research assistant for her uncle, Texas A&M Professor and historian, L.D. Clark until his death in August 2014. Ed Zielinski is a former Judge Advocate General with the United States Military and defense attorney from Buffalo, New York who came to Gainesville, Texas in 1986 where he ran a private law practice. He was elected Cooke County Attorney in 2008 and remains in that position today.

While research for the interviewees was being conducted, additional research regarding locations for the film began as well. The first location visit took place on October 10, 2014 with Dr. Richard McCaslin at the great hanging memorial site dedication. During this visit it was disclosed that the memorial site was the actual location where the executions of those convicted during the great hanging. This small park rests five blocks from the Gainesville, Texas downtown square. A second visit was conducted at the downtown square itself where Dr. Pat Ledbetter gave information regarding a statue of an American Civil War Confederate statue which rested in the northeast corner of the courthouse lot. This monument showcased a Confederate soldier standing guard looking at the northeastern horizon, which is the direction of the great hanging site where the non-legal executions of 40 suspected Union sympathizers took
place. Finally, a location visit was conducted with Colleen Clark-Carri at the Clark family estate, where great hanging victim Nathaniel Clark and his family lived. Mrs. Clark-Carri also gave access to the Clark family cemetery where the graves of Nathaniel, his wife Huldah and their son James L. Clark were interred.

**DISTRIBUTION POSSIBILITIES/TARGET AUDIENCE**

Before principle photography began for this documentary, research into potential distribution models was conducted. This research was completed by my staff at Datalus Pictures, which is the financier and production company record for *The Great Hanging* documentary. I am a co-founder of this production company and currently reside as its Chief Executive Officer. With distribution research completed initial results yielded that distribution to potential television networks History and AHC were deemed to be the best possible destination for the film. However, as my staff at Datalus Pictures ran analytical data on viewing habits of users through the official film Facebook page and website the results suggested a general audience would prefer the film be reproduced as a narrative feature. With this consideration in mind evaluations were made as to the potential advantage of using this documentary film as a *proof of concept*, which is used often in the film industry. This entails developing and creating a short version of a longer concept that could then be shown at festivals where studio executives or potential investors could view it. These studio executives or investors could then offer production funding to develop a feature length narrative version of the film.

While not wanting to solely rely on potential funding for a much larger film, additional distribution models were researched for the documentary film as it currently exists. These models included digital distribution platforms such as Vimeo, Amazon Prime, Apple iTunes and
Hulu from NBC Universal. But with a run-time of approximately 30 minutes the odds of obtaining a long term and profitable deal from one of these platforms was minimal. At this point it was decided to prolong additional distribution discussions until principle production of the film was complete and a better determination could be made.

While researching distribution, new information came from the above analytical data that suggested changes were needed in regards to target audience. Analytical data informed me that the majority of those interested in the film were among the 30-49 age demographic; while these numbers weren’t anything new the percentages for the gender split were of interest. Among this demographic it was discovered that information regarding the film had reached a total of 5,360 people and among these people 62% were women while only 38% were men. This showed a dramatic shift from the initial target audience data compiled for the prospectus. Using this newly collected analytical data it was decided that more research was needed, therefore a finalized target audience determination was postponed until the completion of the film.
CHAPTER III
RECONCEPTUALIZATION BEFORE PRODUCTION

Title: The Great Hanging
Length: 25-30 minutes
Medium: HD Video

After discussions with my thesis committee as well as potential subjects for the film, changes and additional content were developed and added. This addendum highlights those changes and work to clear the air on the documentary as a whole. The first change for the documentary was the film’s length, which is now reduced from 90 minutes to 25-30 minutes. This time frame was reached after taking into account new information and content received from a now confirmed subject, Pat Ledbetter the playwright. Her written play covers the entire Great Hanging series of events and highlights specific characters involved within said event. These new developments will be added to the newly written Introduction and Description thus showing a more concise film narrative. Because of this major adjustment additional changes were made. I will be addressing the Treatment of the film in the section labeled Production Changes. I also made adjustments to Intended Audience as well as Style & Approach and Budget. The Production Schedule however will not change, as I still captured interviews and filmed re-enactments. The filming of the stage play took place during the re-enactment period.

With these new adjustments and changes I have a better-structured film, one that should be primed for a festival run upon completion. My hope is for this film to have a successful festival run and gain the exposure and interest needed to gain a production agreement either for a feature length film or television mini-series.
INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

Gainesville is a quiet town that rests where the Texas border meets with Oklahoma. It is an inviting town with friendly townsfolk who are warm and welcoming. In fact the town’s long time slogan is “Welcome to Gainesville, the Front Porch of Texas.” Because of this slogan and the distinction of Gainesville as the Medal of Honor host city it has been hailed as the most patriotic town in America by USA Today. But as many know, sometimes things may look all well and good on the outside, while underneath there is a deep and dark chasm lurking to be discovered and the town of Gainesville is no different.

I was born in Dallas, but grew up in Gainesville, Texas. Both my mother and father, as well as their families, are from Gainesville or surrounding areas. Living in such a small place you believe that you know everyone and everything about your town, but in reality I never learned the hard truth about Gainesville until I had moved away. And while this hard truth is in fact dark and cold, there is some light and positivity to it as well.

This one dark and callous secret began on October 1, 1862 during the height of the Civil War. As the fight over conscription raged on in the south, Gainesville was far enough north that many of its citizens were comprised of people from the north who had very Unionist ideals. These men banded together and secretly formed a “Peace Party” that would oppose any such political leanings toward the Confederacy and conscription. At this point and time only around 10% of citizens in Gainesville were slaveholders. But it was this 10% who were some of the wealthiest in the town and had strong Confederate ties. Some of these slaveholders received

word from Jonas B. McCurley that a faction to run against conscription was brewing under the
surface. This caught the attention of James G. Bourland, the Provost Marshal for Cooke County,
where Gainesville is the county seat.\textsuperscript{17}

After several weeks of spying and infiltrating, Bourland released his militia to round up
those two hundred suspected Union sympathizers. Nathaniel M. Clark was one such man to be
accused and put on trial.

The trials of the 200 accused were carried out not by a court of law, but by a tribunal or
“Citizen’s Court”, over which Colonel William C. Young presided. Tensions rose within the
tribunal court as some jurors, most notably Church of Christ Minister Thomas Barrett,
denounced and opposed the trial and punishment of those accused. Even with all his best efforts
he could not halt the angry mob and men were being convicted on a simple majority vote.
Quickly men were being convicted and sentenced to death by hanging. They were loaded onto a
wagon driven by slave Bob Scott who would drive them to just beyond Pecan Creek and the
hanging tree. At first Scott took a full wagonload, then he began taking them two-by-two to the
hanging tree. His job was to drive the accused to the tree and halt the wagon. While the accused
stood in the wagon they had ropes placed around their necks; Scott would then be ordered to
drive the wagon back to the court to collect the next group of accused.

After several men were executed the jurors, led by Minister Barrett, changed the vote
needed from a simple majority to a 2/3 vote.\textsuperscript{18} From this point on none of the remaining accused
were convicted by the court; they were acquitted and released to their families. However, as
word of this reached the local Confederate officers, a list of the men acquitted was demanded

\textsuperscript{17} Barrett, Thomas. "The Great Hanging at Gainesville, 1862: The Accounts of Thomas Barrett and George
and with that in hand the soldiers rounded up 14 men, one of which was Nathaniel M. Clark, who was at the general store with his wife.\textsuperscript{19}

Nathaniel and the other 13 men were taken to the hanging tree and set to the end of a rope, as Nathaniel’s wife helplessly watched. After the death of Nathaniel, Col. William C. Young was assassinated and the tribunal court was once again able to convict on a simple majority. Minister Barrett was replaced and new jurors were brought in at which point the convictions and hangings continued. The last two killed in the Great Hanging were two men who tried to flee the county, however Confederate soldiers gunned them down before they could reach the county line.

James Clark, the son of Nathaniel Clark was not in Gainesville the day his father was killed. He was on the front lines fighting for the Confederacy. Upon receiving the letter of his father’s death and reasoning, James defected from the confederacy and joined the Union Army.

As I stated, I grew up in Gainesville and never was this story told to me. Never once was it brought up in any history class or town event. It was swept under the rug. And that’s the way it was for over 150 years. The very ideals that accused “Peace Party” stood for were lost, even after the Civil War was finished and the North had won.

For many years even into the turn of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century Gainesville remained a town divided as it was separated between the north “black-side of town” and the south “white-side of town” as they were often referred to during my youth. Then there were places like Moffitt Park, the “black” park during segregation, which sat on the north side of California St., and the “white” Leonard Park, which rested on the south side. This correlation of segregation between north and

South, black and white resonates deeply in terms of the majority consensus after the Great Hanging and Civil War.

So it was, for many years, Gainesville remained divided and any remembrance of the Great Hanging stood in the form of statue of a Confederate Soldier on the Northeast corner of the Courthouse lot, which looks directly east toward the site of the hangings. The inscription upon it reads, “God holds the scales of justice; He will measure praise and blame; And the South will stand the verdict, and will stand it without shame. Oh, home of tears, but let her bear this blazoned to the end of time; No nation rose so white and fair, None fell so free of crime.”20 There also stands a state historical marker regarding the Great Hangings that, just like the Confederate statute, works to justify the cause and conclusion of the events surrounding October, 1862.

Over the past 60 years a quiet defiance was brewing just like the “Peace Party” before it. Descendants, historians, and some members of the community were working behind the scenes to build an alliance in order to memorialize those men they felt were maliciously murdered for trying to bring about peace. For many years this small group was greatly outnumbered by the majority. Then in 2012 the Great Hanging Memorial Foundation came the closest they had ever been to finally having the atrocities of October 1862 recognized.

As things looked perfect for a memorial site to finally be erected and dedicated, the majority outcry in Gainesville proved to be too much for the small memorial group to overcome. The reasoning behind this outcry was the impending Medal of Honor event. There were many in the community that felt that memorializing something like the Great Hanging and admitting to

the atrocities committed, the banner of “Most Patriotic Town in the US”\(^{21}\) would be lost and Gainesville would only be known as the site of the largest mass hanging in US history.

This did not stop the memorial group and committee as they continued to petition before the City Council and the County at large. Finally, in the fall of 2014 they were granted the lot and permission to erect the memorial site for the Great Hanging. On October 10\(^{th}\), 2014 the largest gathering of descendants from those killed during the Great Hanging, including historians and community members, took place as over 200 people met to host a luncheon, watch a theatrical play regarding the events and finally unveil the memorial site, which stands under the hanging tree just east of Pecan Creek.

**PRODUCTION CHANGES**

With all of this new information and now confirmation from many of the families as well as the playwright of the Great Hanging stage play, my documentary film is going to be taking on an entirely different approach. As stated earlier the film will first be shortened from 90 minutes to 25-30 minutes long. The film will also revolve around four major themes of which are idealism, racial segregation, perception, ignorance and finally acceptance. In addition to these themes the film will revolve around four centralized characters that will work like traditional narrative characters. The main antagonist will be that of Colonel James G. Bourland, while the main protagonist will be the accused Nathaniel M. Clark. Two crucial secondary characters will come in the form of minister and juror Thomas Barrett, who worked hard to oppose and end the hangings while the other character will be slave Bob Scott who drove the wagon back and forth

between the Citizen’s Court and the hanging tree. These characters and themes will be used as the foundation for each Act of the film.

ACT ONE
PERCEPTION

The film opens with the current perception of Gainesville and its façade as being the “Most Patriotic Town in the U.S.” as well as being the Host City for the Medal of Honor. As the story and audience progress forward we look beyond the exterior and begin to see the dark secrets of the town through the interviews of citizens and historians. In particular, we look at the events of the Great Hanging. Through the interviews we learn of the justification and submission of all historical and informational record regarding the Great Hanging. Specifically, looking at the symbolism and purpose of the Confederate statue and historical marker. We also uncover the truth about why the original memorial dedication in 2012 was postponed due to the Medal of Honor and “Most Patriotic Town in the U.S.” award. Finally, we discover that there is still a stark divide within the community both in terms of ideology and racially.

ACT TWO
IDEALISM

Within the following act the film explores the divide touched upon in the opening act. The audience then learns of the contrasting political tensions between the members of the community during the Great Hanging and how they mirror some tensions in the modern day. Particularly through the conflict between the “Peace Party” versus Colonel Bourland’s Confederate-backed militia and how this reflects the tensions between Memorial advocates and those who opposed it. This gives the audience a concrete conflict for the film, a conflict that is not only political and ideological, but a racial one as well. The film then informs the audience of a stage play that was developed to depict the events of the Great Hanging, which is based on
historically preserved letters and journals. Visually this theme is represented through the use of the stage play, which acts as a foundation for the narration. Audience perspective is that of a member of the crowd ready to watch the stage performance. Then the camera action moves from the seats to the stage focusing on the necessary major characters; at this point the film cross fades into the re-enactments. Interviews from historians and the descendants are added to support these re-enactments. The main characters during this portion of re-enactments are our main protagonist Nathaniel Clark and our antagonist Colonel Bourland. Each character is a representation of the tensions described above.

ACT THREE
SEGREGATION

During this act we continue the re-enactments and introduce two additional characters in the form of Minister and citizen court jury member Thomas Barrett and slave Bob Scott. The theme of segregation involves the long-standing north and south divide in the town as explained previously. The film then relates back to the statistics of Gainesville being a community of only 10% slave owners, but that this 10% were the wealthiest in the community. These factions, banding together with Colonel Bourland, infiltrated the underground “Peace Party” movement of which Nathaniel Clark was a member. The audience now learns that Bourland had the members of this party hunted down and brought before a non-federally appointed citizen’s court, of which Minister Thomas Barrett is a major part. As Barrett’s voice rises in opposition he is replaced and the accused are condemned. Nathaniel Clark is taking by wagon to the hanging tree by slave Bob Scott, where he is put to death. Again a combination of the stage play cross fading into re-enactments with support from interviews are being utilized to provide a steady structure for the film.
Also, correlations between this North and South, Black and White divide are being explored further through the interviews and visual observational footage of the so-called North “black-side of town” and the South “white-side of town”. In addition to this, captured observational footage and interviews tell the true story of the opposition to the memorial dedication, the support for the presiding historical markers and the ongoing racial divide within the community.

ACT FOUR
ACCEPTANCE

In the final act the film explores the acceptance of the Great Hanging through the years, the forced and adjusted messaging by the community leadership and the current discontent. We begin by revisiting the stage play and cross fading to the ending of the Great Hanging as the last two men executed are killed while trying to flee for their lives. As the dust settles we see Texas newspapers and State Government applaud the events, as Confederate President Jefferson Davis remains silent. Then moving forward through time we see the development and dedication of the Confederate statue in 1911 and messaging that all the men were Union spies. Again fast forwarding to 1963 and the unveiling of the Historical marker once again pushing Union spy message.

The film then takes a turn toward the end as we see interviews of those who have been fighting to gain the acceptance of a dedicated memorial to those slain. The years of rejection and discourse coupled with the deep divide within the community both racially and politically. This again, is supported through interviews of those who were apart of this movement as well as re-enactments to visually tell their story.
Finally, the film ends where it began with the run up to the memorial dedication. Archival footage is shown of the luncheon and memorial service with support of interviews from the family members and historians. The final narrative of the film reissues and ties up the thesis of a town that is still divided, but one that is more accepting than past generations.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

Additional adjustments will be made toward the intended audience as well. While the largest demographic of viewership for documentaries pertaining to the Civil War revolve around white males between the ages of 35 and 45, based on Nielsen ratings and audience demoing, I feel that adding the above elements to the narrative of the documentary could adjust this audience. With the inclusion of the racial and social impact not only during the events of the Great Hanging but the 150 years up to the Memorial dedication, the intended audience grows to include a large demographic of the African American community as well a younger audience.

As race and police brutality are currently in the public eye and are hot topics for debate, the outcry for the men who were accused and brutally killed during the Great Hanging, as well as the town’s racial divide should resonate with a socially aware audience. This same audience contains a racial mix that breaks down into three particular demographics, which range in ages from 18-55.

The socially aware young adult demographic highlights this first group. The majority of this group resides on college campuses or they have just entered into the collective workforce. They are a demographic utilizing various media platforms to gain news and expand awareness. Along with following movements that begin through social media this demographic section
spends the most time out of all other demographics devouring content, particularly documentary content through services like Netflix© and Amazon Prime©.

This next demographic revolves around the potential audience within the X generation. This generation, known as Generation X, refers to individuals born after the post-World War II baby boom. Birth dates for this generation range from the early 1960’s to early 1980’s. While this demographic is plugged into current technology their level of social involvement is much less than that of the younger group. Based on Nielsen© ratings and Google Analytics© this demographic devours more content through television as well as online media services versus social media suggestions. This demographic consists of middle-class white and African American audience members.

The final demographic is based on the original demographic we discussed in the original intended audience discussion. They are the older, predominantly white, middle class. However, with the inclusion of a much more racially charged narrative, this demographic may see some drastic changes, such as a more diverse racially mixed audience. As programming on networks like that of the History Channel have shown, when narratives involve the Civil War and racial equality, viewership beyond the white middle-class increases dramatically according to Nielsen.

**STYLE AND APPROACH**

As noted in the production changes of the addendum, this film will utilize a mix of stage performance to cross fade into the re-enactments, which is a similar style used by director Clio Barnard for her documentary film *The Arbor* (2010). As this film was about playwright Andrea Dunbar, Barnard utilized the creative aspect of stage performance to develop the re-enactments and move the audience from space to space. I plan on using the stage play of the Great Hanging
as a creative device to take the audience into the re-enactments much in the way that Clio did. This will allow me as a director to sync my re-enactments with the stage play, which was written with a deep emphasis on the journal entries from the actual participants of the events. Therefore, I have a foundation already before me in terms of planning the re-enactments. By also introducing this creative story element it will lend me great leeway on being creative with the framing and composition of the re-enactments.

The interviews are a bit challenging. I want them to be relevant not only for the verbal content that they bring to the film, but also the visual content. For that reason, I believe I will be taking a visual approach similar to what Bart Layton did in his documentary film *The Imposter* (2013). In his film, Bart would place the interviewees within a space that tells something about them. While most of the interviewees were filmed within a home setting, the main character, Frederic Bourdin, was filmed within a seemingly blank space. This blank space reinforced the character himself as a person with no long-term discernable place or history. This same approach can be utilized for the interviewees in the Great Hanging, particularly between the family members and the historians. Visual evidence provided by the just out of focus background can say so much about a character, particularly in regards to lighting. Layton was able to do this very effectively in *The Imposter*, and I will attempt to do the same.

There are other notable styles that will be heavily influenced the production of the Great Hanging. Among these are the many films of Stanley Kubrick such as *Path’s of Glory*, *The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket* and *A Clockwork Orange*. What Kubrick does so well in these films is that he frames the world very much like a photographer would. He uses the angles and natural lines of the environment to ignite a physiological reaction with the audience. Kubrick would use his one-point perspective technique to lead the audience into the action of the film. This would
work in stark contrast to the usual feeling of seeing a scene, particularly a scene of violence, from afar. I particularly see this playing well during the citizen court re-enactments. By using a one-point perspective we can truly place the audience within the space and affect them emotionally. We can hold onto this perspective for some length of time, by doing so we will cause the audience some discomfort, which is the emotion we want for such a tension filled scene. Then we increase the tension by using another one of Kubrick’s trademarks and that’s the use of the Steadi-Cam©. In conjunction with the one-point perspective we can settle the audience into the space, then explore the space deeper with the Steadi-Cam© as we slowly move about capturing detailed reactions and attitudes.

Finally, much of the observational footage of the film should have a cinematic quality all of its own. For that I believe utilizing a handheld invasive approach much like what cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki used for the Terrence Malick film *The Tree of Life* (2011). In this film the motion of the camera felt fluid and present within the environment. This works well for the observational. As we force the audience into a controlled and tension filled space with specific framing to heighten that effect, the use of a handheld soft motion camera style will pull the audience out of that tension and give them a visual break. This is vitally important given the subject matter and sometimes-harsh narrative journey that the film will take.
CHAPTER IV

INTEGRATION OF THEORY IN PRODUCTION

A documentary will never be reality nor will it erase or invalidate that reality by being representational... understand that a documentary is a negotiation between reality on the one hand and image, interpretation and bias on the other.22

Stella Bruzzi

UNDERSTANDING HYBRID FILM AND PERFORMANCE

The documentation of life through a lens has been an ongoing form of story telling since the late 1800’s. Since these early days of cinema the documentary film, or actuality film, can be credited as being the first form of filmmaking as this new technology of film was used to capture events of everyday life.23 One could even argue that through the success of documentary films such as Nanook of the North (1922), where director Robert J. Flaherty included the art of performance to capture the Inuit life, fictional or narrative film was born. While documentary film and fictional film seem to be complete opposites of one another Gary D. Rhodes suggests in docufictions: Essays on the Intersection of Documentary and Fictional Filmmaking that the, “interrelationships between documentary and fictional narrative film involves an interplay among four basic categories,” and these categories consist of the content and form of both documentary and fictional film.24 With this explanation in mind an argument can be made that since the early days of cinema this interplay has enabled a strong desire in filmmakers, and audiences alike, for the blending of documentary and fictional film structures

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into what Chuleean Svetvilas calls the *hybrid film.*

This hybrid film form utilizes techniques from both documentary and fictional film, which in turn come together to create a blended production. We currently see this hybrid form in cinematic works such as *Man on Wire* (2008), *The Arbor* (2010), *Road to Guantanamo* (2006), *The Imposter* (2012), *The Act of Killing* (2012), and *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst* (2015). However, as the use of fictional techniques, particularly performance, in documentary film is routinely met with suspicion; the act of performance is a natural occurrence. Stella Bruzzi suggests that all documentaries in the end, “are a negotiation between filmmaker and reality and, at heart, a performance.” This would lend credence to the theory that all persons in the end perform to some degree or another. We naturally perform around people that we know and trust as well as complete strangers as it has become a natural part of the human experience. Also, as we move further and further into the new media age, where video content is uploaded and shared through social platforms, performance becomes a key part of everyday life.

**USAGE OF HYBRID FILM AND PERFORMANCE**

New York’s Museum of Modern Art chief curator Mary Lea Bandy suggested in an article from *Documentary Magazine* that hybrid films can be “the most perceptive films” for audiences as they tend to, “mix and match their approach, style and format – blending the historical and narrative,” which in turns creates a work that is both informational but also

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incredibly entertaining. In today's culture, where attention spans are limited, and the turnover rate of content happens in a matter of seconds not minutes, any piece of content must either inform or entertain. Through this rationalization we can see why documentary films, more so in recent years have taken a more hybrid approach to development. Utilizing this technique brings with it a sense of authority, while also presenting a performance that is entertaining. With this said the hybrid films listed above acted as inspiration for the development of The Great Hanging as each one effectively used hybrid film techniques to not only convey a truthful narrative, based on facts or historical record, but to do so in an entertaining way.

While The Great Hanging draws on the affordances of hybrid film and performance, it does so purposefully and with reason. This reasoning can be found through the introduction and inclusion of the annual stage play October Mourning, which depicts the events of the great hanging in front of a live audience. This annual stage play in essence is acting as a form of hybrid narrative presentation. While using the affordances of historical facts and theatrical portrayal, playwright and historian Dr. Pat Ledbetter was able to present a theatrical play that not only informed by also entertained. The very existence of this play ignited the desire for the use of hybrid film techniques to convey the difficult narrative of The Great Hanging.

Again, while the usage of performance may be looked upon with a great deal of suspicion film theorist like Leslie Woodhead argue that filmmakers should utilize hybrid forms, such as re-enactments, as a, “way of telling a story that would be impossible by conventional documentary methods.” This logic holds true for the narrative of The Great

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29 October Mourning. By Dr. Pat Ledbetter. Stage play shown annually at the Campus Theater in Gainesville, Texas.
Hanging. As with many events that took place during the Civil War, archival materials which documented these events have either been destroyed or lost. In regards to the events of the great hanging only a single illustration exists to this day. This illustration, which inaccurately depicts the great hanging event according to historical records, was distributed to newspapers as far as New York and London. With a lack of archival material but a wealth of historical data and the theatrical stage play conventional documentary methods were set aside in favor of a hybrid film approach.

By using the hybrid film approach for *The Great Hanging* elements of the authoritative voice of history as well as the entertaining element of the theatrical stage play was deemed the most appropriate solution. Creating physical manifestations of the real-life historical figures allows for a closer connection between the audience and subject. This is a connection that would not have been achievable through the use of incredibly limited archival materials. However, in choosing this path the film, as well as the filmmaker, become more vulnerable to criticism. The reason for this comes down to the perception and usage of dramatization and in documentary film, for as Keith Beattie argues this usage breeds outside implications that the audience is being misled. While these implications are real, one need only look to pioneering documentary filmmaker John Grierson who admitted that “dramatic reconstruction” is a legitimate practice for documentary work.³¹

With a clear comprehension of hybrid film methods and how they can be used as filmmaking tools, the narrative development of *The Great Hanging* continued with the adaptation of a re-enactment script based on the stage play *October Mourning*. Through the foundational use of hybrid film theory production affordances were given such as the

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combined usage of observational, interview, stage play, and re-enactments. Through each of these techniques a fully developed and cohesive narrative of the events could be crafted.

VOICE OF THE NARRATIVE

The one key factor that will allow the usage of hybrid film techniques to work well is the guidance of the narration, or voice of the film. This expository voice will be crucial to ensuring that the audience is guided through the complex situations of the narrative by directly addressing the viewer and advancing the “argument of the historical world.”32 In regards to *The Great Hanging* the vocal guidance will come from several sources and could, if not utilized correctly, confuse the audience instead of clarify. In order to ensure effectiveness, the voice and narration of the film will be presented in such a way that it possesses a, “dominant and constant perspective on the events they represent,” leading to a sense of authority for the audience.33

Throughout the film there will be three authoritative voices. The first being the voice of great hanging victim Nathaniel Clark, played in the stage play and re-enactments by actor Aaron N. Martin. Through scripted dialogue, which was adapted from the *October Mourning* stage play, Nathaniel Clark will act as the mediator for the conflicts of the film. He will move the narrative from act to act ensuring that the audience stays on track. His voice will be accompanied by playwright and historian Dr. Pat Ledbetter who brings an incredibly authoritative voice. Her voice will bring clarity and authority, which in turn will ensure that connections between the stage play and the re-enactments are made. Finally, the voice of historian and great hanging expert Dr. Richard McCaslin will be used to complete the overall authoritative voice of the film.

He’s research and experience regarding the events will serve as the foundation of the films arguments, particularly those depicted during the re-enactments.

Again, each character has a level of authority attached to their voice. While Nathaniel Clark is a manifestation of the real-life figure, his voice originates from the adaptation of the stage play *October Mourning* written by Dr. Pat Ledbetter. This stage play is an adaptation of the book *Tainted Breeze* written by Dr. Richard McCaslin. And finally Dr. McCaslin’s book is the culmination of research gathered from Cooke County and the State of Texas public records. By having all authoritative voices relay back to the original source content affordances will be allowed to ensure that the voice of the film is rooted with an historical foundation.

**VISUAL LANGUAGE AND CONVENTIONAL FICTIONAL FILM TECHNIQUES**

Robert E. Horn from Stanford University stated that at its core, visual language is the “integration of words and visual elements,” that convey a message or feeling to the consumer. While this is a solid foundation for the understanding visual language at it’s basic level this doesn’t entirely give a clear vision of what visual language is in terms of film. For that Academy Award© winning director Martin Scorsese stated in a webcast through the Film Foundation that visual language in regards to film is all about literacy. Being literate and using proper terms to plan and conceive a film is crucial for the development of a documentary or fictional narrative. With this said there are a few visual language terms that *The Great Hanging* will rely on, and they are terms that have been presented and discussed throughout this document.

The major visual language used throughout *The Great Hanging* is re-enactment or, as

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Joseph Jon Lanthier states, the “dramatization of previous events.”36 This dramatization plays out through the re-enactment of the October Mourning stage play as well as scripted and recreated scenes from historical record. When used within documentary film Keith Beattie states that dramatization, “relies on dramatic codes and conventions for the basis of a fictional narrative that makes reference to factual or possible situations, people and events.”37

In order to facilitate this dramatization actors and conventional fictional film techniques will be utilized to ensure the narrative is conveyed effectively. A period of script analysis and rehearsal with the actors will be needed. While the script analysis allows the actors to review the dialogue and structure for the film the rehearsals allow for the fleshing out of the characters.38 It will be vitally important to provide the actors with all the viable information about their character as possible, by doing this they will be able to retain as much historical context while also having the freedom to develop the character on their own. By not forcing the actors to portray their character in a specific way a better and more real-life performance will be garnered. Aside from the actor’s conventional fictional film techniques will need to be utilized to ensure the dramatizations remain emotionally grounded, as well as visual pleasing.

When looking at each of these techniques individually the use of dramatic track-in or dolly shots should be utilized in order to enhance the dramatic effect of the spoken dialogue. In addition to this a Steadi-Cam© should be utilized during the Civil War battle sequences in order to effectively place the viewer in the heat of the action. For conversational moments in

the film the conventional fictional film technique of a shot-reverse-shot should be used. This will ensure that the audience is able to follow the discussion, while also gauging the reactions and mannerisms of the characters on screen. During post-production to effectively transition between the stage play, dramatizations, and interviews editing techniques such as an split edit should be used, meaning “picture and sound are synchronized but the transitions in each are not coincident.” Each one of these techniques is vitally important As Bruce Mamer states in his book Film Production Technique: Creating the Accomplished Image, “where the camera is placed in relation to the scene plays a central role in guiding how the viewer interprets character and action.” With this in mind careful planning during the pre-production phase will be crucial toward crafting scenes that not only retain the historical context, but also deliver an emotional performance for the audience.

REPRESENTATION, RECREATION, AND WORKING WITH ACTORS

While the incorporation of actors and fictional film techniques is nothing new to documentary, utilizing two varying spaces of re-enactments along side a non-fiction narrative is. In regards to The Great Hanging, I want to convey a connective thread between past and present as it pertains to the events of October 1862. This is why the decision to transition the film back and forth between the stage play in the present and re-enactments of the past has been made. Both performances will be used as a way to convey a “perpetually mediated truth,” or a representation of truth as negotiated between the film director and the audience.

With the existence of the stage play October Mourning I am presented with a present

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day representation of the events as the play calls for actors to take on the roles of characters within the events of the great hanging. While filming this stage play alone can be incredibly interesting and informative to the audience it would not give me the connective thread I am looking for. Therefore, I have made the decision to also include scripted re-enactments, which in turn are based on the stage play.

By filming the stage play presentation, which utilizes actors to recreate the historical character’s emotions and voice, I am creating the first end of the connective thread. This end of the thread exists in the present. From this I will develop the re-enactments of the great hanging events, while utilizing the same actors. This in turn becomes the other end of the connective thread, which represents the past. Through the use of both re-enactments I am addressing the subject of the great hanging while also visually representing this subject in post past and present. This “compatibility between subject and representation”,42 will give me the connective thread that I am looking for. Even though I have established the affordances using the stage play and re-enactments provide me, I need to convey how I, as a director, will approach the performances of the actors within this representation.

As stated previously in this chapter, it will be pivotal for myself as the director to ensure that each actor receives all historical context of the character they are enlisted to portray. This will give the actors a foundation to work with when building the character not only for the stage, but also the screen. As a director I will allow the actors to explore the characters and bring in certain nuances, which should render the characters more believable and real. I will however need to oversee these progressions as I do not want the characters to deviate too far from their historical basis. While I am given certain artistic affordances through

the foundation of the stage play, I must make sure that the negotiation between myself as a filmmaker and the audience has no level of deception. The ethics of this decision and the usage of actors will be discussed shortly.

HISTORICAL RECURRENCE AND CONNECTING THEMES

Repetitive patterns within a historical context is nothing new. Theories on historical recurrence were philosophized by Polybius and the ancient Greeks, writer Mark Twain, and philosopher George Santayana who said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”43 With this said there are several historical recurrences when looking at the events of the great hanging in relation to 21st century social issues. Among those that will be discussed are issues of class and the fog of war as well as its sub-themes.

Initial research into the events of the great hanging immediately showcase issues of class within the community. While Terry Nichols Clark asserts that the significance of issues surrounding social class in today's society are declining politically society still raises deep concerns. As the current argument asserts, roughly 1% of the population controls the financial and consumer sectors of the world economy, this leaves the remaining percentage feeling as though they are being controlled or manipulated by this upper class. This same conflict is at the root of the events of the great hanging, as the majority of the population in Gainesville, Texas voted against secession, opting rather to stay apart of the Union and to not divide the country. However, the wealthy members of the community forced an alliance with the Confederacy, thus

causing the creation of the Peace Party and sparking the conflict between the upper class and lower class, which included farmers and slaves.\textsuperscript{44}

Another historical recurrence is the theme regarded to as the \textit{fog of war}. Underneath this theme reside several sub-themes, but first let’s discuss the fog of war. The fog of war relates to what Eugenia C. Kiesling states is a “lack of clear information,” in a state of militarized conflict.\textsuperscript{45} With this said we can clearly recall the Benghazi Attacks of 2012 and how the fog of war caused a lack of clear information and communication according to the report released by the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.\textsuperscript{46} While the fog of war led to a clear issue of information and communication in 2012, the events of the great hanging in 1862 not only saw a community confused by a lack of clear information, but also effected by the sub-themes of martial law, communal fear, and extralegal procedures.

With no clear information or communication available in 1862, the community began to demonstrate and rise up out of fear. Because of this fear the community resorted to “frontier justice”, which in turn led to irrational reactions against fellow neighbors and suspected Union sympathizers.\textsuperscript{47} Through this brand of frontier justice a citizens court was illegally constructed and charged with convicting suspects in an extralegal proceeding. This brand of frontier justice can be seen today in the standoff between Federal Agents and armed protestors at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2015.

In the end, a clear connection of historical recurrence can be made between the events of the great hanging and modern day social issues. With similar themes and sub-themes causing

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{44} McCaslin, Richard. \textit{“Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Texas 1862.”} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.) pp.9-16.
\end{thebibliography}
compared amounts of violence and confusion across many communities both locally and globally.

ETHICS AND PERFORMANCE IN A NON-FICTIONAL WORLD

As stated earlier in this chapter, performance and dramatization will be crucial for telling a complete narrative with the complex themes listed above. And again, to effectively utilize these dramatizations actors will be needed. However, as Paul Ward discusses in the book Rethinking Documentary using actors and dramatization, or performance raise, “questions about the ethics of representation.” Related questions would be, how exactly do actors aid the historical world? What are the dangers of using actors in place of actuality? How much creative performance do you allow? And finally, is the historical world being represented fairly? We’ll run through each one of these vital questions beginning with actors aiding the historical world.

As discussed previously the lack of archival materials for The Great Hanging affords the use of performance, which is due in large part to the, “impossibilities of authentic documentary representation.” Meaning it is impossible for a film crew to return to 1862 and film the events of the great hanging. It is also impossible to use archival materials that do not exist or are lost from public view. Because of these limitations a dramatization of the great hanging events will stand in place of the historical reference. By using actors through the dramatized historical world a level of authenticity can be accomplished. The key to this dramatization is the clear communication between the filmmaker and the audience that characters within the dramatization are indeed actors and not historical figures. This communication will be made through the

introduction those actors within the stage play performance, which will then correspond to those same characters in the conventional fictional film styled re-enactments.

With communication between the filmmaker and audience clearly established, the filmmaker must look at the potential dangers of using actors in the place of actuality. As Stella Bruzzi points out, the use of performance can carry, “connotations of falsification and fictionalization.” But as Paul Ward states the filmmaker must mediate, “actual events and people via dramatic conventions and performances,” with the key word being mediate. In regards to The Great Hanging a strong foundation of historical context will be essential. And as stated earlier script analysis between the filmmaker and the actors must take place in conjunction with rehearsals to ensure that the actors are developing their characters on historical fact and context.

With the establishment of communication between the filmmaker and audience as well as the filmmaker and actor a new question emerges. As a filmmaker how much creative performance do you allow? Again, going back to Paul Ward’s argument on performance in documentary he mentions the use of unknown actors for dramatic reconstruction. He asserts that by using unknown actors you can give affordances to the audience, which will allow them to view the re-enactments with a sense of authenticity. While there are serious reservations on whether an audience becomes disconnected with the narrative due to the recognizably of the actors performing, The Great Hanging will rely heavily on actors from theater and improve. While many of these actors have had roles in large scale film projects those roles were small, which should aid the audience according to Ward’s argument.

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If each one of these ethical questions are addressed as laid out above, then the usage of performance within this documentary should clearly be deemed appropriate. However, to ensure the historical world is being represented fairly connections Civil War experts will be needed. The expertise of each of these individuals will be called upon to aid the production design of the film. Having an effective production design alongside performances based on historical context should increase the authenticity of the performance, thus allowing for a deeper connection between the narrative and audience.
Pre-Production development for *The Great Hanging* was split into two different phases due to the scheduling of the interviews months before the re-enactments. The interview and observational phase of pre-production began during the development of the prospectus, which ran from January to May of 2015. The second phase of pre-production revolved around the re-enactment portion of the film. This process took place from August to October of 2015.

**SCHEDULE**

1/22/15 – 5/25/15

*Phase One: Interview and Observational Pre-Production*

The first phase of pre-production ran from the end of January to the end of May. During this phase background research was conducted on each of the interview subjects. In order to complete this research correspondence was conducted through email as well as one-on-one meetings between myself and interview subjects Dr. Richard McCaslin, Dr. Pat Ledbetter, Colleen Clark-Carri and Ed Zielinski. My goal during this phase was to gain the trust of the subjects above as each one brought an insight and authoritative voice that the film desperately needed.

Dr. Richard McCaslin and Dr. Pat Ledbetter were particularly engaging during this phase. After corresponding with Dr. McCaslin over a period of several weeks I was able to gain the historian’s trust which resulted in the permissible use of his authoritative work the *Tainted*
Breeze\textsuperscript{53}. This same trust was again garnered between myself and Dr. Pat Ledbetter who allowed the integration of her authored stage play script \textit{October Mourning}\textsuperscript{54}. From this moment on it was my duty as the director of the film to honor this trust and ensure that it was never betrayed or broken.

7/30/15 – 10/9/15

\textit{Phase Two: Re-Enactment Pre-Production}

The second phase of pre-production ran from the end of July to the first of October 2015. During this phase of pre-production I began working closely with my co-writer David Goodman. We in turn worked closely with historian and \textit{October Mourning} Author Dr. Pat Ledbetter to develop the script for the film. While working through this process both David Goodman and myself were keenly aware of the responsibility that lay before us. When adapting any work of authorship for film the screenwriters have an inherent duty to ensure authenticity of the original content.

With Dr. Ledbetter’s help we were able to do just that, which in turn strengthened the trust between subject and filmmaker. Once the script was completed the storyboard process for the reenactments began. While this pre-visualization process was ongoing the selection of the production crew as well as post production crew were made and initial discussions between myself the director and each collaborator began. This process ran from early August to late September, with revisions being completed by October 1, 2015.

\footnotesize

CREW

Johnathan Paul – Director / Producer / Co-Writer / Editor

Johnathan Paul is a filmmaker based in Dallas, Texas who is pursuing an MFA degree in documentary film production in the Media Arts Department at the University of North Texas. His experimental film and 3D animation work has been displayed in art galleries in both the United States and Europe, while his narrative and documentary film work has also screened in various film festivals in the United States and Europe. As a director, Johnathan led production of the documentary short film *Hustler of Providence* (2015). For his work he along with the film were nominated for several awards including the Oscar™ Qualifying Short Film award at the Rhode Island International Film Festival, 2015 IDA David L. Wolper Student Filmmaker Award, 2015 Kodak / UFVA Filmmaker Award, as well as a nomination into the 2016 BEA Awards.

David Goodman – Co-Writer / Assistant Editor

David is a narrative and documentary filmmaker based in Huntsville, Alabama. He attended the famed NYU Tisch School of the Arts where he studied film production, then attended Memphis University to obtain a MA degree in screenwriting. David continued his film studies by earning a second MFA degree in documentary film production at the University of North Texas. Currently David is a professor of film studies at the University of Alabama – Huntsville. His latest film work includes the documentary short film *Texas Paranormalists* (2015) as well as the narrative feature film *Last Summer* (2013), which is available on Netflix Instant.

Andrew Dunn – Art Director / Storyboard Artist
Andrew Dunn is an illustrator and concept artist based in Dallas, Texas. The majority of his work focuses around the development and creation of conceptual art pieces for video games and film. Andrew received a BFA from the Art Institute of Dallas, and then in the fall of 2007 he joined the College of Visual Arts and Design at the University of North Texas where he majored in Drawing and Painting. He has also worked for many years as a professional marketing and advertising illustrator whose work has been displayed in several print and online publications.

Michael B. Mullins – Director of Photography

Michael is an award winning cinematographer based in Denton, Texas. He has worked as a professional cinematographer and camera operator for nearly two decades in both Hollywood and New York. Michael is a member of the International Cinematographers Guild and worked for years on the Emmy Award winning series Monk (2002-2009) as well as the films Hidalgo (2004), Superman Returns (2006), and The Spiderwick Chronicles (2008). Additionally, he has worked camera operation for The Late Show with David Letterman (1993-2015), NBC, ABC, CNN, ESPN and the BBC. Currently, Michael is a teaching fellow in the Media Arts Department at the University of North Texas where he is working towards a second masters degree in film production.

Sharie Vance – Production Designer

Sharie is a production designer, filmmaker and photographer from Dallas, Texas. Her film Finding Faulkner has screened at numerous festivals and won Best Student Documentary at the 2015 Thin Line Film Festival. While she has been a successful filmmaker and photographer her true passion is in production design. Sharie joined the Datalus Pictures crew in fall 2015 to
serve as line producer for *The Great Hanging* and now has become the full-time Production Designer for the Studio.

Garrett Graham – Production Sound Supervisor

Garrett is a documentary filmmaker from Plano, Texas. As a documentary filmmaker Garrett strives to seek out stories of hope and resistance. Through the years he has worked on several high profile social documentaries including *Blockadia Rising: Voices of the Tar Sands* *Blockade* and *Don’t Frack with Denton*, which Johnathan Paul executive produced. While working with director Johnathan Paul Garrett has overseen and supervised all production sound for *The Great Hanging*.

Ed Zielinski – Stunt Coordinator

Ed Zielinski is the County Attorney for Cooke County Texas, and is based in Gainesville, Texas. He is a former Judge Advocate General and Captain with the United States Army. When not attending to the matters of County law Ed works as a Civil War re-enactment coordinator. Through 20 plus years of service he has lead and overseen all aspects of organized re-enactments in Texas, Louisiana, New York, and Virginia. On more than 2 occasions he has led a team which oversaw the Civil War re-enactment in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which is held annually.

Zach Szakin – VFX Artist/Compositor

Zach is a visual effects artist and compositor for Datalus Workshop. He is a graduate of the University of North Texas Media Arts Department. After having developed several
independent visual effects projects Zach joined the Datalus Workshop crew to complete the visual effects work on *The Great Hanging*.

Benjamin Shirey – Composer

Benjamin is an award winning composer and recording artist from Aubrey, Texas. He received his undergraduate and graduate degree from the world famous University of North Texas School of Music, where he focused on composition. In addition to his composition work Benjamin spends time working with researchers on new sound techniques such as binaural sound development. He also co-founded the Ampersand Music School, which has hundreds of students from all over the North Texas region.

Arthur Strode – Audio Engineer

Arthur is an audio, sound effects and mixing engineer from Dallas, Texas. He is a graduate of the University of North Texas Media Arts department. His work includes several films where he held a variety of roles, however it was his love and passion for post production sound that really captivated his attention. He joined composer Benjamin Shirey to work on the audio mixing and mastering of *The Great Hanging*.

Cory Berendzen – Colorist

Cory is a professional colorist from Los Angeles, California. He has worked in the industry for over 14 years and has held major positions at post houses such as 525 Studios, R!OT, New Hat, EFilm, The Mill and now with Austin, Texas based post house TBD Post. Cory
has worked as a colorist on high profile productions for clients such as Google, Kitchit, and the US Marine Corp. as well as recording artists Dr. Dre, Syd Youth, Pink, and Chris Cornell.

EQUIPMENT

For Phase One and Phase Two of pre-production several pieces of equipment from hardware to software were utilized. Beginning with software the crew used Celtx™ software to create the script drafts, then a combination of Photoshop™ and After Effects™ for storyboards and pre-visualization. Premiere Pro™ was also used to cut together the teaser trailer from test footage. In terms of hardware the crew used the Canon 5D Mark III™ and RED Scarlet™ to run test footage and capture location stills.

EXPERIENCE

Both phases of pre-production for The Great Hanging went incredibly smooth. This was due in large part to the willingness of Dr. McCaslin and Dr. Ledbetter sharing their authoritative work with co-writer David Goodman and myself. Because of their support David and I were able to develop a re-enactment script alongside both historians with Dr. Pat Ledbetter vetting the accuracy of the narrative. As the director and co-writer of the film I had the challenge and duty to ensure the re-enactment depictions were developed in such a way that they accurately reflected the historical record, while also maintaining a sense of acceptable artistic license.

Once this part of the process was completed and both historians agreed with the narrative of the re-enactments the second phase of the pre-production process began. This phase started with a collaboration between art director Andrew Dunn, cinematographer Michael B. Mullins
and myself. Together we worked toward the development of the storyboards for the re-enactments.

This process would begin with Michael and myself having discussions on blocking and staging details for each scene. These details included the number of cameras needed and their placement around the characters, as well as the ideal costumes and location for each scene. Once these details were organized and arranged they were given to art director Andrew Dunn who then developed the storyboards. After the initial draft of the storyboards were completed Andrew uploaded them to a closed network server were I would review, comment and approve them.

Aside from the pre-visualization artwork several camera and sound tests were completed ahead of production. With the aid of cinematographer Michael B. Mullins test footage was captured using high-frame rates, high shutter speed, and professional Steadi-Cam™ rig. By testing each one of these capture methods we ensured that our knowledge base for each was exemplary, thus reducing the number of potential challenges during production. This same mindset was applied to audio as composer and sound editor Benjamin Shirey and myself tested Sennheiser™ and Lectrosonics™ wireless lavalier microphones ahead of production. These audio tests were conducted in order to hear which microphone series would provide the best sound quality under the rigorous actions of actors during the re-enactments.

Due to the excellent professional and collaborative efforts of all those involved, pre-production for *The Great Hanging* was a complete success. From these efforts I had complete confidence that the potential issues or challenges of production were greatly reduced. The process of pre-production is an incredibly important one, but it is one that I have never been able to experience as I did during this film. By having such a positive and professional experience this same methodology of pre-production will be applied to future productions.
RELEASES AND AGREEMENTS

With the film working directly from Dr. Pat Ledbetter’s stage play script *October Mourning*, a release form was drafted and signed by both Dr. Ledbetter and myself. This release gave full creative license to the stage play script. In addition to this release a principle agreement between myself, production company Datalus Pictures and Dr. Richard McCaslin began. This agreement would be the purchasing of film rights to Dr. McCaslin’s book *The Tainted Breeze* by Datalus Pictures, of which I am a co-founder and co-owner. While a principle agreement was discussed, the finalization of the agreement is pending approval by Dr. Richard McCaslin upon the completion of *The Great Hanging*. 
CHAPTER VI
PRODUCTION
OVERVIEW

Principle production of The Great Hanging was split into two different phases. The first phase of production began in late June of 2015, then continued through the summer and completed the first of August 2015. During this first phase all interviews were conducted and captured on film as well as initial observational footage. Then beginning in the mid of September 2015 the second phase of production took place. This second phase of production spanned the entire fall season and ended in late November of 2015. Throughout this phase of production all re-enactments for the film were produced. In order to produce these re-enactments a 16-member production crew and a combined total of 63 actors and extras were utilized. All re-enactments were filmed in Cooke County Texas and near the city of Gainesville, with the majority of the filming taking place at the Lone Oak Ranch and Retreat just north of town.

SCHEDULE

6/25/15 – 8/9/15

Phase One: Interview and Observational Production

During this period of production director Johnathan Paul and his crew scheduled and captured interviews with the main subjects of the film. Those being interviewed included Dr. Richard McCaslin, Dr. Pat Ledbetter, Colleen Clark-Carri and Ed Zielinski. These interviews began in late June 2015 with Dr. McCaslin’s interview, which was filmed in the library of Wooten Hall, located on the campus of the University of North Texas. Dr. McCaslin’s interview gave the most complete context of the events of the great hanging. He shared the majority of his
research through a 3-hour interview, touching on several key factors such as the legality, class divide, communal fear, violence, and frontier justice.

Interviews continued in early July 2015 with Colleen Clark-Carri’s interview taking place at the Clark family farm just outside of Gainesville, Texas. During Mrs. Clark-Carri’s interview she became incredibly outspoken and at times confrontational towards the leadership of Gainesville. Her insight surrounding her ancestors such as great hanging victim Nathaniel Clark, his wife Huldah, and son James L. Clark was extremely helpful toward preparing actors for the re-enactments. Just two weeks after capturing Mrs. Clark-Carri’s interview County Attorney Ed Zielinski was interviewed and filmed in the historic downtown courthouse of Gainesville, Texas. Mr. Zielinski’s insight was more tactical in nature. He spoke directly about the legality of the great hanging and the citizen’s court actions, which led into a discuss about confederate military influence and the fog of war.

Finally, the interview process completed in early August of 2015 with Dr. Pat Ledbetter’s interview, which took place in the Campus Theater at North Central Texas College. This college is where Dr. Pat Ledbetter currently resides as professor of history and humanities. The Campus Theater is also the sight of the annual stage play October Mourning. Dr. Ledbetter’s contribution to the film was crucial as she spoke authoritatively and distinctly about the events of the great hanging. Her voice, much like Mrs. Clark-Carri’s, was confrontational at times, but rooted on historical facts as well as in-action on behalf of the City of Gainesville community leaders. With the interview process complete I began working with my camera crew to B-Roll photography around the city of Gainesville as well as plan for the re-enactments.
9/11/15 – 11/23/15

Phase Two: Re-Enactment Production

During phase two of the production process I began working with my production designer Sharie Vance and cinematographer Michael B. Mullins and his camera crew to captured all re-enactments as well as annual stage play event *October Mourning*. Re-enactments began on the 11th of September 2015 with actor Aaron N. Martin who portrayed great hanging victim Nathaniel Clark. Then in late September of 2015 all five main actors for the re-enactments came together for the re-creation of the stage play *October Mourning*, with author of the play Dr. Pat Ledbetter present to ensure accuracy. These re-enactments were followed by the filming of a Civil War battle that James L. Clark, son of Nathaniel, was apart of while his father was being convicted through a Citizen’s Court. James L. Clark was played by SAG actor Stephen Brodie. Finally, November 2015 saw the most activity as principle production continued for four straight weeks. During these four weeks the remaining re-enactments were filmed on location at Lone Oak Ranch & Retreat. With the aid of my 16-member crew and a total of 63 actors and extras *The Great Hanging* wrapped on the 23rd of November 2015.

EQUIPMENT

For Phase One the equipment consisted of an A and B camera setup. Camera A was a RED Scarlet MX 4K ™ cinema camera while Camera B was a Blackmagic Design 2.5K Cinema Camera ™. In addition to the camera equipment the sound supervisor and recordists utilized the Sound Devices 633 ™ field recorders, RODE NTG-1 ™ shotgun mics as well as combo of the wireless Sennheiser ™ and Lectrosonics ™ lavalier microphone.
During Phase Two of production the crew used an A and B camera setup, however this time the RED Scarlet MX 4K ™ cinema camera was partnered with the Canon 5D Mark III ™ DSLR camera. The Blackmagic Design 2.5K Cinema Camera ™ was use strictly for Steadi-Cam ™ operation during the re-enactments. Additional camera equipment was provided by Maher Film, which included the DJI ™ Inspire drone and Osmo gimbal. Accessories for the camera included a production doorway dolly, Glidecam ™ slider, and Steadi-Cam ™. For production sound the same setup of the Sound Devices 633 ™ field recorder along with the RODE NTG-1 ™ shotgun mic and wireless lavalier microphones were used, however their numbers increased.

OVERALL PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE

The shooting experience for The Great Hanging went incredibly well. Operations were smooth and concise with no need for reshoots. This success can be attributed to a well-chosen and well-managed crew that worked tirelessly to ensure the film presents a high level of professionalism. Beyond the crew the actors for the re-enactments and the interview subjects were extremely accommodating with their time. Each actor brought with them a professional attitude and collaborative spirit, while the interview subjects invited our crew into their homes and personal work spaces.

As stated above, the interviews were conducted with a smaller production crew, which included myself, cinematographer Michael B. Mullins, sound supervisor Garrett Graham, and sound recordist Robert Bowen. While conducting the interviews I would run A camera, this camera was locked down provided a static image of the subject. This provided me the opportunity to focus on questions and the dialogue between myself and the subject. B camera was operated by Michael B. Mullins and this camera was placed on a slider with a zoom lens so that slow pans and close ups could be obtained. While I conducted the interview and Michael
rolled on B camera, Garrett Graham and Robert Bowen worked to monitor the sound and ensure there were no frequency interferences.

This production also marked the first time that I had ever been able to work with a production designer. And looking back on the experience I was extremely lucky to have designer Sharie Vance join our crew and aid in the re-enactment process. Her aid and leadership for the other crew members was incredibly valuable and allowed us to achieve a level of authenticity that I was unsure if we could capture. Sharie, along with the entire production staff made my job as director much easier. This was without question the largest production that I have ever led as a director and I knew our success relied greatly on the production team I could assemble. I was extremely lucky to have this crew, and it was because of their efforts that my job as a director, while challenging, went much smoother than expected.

PRODUCTION CHALLENGES AND TECHNIQUES

Throughout production there were several challenges that the crew and I encountered. For each one of these we had to rely on exiting techniques, or newly learned techniques, to aid us in the process of solving those challenges. To give a full overview of the production process I’ll discuss the challenges during the interview process, stage play, and finally the re-enactments.

INTERVIEW CHALLENGES

My experience during the interview process went exceptionally well. I attribute this to the extensive correspondence with each subject during the prospectus and pre-production phase. My crew and I were also incredibly lucky to secure several places that would allow us and our equipment to fit comfortably inside with minimal adjustment to the space. Pat Ledbetter’s interview however, had a few issues. The first of which was capturing the correct stage lighting
since we were interviewing her at the Campus Theater at North Central Texas College in Gainesville, Texas. Luckily, Pat was able to get us access to the lighting booth where we were finally able to set the stage lights, thus lighting here upon the stage for her interview. An additional issue came when recording sound for the interview. This issue originated from the air conditioning unit, which would create a random clanking sound while running. Since we could not turn off the air conditioning system we chose to conduct the interview during the periods when the system was off. There were a few moments that the noise come in toward the tail end of an interview, but it’s presence luckily ended up interrupting sections of the interview that were not crucial.

STAGE PLAY CHALLENGES

When we began production of the stage play I decided to initially have the camera set on a tripod with a wide angle lens. This allowed us to capture a wide view of all of the players on the stage at once. However, after having discussions with my cinematographer Michael Mullins we noticed that we were losing the emotion of the moment because the camera felt so far away. To fix this and add additional emotional context to the stage performance brought the camera closer to the individual players. While focused on a particular character we would capture all lines of dialogue from that character instead of jumping from character to character as the play was performed.

In addition to this challenge, we also faced an audio challenge during the stage play. Since we were using wireless lavalier microphones we ran the risk of having frequency issues, and one such frequency issue arose. During his performance main actor Aaron N. Martin’s lavalier microphone began popping and generating noise. To solve this problem, we use the wireless lavalier microphone from actor Stephen Brodie who had completed his lines for the
stage play. After the switch we were able to continue the production and capture quality audio of Aaron N. Martin’s performance.

As a director I also ran into the challenge of how to communicate to the actors how I wanted them to portray their characters. There were a few moments that I felt the performances were a little over dramatic and not realistic. During these moments I took it upon myself to address those actors and their performance. The reason this was challenging was because I needed to guide the actors without insulting them and their skill as an actor. I met this challenge by being very reassuring to the actor, while gently giving them performance guidance. I believe this technique aided in their performance and the overall film.

RE-ENACTMENT CHALLENGES

During the re-enactment stage of production, we ran into several issues, many of which were weather related. Since the re-enactment section of production took place during the Fall months we were met with several delays due to inclement weather. Adding to these delays, our location at Lone Oak Ranch and Retreat in Gainesville, Texas was scheduled out for other events throughout the months of December 2015 and the first two months of 2016. These bad weather days forced myself as a director to condense the production schedule from 8 weekends to 4 weekends. Because of this rescheduling each production day now consisted of 4 to 5 scenes per day instead of the original 2 scenes per day. As a result, I had to decrease the number of takes available for each scene. Where I would have normally been able to capture 8 to 10 takes per scene I was regulated to 3 to 4 takes for each scene. While the actors gave me professional performances I feel they were never able to fully realize their performance due to the time constraints.
This I believe was the largest challenge I had to face as a director. Because of the above limitations I knew my actors were going to be limited in terms of exploring their characters. During several scenes I could sense frustration with some of the actors. To remedy this, I called upon veteran actor Aaron N. Martin, with whom I have a long working relationship, and he gave me incredible advice for handling the situation. He told me to approach the actors with a smile and a reassuring voice, then gently guide them toward a performance that was more authentic, versus the recital performance of the stage play. This advice worked incredibly well, and I feel we were able to capture a much better performance from each actor. While I do believe we would have been able to garner better performances with additional takes, the performances we did capture were far better than the initial offering.

Another day when weather affected the re-enactments came during the filming of the Peace Party campfire sequence. My cinematographer Michael Mullins and I were expecting to have the moon light give additional lighting to the character around the fire. Unfortunately, the moon was covered by an overcast sky thus removing our additional light source. To remedy this challenge my Michael utilized an LED light, which he then mounted to the end of a long rod. This rod was then attached to another rod, which was in turn connected to a large metal c-stand. Now, we had a light that rested roughly 20 feet in the air. After looking at the light we noticed that we were getting sufficient lighting, however the light was too harsh. Realizing that moon light would be defused Michael, myself and other crew member carefully tilted the towering light setup over so Michael could apply a frost gel over the light. Once this was applied we hoisted the stand and light back upright and found we had the exact lighting we wanted.
CHAPTER VII
POST PRODUCTION
OVERVIEW

Post Production for *The Great Hanging* began in December of 2015. During this stage the footage from the film was logged and marked. After this process was completed a string-out of the film began with its completion wrapping up in early January 2016. By late January the rough cut of the film was completed and sent to the Thesis Committee. This rough cut was also screened for the Media Arts MFA cohorts, where additional feedback was received. After the rough cut, work began on the fine cut of the film, which was completed in early March 2016. Once this fine cut was completed the film was sent for scoring, visual effects work and color correction and grading.

SCHEDULE

12/5/15 – 12/31/15

*Logging, Marking and Stringout*

The first step of the post production process consisted of logging over 4067 pieces of media from footage to audio. Two additional backups of the film were made through the Datalus Pictures Mac Server. Once the logging and backup process was complete I began editing the film in Avid Media Composer™. However, editing of the film moved to Adobe Premiere Pro CC™ after consultations with Datalus Workshop, the visual effects division of Datalus Pictures production company of *The Great Hanging*. The reason for this switch in non-linear editing systems was due to the usage of Adobe After Effects™ for compositing. The assembly of the
string-out continued with the editing of interviews, observational and re-enactment scenes, with a run time of 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

1/1/16 – 2/5/16

Roughcut Assembled

After running through the string-out with co-writer David Goodman a rough cut edit was assembled. This editing session would bring the film runtime down to 39 minutes. This rough cut was sent to the Thesis Committee for review and was then screened for the Media Arts MFA colloquium where cohorts gave their critique on the film.

2/5/16 – 3/25/16

Fine Cut Assembled

Beginning in February Johnathan Paul and co-writer David Goodman exchanged notes and the assembly of the fine cut of the film began. In order to maintain a comfortable time-table for additional post production work to be done the fine cut of the film was due and completed by Feb. 26th.

3/11/16 – 4/15/16

Film Score, Mixing/Mastering, VFX, Color Grading

With the fine cut of the film being submitted to the Thesis Committee, the film was also sent to composer Benjamin Shirey for scoring, Authur Strode for sound mixing and mastering, Andrew Dunn and the visual effects crew at Datalus Pictures, then finally to colorist Cory Berendzen in Austin, Texas.
Picture Lock

With additional post production processes complete the film moved to picture lock and was sent one last time to the Thesis Committee for final approval before the May 6th screening.

EQUIPMENT

Numerous pieces of software were used for the post production process of *The Great Hanging*. For the editing process Adobe Premiere Pro CC™ was used along with Plural Eyes™ from Red Giant™. All visual effects processing was completed in Adobe After Effects™, Mocha™, Trapcode Particular™, Video Copilot Action Essentials™ and Nuke™ from The Foundry™. All audio mixing and mastering was completed using Apple Logic™ and Avid Pro Tools™ software and Cine Studio hardware. Finally, the color grading of the film was completed in DiVinci Resolve 12™ using the DiVinci Resolve Color Op Board, both of which are manufactured by Blackmagic Design™.
CHAPTER VIII

RECONCEPTUALIZATION DURING POST PRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

During the first few editing phases of *The Great Hanging* I came to the realization that I had more characters than I needed for this film. With the inclusion of the stage play and re-enactments adding four interview voices seemed too much. The first reaction for any filmmaker is the desire to keep everything and not cut anything. However, if this were to happen I would be left with an over-bloated film that reiterated itself far too often. After viewing the rough cut with fellow MFA cohorts as well as instructor Tania Khalaf, several decisions regarding the interviewees were made as well as some structural changes.

First, the characters of Colleen Clark-Carri, descendent of great hanging victim Nathaniel Clark, and Cooke County Attorney Ed Zielinski were removed from the film. This was a difficult decision as each brought an additional voice to the film. However, the information that was being conveyed by both interviewees, while extremely helpful, was essentially a reiteration of the authoritative information brought forth by historians Dr. Richard McCaslin and Dr. Pat Ledbetter. As the filmmaker and editor I knew that I needed better level of pacing for the film and that at present with a multitude of interviews and voices this pacing could be stalled. Again, as a result of this determination the interviews of Colleen Clark-Carri and Ed Zielinski were removed from the film. Once these interviews were removed I was able to hone in on the edit and ensure that the pace of information and dramatization was smooth and crisp.

An additional change was made to the overall structure of the film, particularly in regards to its beginning and conclusion. During the string out and rough cut phase the beginning of the film started off with a voice over and scene of actor Stephen Brodie portraying James Clark, son
of great hanging victim Nathaniel Clark. It was determined that while James is a crucial character his presence alone didn’t feel warranted. After discussions with the Thesis Committee and co-writer David Goodman an additional scene featuring Nathaniel Clark being prepared to be hung was added. Then an adjustment of the opening voice over was captured during an ADR session with actor Aaron N. Martin. This voice over was then spread across the two connecting scenes. By adding the scene of Nathaniel to the scene with his son James the audience is given a preface to the events ahead. These connecting scenes also reflect the climax of the film were the audience sees Nathaniel and then finally James as he walks away after defecting from the Confederate army.

As stated the ending of the film was adjusted as well, but it was adjusted by an additional change made to the beginning. In the rough cut of the film the audience follows the camera as it joins patrons in the lobby of a theater. Soon the doors open and the patrons move in. It is here that Dr. Pat Ledbetter walks on stage and begins the narrative of The Great Hanging. While this opening was somewhat effective it became clear that the film shouldn’t start out with a present audience as if the stage play was happening in real-time. So the opening of the film was adjusted to showcase an empty theater as Dr. Pat Ledbetter walked on stage to introduce the narrative, but now only for the film’s audience. Additional cut-away footage of the audience was also removed throughout the film and replaced with b-roll coverage of the theater.

With this removed from the beginning it was thought that the audience should then be placed toward the end of the film once the stage play and re-enactments, based on the stage play October Mourning had completed. While this change was present in the fine cut of the film, it’s presence was deemed too long and unnecessary. Instead the closing arguments of Dr. Richard McCaslin and Pat Ledbetter were shortened and observational footage of the Great Hanging
Memorial dedication as well as images of Gainesville, Texas were added in its place. Generating this sense of place mirror the opening of the film and acted as a reminder to the audience where the events witnessed throughout the film took place.

Each of these changes played out during the fine cut and picture lock stage of the post production process. Once completed the film was sent to the composer for scoring, the audio engineer for mixing and mastering, then the visual effects team for compositing, and finally to the color artist who adjusted the color of the film to fit my preferences as a director. Once each of these collaborators returned the film minor adjustments and changes were made, but these changes were nothing substantial. In the end I believe that I, alongside an experienced crew, was able to construct a film that was both incredibly informative while also entertaining. Because of this there should be a larger mass appeal for the film, which should allow for potential distribution or production funding.
CHAPTER IX

EVALUATION OF COMPLETED WORK

Reaching the end of a full production cycle allows a filmmaker the opportunity to look back at each phase of that production and make assessments and evaluations on the completed work. To begin this evaluation, I will start with the pre-production phase, then move to principle production and finally to the post production phase. With each assessment I will critique myself as the director, co-writer and producer specifically through successes and failures. The goal of this evaluation and critique is to ensure that something is learned, which should aid myself, my crew and my next production.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Looking back at the pre-production phase I can see exactly how the film has evolved from its inception. Its original format, before becoming my thesis film, was to be a fictional film that was produced outside of the MFA program. I am now extremely glad that I made the decision to make this my thesis film and the final project of my Graduate career. With so many lessons learned during years one and two, I was able to apply those lessons to this production, ensuring a level of professionalism that I had not been able to achieve before.

However, one critique remains and it is in regards to the conceptual stage of pre-production. While this part of the pre-production was delightful and helpful, I believe that it wasn’t utilized fully. This was due to scheduling constraints. Due to outside commitments to school and work storyboard artist Andrew Dunn and myself had to reschedule the development of the pre-visualization for the film. This in turn cause the storyboard and conceptual art process for the film had to be rushed this way the production schedule did not have to be adjusted. I
would also say that I have learned I am a filmmaker who wants or rather needs to have the film fully realized through storyboards before a camera ever rolls. Going forward I will ensure that ample time is given to complete the pre-visualization process and to ensure that crucial production crew members are involved from start to finish before production begins.

PRODUCTION

Principle production of *The Great Hanging* was the most challenging, but also the most rewarding experience of my career. This marked the first time in my career as a director that I managed and led a crew of 16. Until this production my crews primarily consisted of myself, a camera operator and sound recordist. The challenges of keeping a large crew like this in-sync and on schedule was incredible difficult. I was lucky to have an active co-producer that I could count on as well as seasoned veterans in key positions like cinematographer, production designer and sound supervisor.

Once these key people were in place the production process ran as smooth as it possibly could. There were still plenty of challenges, but these challenges were met with a solid leadership core that worked tirelessly to ensure my vision of the film was captured. One crucial critique from this process is that, as the director, I should have allowed the core production leadership to take control of their role and those working underneath them. I believe early on in the production process I was micromanaging the set instead of allowing my crew to work and collaborate together. Fortunately, this was a lesson that I learned midway through and was able to correct before the end of production.

This part of the filmmaking process also reinforced to me that while I love the non-fiction value of documentary film, I am more enthralled with the act of storytelling in a fictional way. It
enlightened me in such a way that I know now that I can continue my career by successfully combining the best of non-fiction and fictional film in order to create an experience that is both enlightening, but also entertaining.

POST PRODUCTION

Finally, post production for *The Great Hanging* was incredibly complex and challenging. With over 4000 pieces of media and hours of interviews, re-enactments and observational footage to sort through the challenges started immediately. Despite these challenges I was lucky that the narrative structure was such that we were able to develop string-out and rough cut in a relative short time frame. Having a script on hand, to act as a foundation for the edit, made this process much easier and for more manageable.

While I did enjoy the process of editing the film I quickly came to the conclusion that moving forward working with a professional editor for future projects is essential. I will always develop and create a directors cut, however in the future I would like to give that directors cut to a professional editor. This will ensure maximum effectiveness of the film is achieved. There are plenty of examples that prove a strong collaboration between a director and editor can yield amazing results and this is a collaboration that I believe must happen throughout my career.

With this said I truly believe a quality film has been produced, however during the editing phase there were doubts about the structure of the script. With so many elements being presented in this film, such as the interviews, stage play recital, and re-enactments I was worried it would be too much for the audience to follow. But in the end the overlapping structure of these elements proved to be the right decision. There is no doubt that after screening this film the structure of the film is solid and easy to follow. My only hope now is that we did our job
properly and ethically, so that the majority of the viewing public are not divided in their opinions but rather enlightened.
Shooting Formats: Digital
Total Run Time(s): 25-30 minutes
Intended Delivery Date: 5/6/16

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APPENDIX B

FUNDING
Intensive research will go into finding grants for production costs. Submissions will be made to organizations such as Austin Film Society, Catapult Film Fund, The Fledgling Fund and Sundance Institute Documentary Fund among others. Crowd sourcing will also play a vital role as well through Kickstarter, by way of building an online presence and audience.

GRANT SUBMISSIONS:
Austin Film Society
Catapult Film Fund
The Fledgling Fund
The Ford Foundation JustFilms Grant
National Endowment for the Humanities America’s Media-Makers Production Grants
Sundance Institute Documentary Fund

CROWD SOURCE FUNDING:
Kickstarter

POTENTIAL FUNDING BREAKDOWN:

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<th>Description</th>
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APPENDIX C

TALENT RELEASE FORM
THESIS DOCUMENTARY TALENT RELEASE FORM

I authorize the undersigned Producer to make use of my appearance on:

PROGRAM TITLE: The Great Hanging

PRODUCER’S NAME: Johnathan Paul

PRODUCER’S PHONE NUMBER: 940-293-7902

DATE OF TAPING: Production Begins September 26, 2015

I understand that I am to receive no compensation for this appearance unless otherwise notated below. The Producer shall have complete ownership of the program. I give the Producer the right to use my name, likeness and biographical material to publicize the program and the services of the Producer.

Compensation Agreement:
The Producer (Thesis Student) agrees to cover travel, food and lodging expenses as deemed necessary for Re-enactment Talent. The University of North Texas is not liable for any of these costs. The Producer may agree to additional compensation to the artist if the thesis production gains studio or network funding after production is complete. This agreement will be between the Producer and Re-enactment Talent, the University of North Texas is again not liable for this compensation.

The Producer may:
1. Photograph me and record my voice and likeness for the purpose of the production mentioned above, whether by film, videotape, magnetic tape, digitally or otherwise;
2. Make copies of the photographs and recordings so made;
3. Use my name and likeness for the purposes of education, promotion or advertising of the sale or trading in the photographs, recordings and any copies so made.

I further understand the master tape remains the property of the Producer and that there will be no restrictions on the number of times that my name and likeness may be used.

Name (please print) ____________________________ Date: ______________

Address __________________________________________________________

City ____________________________ State ________ Zip Code ____________

Talent Signature (Parent or Guardian if under 18 years of age)

_________________________________________ Date: ______________________

Is the aboved signed Re-enactment Talent? □ YES □ NO
REFERENCES


Scorsese, Martin. *Interview with The Story of Film.* The Film Foundation. 2006. Web.


*The Road to Guantanamo.* Mat Whitecross and Michael Winterbottom. Film4. 2006. Film.


*The Imposter.* Bart Layton. Film4. 2012. Film.

*Harlan County USA.* Barbara Kopple. Cabin Creek. 1977. Film.


*Saving Private Ryan.* Steven Spielberg. Dreamworks SKG. 1999. Film.


*The Tree of Life.* Tarrence Malick. River Road Entertainment. 2011. Film.


