PRELIMINARY PRESS NOTES

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SYNOPSIS

BURNING CANE tells the story of a deeply religious woman's struggle to reconcile her convictions of faith with the love she has for her alcoholic son and a troubled preacher. Set in rural Louisiana, the film explores the relationships within a southern black protestant community, examining the roots of toxic masculinity, how manhood is defined and the dichotomous role of religion within the African-American community.
ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Under the beating Louisiana summer sun, writer-director Phillip Youmans’ feature-length debut BURNING CANE follows a god-fearing woman’s tumultuous relationships with her estranged son and troubled pastor. Devoted to providing an honest insight into the nuances of southern black life, BURNING CANE establishes Youmans as an emerging auteur with an authentic, unapologetic voice.

It’s burning season and Helen Wayne’s attempts to treat the family’s mange-ridden dog have proven fruitless. She looks to the church for hope as the dog’s rashes grow fiercer by the day. In the sanctuary, Reverend Pastor Joseph Tillman preaches a righteous sermon, but can’t seem to maintain his sobriety in the wake of his wife’s recent passing. Helen’s only surviving son Daniel’s recent unemployment has left him ruminating in isolation with his young son Jeremiah. As Daniel’s delusion swells, he begins to introduce Jeremiah to his vices.

Featuring a harmonizing combination of seasoned talents and first time performers, BURNING CANE’s all-black cast is led by Wendell Pierce (The Wire, Treme, Clemency, Jack Ryan, Selma, Ray, X) in a spellbinding performance as the Reverend Pastor Joseph Tillman.

Written, directed, shot, and edited by Phillip Youmans during his final years of high school and executive produced by Benh Zeitlin (Beasts of the Southern Wild), BURNING CANE tells the story of a southern, protestant mother’s struggle to help the spiraling lives of the ones she loves.
GENESIS

BURNING CANE began as a short film titled *The Glory* that writer-director Phillip Youmans penned in November 2016, during his junior year of high school. During this time, Youmans began working at Morning Call Coffee Stand in New Orleans City Park to raise money to shoot the short. The original short screenplay featured most of the same key characters as BURNING CANE: Reverend Tillman, Helen Wayne, and Daniel Wayne. Akin to BURNING CANE, *The Glory* followed a protestant woman as she deals with an unexpected visit from her estranged son.

In December 2016, Isaac Webb, Youmans’ Media instructor at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) and eventual producer, introduced Youmans to New Orleans actress, producer, and casting director Karen Kaia Livers. Webb intended for Youmans and Livers to work together to cast the film. However, after her initial reading and during that first meeting, Livers approached Youmans about playing the role of Helen herself, stating that she couldn’t be an objective casting director with his role; she saw too much of herself in Helen.

After a brief hiatus in which he directed another short, in March 2017, Youmans began hosting table reads with his classmates and fellow NOCCA students on a frequent basis, sharpening his rewrites. Around this time, Webb approached Youmans about expanding *The Glory* into a feature-length project and shooting it during the upcoming summer. This meeting fueled Youmans’ determination to flesh out these characters and this story.
From its inception, *The Glory* (BURNING CANE) was conceived in the spirit of the blues. Early in his junior year of high school, writer-director Phillip Youmans discovered his fascination for the works of blues legends Robert Johnson and Lightnin’ Hopkins. He found the unrepentant nature of Johnson’s work intoxicating. In his words, “I think the only thing arguably more soulful than Robert Johnson is Sunday morning gospel.”

Youmans’s upbringing in the Southern Baptist Church served as the subject inspiration. His childhood provided him ample insight into the workings and relationships within the church, as well as serving to authenticate his particular perspective on the church’s dichotomous relationship within his community. On this dichotomy, he said, “The church is regarded as a beacon of hope and guidance, but it is also used by some to manipulate and control voices within the community. Making this film was therapeutic because it allowed me to work through my own personal conflicts.” His mother and producer Cassandra Youmans’ protestant, low-country South Carolina childhood made her a valued consultant for the project.
PRE-PRODUCTION

After Youmans' and Webb's discussion about moving to feature-length, Youmans went to work on the first draft of the script, churning out his first 80 page draft in late May 2017. In the ensuing weeks, he met with Webb and Livers frequently for feedback on his draft revisions.

Around this time, Youmans reached out to friend, cinematographer, and producer Jakob Johnson from The Sunhawk Company to come on to the project as DP. Youmans met Johnson the year prior on a UCLA thesis film that was in production in New Orleans. Johnson was AC and Youmans 2nd AC; the two became friends instantly. They always hoped to work on a project together and BURNING CANE seemed like the prime opportunity to do so. Until mid-July 2017, Johnson was attached as cinematographer, after which point it became clear to Johnson that he needed to leave the project in order to find paying work to support his family in Alabama. Without a DP, Youmans decided that he would handle the role himself. And although Johnson’s hands-on involvement was limited past this point, his producing services to the film proved invaluable; Johnson provided Youmans with the camera gear for the first half of principal photography and acted as a liaison for their shooting locations in Laurel Valley. Since Johnson was born and raised in the Laurel Valley Area, he facilitated nearly every connection that the production utilized in the area.

Youmans approached his best friend Mose Mayer to come on to the project as a producer. At the time, Mayer had no prior experience in film besides working on Youmans’ previous short film Ivory. Together, Youmans and Mayer started an Indiegogo campaign with a production start date of July 17th. The production moved forward with that date.

In the summer weeks leading up to principal photography, Youmans spent most of his days working 10 hour plus shifts as a waiter at Morning Call Coffee Stand. Morning Call was a cash-only business that specialized in beignets; the cash-only business allowed Youmans the ability to store the bulk of his earnings for the film. In addition, Youmans put all of his savings into the film. And in addition to his personal funds and the funds raised by Indiegogo, Youmans’ mother and producer Cassandra Youmans made sizable, helpful contributions to the production.
ASSEMBLING THE CREW

When assembling his crew, Youmans was a little wary on approaching the various production contacts he’d assembled over the past few years working as a production assistant on local productions. First and foremost, he knew that his humble budget wouldn’t allow for him to pay his crew industry standard rates and he knew very few local filmmakers who would have been willing to offer their time without proper compensation. Furthermore, Youmans has always been a firm believer in the idea that an artist is an artist regardless of the medium that they find themselves working in at the time. With this in mind, Youmans decided to bring on some other talented high school artists at NOCCA who were willing to put their all into the project because they believed in the story and they believed in him.

In early June 2017, Youmans approached his friend Ojo Akinlana to production design and produce. Akinlana is a talented, afrocentric painter, tattoo artist, and 3D animator from New Orleans. Akinlana had a great eye that Youmans believed would blossom in the art department. Sierra Wilson from H&MU/Wardrobe was a talented dancer at NOCCA. Erica O’Neal, also from H&MU/Wardrobe, was trained in NOCCA’s musical theater department as a performer and producer. Producer Mose Mayer is now a developing video installation artist, fashion designer, and hip-hop instrumentalist. Longtime friend, associate producer, Rahsaan Ison is now a budding hip-hop recording artist based in LA.
CASTING

In December 2016, Isaac Webb, Youmans’ Media instructor at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) and eventual producer, introduced Youmans to New Orleans actress, producer, and casting director Karen Kaia Livers (Helen Wayne). Webb intended for Youmans and Livers to work together to cast the short. However, after her initial reading and during that first meeting, Livers approached Youmans about playing the role of Helen herself. From that point on Livers was attached to play Helen.

The next person cast was Dominique McClellan (Daniel Wayne). Youmans found McClellan through their mutual contact Tommye Myrick, a prominent New Orleans theater director. Myrick was Youmans’ acting coach back when Youmans was auditioning for roles in his elementary school years. After reading the script, Myrick told Youmans with confidence that McClellan was the one for this role. She gave Youmans his information and after an incredible reading at producer Mose Mayer’s home, McClellan was cast. He found E’myri Crutchfield (Sherry Bland) in a similar way. Youmans and Crutchfield were peers in Myrick’s acting class during their middle school years.

While waiting tables at Morning Call, about a month before principle photography was set to begin, Youmans waited on a woman named Lula Elzy, a prominent dancer and native New Orleanian. Elzy asked Youmans what he wanted to do and what school he attended. Youmans told her that he was a filmmaker at NOCCA’s Media Arts Department; he felt compelled to tell her that he was saving up to shoot his first feature-length film that summer. Elzy asked Youmans what the story was about and Youmans gave her his pitch. “It’s about a black protestant family in Laurel Valley. It’s about a mother’s relationship with her estranged, violent son and a pastor who’s relying on alcohol to soothe him in the wake of his wife’s recent passing. I’ve cast the mother and the son, but I’m still looking for someone to play the pastor.” Elzy asked Youmans what he thought of Wendell Pierce playing the role. Youmans said he thought Pierce would be amazing, but he had no way of getting in touch him. At that moment, Elzy texted Pierce telling him that a NOCCA student was interested in working with him. Pierce said to give Youmans his information; Elzy gave Youmans his email and the conversation began.

Said Youmans: “Wendell was actively corresponding with me, trying to make the dates work, constantly proving to me that he believed in the story and my script. In truth, there was a point in time when I believed he wasn’t going to be able to do it. For a couple of weeks, we just couldn’t find any dates that worked with his schedule. I let it sit for a little while. I was about to go into principal photography without knowing whether or not he’d be our Pastor Tillman. But something told me I had to be a pest, that I had to be annoying, and it was worth it. I sent him an email telling him how much his involvement would mean for me personally. I told him that I couldn’t see anyone else doing justice to the role but him. He sympathized with me and figured he’d give it a shot.”
Production began on July 17th, 2017 in Laurel Valley, Louisiana (about an hour and a half outside of New Orleans). The production booked a shared Airbnb home in nearby Thibodaux, LA for cast and crew. Each morning, cast and crew woke up and packed together in a fleet of cars to make the 30 minute drive to the Laurel Valley Plantation (location of Helen Wayne’s house). Youmans was trying to shoot principal photography as least segmented as possible due to the fact that he knew that as soon as his senior year started, he’d only really be able to shoot on weekends.

The next phase of principal photography took place in Algiers, New Orleans, LA. Producer Ojo Akinlana secured the location (Daniel Wayne’s home) from Trevor Young, Akinlana’s boss at the food truck he was at for a summer job. The home was perfect for the production because of the fact that it was completely unfurnished; Youmans envisioned that the lack of furniture in Daniel’s house would be a defining feature. They rented a Uhaul truck and furnished the house with furniture from Youmans’ home. This was Braelyn Kelly’s (Jeremiah Wayne) first time on set. On working with Kelly, Youmans said, “Working with Braelyn was dope. He’s a smart, talented kid. We had some in-depth discussions about Jeremiah beforehand, but I didn’t want want any pre-determined decisions or choices to get in his way on set. I wanted him to live in the moment as best as he could. Braelyn knew the script, he knew the circumstance, he just had to live it.”
On meeting Wendell for the first time in late August 2017, Youmans said, “I first met Wendell in person the day before our first shoot day. I went to his house in Pontchartrain Park with my Hair & Makeup/Wardrobe crew (Erica O’Neal and Sierra Wilson) and producer Mose Mayer for a suit fitting. I mostly prepared Wendell by way of email and phone. We spoke about Tillman’s past and the impact of his wife’s passing. It was just about us coming to a mutual understanding of who this man was. I’ve got to give it to Wendell though. He’s a brilliant, hard-working actor. When I came to his dressing room on our first day together on set, I saw his script page for the first sermon. It was completely annotated. A high school English teacher couldn’t have done it better. Every line had a comment or a question. Most of the questions didn’t have answers. It’s as if his script was having active conversations right on the page, between the margins.”

Production with Pierce began at Mount Sinai Baptist Church in Algiers, New Orleans, LA. Youmans and Mayer secured the location from Reverend Pastor Dudley Watson. Watson was a NOCCA alum and wanted to support the next generation of NOCCA artists. Furthermore, the choir featured in BURNING CANE was Mount Sinai Baptist Church’s actual youth choir; the congregation within the church consisted of regular attending members of the church.
On directing Wendell Pierce, Youmans said, “In truth, directing Wendell was a lot less hands-on than I thought it would be. I learned a lot from working with Wendell. We had enough conversations beforehand that none of the motivations for the scene really needed to be revisited on set. He made of lot of great decisions too. When you’re working with talent like that, it services the film to let them have the freedom and space to bring their own ideas to the table because every idea that he had worked. It just worked. It’s hard to articulate past that point.”
On the stormy second and last day of shooting with Pierce, Youmans said, “I couldn’t worry about keeping myself dry. As the director, I knew I set the mood on set and if I lost my composure, so would everyone else. Mose, my producer, approached me “We aren’t prepared for this. Do you want to reschedule?” He was right; we weren’t adequately prepared for this. We knew to expect rain, but this wasn’t just rain. We were caught in the outskirts of Tropical Storm Harvey. But I told him no. We had Wendell Pierce on set and this was the last day that we had to shoot with him before he had to return to Los Angeles to resume shooting another project. I wasn’t about to let weather stop production. We took down the canopies designated for food and wardrobe and moved them to protect the gear. The rain made it difficult to find the right positioning, so every time I moved the camera, the canopy had to move with me. Miraculously and almost in sync with our readiness to shoot, the rain stopped. As we were packing up for our next location, the rain came back with a vengeance. There was a triumphant mood on set after we finished that scene, and rightfully so, but the biggest struggle of the day was still ahead of us.”
Youmans continued, “One of the most pivotal scenes in my film involves Wendell’s character getting pulled over in front of the slave quarters in Laurel Valley where Livers’ character comes to pick him up. With a nearly all black cast and crew, I anticipated that the locals wouldn’t be comfortable with my intention to shoot the very slave quarters that they pour thousands of dollars every year in to preserve. So, I applied for a film permit to shoot there a week in advance. As soon as our small fleet of cars arrived at the location, an older white man who served as the plantation’s groundskeeper screeched behind us in his beefed up pickup truck. He yelled out that he would call the sheriff if we didn’t leave the property, but we weren’t on the property; all of our cars were parked on the side of the road. Despite my informing him about our permit, he didn’t believe us and, soon enough, six LaFourche Parish Sheriff squad cars arrived. Soon after that, the owner of the property arrived as well. The groundskeeper lied to officers and said we shot on the property, but luckily my cast and crew were there to back up the truth. I confirmed the permit with the law enforcement, but the squad cars lingered around until the cars that weren’t essential to the scene cleared the road. It also continued to rain and we waited about half an hour for it to dissipate, but it didn’t and time was running out, so we put our audio recorders inside the cars where the actions took place and kept the camera under an umbrella. Once we cleared frame and set the focus, we shot the scene.”
Youmans first met executive producer Benh Zeitlin soon after principle photography was completed. Youmans first reached out to Benh over Instagram; he sent him a cut of the trailer and asked if he’d be interested in meeting up. Zeitlin soon responded, excited to meet with the young director. After their first meeting, their friendship was ignited. Zeitlin’s New Orleans-based production company Court 13 threw a festival called Always for Pleasure Fest and included a short version of BURNING CANE titled *The Reverend*. In the ensuing months, Zeitlin would facilitate and advocate for Youmans to receive the Create Louisiana Youth Vision Award that provided Youmans with essential finishing funds and resources including a cash award, an editing suite at Fotokem’s Second Line Stages location in New Orleans, and full color services from Fotokem. Youmans said of his time working with Zeitlin, “Benh was awesome. I’m thankful that he believed in me and in this project. He spent hours upon hours with me giving feedback, helping me fine tune the edit. You can say I’m a fan of BZ for life.” On post-production, Youmans said, “Over the months, I hosted numerous feedback sessions with Benh, Webb, Jolene Pinder from Create Louisiana, and Darcy McKinnon from NOVAC. Benh connected me with his editor Affonso Gonçalves for feedback. Towards the end of post-production when I felt like I was at a standstill, I brought in an outside editor off of Benh and Webb’s advice. It made a huge difference. I brought in Ruby Kline, a talented editor in her junior year at NOCCA, to help bring a more objective eye to the table. I realized that having written, directed, shot, and edited most of the film, I was simply too attached to all of the footage.” The final picture-locked, colored cut was completed in August 2018.
ABOUT THE CAST

WENDELL PIERCE (Rev. Pastor Joseph Tillman) was born on December 8, 1963 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Like writer-director Phillip Youmans, Pierce is an alumni of both Benjamin Franklin and NOCCA high schools. He studied at Juilliard before taking on an array of television and film roles. He's most known for his roles in two of HBO's most storied series of the new millennium: *The Wire* and *Treme*, with the latter program grappling with the effects of Hurricane Katrina and also directly speaking to Pierce's roots. The actor has also starred in other series like *The Michael J. Fox Show*, *Suits* and *The Odd Couple* as well as the highly-charged TV film *Confirmation*. Pierce parlayed his way as an actor via television and film roles, making his screen debut as a paramedic in the 1986 film *The Money Pit*. More supporting roles followed in big-screen projects like *Family Business* (1989), *A Rage in Harlem* (1991), *Malcolm X* (1992) and *Waiting for Exhale* (1995), as well as the series *A Man Called Hawk*, *The Equalizer*, *I'll Fly Away* and *New York Undercover*. Pierce enjoyed his first recurring role in the 1990 newspaper drama *Capitol News* and was also a featured player in *The Gregory Hines Show* and *The Weber Show*.
KAREN KAIA LIVERS (Helen Wayne) is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. For the past 40 years, she’s appeared on stage and in films. Karen’s credits are versatile, beginning with her training at the legendary New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA). Her last theatrical tour included a performance at the Apollo Theater in *Swimming Up Stream*, a collaborative writing by 18 New Orleans Women about their experiences surviving Hurricane Katrina. Under the direction of Tony Award winners Eve Ensler and staged by Kenny Leon. Karen Kaia has appeared in several TV series including *Claws*, *One Mississippi*, *NCIS New Orleans*, and *Vampire Diaries*. With recurring roles on the CW’s *The Originals* as Agnes the most powerful elder witch, the Gumbo Party Lady, Latonya on *K-Ville* and *Mrs. Robinette*, the wife of a Mardi Gras Indian Chief on the HBO series *Treme*. Before being cast on the show she was hired by productions as *Treme*’s Specialty Casting Director and Musician’s Coordinator for all four seasons. Kaia feature film credits includes *Triple Nine, Don’t Kill It, Hurricane Season*, and *Sonny*. Her start in casting began with director Spike Lee.

Forty Acres & A Mule contracted her to work as local casting director on *Miracle at St. Anna* and later with *Old Boy*. Kaia has added another title as a consultant and specialty casting director for the film projects: Freeform series *Cloak & Dagger*, WGNO series *Underground, American Horror Story: The Coven*, and *12 Years A Slave*. Outside of all of her creative endeavors, she spent 23 years with the Alliance for Community Theaters, Inc.; ACT I- New Orleans Black Theater Festival assisting theater practitioners’ with arts administration and creative management. She is also the recipient of several awards; HBO’s *Treme, MVP Player*; Louisiana Division of the Arts Theater Fellowship, ACT I’s Best Actress and Best Director, CAC Sweet Arts Award, Mayor’s Arts Award, with many more to add to the list.
DOMINIQUE McCLELLAN (Daniel Wayne) is an American actor and filmmaker born and raised in Mississippi. Dominique, who is also a military veteran, received his actor training at the University of Mississippi after serving ten years in the service. He has since landed leading roles in a plethora of theatrical productions such as Dreamgirls, RENT, Blues for an Alabama Sky, All The Way, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and To Kill a Mockingbird. Although theatrically trained, he has found a way to measure his performance precisely for film where he has hit his stride as an actor. His approach to the craft is “Just be, no matter what. People want to see you - not an actor.” Dominique’s most recently noted accolades include his award winning self produced/written/directed film Saltz and his self produced/written/directed family comedy, The Wedding Party, which will be going on tour this fall and coming to the big screen in 2020.
BRAELYN KELLY (Jeremiah Wayne) was born on June 11, 2008. He is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. He is a 5th grade student at St. Leo the Great Catholic School. Braelyn’s favorite subject is math. His interests and hobbies are basketball, football and Fortnite. Braelyn’s role as Jeremiah Wayne in BURNING CANE is his debut role as
SUPPORTING CAST

CYNTHIA CAPERS (Marsha Bland) is a television and film actress. Her performance as Marsha in BURNING CANE is her first role in a full length motion picture. In 1991, she played an extra on the television series I’ll Fly Away. She spent time under the tutelage of working actor and acting coach, Deke Anderson. From 2017-2018, she studied at Next Level Acting Studios in Houston, Texas. Even though she hasn't been in front of the camera for much of her career, she has spent more than 18 years behind the lens as a television news producer. She started her career in Augusta, Georgia and then worked her way up to the seventh largest television market in the country, Houston, Texas.

E’MYRI CRUTCHFIELD (Sherry Bland) is a young actress from New Orleans, LA. Emyri’s mother enrolled her in acting classes at the age of eight after noticing she had a knack for impersonating people she encountered in the mall. In addition to acting classes, she pursued gymnastics from ages eight to twelve. E’mryi was home-schooled for four years, allowing her parents to travel with her between Los Angeles, CA and her hometown to audition and pursue her acting career. In 2014, E’mryi was one of a small group selected from amongst thousands to attend the Nickelodeon Groundling Sketch Comedy training in Los Angeles. E’myri got her acting start in local New Orleanian small theater plays and small independent films such as Paper Cranes and Pendulum and We Three Kings. E’mryi’s first speaking role came when she played a role in the 2015 release Vacation. E’mryi made her prime-time television debut in 2016 as teenage Kizzy in the remake of the series Roots which aired simultaneously on Lifetime, A&E and the History Channel. Also in 2016 she played Zoey in Amazon Prime’s, The Kicks a series about a middle school girls’ soccer team.

ERIKA WOODS (Dianne) was born in Tyler, Texas and raised in Overland Park, Kansas. Erika began acting in the prestigious "Theatre for Young America" where she caught the acting bug at a young age. After receiving her BA from Howard University, she moved to New York City where she began working with the Wilhelmina Modeling Agency and studying her craft. After appearing in numerous print ads and national cosmetic campaigns, Erika signed with the Paradigm Talent Agency where she went on to appear in national network commercials. Erika also served as an Associate Producer on the feature film Santorini Blue starring Ice-T, Coco T and Richard Belzer. Recently Erika can be seen portraying Officer Talbot on NBC’s The Blacklist and featured in a National Print campaign for American Express.
ABOUT THE CREW

PHILLIP YOUMANS (Writer/Director/Cinematographer/Producer/Editor) is a filmmaker from the 7th Ward of New Orleans. Phillip was first introduced to filmmaking as an actor, taking small roles in productions around New Orleans. This early exposure to working on sets ignited Phillip’s desire to pursue the medium from behind the camera. Before high school, Phillip began writing, directing, shooting, and editing his own short films. During his high school years at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), Phillip solidified his technical foundation of filmmaking in their media arts program. In his junior year, Phillip began work on his first feature film BURNING CANE. His most recent video installation titled Won’t You Celebrate With Me premiered through Solange Knowles’ creative agency Saint Heron at the end of his senior year of high school; the installation is a showcase of black female unity in an non-material, alternative future. His latest short film NAIROBI, also made with Saint Heron, about a Harlem-based family of francophone West-African immigrants, will premiere on their platform in the Spring of 2019. Furthermore, Phillip is in post-production on his short documentary about the Grammy-nominated jazz musician Jon Batiste titled The Vanguard: Days With Jon Batiste. The film follows Batiste and the Stay Human Band from The Late Show with Stephen Colbert to their six night run at the legendary Village Vanguard and is set to release late 2019. Youmans founded his production company Denizen Pictures alongside producers Mose Mayer and Ojo Akinlana.

MOSE MAYER (Producer/2nd AD/1st AC) is a filmmaker who was born in the Lower 9th but grew up in the City Park area of New Orleans. Mose was first introduced to filmmaking by finding his mom’s old Sony Handycam and meeting Phillip Youmans, as well as working a small role on the crew of Youmans’ short film Ivory. There, he fell in love with the process and excitement of it all and began shooting with his mother’s old Hi8. After that, many PA jobs came Mose’s way and he worked them all. As high school went on, he and Phillip worked on more films together. In his junior year, Youmans began working on his first feature film BURNING CANE and Mayer was eager to help out in any way possible so he came on to the project as a producer. He was a producer on Youmans’ Saint Heron installation piece Won’t You Celebrate With Me. Mayer was also a part of the crew for Youmans’ Nairobi, also for Saint Heron. Youmans stars in Mayer’s first narrative effort as a director on the experiential short film Demons Arise. Mayer is a producer at Youmans’ production company Denizen Pictures.
ABOUT THE CREW

FALOLA “OJO” AKINLANA (Producer/Production Designer/1st AD) is a visual artist who was raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. Starting as early as seven years old, Ojo began displaying his paintings at local festivals. His talent was noticed by the administration at NOCCA so much so that they awarded him a scholarship to attend the school. Here, Ojo was able to hone his skills as a visual artist and began to venture into other mediums. It was also at NOCCA where Ojo met the young filmmaker Phillip Youmans, soon after which they became close friends. Phillip started Ojo’s career as a filmmaker by asking him to participate in his short film *Ivory*. The process was foreign to Ojo and he often found himself asking more questions than solving them. Nevertheless, Ojo enjoyed working on the film so, when Phillip Youmans asked Akinlana to produce and production design for *BURNING CANE*, Ojo jumped at the opportunity. Working on *BURNING CANE* not only enhanced his capabilities as a filmmaker, but it also broadened Ojo perspective as an artist. He soon joined Phillips’ production company Denizen Pictures. Once a part of Denizen, Ojo continued work with Phillip on his short film *Nairobi* as a Production Designer and Producer. Ojo currently studies at Pratt Institute where he majors in 3D animation. He is able to do so while becoming a licensed tattoo artist working at Think Before You Ink Tattoo Studio with Richard “Maderich” Parker.

RUBY KLINE (co-editor) is a filmmaker from New Orleans, LA. During her childhood, she often wrote, directed, and filmed her own short films. Attending high school at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, she gained a lot of experience working on sets and other student films. During her junior year, Ruby co-edited her first feature-length film: Phillip Youmans' *BURNING CANE*. Her work has also been featured at the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans, *Orléans Magazine* in France, and *PBS Newshour*. 
ABOUT THE CREW

CASSANDRA YOUMANS (Producer) MD, MPH, MS-HCM, FAAP, FACP was born in Columbia, South Carolina on April 28th, 1960. Raised in Hampton, SC, she is the proud mother of filmmaker Phillip Youmans, producer on BURNING CANE, and is currently an Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine at the Louisiana State University Health Science Center Department of Medicine in New Orleans, Louisiana. Cassandra has been practicing Internal Medicine and Pediatrics for over 30 years. She served as the Louisiana Department of Health’s Region 1 Medical Director during Hurricane Katrina and Rita; the Georgia Department of Human Resources’ East Central Health District Health Director, and the Medical Director of Ambulatory Care Services for the Interim LSU Public Hospital, formerly known as Charity Hospital, in New Orleans. In her various capacities as a physician and administrator, she was intimately involved in establishing medical homes, increasing access to both primary and behavioral healthcare for those who are underserved which includes the uninsured and underinsured. Cassandra was also instrumental in facilitating the restoration of ambulatory health and public health programs in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines Parishes during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She has received numerous awards, and has been listed as a Top Doctor by New Orleans Magazine. She is known locally more recently because of her direct care of and advocacy in facilitating access to treatment for those with Chronic Hepatitis C and B.

RAHSAAN “ADONI” ISON (Associate Producer) is a New Orleans native filmmaker and musician who started pursing his love for music and film at 13, making songs and short films for fun. Soon enough he began producing, writing, and rapping his own original content. In 2012, Rahsaan founded an arts collective known as The Fourth Eye Tribe, a group that focuses on the art and culture of their generation. Since then, Rahsaan has graduated from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), attended Grammy Camp in Los Angeles, and recorded multiple EPs. Rahsaan uses his platforms to express himself as well as to push for social justice through his music and heavy involvement in organizations.
REV. PASTOR JOSEPH TILLMAN……..Wendell Pierce
Helen Wayne..........................Karen Kaia Livers
Daniel Wayne.........................Dominique McClellan
Jeremiah Wayne.....................Braelyn Kelly
Sherry Bland............................E’myri Crutchfield
Marsha Bland............................Cynthia Capers
Dianne (Choir Leader)...............Erika Woods
Organist.................................Kevin Gullage
Operator..............................AnneMarie Bernard
Officer.................................Robert Florence
Gus Ladeaux............................Harold Clark

DENZIEN PICTURES Presents
In Association with THE SUNHAWK COMPANY

Written and Directed by
Phillip Youmans

Produced by
Phillip Youmans
Mose Mayer
Ojo Akinlana
Cassandra Youmans
Wendell Pierce
Karen Kaia Livers
Isaac Webb
Jakob Johnson

Executive Producer
Benh Zeitlin

Associate Producers
Rahsaan Ison
Josh Mayer
Jill Dupré
Louis Livers Jr.

Cinematography by
Phillip Youmans

Edited by
Phillip Youmans
Ruby Kline
Music Performed by
   Kevin Gullage
   Erika Woods
Mount Sinai Baptist Church Youth Choir

Featuring Music by
   Mary Lou Williams
   Robert Johnson
   Erin Knight

Production Designer
   Ojo Akinlana

Wardrobe/HMU
   Erica O’Neal
   Sierra Wilson

Casting by
   Phillip Youmans
   Ojo Akinlana
   Mose Mayer

1st Assistant Director
   Ojo Akinlana

2nd Assistant Director
   Mose Mayer

Camera Operator
   Phillip Youmans

1st Assistant Camera
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   James Waiters

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   James Waiters
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