A Love Song For Latasha

PRESS NOTES

Official Selection
Tribeca Film Festival 2019

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TRT | 19 mins | Not Yet Rated | USA | English | Color
A Love Song For Latasha

LOG LINE + SYNOPSIS
an experimental hybrid short documentary

A Love Song For Latasha is a dreamlike archive in conversation with the past and the present to reimagine a more nuanced narrative of Latasha Harlins by excavating intimate and poetic memories shared by her cousin and best friend.

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Latasha Harlins was 15-years-old when she was wrongfully killed in 1991 by Soon Ja Du at Empire Liquor in South Central Los Angeles. Du was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter but received no jail time. The death of Latasha, occurring 13 days after the brutal beating of Rodney King, was a leading catalyst for the 1992 L.A. Riots. But, for the past 28 years her life has only been examined within the context of her death.

This short hybrid documentary carefully excavates, conjures, and archives memories shared by Latasha’s best friend Ty and cousin Shinese to document a more nuanced narrative of Latasha Harlins beyond her trauma. Ty and Shinese were were both 15-years-old when Latasha was killed and they’ve carried these stories deep within them, keeping them safe and sacred. By using experimental methods to reimagine what is no longer tangible from their childhood, oral history and memory converge together in a dream-like conversation to become a visceral embodiment of the past, present, and future intersecting.

A Love Song For Latasha fills in gaps and speaks truth to Latasha’s life and nuance. Through the reclaiming and re-envisioning of these archives, we are challenging a system that has historically prevented black women and girls from having agency over their narrative and public image. By activating this space, we are interrogating new ways to imagine and engage with black history that has been erased and left void. These memories serve as evidence of not only the existence, but also the resistance of black women and girls. As Latasha’s cousin Shinese states, most people only know Latasha as “a young black girl who was worth a dollar and 79 cents. They don't know who she was as an individual.” This hybrid documentary tells the story of Latasha’s fullness, providing a more intimate narrative than ever before.
**A Love Song For Latasha**

**PRODUCTION NOTES**

*A Love Song For Latasha* received support and funding from Glassbreaker Films and Sundance Institute New Frontier Lab Programs

*A Love Song For Latasha* is a spiritual and physical conversation of dreams, memories, and legacy. Through the process of archiving what no longer exists, we are creating a new framework that examines the erasure of black women’s stories. This type of intentionality challenges who is in charge of our narrative and historical records, while also providing a context beyond headlines of trauma and negative stereotypes. “History lies not in official proclamations or authorized texts but ‘in lost hidden places that wait to be found,’” these words by Professor Tiffany Ruby Patterson became the basis of the documentary and the journey of reimagining the life of Latasha Harlins.

Sophia Nahli Allison (Director), is a native of South Central Los Angeles and feels a deep and personal spiritual connection to her and Latasha’s hometown. South Central is an integral character in the film and has always served as a historical landscape of resilient black life, nuanced self expression, and an active legacy of culture creation. It deeply houses memories of the Latashas in the world that history too often overlooks.

*A Love Song For Latasha* explores how documentary storytelling can be constructed when no tangible elements exists to visualize the past. The film challenges the restrictions and constraints of conventional documentary by visually articulating both the public and private spaces black women and girls must navigate and coexist in. We are able to rebuild a new and spiritually resonant archive by combining elements of magical realism with oral history.

Set in the late 80’s/early 90’s, the aesthetic is that of a VHS tape, reminiscent of the time period. Through an experimental and dream-like aesthetic, time, memory, and reality are intentionally distorted throughout the film to reflect how trauma is processed amidst the necessity to cultivate a personal relationship with dreaming and collective memory.
ABOUT THE CREW

Sophia Nahli Allison (Director, Cinematographer, Editor, Producer) was born and raised in Los Angeles. She received a bachelor’s in photojournalism from Columbia College Chicago and a master’s in visual communication from The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Sophia was a 2018 Sundance Institute New Frontier Lab Programs Fellow and a recipient of a 2018 Glassbreaker Films Catalyst Grant. She has been an Artist-In-Residence at The Center for Photography at Woodstock and a 3Arts Residency Fellow at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France. She was named the 2017 Student Video Photographer of the Year by the White House News Photographer Association and was a participant of the Eddie Adams Workshop, the New York Times Student Journalism Institute, and the 2nd Annual New York Times Lens Blog Portfolio Review. As an educator she's taught photo and video to youth in Chicago and Los Angeles and is a grateful recipient of a 2014 Chicago 3Arts Award, a $25,000 grant for her work as a teaching artist. Her work has been exhibited with Pop Up Magazine, Los Angeles Filmforum at MOCA, and Art + Practice in Los Angeles. She disrupts conventional documentary methods by reimagining the function of archives and excavating hidden truths. Combining elements of magical realism into her work, she conjures ancestral memories to activate and explore the intersection of fiction and non-fiction storytelling.

Janice Duncan (Creative Producer) is a queer afrofuturist time traveler, filmmaker, writer, creative producer and artist from Detroit, MI. She earned her M.F.A. in Film + Tv Production from the University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts and B.A. in Film + Media Studies from Johns Hopkins University. She has worked on films, music videos, and commercials from an array of backgrounds and budgets. She was a 2018 Sundance New Frontier Lab Programs Fellow, has received support from Glassbreaker Films, and another film she creative produced was a 2018 finalist for a Student Academy Award. She has a deep passion for dance, music videos, and short experimental films. She enjoys world building and creating avant garde ways to articulate experiences that inspire people towards greater self value, black feminism, and unconditional empathy for one another and our planet.

Fam Udeorji (Producer, Music Supervisor) was born and raised in Los Angeles. He’s the founder of the management company Wolf + Rothstein, with Donald Glover being their primary client. He is also a staff writer and music supervisor on FX's Atlanta, having previously written on the short film “Clapping for the Wrong Reasons”. Udeorji has a Grammy as a producer of Donald Glover’s “This is America” music video and a Golden Globe for FX's Atlanta. Fam began his career working closely under United Management whose clients included Phoenix and Bloc Party. He then was the creative director and executive producer on Glover’s sophomore album “Because The Internet”. As featured in GQ, he is currently facilitating all projects for the Royalty Collective who are the creative voices behind FX’s Atlanta. He is recently credited as a producer, music supervisor, and story writer for “Guava Island”. Cultivating an authentic voice where art can meet commerce is his mission, putting out purposeful content that can shift antiquated narratives.
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Aubrey Aden-Buie (executive producer) is an Emmy-nominated journalist, filmmaker and visual storyteller based in LA. Through her work with Glassbreaker Films, and The Center for Investigative Reporting, she has been instrumental in helping to find and support the next generation of womxn leaders in nonfiction film with generous funding from The Pussycat Foundation. In the last two years with GBF, she has overseen the production of over 30 short films. Her team has been nominated for a national News and Documentary Emmy Award, has won an Edward R. Murrow Award and a Gracie Award, and has received a Vimeo Staff Pick, three Atlantic Selects, and publication on the NYT Op-Docs, and in film festivals all over the world. In 2016, she was named one of Cynopsis Media's Top Women in Digital for her intimate coverage of what life is like for refugees coming to the United States.

Elisa Gambino (executive producer) brings to bear an extraordinary journalistic foundation to her film productions. From the fall of the Berlin Wall to the Gulf War in 1990, from the collapse of the Soviet Union to the wars in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, Elisa was there. Her work in Somalia was recognized with a News and Documentary Emmy Award. Based first in Rome and then in Moscow, Elisa spent 15 years chronicling world events for CNN International. She interviewed Nelson Mandela, Yasser Arafat, refugees in Bosnia, war criminals in Serbia and South Africans in Johannesburg celebrating their first free vote. Elisa has spent her career committed to telling the stories that matter — stories that bridge divides and bring people together.

Adebukola Bodunrin (animation) is a film, video, and installation artist who explores language, culture, and media. In her collage animations, she manipulates film using unorthodox manual and digital techniques in order to produce unexpected cinematic experiences. Bodunrin completed her Master of Fine Arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work has been screened or exhibited nationally and internationally at venues that include the Jersey City Museum of Art, the Scope Art Fair, Onion City Film Festival, the Chicago Underground Film Festival, Nightingale, Chicago, Festival Animator, Poznań, Poland, Ok, Quoi? festival, Sackville, New Brunswick, Anthology Film Archives, New York, and the Black Cinema House, Chicago. She has participated in studio residences at the Chicago Artists Coalition as a participant of the BOLT residency, and at the Chicago Cultural Center. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

Kya Lou (color correction) Lou’s practice is steeped in the roles of photography, colour grading, sculpture, video, audio, and performance. As a queer artist of color, her work questions relationships between social, political and cultural histories. Her study is concerned with the existence of folk as branches without roots, and that makes things come round in queer ways. Kya Lou was born and raised in San Diego, CA and now continues her practice in Los Angeles.

Minna Choi (composer) is a music arranger, conductor, and pianist living in San Francisco, California. Choi founded the Magik*Magik Orchestra in 2008 and remains its music director and lead arranger. Since starting Magik, she has worked closely with over 80 artists writing musical arrangements and conducting performances. Minna’s natural musicality and warm professionalism have guided her writing collaborations with highly respected acts such as Death Cab for Cutie, Weezer, John Vanderslice, The Dodos, Explosions in the Sky, The Lonely Forest, Zach Rogue, Thao, How to Dress Well, Mike Patton, Santana, Third Eye Blind, Thao, Zoe Keating, Son Lux, Hauschka, Faux Fix and Christina Vantzou.
**Jen Malone (music supervisor)** is an Emmy Nominated Music Supervisor based in West Hollywood. Credits include: Creed II (MGM), Atlanta (FX), Baskets (FX), Step Up: High Water (YouTubeRed), The Resident (FOX), Boomerang (BET), Euphoria (HBO), Are You The One? (MTV), Lady Dynamite (Netflix), Vice Guide To Everything and many more. Jen Malone started her career in the music industry as a publicist at Formula PR, working for Nine Inch Nails, Portishead, Chemical Brothers, Crystal Method, Marilyn Manson, Prodigy and many more. While living in Boston she formed the boutique publicity agency, Black & White and represented several artists and labels including The Hellacopters, The Hives, Backyard Babies, The Wildhearts, Gearhead Records and Hydra Head Records to name a few.

**Riley Mackin (sound mixing)** is a Grammy award winning audio engineer who has worked extensively with Childish Gambino among other artists.

### Featured Songs

**Kadhja Bonet (“Stand By Me” cover)** With her beguiling, airy voice and robust blend of cosmic jazz, R&B, folk, and classical, singer/songwriter Kadhja Bonet quietly made waves in the Los Angeles underground prior to releasing the mini-album The Visitor (2016) and full-length Childqueen (2018). A multi-instrumentalist with a background in classical violin dating back to childhood, Bonet seriously pursued music as an adult following an unfulfilling period in film school. She began collaborating with L.A. producer Itai Shapira, resulting in her soulful debut single "Tears for Lamont" in 2014. Later that year Bonet participated in the Red Bull Music Academy program in Tokyo, working with German producer RJ and Australian producer Max Maxwell on the electronic-laced single "Late Night Munchies." Throughout early 2015, she continued to release singles via her Bandcamp page, each one expanding her range and developing her elegant, occasionally cinematic sound. In September of that year, Bonet delivered her first collection of music, The Visitor, a mini-album released through Fresh Selects and Fat Possum. Less than two years later, she followed it up with the full-length Childqueen, an even more transportive and mystical set of songs for which she provided most of the instrumentation. - via apple music

**Noname (“Don’t Forget About Me”)** The poetic, down-to-earth style of Noname exhibits inspirations including Lauryn Hill and Andre 3000, but the rapper has paved a lane for herself with the observant and unflappable verses that shade the full-lengths Telefone (2016) and Room 25 (2018). Born Fatimah Warner in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, Noname frequented open-mike nights and slam poetry competitions when she wasn't volunteering with the local YOUMedia arts program. Her audience began to widen in 2013, the year she appeared on Mick Jenkins' Trees & Truths and Chance the Rapper's Acid Rap. After she guested on Jenkins' The Waters, Donnie Trumpet & the Social Experiment's Surf, Chance the Rapper's Coloring Book, and Jamila Woods' HEAVN, among other releases, she made her proper debut in July 2016 with the self-issued Telefone. Three years in the making, its reflective coming-of-age tales featured productions from a strictly Chicagoan cast of Cam O'bi, Phoelix, Saba, and Monte Booker. The mixtape landed in year-end lists from numerous publications, and Coloring Book shortly thereafter won a Grammy Award for Best Rap Album, consequently increasing anticipation for Noname's follow-up project. Recorded during a month long period following touring and a move to Los Angeles, the comparatively expansive Room 25-- with Phoelix the lone production collaborator -- arrived in September 2018. - via apple music
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CREDITS

Cast
Tybie O’Bard, Shinese Harlins
Zoe Flint, Nnenna Brown, Juanita Jennings
Marley Cortez, Londyn Sharp, Raigan Alex, Irie Hudson

Sophia Nahli Allison
Director. Cinematographer. Editor. Producer

Janice Duncan
Creative Producer

Fam Udeorji
Producer

Aubrey Aden-Buie + Elisa Gambino
Executive Producers

Minna Choi
Composer

Fam Udeorji + Jen Malone
Music Supervisors

Adebukola Bodunrin
Animation

Kya Lou
Color Correction

Riley Mackin
Sound Mixing

Featured Songs
“Stand By Me”
Written by Ben E. King, Jerry Leiber, and Mike Stoller
Performed by Kadhja Bonet
Courtesy of Kadhja Bonet
A Love Song For Latasha

“Don’t Forget about Me”
Written by Noname
Performed by Noname
Courtesy of Noname Inc.

Thank you
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Glassbreaker Films
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The Sundance Institute New Frontier Lab Programs
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Tanya and Tati Smith-Johnson
Wilma Dickens and Ronyae Brandon
Richie Cortez and Lil’Rich
Kya Lou and Adebukola Bodunrin
Lena Hightower, Kyndall Dowell, Mikayla Roberts, Jazzena Monaie
Yvette, Antwon, Hannah and Faith Martin
Greater Bethel Cathedral
J’S’ Shawn Lyons, Jacqueline Malava, Joe Gardina
Kadhja Bonet and Noname
Anita Badejo and Pop Up Magazine
Tranee Peevy, Rachel Summers, Oriana Koren,
Dorothy Pirtle, Bethany Mollenkof, Ligaiya Romero
Aunt Lolo, Aunt Ruth, Sybil Desta Allison
David Bryant, Jahmal Holland, Edward Jaros
Andrea Yarbrough, Marisa Ramirez and College Track Watts/Animo College Prep
Damion Nunley and Leuzinger High School students
Adama Booker and Bret Harte Middle School
Algin Sutton Recreation Center
South Central Los Angeles and all the community members we met.