A Zebra in the Infield

Nelson R. Robinson IV
nxr9901@rit.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation
Accessed from
By Nelson R. Robinson IV

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Live Action Film

School of Film and Animation
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

September 2016

Approved for submission by:

______________________________________________________ Peter Kiwitt,
Committee Chair

______________________________________________________ Mark Foggetti,
Committee Member

______________________________________________________ Frank Deese,
Committee Member
# Table of Contents

Title Page .................................................................................................................. 1
Table Content ............................................................................................................. 2
Abstract..................................................................................................................... 3
Origin......................................................................................................................... 4

## Preproduction
Vision....................................................................................................................... 8
Assembling a crew
Script....................................................................................................................... 9
Casting....................................................................................................................... 10
Location..................................................................................................................... 11

## Production
Directing the Actor .................................................................................................. 13
Shooting...................................................................................................................... 13
Cinematography....................................................................................................... 16
Technology............................................................................................................... 17

## Post Production
The Edit ..................................................................................................................... 18
Visual Effects............................................................................................................ 19
Sound Design........................................................................................................... 20
Color .......................................................................................................................... 21
Music.......................................................................................................................... 22
Screenings................................................................................................................. 23
Appendix Stills......................................................................................................... 24
Appendix Original Proposal ....................................................................................... 32
Budget....................................................................................................................... 36
Timeline.................................................................................................................... 37
Script.......................................................................................................................... 38
Indiegogo Campaign................................................................................................. 53
Abstract

“A Zebra in the Infield” is a dark comedy about a young African American man named Rotavious from the inner-city. Rotavious is a recent college graduate and he is venturing into the suburbs to purchase a car. After catching a bus to the predominantly Caucasian side of town, he is profiled and harassed by police officer Colescott. Officer Colescott searches Rotavious and finds the money that Rotavious has allocated for his new car, he seizes it as drug money. During a struggle for the money Officer Colescott is shot and Rotavious flees in fear. In his haste to flee he forces, Hannah, a middle aged Caucasian women and her dog to hide him. With the help of America, Hannah’s dog, Rotavious is able to convince Hannah to harbor him. Together they hey devise a plan for his escape.

The story is a satire of the current race relations and police brutality plaguing America. Racism has been an underlining issue in America since it’s conception. After the recent barrage of African American male deaths by police across the nation, it is apparent that the mistreatment of African American citizens is rampant in our country. The mistreatment of African American males in this country is nothing new. What is new is the technology available to catch the atrocities happening in real time. Normally able to deny and cover up these allegations, cell phone camera technology displays the harassment and supposed accidental deaths of African Americans. Even with this evidence there are those who still find fault with victims, as if death is a fair penalty for petty crimes and darken hued skin. As a nation, overall, America’s treatment of minorities is deplorable. The lack of understanding and inclusion of the African American community by the nation in 2016 has created a divide within America.

In this paper you will find information about the conception of a film that attempts to explore the effects of discrimination and hatred with laughter and humor. You may ask why humor? I believe by using humor and laughter we can create an environment for open conversation and exploration of cultures unknown to us. Laughter is universal and knows no color lines.
Origin

Every soldier on deployment has an inspiration, a muse, something to motivate them through their tour of duty: a pretty lady, a farm back home, family. I was no different, my muse was RIT. I had first heard of the Rochester Institute of Technology while attending the Art Institute of Atlanta, in 2005 a professor there thought my talent would be better honed at RIT. But following dreams takes moneys so I created a plan, I enlisted in the Army and began a career as a combat cameraman (figure 2).

In my off time I would read cinematography and screenwriting books and then apply them to media products that we created in my Psychological Operation Group (figure 1). I was a valued member of my unit and trained incoming soldiers by creating a Standard Operation Procedure for workflow and videography protocol and training. It goes without saying that the friendships I shared within my company and the Army community was un-paralleled by any other establishment. By no means was my battalion free from discrimination, but we would often joke saying, “The only skin color in the Army was green.” The Army was my first real exposure to other cultures and lifestyles and I am forever grateful for that experience.

When my Expiration of Time Service, ETS, was approaching I was somewhat hesitant to leave the Army culture but I still had my dream of RIT. I had been accepted and I was excited about the opportunity to attend graduate school at the School of Film and Animation. It is what I had longed for on those dark nights in Afghanistan. The American dream was as real as ever to me and I was going to make it mine.
But my experience at RIT was not to be the same as my experience in the Army. Since I began at RIT I was made fully aware of how different I was from my peers. It was painfully obvious to me how much I stood out. Here I am an African American male, from a single parent home, in an impoverished community, who had been afforded a different path. Most of the people I grew up with were now either in jail or dead. Honestly, I’m an anomaly and I confuse myself. I knew I was built strong and RIT would be just another obstacle for me to overcome on my road to learning who I am. There were so many obstacles to overcome just to attend RIT and I’m proud of that, it helped build my character. The stereotypes that I would fall into had long been instilled in the students and faculty of RIT long before my arrival, but I felt the weight of it. People distanced themselves from me and would whisper about me as I passed by. I was verbally accosted during class by a significantly younger peer while my teacher watched and said nothing. I was totally disrespected and this peer felt she had some god given right to speak to me in that manner. The professor’s lack of discipline and intervention into the altercation only confirmed to my peer, that disrespect towards me would be tolerated. Later that semester I again had to witness my peers’ displeasure with me attending the class. They talked aloud about me as I stood in the school's courtyard.
made the professor aware and the intolerance subsided but that was not the last incident.

Incident after incident occurred until anxieties begin to overtake me and I dreaded attending RIT. I was completely out of place hence the title of my movie “Zebra in the Infield.” I began to confide in certain professors my thoughts and feelings about what was happening to me and asked for advice. I was given a multitude of wisdom including, “you try too hard, you don’t try hard enough, you look desperate, and get on more sets.” Getting set time was a problem in itself. Since I had limited peer support, I was not invited to work on very many sets. This meant less experience developing my craft and less assistance on my personal projects. I resigned myself to working on screenwriting and creating worlds, characters, and environments that would inspire myself and others.

**Choosing a Thesis Film**

I began to look at my situation from a Psychological Operation standpoint. I looked not for the symptoms but the core of the racially biased thinking. The problem was not that I was black, it was that I was different. Something that the students and faculty had not been exposed to and instead of being informed properly they allowed stereotypes to
guide their judgments. Stereotyping is natural, people enjoy labels because they help to put a face on the unknown. We fear the unknown and lash out or exclude those who are not like ourselves, as a protection mechanism, to alleviate fear. It can be a truly uncomfortable experience for both parties in a setting where predetermined stereotypes exist and are abided. Communicating and advocating for change is nearly impossible in an environment where exclusion, rumors, and underlying racism is allowed to incubate.

I felt strongly that this film was an opportunity to use my military training, life experience and RIT education to cultivate an atmosphere for open discussion and understanding. My theme would be racism and stereotypes in America, an extremely difficult subject. It would be a narrative and the goal was to have the storyline resonate with every culture within America.

On July 17th 2014 from my couch I watched as a man was choked to death on national television. Eric Garner was killed by plainclothes officers for selling untaxed cigarettes, circumventing state tax law. (Figure 3) Since the beginning of time African Americans have always been weary of the police. It’s well known in our communities that they kill black men for little to no cause. Now through the miracle of technology, not only did it confirm our claim but the world was able to witness for themselves the brutality. From the cell phone video, you could clearly see an illegal choke hold as three men swarmed the man. The choke hold immediately cuts off oxygen to his brain and three officers combined weight compressed his chest, killing him four minutes later. His last words “I can’t breathe!” echoed in my mind. That’s how I felt, the rumors, the disdainful comments from students, the neglect from faculty and staff. It was overwhelming and I literally felt I could not breathe.

The video played on a constant loop and with each repetition a layer of truth was revealed. I watched as Eric laid motionless, his cries and pleads unheeded. Discarded along the sidewalk, with no attempt of resuscitation for five minutes. He begged not to be killed. To add insult to injury a majority of Caucasian Americans sought to excuse the execution because of the illegal circumventing of state tax. The illegal selling of one cigarette was worth taking the life of a three-month old daughter’s father? The broadcast felt surreal, and I was naive to think America would stand with the African American community. How could the country I love so dearly, the one I served, turn its back against its own people?

The next morning, I sat in my Thesis Preparation class and announced that my film would deal with police brutality and stereotypes. I could immediately hear the whispers behind me. “He’s playing the race card and this isn’t politically correct.” I knew no matter what I said or did I would be attacked. Needless to say I said very little, but what would have made me shun a week ago gave me strength now.
Pre-Production

Vision

Racism, police brutality, and stereotypes are all difficult subjects to discuss. I felt if I created a dramatic narrative the message would be lost by the sheer violence and intensity of the film. I wanted to steer clear of a narrative that fostered and perpetuated hatred by either party. I wanted a film that not only clearly stated the African American stance but also invited all Americans to take part in an honest conversation. I felt the only way to combat ignorance and hatred was with comedy and laughter. It is a universal emotion that we all share and relate to. Comedy has a sense of commonality. It has the ability to bring individuals from every culture together to laugh. We laugh because we have experience with the situation being made light of in a sketch or set presented by the comedian. After you leave a comedy show the laughter seldom stops. Jokes are retold and passed down from person to person via word of mouth and social media. The conversation continues long after the set ends, becoming an oral tradition. That is what I wanted. I wanted to put everyone at ease. However, creating a comedy about stereotypes, police, and racism added another layer of difficulty.

Assembling the Crew

Since I’ve been at RIT the availability of support from other students has been limited. I wasn’t surprised when a majority of the crew I solicited last year completely dropped. To complete pre-production, I donned many hats and producer was one of them. I sent an email through Mary Barnard to the SOFA community as well as through the RIT Veterans club. I was able to enlist the help of several undergraduate students by these means who helped me when available. Right before production I was able to secure a
producer to help me run down leads and make calls to contacts with various location owners. Gregory Dole responded to the RIT Veterans club email and supported me through the casting calls. My Thesis advisor, Peter Kiwitt, helped to pair me with a Director of Photography that he was also advising, James Buxton. Peter Kiwitt also introduced me to Joshua Blackey who later became my editor. I realized due to the limited availability of crew members that the script duration and more technical shots would have to be altered to meet deadlines.

Script

I concentrated my efforts on creating a funny script that was well balanced, but also ballsy. I would use Adult Swim’s offbeat comedy style of analogies and satire. Satire is related to a topical subject and is one of the most misunderstood and difficult types of humor. It needs to be witty. Satire is not just the art of mocking something or someone; it is using irony, and sarcasm to accentuate the vices and flaws of your subject matter, while still making relevant social commentary around it. I wanted to shock people with over the top stereotypes concerning African Americans and the police making it a dark comedy. A dark comedy has elements of satire but deals with a serious subject matter. This style is also known for its shock value since it mocks such a serious matter.

I wanted the main character, Rotavious, to be an exceptional young man by any cultural standards. An intelligent college graduate, whose only vice appeared to be being black. I also wanted the character’s physical stature to be small, making him less threatening. The character needed to be honest and above all not a criminal of any sort. Any slight infraction and he would not be viewed as the hero. Even in self-defense, any violent or negative behavior would confirm his guilt. As such, many of the character’s actions and decision hinge on a quirky fate and the interpretation of the that action by others.

I introduce Rotavious’s family not only to gain a sense of normalcy within the character's life but also to accentuate the contrast between communities in the film. I also introduce the audience to a new world, if you are not African American, while satirizing some stereotypes about African American cuisine. The oddity of baked chicken instead of fried, was used as a tool in the film when his father secretly asks Rotavious to bring him a whole fried chicken. Officer Colescott later mistakenly considers the request to be slang for 2.5 pounds of cocaine.

Officer Colescott embodies a stereotypical police officer (figure 4) an officer who has a predetermined attitude to any culture unlike his own. He is unable to empathize with the emotional distress of minorities. He does not see a father; he sees a thug or a menace lurking in the community. Although he meets the physical criteria for the job he is his morally incompetent as an officer which propels the story forward.
One of the issues I wanted to address in the narrative was, after encountering such a scarring emotional trauma, how can Rotavious trust again? Who can he trust? Rotavious meets Hannah and her dog America who unknowingly aid in his escape from Colescott. Hannah is the unconscious bias that resides in us all. It is a blind spot that requires a shift in our perception, and in the way we think of others. It is a belief or attitude already in place in our heads, from family cultural beliefs to the experience, we have accumulated through life. Hannah and Rotavious are at odds throughout the film but thanks to America, her point of view shifts to aid Rotavious. America is Hannah’s dog which I use as satire to compare the dog to the United States of America. This adds hilarious jokes and gives Hannah the catalyst to overcome her unconscious bias. After the treatment was completed for the film, the script was a living document. There were rewrites throughout the filming and, in many cases, the day of filming.

Casting

Casting was September 16, 2015 and I relayed the information through sources at RIT, the VA, the Society of Leadership and Success, and various social media outlets. I was excited because I received several e-mails from interested parties, but only one of them attended. Abby Porter owned her character, however her past theatre experience, would need re-direction to taper the extremity of it. Through social media I met Karen Galvin of Vision Enterprises. Her company trains theatre-based actors. Karen and I worked together to vet Abby for the part. She continued to offer her support and gave me several avenues to find performers, including some of her personal contacts, to fill the rest of my cast.
I had a limited budget, but I still needed experienced, well rounded actors with a grasp on comedic timing. There was not an abundance of this in Rochester. As always I could count on the relationships I had developed while in the Army. Eight years ago while in Advance Individual Training, AIT, I met Ryan Goldsmith. We became close friends and followed one another’s progress throughout the military and after. Rotavious reminded me so much of Ryan and I knew he had an acting background. Once I learned that Ryan was now a touring Comedian, I was sold. Ryan would graciously make the eight-hour drive from Baltimore, Maryland to act on the weekends for my film. It was all coming together and it just felt right. (Figure 5)

I was left with one major roll left to cast and that was Officer Colescott. I had completely exhausted all of my resources and information locating the rest of the crew. Gregory Dole stepped in and pulled from his pool of past actors and produced Spike Love. He was perfect. His body type and attitude fit the description of Officer Colescott. Spike had tattoos, which I hadn’t written in the script, but did feel more rebellious.

Figure 5. Behind the scene of Zebra in the Infield / Ryan Goldsmith, Nelson Robinson, Jen Moore.

Location

Although the script was always evolving there were many locations that were set in stone and would not change. During the summer I went and scouted places that would fit the script’s locations. One scene that was relatively small but was important to the
film was the scene in which Rotavious is on the bus to buy his car. The bus was a transitioning scene and was placed in the film to show the difference between the predominately African American side of town to that of the Caucasian side of town. Although it’s a brief scene it was important to lock down that location. I headed down to the Rochester, NY transit station to find a contact there. After several days I received a phone call from the supervisor of the Transit office and was told that my request would not be authorized. Undaunted, I contacted RIT’s transit authority and was given permission to film on their bus. The day of filming my producer and I met the bus driver, we gave him the route and shot the scene.

Figure 6. Behind the scene of *Zebra in the Infield* / Crew filming on location.

Another location that was difficult to attain was a wealthy looking house mostly because I do not know anyone wealthy. I turned to my various outlets to ensure that the location was secured but there was no luck. I literally exhausted every contact and resource I had. That’s when I picked up my second producer, Mercede McNeill. Mercede works for the Villa of Hope and suggested housing on their campus that could be used as an extravagant home. After checking with the appropriate parties I was granted permission to film at the location. There were some minor problems with the location such as exits signs posted throughout the house and above the doors. My location also called for a garage in front of the home but this location did not have one. These small details would not jive with a genuine home. I would need to find a second
wealthy home for the exterior shots of the house. Mercede, my producer, reached out to a childhood friend who would allow me to film the exterior and the front entry way of their home. (figure 6)

Another scene called for Rotavious to exit the bus and walk across the street to an adjacent alley where he is stopped by Officer Colescott. I scouted some locations over the summer and found one that fit my description. After speaking with the owner of the restaurant, Gregory and I scoured the surrounding area I found an alley adjacent to the building. Later that week I stopped by the location to have lunch and then requested permission to film in their alley. I was given permission by the establishment but learned that the alley was shared by three business. After getting the required authorization from the companies we were permitted to film in the alley. The rest of the locations were simple to obtain.

Production

Directing the Actor

I began acting rehearsals September 25th with Abby Porter alone. Spike was unavailable that night and Ryan was driving from Baltimore. Although a majority of the actors couldn't attend it was for the best as I noticed Abby was struggling with her part. We begin to talk about the differences between theater and film. Her movement and annunciation of words were over exaggerated because theater actors are performing from a stage. We spoke of Constantin Stanislavski's concept of emotional memory for which an actor focuses internally to portray a character's emotions.
During filming Abby was having a hard time staying in character. When she was uncomfortable or nervous she would revert back to her theater training which was overly exaggerated. By the second day of filming she arrived late and her overall excitement for the project dwindled. She explained that she enjoyed theatre because she liked being someone other than herself internally and externally. This is the complete opposite of Stanislavski’s internal performance which was needed to guide the actor to the intended performance. Due to her disheartenment and inability to adapt to the acting method we replaced Abby on the second day. I reached out to Susan Asher and was able to secure Jen Moore, a more experienced actress. Jen came in and did an extremely great job as Hannah from the start. I knew that casting was important prior to my casting call but having to switch an actress in the middle of production really emphasized the point. I do feel that the film is better overall because of that decision.

As I mentioned earlier, a local actor we had secured, Spike Love played the part of Officer Colescott. He had starred in several RIT films but his skills were novice. However, I had more access to him. We rehearsed together several times until he felt comfortable. Spike would have an image in his mind of the character and then mimic that in his performance. We also conversed about Stanislavski’s internal performance method with Spike. Spike really picked up on the method quickly and began to make the character his own. By the time we were ready to begin production on the film, I was confident Spike could hold his own. He performed confidently and made himself as accessible to me as possible.
I had less time with the lead role, Ryan Goldsmith, than with everyone else. We would have one rehearsal, the day before shooting. Ryan studied theater as well as being a circuit comedian and a veteran. We both trained at Fort Meade, Maryland at the Department of Defense Information School as Combat Documentation Specialists and understood storytelling. After our first rehearsal together, with all the characters on set, I was amazed at the genuine shared rapport between Ryan and the other actors. He was always telling jokes and sharing his comedic opinion with the other actors. Ryan takes direction extremely well but without the proper coaching he also exaggerated the character. He understood Stanislavski’s internal performance method and did an amazing job in his performance. (Figure 7)

Figure 8. Behind the scene of A Zebra in the Infield / The crew waits for rain to subside during scheduled filming

Shooting

I had one the hardest working, tech-savvy group of individuals at RIT, however the hustle and bustle of the school year took its toll on us. The starting number of crew members was about eight but throughout the shoot we dwindled down to three. Murphy’s Law was in full effect from the start of production. My casting error of Abbey had already cost us two days of shooting. We would have to reshoot those scenes with Jen Moore. Basically, we were starting from scratch and that affected the crew as well as my morale and motivation.
As we lost crew members everyone chipped in to ensure that things would run smoothly. My Director of Photography, James Buxton, had mandatory meetings he had to attend therefore I would take over cinematography. If Adam, our Audio Mixer, was promised to another set that day, Greg would audio mix. On several occasions when our man power was low, I would call in another veteran cameraman to help. Though there was some support, this shortage of crew affected the daily timeline and at times actors had to wait for us to finish setting up before shooting could begin. Things went as smoothly as possible with the number of crew we had. Everyone chipped in vigorously to make things work.

The weather was one of the biggest sources of contention during the making of the film. We had an extremely mild winter in 2015 but when it snowed it always seemed to be during our scheduled filming. This would create a problem with continuity later in the editing room. We also had problems with rain, it would halt production for hours at a time. In the end we got the job done with the resources and personnel that we had available. (figure 8)

Figure 9. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield / High hat,POV shot

Cinematography

James was preoccupied filming another student’s film earlier in the semester so I created the camera package, storyboards, color scheme, and general blocking alone. I wanted the film to have some stylized shots to bring more personality to the character. (figure 9) Most of these were shown in the storyboards that I created which was full of detailed information about what and why I wanted the shot. There were certain scenes I wanted dramatic lighting for, but for the most part we used the existing sunlight and...
bounce boards. The initial thought was as the film became more dramatic so did the lighting.

In the garage scene and the night scenes the lighting, color palette, and tone changed drastically. In the garage scene I wanted Rotavius to appear more menacing than he really is. We blacked out the garage and gelled that entire scene with a green filter which gave it a gloomy look. Another dramatically lit scene was in the kitchen where Rotavius and Hannah have their first conversation. We took a 650-watt light, scrimed it, added a blue filter and sent it through the kitchen window. We used bounce boards to direct the residual light from the 650-watt light back onto the actors. This illuminated the darker sides of the actor's face ever so slightly. I'm very proud of that scene.

**Technology**

I chose to shoot using the FS700, it was easily accessible and I had worked with the camera before. One of the drawbacks of the camera was its native codec AVCHD it was recorded in 8bit. To improve the codec to Pro-res and a 10 bit jump I also recorded on the Odyssey 7Q+. (figure 10.) The added bit depth would allow more millions of color which is helpful during grading. I wanted to shoot certain shots in the scene at 120fps and the 700 was capable of doing this.

I purchased a set of Rokinon Cinema lenses which we used on the FS700. The lens was an EF-mount so I purchased a metabones adaptor to fit the E-mount of the FS700. This gave me an extra stop of exposure. Some difficulties we found were with the sharp drop off of focus during follow focusing. We combated this by opening the aperture.
Figure 10. Behind the scene of *A Zebra in the Infield / Odyssey 7q+ external recorder.*

**Post Production**

**Editing**

Normally when I’m filming on staggered weekend shoots I like to have a rough cut created during the production’s down time. This habit helps me gauge if there are any missing shots which I would need to add to my schedule. My editor, Joshua Blackey, was also working on another student project and was unable to devote the necessary time to my film. There was a mandatory rough edit screening for undergraduate SOFA students but the loss of my editor slowed post production to a crawl. I began creating a rough draft in order to evaluate the footage I had and would need. I chose Premiere as a nonlinear editing system because of my experience with it, I could work faster using
this tool. I had planned out a majority of the film within two weeks in order to ensure I had the right pick-up shots. Joshua and I had discussed Joshua creating the primary edit in Avid so my edit was just a blue-print.

The following semester I was uneasy because of the amount of work I knew needed to be completed. Excluding my rough edit there was no edit and I would have to mix the film later in the semester. It was tight but if we stayed to a strict timeline we could do it. Three weeks into the semester I had bought a terabyte drive but there was still no Avid edit. Neither one of us was up to speed with the program and we decided that going back to my original edit would save us time. We also began to work in tandem editing different scenes in our off time to catch up, then meeting and combining them during our designated weekly editing time. Working in this fashion we were able to complete editing two weeks before screening. It was great we finished but this left me with little time to mix.

**Sound Design**

I’ve never had a sound designer since attending RIT. I have always mixed all of my projects on my own. I was trained on Adobe Sound Booth in the Army and continued editing audio in Audition for my short films at RIT. I decided to take advance sound my final semester to help with sound mixing for my thesis project and for personal interest. I would use the sound software standard Pro Tools which I owned at home. (figure 11) This allowed me to work around the clock on the audio. I basically learned everything I needed to know to mix the audio from Advanced Sound but I also learned more foleying techniques. Prior to the picture lock I began working on foleying. There are so many elements of sound in the various scenes that needed to be addressed. I broke them down like I learned in Advance Sound, organic, metallic, explosion, combustion, and so on. I made a library of existing sounds that I collected from various places including RIT’s sound library. This accounted for about 75 percent of the required sound library, the rest I would have to create.
Adam Heliborn, my sound mixer, did an outstanding job with the external audio. The dialogue lines were clear and he recorded wild-lines, and sounds I would need later. Joshua also did a great job in Premiere editing and syncing the sound to the edit. I recorded ADR and the voiceovers of Jen and Ryan for several lines which Joshua added later in the film. In Pro-tools I did the layout of the sound tracks and equalized all of the voices. All that was left was SFX, music, and attenuating the levels of the mix. This took about a week to get the level to industry standard and mix in the score. I would have preferred more time, however, screenings were less than two days away and more sounds needed to be foleyed.

**Visual Effects**

There were several visual effects I felt were necessary to have in the film. There were several shots taken from the bus that were extremely shaky. I wanted to stabilize them. The motion takes the audience out of the overall story. I also spotted a T mark on the ground in another shot which I wanted to have that area cloned over. One of the more important visual effects was the flare from the Officer's weapon once it was fired. I had purchased an Airsoft 45 caliber model gun. It allows for the upper receiver to slide back during fire, like it would in reality. I felt that the combination of the action of the Airsoft pistol and the VFX would make the scene feel realistic. I handed this portion over to Levi Davis III who assisted with the visual effects.

When I was certain that the edit would not change, I exported the sections needed Levi. Levi did an excellent job with the gun flare, unfortunately due to our tight schedule, he was unable to complete the other visual effects. Also, because of the fluidity of
filmmaking, my edit had changed and the effects syncing was off. I quickly edited the clips to retime the effect with the edit. The other visual effects would have to be completed after screening because I was still mixing the film’s audio.

Color

I was in the middle of mixing the film’s audio and honestly had no idea how the color correction would get done. Normally the director of photography or the editor would perform color grading for me, however, both were busy. I shot a scene in Kaela Lucille Mangiaracina senior film, Oneness, the previous year. She happened to e-mail me to check on my thesis project progress and asked if she could help in any way. I enthusiastically asked if she would be willing to color grade my thesis and she accepted. With three days left to screening it was asking a lot for tech grade but Kaela went to work. The footage was shot in S-log so without a grade of any type the footage is void of contrast and saturation. (figure 13) The 10-bits we gained by using the Odyssey external would be loss! Thanks to Kaela, the film could be screened at tech grade level. (figure 12.)

Figure 12. Cinematic Still Zebra in the Infield (Tech Grade).

After screening I continued my work on color grading the film. I started with an S-log LUT and graded each scene to my taste. Some scenes called for different color enhancement to match the feel of the scene. (figure 14)
Figure 13. Cinematic Still Zebra in the Infield (S-Log).

Figure 14. Cinematic Still Zebra in the Infield (Final Grade).

Music
My composer was Dorian Cromwell, an experienced music producer and videography. He worked with big name clients such as Outkast and Lil John. Dorian had hundreds of songs sitting in his apartment. Being a music producer he is continuously creating beats and tracks. I sat for about two hours going through his tracks and heard several that I thought would fit into the film. I also asked Dorian if he would be willing to score some of the scenes for the film as well.

We would meet every other week. He would play a samples and I would tell him which ones I liked. As screenings approached I was unable to contact Dorian for several weeks. With screenings less than a day away I tried frantically to locate him. About 8 hours before the mandatory turn in time Dorian was at my door with the files. Dorian’s score went great with a majority of the film’s scenes but about three songs didn’t fit the scene. With five hours left I searched through Digital Juice’s music scores. I had purchased a Digital Juice membership about two years ago and financially that saved significantly when purchasing licensed music. I mixed Dorian’s and the purchased scores and bounced the file. After importing the audio back into premiere and watching the film I realized that the audio was over the industry standard. Instead of returning to Pro-Tools and bounce another file, I altered the volume in the editing software and exported it without checking the entire film. I literally had no time left and drove to RIT to upload my film.

**Screenings**

During the three day screening I was exhausted but eager to see the results of my film to the SOFA community. As my film announced I watched as half of the theatre’s patrons stood and walked out. They had come to support a peer but would not stay to see my film. I sank into my seat already feeling defeated. This was a variable that eluded me, what if no one watches? The film screened with the remaining audience and they loved it! When you are writing with a dedicated purpose of creating laughter, the experience of witnessing the audience’s reaction is amazing. Ryan’s performance was spot on and drew the audience into the story with his performance. The chemistry between Ryan and Jen was more than admirable and Spike was perfect in his role as the Officer. I was worried about the more complicated jokes being conveyed to audiences correctly but everyone was able to follow the content. Satirizing of such a material was a risk but with every stereotypical joke the audience let their guard down. By the end of the film the satirizing of stereotypes and police incompetence had conveyed to the audience that prevention of police brutality wasn’t just the responsibility of minorities. It would take not only African Americans to exact change to law enforcement training protocol, but all Americans in unison.

I had successfully combined my thesis film with my military training and produced a film I was proud of. I didn’t just complete a film to meet a requirement to ascertain my Masters in Fine Arts, I made a statement. It was an extremely difficult road but I found that my passion to help others gave me strength. I am appreciative of what I have learned from my experience at the Rochester Institute of Technology and the strength it confirms that I possess.
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MFA degree in the School of Film and Animation, Rochester Institute of Technology

Copyright 2016 Nelson R. Robinson IV

Figure 15. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.
Figure 16. Cinematic still *Zebra in the Infield*.

Figure 17. Cinematic still *Zebra in the Infield*.
Figure 18. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.

Figure 19. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.
Figure 20. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.

Figure 21. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.
Figure 22. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.

Figure 23. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.
Figure 24. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.

Figure 25. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.
Figure 26. Cinematic still *Zebra in the Infield*.

Figure 27. Cinematic still *Zebra in the Infield*. 
Figure 28. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.

Figure 29. Cinematic still Zebra in the Infield.
“A Zebra in the Infield”
Fiction Narrative
Nelson R Robinson
MFA Thesis Proposal
School of Film and Animation
Rochester Institute of Technology

Log Line
This film is a dark comedy about an inner-city African American college graduate profiled by police in a white suburban neighborhood. Fearing for his life he forces a white middle-aged woman to hide him. He wins her over and they devise a plan but the police find him first, leading to discord and chaos.

Treatment
Rotavious28, has just landed a job in Greece, NY and needs a car to travel to work from Rochester. His entire family pitches in to buy him a car so that he can take advantage of the new job opportunity. He refuses but the family won’t hear of it. He finds a cheap used car in Penfield.

He takes a bus to a used car lot in Penfield. Rotavious walks down the predominantly Caucasian neighborhood from the bus station. The citizens of Penfield
subconsciously gawk and stare at the displaced African American man strutting down the street. He sees a diner and buys some chicken. Rotavius scans the confused faces amongst the sidewalk. He can hear the resident’s faint whispers as he walks and eats his fried chicken. A man alerts a Police Officer on a horse. “There’s a suspicious man eating fried chicken!” Officer Colescott, 35, a Caucasian male wearing an extra tight uniform and shiny sunglass, races his horse over to Rotavius. “Hey, boy, stay right there,” he says sitting high on his horse. Rotavius looks up. “What’s the problem Officer?” Officer Colescott dismounts. “You fit the description.” Rotavius replies, “Of what?” The Officer drops his brow. “Please calm down!”. Rotavius begins to back away. “Step over here,” Colescott says aggressively approaching Rotavius. Colescott stares at him with a trained eye, “Hey, gangbanger you better cooperate!” Colescott slams Rotavius to the ground. “What do you have on you?” Colescott places his knee on the back of Rotavius’s neck and pat’s him down. “What are you doing? Get off of me!” Rotavius screams, kicking wildly. Colescott finds Rotavius’s wallet with the money inside. “Mmmh, now I got you,” he says standing over Rotavius counting his money. “Large amount of cash. You selling narcotics?” Rotavius pauses to think. “No, why would you think that?” Rotavius whimpers. “Look at you!” Rotavius. “Get up!” Colescott says dragging him towards an alley. “I can’t get up!” Rotavius kicks and screams for help.

Colescott shoves Rotavius into an alley. “Hey dip shit, I’m going to do you a solid. I’m going to confiscate this illegal tender and let you go on a warning,” he says nodding to himself. He taps the handle of his revolver. “Now go!” Rotavius viciously shakes his head. “No!” He snatches the money back before he thinks about it. “You just assaulted an officer,” he says retrieving his club. He swings with all his might but Rotavius catches the club. They are both shocked by Rotavius’s action. Colescott draws his revolver. Rotavius stumbles backwards. “Wait!” “For what?” Colescott says, training his weapon on Rotavius. Colescott looks him over. “I’m out here every day busting my fucking hump!” He swings his gun wildly. “I can barely pay the rent on my shitty little apartment, and you’re just bopping around with thousands of dollars in a pair of jeans. Colescott enunciates every word with his weapon until he drops it. The two look down at the weapon at their feet.

Rotavius struggles for control of the weapon until he secures it. He points the weapon at the officer who freezes but squints at Rotavius. Rotavius looks down and realizes that he’s holding the weapon backwards. He flips it around, “HA!” He races out of the alley where a crowd has gathered. They part as he approaches except one man who has his phone out recording the entire event.

Rotavius dashes down the street until he reaches the intersection where an elderly woman sits alone in her car. His body slams against the window. “Please help me. That officer is trying to kill me!” He waves the gun wildly. The elderly woman clutches her chest and falls hard on the steering wheel. The horn blares. Rotavius stares at himself in the side mirror of the vehicle. He shakes his head and tucks the weapon in his pocket. Officer Colescott races down the street. “I knew it. Car jacker!”

Rotavius races around the corner into a grocery store parking lot. Hannah (45), a middle-aged woman holding a dog, hands him a twenty. “My car is right there. I’m running late. Could you load her up?” Rotavius looks at the money in his hand and then the cart full of groceries. He looks at her, offended, and then gladly accepts the
proposal. Just as they head to the car Officer Colescott enters the parking lot. He begins systematically checking the aisles of the parking lot. Rotavirus hurriedly loads the woman’s car while she starts the engine. She turns to thank him but he is gone. Officer Colescott passes by and looks at the car suspiciously as she backs up and leaves the parking lot for home. Nupsie, the dog, barks in the backseat of the car. Hannah pulls into the driveway of an upper middle class home. Hannah grabs Nupsie, still barking, from the back of the car. She opens the trunk. Rotavirus tumbles out. She screams and scrambles for the door. “Shhh, quiet. I’m running from the cops.” He places his finger to his lips. This only increases her fear as she shuffles through keys to open the door. A police car drives past slowly. Rotavirus freaks. He pounces on Hannah and holds his hand over her mouth. The woman kicks and screams. Rotavirus releases his grip once the car passes. The woman is petrified. Rotavirus snatches the keys and opens the door pulling the woman inside with him.

Officer Colescott watches security footage of the grocery store parking lot, he spots Rotavirus getting in to Hannah car.

It is night. Rotavirus looks out the window, catching his breath while Hannah studies herself. She looks up at Rotavirus. "Are you going to rape me?" Rotavirus tosses his hands in the air."What? No! Why would you say that!" he says looking deeply wounded by the accusation. Hannah stares on confused. "Well what do you want?" Rotavirus buries his head in his hands. “I just want a car!” Hannah points out the window. “Take mine!" He’s flabbergasted. “No, I wanted my car!” he exclaims. “Where is it? I’ll drop you off on my way to the police,” she says. Rotavirus lips tighten. He reveals the weapon. "I’m not playing. Back up!" He snatches the phone out of the kitchen wall and slams it to the floor. He races into the next room and looks out of the window. Hannah watches in terror. He then snatches the phone wire from the phone and ties Hannah to the chair. “Oh my god. Help!” She screams. He kneels in front of her, “Missus, I know what this looks like and I’m sorry.” “You’re sorry?” she says in disbelief. “Okay, look, I’m a lawyer. I can help you. Just untie me and let me go. A show of good faith will go a long way during your hearing,” she bargains. “My hearing? No…,” Rotavirus paces back and forth across the room. “I was walking down the street and then for no reason at all this police officer stops me. Then he tries to rob me...” He stops. She studies him. “What?” Rotavirus shrugs. He unties her and sits on the couch. “I don’t know what to do.” Nupsie hops onto Rotavirus’s lap and lies there. Rotavirus pets the animal gently. Hannah looks on in amazement. “Nupsie never lets anyone pet him.”

Hannah suggests a plan for Rotavirus to escape. Rotavirus will hide in Hannah’s trunk, and she will drive him home. She puts out her hand for the keys. “Trust me.” He hesitates then relents. She leaves saying, “Let me open the trunk first.” He waits. Nothing. He looks out but doesn’t see her. The trunk is still closed. “Damn!” He hesitates then steps out the front door.

A police search light stops him in his tracks. “Put your hands up!” Officer Colescott steps out from the darkness. Hannah is detained by another officer. “Please, it’s all a misunderstanding.” Nupsie runs out the door charging the police, barking. Rotavirus instinctively moves to stop him. Officer Colescott empties his magazine. Hannah cries, “Nooo!”

The front door is riddled with bullet holes.

Rotavirus stands with Nupsie in his arms. “What the Fuck!”
Officer Colescott starts to reload. Hannah cries out, “That’s my client!” Officer Colescott stops, looking defeated. “Damn!”

A new day. Rotavious’s mom stands in front of their home, watching in pride as Rotavious pulls up in his brand new pimped out car.

**Rational**

This film touches on the controversial issue of race that has been a long time cause of concern for the American people. I’d like to address the stereotypes given to minorities from my perspective as an African American male living in America. As a child I can personally recollect the warnings given to by my parents about the brutality of the police. With the explosion of various technologies, the capability to record images on phones has lifted the veil on the totality of the abuse, reminiscent of the shock and awe footage from the civil rights movement. In order to curve racial motivated brutality, we must create a rapport with the members of society detached from the realities of the plight of minorities. Those persons must experience the mental and emotional state of a minority in that type of high pressure situation but from the minorities prospective. However, I think that viewing horrific material is not the only way to promote change. I’d like to do it through laughter.

**Vision**

My vision is to give the audience a vivid perspective of police brutality from an African American stand point. I’d like to use perspective shots to accomplish this. Not just incidents involving Rotavious but through Hannah’s eye as well when first encounters him. I envision the Rotavious appearing menacing at various times although the character has no ill will to others. I’d like to take advantage of various lighting styles to create harsh shadows while geling lights in some situation to create the necessary moods. I’d also use low angles to give Rotavious that menacing look during his introduction to Hannah. For the Character Rotavious I’d like to look for a comedian to utilize improvisation throughout filming. The Character Hannah I would like to be mature and regal in appearance as well as in personality. Officer Colescott should be the alpha male type.

**Support**

A part from my advising committee I will be looking towards the students of SOFA for support.

**Schedule**

See attached document.

**Budget**

See attached document.
# Project: A Zebra in the InField

**Signal Productions**

**Nelson R Robinson**

## Pre-Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Actual Cost</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story and Treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>Written myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyboard</td>
<td></td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>Drawn Myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shotlist</td>
<td></td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break Down Sheet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Done by myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set Dressing</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make up</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costumes</td>
<td></td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Actual Cost</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camera Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grip Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expendables</td>
<td>Gels, Tapes, batteries</td>
<td>$30 per day</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td></td>
<td>$30 per day</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extras</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5 and meal</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew and Cast Meal</td>
<td></td>
<td>100 per day</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Expense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Post Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Actual Cost</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Rights</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Effects</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Make myself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Advertising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Actual Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVD's</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 4,640
| WEEK | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | Winter Break | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| Timeline |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Final Draft |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Finalize Cast |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Rehersal |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Website/Facbook |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Secure Locations |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Finalize Crew |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Schedule Shoots |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Storyboard |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Principle Photography |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Sync Sound |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Rough Cut1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Pick up shots |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Roughcut 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Roughcut 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| ADR |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Rough Credit |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Picture Lock |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| VFX |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Sound Mixing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Color Correction |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Final Mixing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Credits |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
A Zebra In the Playing Field

By

Nelson R Robinson IV
INT. KITCHEN - DAY

African American hands tear collard greens and toss them into colander.

A pan slides into a preheated oven.

The collard greens are packed into a boiling pot.

The OVEN BEEPS and the pan is retrieved.

The hands slide a plate of baked chicken, greens, and Mac and Cheese slides onto the table.

MRS. RICHARDSON (41) spins around for a pitcher of Kool Aid.

A man’s hand pinch a piece of the chicken, holding it high. The loose baked skin slowly separates from the meat.

MR. RICHARDSON (45) stares at the chicken.

MR. RICHARDSON
What the hell is this!?

Rotavious (28) strolls in wearing a sweater vest, white shirt, and khakis.

ROTAVIOUS
Stop playing with your chicken, dad...

Rotavious kisses his mother’s cheek. She melts.

MRS. RICHARDSON
Oh, my college graduate...

MR. RICHARDSON
That isn’t the golden brown, crispy, crunchy, munchy, fowl I’ve come to adore.

Mrs. Richardson slams a sodium free salt container onto the table.

MRS. RICHARDSON
What’s foul is your hypertension.

Mr. Richardson mumbles as he dashes a ton of sodium free salt onto his chicken.

MRS. RICHARDSON
Want something, baby?

(CONTINUED)
ROTAVIOUS
I was recalling our parlay regarding an automobile as compensation for my commencement...

MRS. RICHARDSON
Oh, that’s right!
(grabbing her purse)
I love it when you talk so smart.

MR. RICHARDSON
You gon’ give that boy $1,500 dollars? Oh hell, we ain’t got no money!

Mrs. Richardson closes Rotavious’s hands around an envelope.

MRS. RICHARDSON
(kissing his forehead)
Congratulations, baby.

MR. RICHARDSON
We still have a rotary phone.

ROTAVIOUS
Thanks, momma.

MR. RICHARDSON
Takes me nine minutes to dial nine-one-one.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY
Rotavious counts the wad of cash as he heads down the walk. Mr. Richardson hurries out the door.

MR. RICHARDSON
Son!

ROTAVIOUS
Yeah, pops...

MR. RICHARDSON
Wanted to give you something...

Mr. Richardson tenderly places a folded note in his son’s hand. Rotavious opens it.

It reads "whole chicken."

(CONTINUED)
MR. RICHARDSON
   Eight pieces, fried!

Mr. Richardson heads back inside. Rotavious shoves the note inside the envelope.

INT. CITY BUS - DAY - MONTAGE

Rotavious holds a folded map.

The neighborhood changes from black to white.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

The bus pulls away revealing Rotavious. He glances at his map.

ACROSS THE STREET

OFFICER COLESCOTT (35), a caucasian male wearing an extra tight uniform and shiny sunglasses, admires a doughnut. He holds it up. His smile fades.

THROUGH THE DOUGHNUT

Rotavious stands in the bulls eye.

ROTAVIOUS

looks around aimlessly. A Caucasian couple passes.

   ROTAVIOUS
   Excuse me.

The couple ignores him to Rotavious’s surprise.

COLESCOTT

watches Rotavious makes his way down the street. He forces half the doughnut into his mouth.

EXT. SUBURBAN CITY STREET - DAY

Rotavious strolls down the street, past an alley.

Colescott dashes on the other side of a parked car to cut him off. He trips and FALLS FROM VIEW.

Rotavious checks his map.

Colescott combat rolls INTO VIEW.

(CONTINUED)
OFFICER COLESCOTT
Hold it! Step over there, please.

Colescott points towards the alley.

ROTAVIOUS
Excuse me?

EXT. SUBURBAN ALLEY - DAY

Rotavious’s face slams into the wall.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
What do you think you’re doing, boy?

ROTAVIOUS
I was just walking!

Colescott grabs his radio. The RADIO SQUEALS loudly. He frisks Rotavious as he talks.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
(into radio)
This is officer 22043. I’ve got an 11-94 with a possible 10-50.

RADIO (V.O.)
Copy that.

Colescott’s hand grabs between Rotavious’s legs.

Rotavious’s eyes pop!

Colescott grabs the envelope from Rotavious’s back pocket.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
Well, what do we have here?

ROTAVIOUS
That’s my money!

Colescott reads the note.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
A whole chicken!

Colescott slams Rotavious back into the wall.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
You’re buying a whole kilo, boy?

(CONTINUED)
ROTAVIOUS
What!? Wait No!

OFFICER COLESCOTT
You think I don’t know the lingo, amigo! A whole chicken, a bird? That’s a lot of coke. Could put you away for a long time.

The RADIO SQUEALS AND BEEPS.

RADIO (V.O.)
Officer 22043, backup is on the way.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
(into radio)
Go ahead and code 4 that.

RADIO (V.O.)
That’s a 10-4, no further assistance necessary.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
(into radio)
10-4.

Colescott lets Rotavious off the wall.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
I’m going to do you a solid, boy. I’m going to confiscate this illegal tender and let you go with a warning.

ROTAVIOUS
You can’t do that!

Rotavious grabs the envelope.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
Let go, boy!

They wrestle for the envelope.

Colescott draws his weapon. TIME SLOWS DOWN. He loses control. The gun falls to the ground.

The gun bounces twice then EXPLODES into Colescott’s chest!

The impact sends Colescott flying to the ground. He lies motionless, eyes open staring.
CONTINUED: (3)

ROTAVIOUS
Hoollyy Shit!

Colescott blinks and moans, feeling his bullet proof vest. He looks at Rotavious.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
You shot me!

Colescott sits up revealing his vest and stares at his gun. Rotavious glances down at the weapon.

Colescott looks at the weapon as Rotavious kicks the gun under the dumpster. Colescott strains to reach the weapon, he watches Rotavious disappear around the corner.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Rotavious stops and catches his breath.

CLAP, CLAP.

Hannah(45) startles Rotavious.

HANNAH
I’m running late.

Rotavious notices employees dressed just like him. He sees Colescott rounding a corner in the distance.

HANNAH
Come on, I don’t have all day!

She heads to her car.

Rotavious pushes the cart. Out of a bag perched at the top pops AMERICA, a small, barking dog.

HANNAH
Hey cray-cray, don’t agitate America.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Hannah pops the trunk with her key. She grabs the bag with America.

Rotavious spots Colescott systematically checking the parking lot.

He hurriedly loads the groceries in the trunk.

(CONTINUED)
Hannah closes America into the car and pulls out a dollar. The TRUNK SLAMS.

HANNAH (turning) Thank...

No one is there.

HANNAH ... you?

EXT. GROCERY STORE - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Hannah drives with America barking uncontrollably in the back seat.

They pass Officer Colescott. He watches them leave.

INT. HANNAH’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Hannah can be seen unlocking the kitchen door. America is still barking.

HANNAH (entering) What is wrong with you?

She lets America out of the bag and heads back outside.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Hannah pops the trunk. Rotavious sits up.

ROTAVIOUS Hello.

Hannah screams!

Rotavious jumps out and covers Hannah’s mouth.

ROTAVIOUS Shhh, it’s okay. I’m just running from the cops!

He looks around wildly trying to figure out what to do.
INT. HANNAH’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Rotavious whirls into the house still holding Hannah’s mouth.

ROTAVIOUS
You are not going to scream. Are we clear?

Hannah nods. He releases her.

Rotavious looks around trying to assess the situation. It’s bad.

ROTAVIOUS
to himself
I just wanted a car.

HANNAH
Take mine!

ROTAVIOUS
flabbergasted
No, I wanted my car!

The DOORBELL ECHOES through the home.

Hannah and Rotavious stare at each other.

HANNAH
I should answer it.

Rotavious scoops America up and places his hand close to America’s throat.

HANNAH
America!

Rotavious wraps his hand around the dog’s neck.

ROTAVIOUS
Don’t set trip.

He head motions towards the door.

She nods, frighten, she heads to the room.

Rotavious lingers a moment. He gives the dog and Eskimo kiss.
INT. HANNAH’S FRONT HALL - DAY

The door swings open and a bag of groceries thrusts forward.

GUS (O.S.)
You forgot your groceries.

Hannah takes the bag, revealing GUS (28). His shirt reads "Neighborhood Watch."

HANNAH
Thank you.

She glances behind the door.

Rotavius draws his hand across America’s neck like a knife.

GUS
You also left your trunk and the garage open. Stay alert, stay alive!

Hannah takes a step forward so the door blocks Rotavius’s view.

HANNAH
That is so true.
(nodding towards the door)
You never know when there could be a home invasion or a black man holding America hostage.

Rotavius, oblivious, scratches America’s belly while America licks his face.

GUS
Damn straight! American lives matter!

Gus turns to leave.

HANNAH
But --

GUS
Ever vigilant!

Rotavius shuts door.
Rotavious paces, holding America. Hannah sits on the couch.

HANNAH
Are you going to rob me?

ROTAVIOUS
What? No!

HANNAH
Oh my god! You’re going to rape me! Your rough mahogany hands pressing down on my soft white flesh...

Rotavious stares at her.

ROTAVIOUS
Lady, you’re a racist!

Hannah shoots to her feet.

HANNAH
I voted for Obama!

ROTAVIOUS
Give me a break.

HANNAH
And I represented several low income clients -- pro bono!

ROTAVIOUS
That means you can’t be racist? Oh, you think because you can’t see it it doesn’t exist?

HANNAH
I didn’t break into someone’s house!

ROTAVIOUS
You weren’t chased by a psycho cop!

HANNAH
I didn’t break any laws!

ROTAVIOUS
Yeah. Being black.

Hannah is speechless.
ROTAVIOUS
Aw, hell.
  (he sits)
I’m screwed.

America jumps onto Rotavious’s lap.

Hannah watches Rotavious absently pet America. She softens.

HANNAH
Maybe I was hasty. But America always judges people by the content of their character.

Rotavious looks down at the dog. He smiles.

HANNAH
(sitting)
Tell me what happened.

EXT. HANNAH HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT
Hannah, America in hand, opens the back door.

HANNAH
Just give me a minute to open the garage and start the car.

She starts to go.

ROTAVIOUS
Wait... Thank you.

HANNAH
No. Thank you.

She leaves.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT
Rotavious makes his way to the garage.
A flash light blinds him.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
Hands up!

Rotavious throws his hands up.

Officer Colescott steps into the light.

(CONTINUED)
ROTAVIOUS
Holy shit!

OFFICER COLESCOTT
Think you can shoot a cop, boy?

ROTAVIOUS
No! I didn’t --

OFFICER COLESCOTT
You calling me a liar?

ROTAVIOUS
No, I --

OFFICER COLESCOTT
Who’s gonna to believe a drug slinging pimp like you?

ROTAVIOUS
(walking toward him)
Pimp!? Now I’m a pimp? What is the matter with you!? Do you see a Fedora on my head !?

OFFICER COLESCOTT
(sotto voce)
Charging an Officer.
(aiming his gun)
Perfect.

America charges out of the house barking.

Rotavious instinctively moves to pick the dog up.

OFFICER
He’s going for a gun!

Officer Colescott unloads his WEAPON BANG, BANG, BANG!

Beat.

Rotvous pops up INTO VIEW, dog in hand.

ROTAVIOUS
You tried to shoot me!

Colescott reloads.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
Damn skippy!

Hannah rushes out of the house and stands between Rotavious and Colescott’s weapon.

(CONTINUED)
HANNAH
Stop! What are you doing?!

Colescott raises his weapon.

OFFICER COLESCOTT
Protecting America.

Hannah glances back to Rotavious holding America.

HANNAH
(to Colescott)
You’re going to shoot America!

COLESCOTT
(confused)
What? Lady, you’ve got Stockhomles. Stand aside.

HANNAH
My name is Hannah Barbara, attorney at law. This man is my client.

ROTAVIOUS
(stands tall)

HANNAH
He’s prepared to surrender himself into your custody.

The lights of the neighborhood home turn on.

INT. RICHARDSON’S KITCHEN – DAY

Rotavious races past his mother and opens the kitchen door.

MR. RICHARDSON
Stop! That’s your problem! Get back over here.

Mrs. Richardson leans forward but Rotavious continues past her to two framed photos on the wall. He leans and kisses a photo of Martin Luther King.

MR. RICHARDSON
Now, kiss on Obama.

Rotavious kisses the adjacent photo. He marches back to the door.

(CONTINUED)
MR. RICHARDSON
Hey pick me up --.

The DOOR SLAMS.

EXT. RICHARDSON’S HOME

Rotavious walks down the steps of the home. He stops in front of a beautiful Maserati.

He starts the engine and drives away.

The End.
Indiegogo Campaign

Short Summary

Nelson R Robinson IV is an Alumni of Rochester Institute of Technology and US Army Combat Camera Man veteran. Born and raised in Albany, Georgia he attended Monroe Comprehensive High school before receiving a scholarship to attend Valdosta State University. Upon graduating with his Bachelors of Fine Arts, Nelson studied at The Art Institute of Atlanta before entering the United States Army. Nelson had the honor of developing his skills at the Department of Defense Information School (DINFOS) in Basic Photography and Videography. He was able to implement these skills while deployed and Garrisoned with the 4th Physiological Battalion at Fort Bragg, NC. Nelson credits his experience in the Army with providing him with the passion, discipline, and integrity to create fictional narratives that not only entertain but inspires to evoke long standing change.

A Zebra in the Infield, Why?

This film touches on the controversial issue of race that has been a long time cause of concern for the American people. I’d like to address the stereotypes given to minorities from my perspective as an African American male living in America. As a child I can personally recollect the warnings given to by my parents about the brutality of the police. With the explosion of various technologies, the capability to record images on phones has lifted the veil on the totality of the abuse, reminiscent of the shock and awe footage from the civil rights movement. In order to curve racial motivated brutality, we must create a rapport with the members of society detached from the realities of the plight of minorities. However, I think that viewing horrific material is not the only way to promote change. I’d like to do it through laughter.

What We Need

Pre- Production items such as production design, props make up and costumes, etc.

Production items such as Camera, light and sound equipment, actors, and locations, etc.

Post Production sound effects, composers and music rights, etc.

Travel cost to various Festival.
The Break Down

The total cost of production was $4,050.00 we are looking for reimbursement as well as festival cost.

**What You Get: Perks**

We have a variety of perks! We have stickers, posters, T-shirts, and a listing in the movies credits! Branded with the Zebra in the Infield logo. Perk based on contribution.

What if our goals aren’t met?

If our goal isn’t met the remaining funds will be used to recoup cost and further market the film.

**The Impact**

Your contribution will help to disseminate information and creating an environment willing to spark honest conversations, invoking change.

- Open dialogue is needed to start people to talking
• I have worked on various projects exploring topics such as racism and military operations.
• My ultimate goal is to remind everyone that we are the same despite our difference and if people from different walks of life can see this film and laugh find a commonality through comedy then mission accomplished.

Risks & Challenges

Creating a dark comedy out of such intense subject matter such as racism and police brutality is a challenge in itself. Appealing to a broad audience and quenching the myriad various sense of humor is the real challenge. I will use a combination of comedic style and technique. I will also cast Actors and Actresses with comedic performance experience.

• Cast correctly
• Difficult Subject matter

Other Ways You Can Help

We appreciate everyone that is able to donate and we appreciate those who can’t. We would like to spread the word about the film and create comfortable conversation about race and police brutality. Share our Indiegogo, Facebook, and Instagram help create an environment of acceptance.