

The Blood is at the Doorstep



photo courtesy of Milwaukee Magazine

web: thebloodisatthedoorstep.tv | **twitter:** @bloodatdoorstep

instagram: @bloodatdoorstep | #DontreHamilton

facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thebloodisatthedoorstep/>

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/205828363>

Screener: <https://vimeo.com/188310685> (95 minutes)
use code: dontre

Directed by: Erik Ljung

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Press Contact:

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Short Synopsis:

After Dontre Hamilton, a black, unarmed man diagnosed with schizophrenia, was shot 14 times and killed by police in Milwaukee, his family embarks on a quest for answers, justice, and reform as the investigation unfolds.

Longer Synopsis:

On April 30, 2014, Dontre Hamilton, a black, unarmed man diagnosed with schizophrenia, was shot 14 times and killed by a Milwaukee police officer responding to a non-emergency wellness check in a popular downtown park. His death sparked months of unrest and his family into activism.

Filmed over the course of three years in the direct aftermath of Dontre's death, this intimate verite documentary follows his family as they struggle to find answers and challenge a criminal justice system stacked against them. Offering a painfully realistic glimpse inside a movement born out of tragedy, this explosive documentary takes a behind the scenes look at one of America's most pressing social issues.

Long Synopsis:

Nate Hamilton and his brother Dontre grew up like twins. Even as adults, Nate felt responsible to look after his "baby" brother. As a roofer by day, Nate juggled community college and fatherhood in the evening. According to Nate, he had led "a pretty simple life." That all changed when Dontre was shot 14 times and killed by a Milwaukee Police officer in 2014. Dontre's death complicates current narratives of police profiling and use of force because not only was he an unarmed black man, but he was also living with paranoid schizophrenia.

Filmed over the course of three years in the direct aftermath of Dontres death, this intimate verite documentary follows Nate and his family as they struggle to find answers and challenge a criminal justice system stacked against them. Offering a painfully realistic glimpse inside a movement born out of tragedy, this explosive documentary takes a behind the scenes look at one of America's most pressing social issues with stunning access to all parties involved.

In their quest for justice, the Hamilton family and a grieving community must publicly square off against a police union that vows to stand as one, and an embattled chief of police that finds himself defiantly stuck between a union that has lost confidence in his leadership.

Despite a multitude of setbacks, the Hamilton family inspires substantive reforms on a local level. But when another controversial police shooting in Milwaukee sets off a

chain of riots, the Hamilton's activate to maintain peace, as they anxiously wait to see if the reforms they fought so hard for can make a difference.

Filmmaker Statement:

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.
- James A. Baldwin

Dontre's death occurred just one mile from my home, in one of the highest traffic parks in downtown Milwaukee. The immediate response of the Milwaukee Police Department was to blame mental illness for Dontre's death. I had trouble accepting that a man not suspected of a crime, who was sleeping in a public park, needed to be frisked and removed in the first place. The fourteen shots in a high traffic park directly across the street from City Hall only added to the sense that something went terribly wrong. On a personal level, I was drawn to this story by the struggles my own family has confronted in dealing with schizophrenia. It was important to me to de-stigmatize and amplify the voices of a family struggling with the very difficult and complex dynamics that surround caring for an adult family member suffering from mental illness.

I believe that by showing the aftermath of a police shooting from one family's perspective, we can help to challenge broader social and cultural assumptions around race and mental illness. There is an opportunity to help build intersectional understanding as our nation struggles with the solutions to minimize these fatal incidents. Black Americans are two-and-a-half times more likely to be killed by police than white Americans, and it is estimated that nearly 1,200 people are killed by police each year, roughly a quarter of whom suffer from a diagnosed mental illness.

With inadequate services for the mentally ill in America, police departments are increasingly being called upon to be the first responders during times of crisis for those suffering. Despite this, mental health training for police departments is largely insufficient, if provided at all. The scrutiny continues to grow, and state governments are being forced to consider new laws and reformative measures to reduce instances of lethal force. Following Dontre's death, the Milwaukee Police Department became one of the first police departments in the United States to require, by 2017, Crisis Intervention Training for all officers. I believe that this film is uniquely positioned to influence the conversation around systemic, reformative measures for police departments across the US.

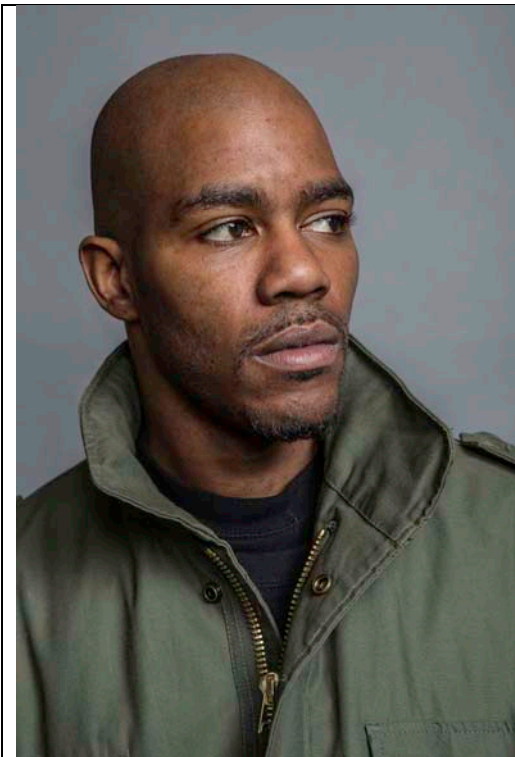
The deaths of unarmed black Americans at the hands of police has been one of the most pressing social issues in America in recent years. Each week seems to usher in a new name with a disturbing set of details. Despite the constant deluge of coverage, these complex cases rarely take a nuanced, personal look at the effects of these tragic, and often avoidable fatal encounters with police. Regardless of who is right, who is wrong, these are real families being affected. Families that are unexpectedly thrust into the

spotlight at an unimaginable moment, and left to battle a criminal justice system stacked against them. My hope is that the Hamilton family story is a rallying cry that can help inspire a nation of concerned citizens to take a direct and active approach to engaging in their own communities around issues of justice and police brutality.

Character bios:



Dontre Hamilton – The film centers around the shooting death of 31-year old Dontre Hamilton on April 30th, 2014 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Dontre was shot 14 times by an officer responding to a non-emergency wellness check of a subject sleeping in a public park. Dontre’s story complicates current narratives of police profiling and use of force because not only was he an unarmed black man, but he was also living with paranoid schizophrenia.



Nate Hamilton – Nate is a charismatic, fun-loving father of three focused on building a stronger future for himself through his roofing business while taking night classes at a local community college. He and his brother Dontre had grown up like twins, and even as adults, he felt it was necessary to look after his “baby” brother. Before Dontre was killed by police in 2014, Nate had led “a pretty comfortable life,” however his loss propelled him into a life of activism that he had never envisioned for himself. Nate has become a trusted leader in the Milwaukee community on a wide range of issues. He is the co-founder of the Coalition For Justice.

<https://cfjmilwaukee.org>

<https://twitter.com/Justice4Dontre>

<https://www.facebook.com/justicefordontre/>



Maria Hamilton – Maria is the strong matriarch of the family, however in the wake of Dontre’s death she is despondent and was “hardly able to move for months.” Running low on rest and privacy, Maria finds strength in building a network of other mothers who have also tragically lost sons to police violence. Alongside her two adult sons, Maria rallies a community in a search for answers, justice and reform. During the election cycle, Maria joined the Hillary Clinton campaign as one of the “Mothers of the Movement” along with the mothers of Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, and Jordan Davis. Maria is the founder of Mothers for Justice United.
<https://twitter.com/mommas4justice>
<http://www.mothersforjusticeunited.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/mothersforjusticeunited/>



Chief Ed Flynn – Chief Flynn is a passionate and cerebral leader of the maligned Milwaukee Police Department. As Dontre’s case begins to unfold, Flynn finds himself stuck between a Police Union that has lost confidence in his leadership and a community demanding justice for Dontre. Despite substantive reformative measures to his maligned department, the Chief straddles a thin line between defending his officers and holding them accountable. In response to Dontre’s death, the Milwaukee Police Department is in the midst of a collaborative reform investigation with the Department of Justice. On February 22, 2017, the Milwaukee Police Department was sued by the ACLU for a history of unlawful stop and frisks.

Filmmaking team bios:



Erik Ljung – Director / Producer / DP

- Erik Ljung is a freelance Producer and Director of Photography currently based in the midwest. He has produced content and short documentaries for the New York Times, VICE News, Al Jazeera, PBS and the Wall Street Journal. In 2016 he won a midwest Emmy for his work on public television's Wisconsin Foodie. His cinematography can be seen on CNN's The 414's, which premiered at Sundance, and Almost Sunrise slated to air on POV in 2017. He is a former Nohl Fellow, and a two-time Brico Forward Fund recipient for his documentary work.

<http://www.erikljung.tv>



Michael Vollmann - Editor - Michael T. Vollmann's editing credits include HBO, ESPN 30 for 30, CBS. He most recently directed the documentary "The 414s" (CNN Films) which premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. Michael D.P.'d the feature doc "The Jeffrey Dahmer Files" (IFC) (2012 SXSW) which became a New York Times Critics' Pick. Michael won the 2013 Milwaukee Filmmaker-in-Residence award for his short film "Before You" (Milwaukee Film Festival '13) which went on to win Best Wisconsin Film at the Wisconsin Film Festival '14.

<http://babyplaneproductions.com>

FILMMAKER NOTES:

- Pre-production began in May of 2014
- Principal Photography began in August of 2014, filming a rally in solidarity with Ferguson, just days after Michael Brown was killed.

Post-production began in February of 2016, (while production simultaneously continued up until February 2017).

- The vast majority of the film was shot on a Sony FS7 with a Canon 24-105mm lens. Early in production, before the FS7 was released, we utilized a Canon C100.
- Majority of film covered as a one man band in the field
- Micro-budget film largely self funded by filmmaking team

PRESS:

The Hollywood Reporter: Critics Pick, top 10 of SXSW "It's a clear-eyed film that finds hope within terrible circumstances, and strength within heartbreak. Given the continued unfortunate timeliness of the subject, it'll certainly find an audience in a wider platform beyond the fest circuit."

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/critics-picks-best-sxsw-2017-986934>

The Hollywood Reporter: 'The Blood Is at the Doorstep': Film Review | SXSW 2017

"An urgent report from the frontlines of an American crisis. "

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/blood-is-at-doorstep-983836>

The Daily Dot: 7 Films you need to see from SXSW: "Director Erik Ljung doesn't focus on the pathos of tears and soundbites, but takes audiences into the heart of the Hamilton family's struggle to bring justice for Dontre, uncovering the Milwaukee police's conflicts of interest while showing how family members are taking center stage within social movements."

<https://www.dailydot.com/upstream/sxsw-film-round-up-2017/?tw=dd>

REVIEW: Shadow & Act " The scene that follows with the mothers encompasses all that "The Blood is at The Doorstep" is: it's heartbreaking, looking upon people who will not see justice, whose loved ones will never return. And it's simultaneously astounding to see the strength and the genius of people who insist on coming together, continuing to love and support each other in a world where such acts put them at such great risk."

<http://shadowandact.com/2017/03/13/sxsw-review-the-fight-for-black-lives-gets-personal-in-the-blood-is-at-the-doorstep/>

BBC: Talkin' Movies - (5:15 segment)

<https://vimeo.com/212401424/e936631423>

Teen Vogue: The Family of Dontre Hamilton, Shot 14 Times and Killed by Police, Speaks Out

<http://www.teenvogue.com/story/dontre-hamilton-the-blood-is-at-the-doorstep>

No Film School: The Blood is at the Doorstep - When Your Film Becomes Your Life

<http://nofilmschool.com/2017/03/blood-is-at-the-doorstep-erik-ljung-sxsw-interview>

REVIEW: Festworks: "Director Erik Ljung takes an approach so professional, with such high production value, the audience could almost not be blamed for looking twice to see if the film is documentary or a lightly concealed work of fiction. "

<http://festworks.com/2017/03/14/sxsw-2017-reviews-erik-ljungs-the-blood-is-at-the-doorstep-looks-with-precision-at-a-little-known-police-killing-case-and-the-raw-emotion-of-justice-unrequited/>

Previous Screenings:

SXSW (World Premiere)

Monday, March 13 @ 4:30 - Alamo Ritz 1 - 320 E 6th St., Austin, TX

Tuesday, March 14 @ NOON - Alamo Lamar A - 1120 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin, TX

Thursday, March 16 @ 7:00 - Alamo Lamar A on - 1120 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin, TX

Maryland International Film Festival (May 3-7)

Human Rights Watch Festival (June 9-18)

FULL CREDITS:

A Young Productions, LLC & Baby Plane production

In Association with September Club

Director / Producer:

Erik Ljung

Director of Photography:

Erik Ljung

Editor

Michael T. Vollmann

Associate Producer

Daniel Thomas Peters

Assistant Editors

Ian Anderson

Daniel Black

Jordan Brethauer

Max Hey

Sam Kirchoff

Soon Loh Vue

Miranda Morn

Matt Prekop

Travis Starr

Trailer Editor

Matt Prekop

Post Production Manager

Dan Didier of About Face Media

Cinematography

Daniel Thomas Peters

Joel Van Haren

Quinn Hester

Additional Camera

Spencer Chumbley

Anthony Lopez

Ryan Thomas Reeve

Chris James Thompson

Jacque Tiegs

Jack Whaley

Patrick White of Eye Design Media LLC

Cell Phone footage:

Vaun Meyes

C.M. Despears

Boom-operator / On-location Sound:

Sean Eagon

Chris James Thompson

Color

Rob Due at Independent Studios

Sound Mix and Sound Design

Steve Kultgen at Independent Studios

Re-enactments

Wes Tank as Christopher Manney

Fred Smith as Dontre Hamilton

Research Assistant

Dan Black

Digital Tech

Stephen Schoonover

Wes Tank

Photography (Stills)

Vallen Alexander

Joe Brusky

C.M. Despears

Jennifer Johnson

Courtesy of Milwaukee Magazine, by Adam Ryan Morris

Pat Robinson

Jacque Tiegs

Abe Van Dyke

Poster Design

Chelsea Atwell & Mark Goldstein

Of Nobody Studios

Web Design

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Production Assistants

Makenzie Boettcher

Ben Wick

Legal Representation

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of Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren, s.c.

Festival Premiere Public Relations

Tracy Nguyen-Chung

Eseel Borlasa

of After Bruce PR & Marketing

SPECIAL THANKS

About Face Media

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Katinka Hooyer

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Meg Kissinger

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Ashley Luthern

Mike Maggiore

Reem Makhoul
Matt Mixon
Daphne McWilliams
Scottie Lee Meyers
Peter Miller
Polly Morris
Cara Ogburn
Janet Pierson
Kartemquin
Barry Poltermann
Brad Priutt
Gordon Quinn
Michael Raisler
Andrew Rossi
Matt Sabaljak
Justine Simons
Michael Skolnik
Iliana Sosa
Sara Terry
Amanda Todd
Jack Turner
Malik Vitthail
Rannell Washington
Jason Zeldes

The entire Dontre Hamilton family

Archival Footage / Audio

CBS-58
CNN
Fox6
WISN 12
News/talk 1130 WISN
Wisconsin Public Radio – Kathleen Dunn Show
Wisconsin Department of Justice – Department of Criminal Investigation
Milwaukee Police Department

Fiscal Sponsor

Milwaukee Film

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