



TIME SIMPLY PASSES

A FILM BY TY FLOWERS

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TIME SIMPLY PASSES

Country of Production

USA

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TRT

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Director/Producer

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Log Line

1968: ARCADIA, FLORIDA. JAMES JOSEPH RICHARDSON IS CONVICTED OF THE MURDER OF HIS SEVEN CHILDREN AND SPENDS MORE THAN 21 YEARS IN PRISON FOR A CRIME HE DID NOT COMMIT. THIS IS THE STORY OF HIS 48-YEAR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE - AND ANSWERS.

Synopsis

Time Simply Passes is a film about James Joseph Richardson, an African-American orange picker in Florida who was wrongfully convicted of murdering his seven children in 1967. He spent 21 years in prison, until he was released in 1989 when the conviction was overturned due to miraculous circumstances. Since then, he's been surviving on donations from friends while attempting to receive compensation from the State.

It's a film about race, about Florida, about the evolution of small-town justice, about forgotten historical moments, about systemic corruption at all levels of government, and a philosophical evaluation of the concept of restorative compensatory justice.

The film makes extensive use of archival footage, photographs, and documents, and endeavors to piece many disparate elements together to tell a story over 40 years in the making.

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Screenings & Awards

FORT LAUDERDALE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, OFFICIAL FEATURE SELECTION, 2015

PRINCETON INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, OFFICIAL FEATURE SELECTION, 2015

FULL BLOOM FILM FESTIVAL, OFFICIAL FEATURE SELECTION, 2015

Director's Statement

My father was an investigative journalist in the 1980s. James Richardson was a story he's been working on since I was a child. He wrote many of the articles and took many of the photographs that are featured in the film. When I found out in 2013 that James was still living in poverty, and that there was a bill up in the Florida Legislature to potentially give him a settlement after all these years, I thought it would be important and helpful to make a portrait film about his circumstances. As I delved deeper into the complexity of the subject, it didn't seem possible for me to tell the story without telling the complete story, and so I decided to pick up where my father left off, and began digging through boxes of old newspaper clippings and VHS tapes that my father had kept in storage. Some pieces had been heavily damaged over the years, and at one point I went as far as physically taping together VHS celluloid that had been eaten away by mites, debris, and the oppressive humidity of Central Florida.

To make the film, with the help of my father I tracked down as many of the figures from the story as I could. By this point, many have passed away. I discovered a number of conflicting narratives that made it very difficult to ascertain a faithful account of the story. I found that many of the lawyers, politicians, members of Government, and journalists had their own memories of the case, which often cast themselves as heroes and cast their opposition as villains without much ambiguity. James himself was often kept in the dark about many of the details surrounding his incarceration, his exoneration, as well as the reasons why he was unable to gain a settlement from the State. After pouring through decades of research provided by my father and various archives throughout the State and comparing them with interviews we shot for the project, I developed a thesis for the film. I found that the Edmon family exhibited the most unassailable, factually and morally accurate memory of events, and I largely relied on their interpretation of events to guide the narrative.

We spoke to James, along with his pastor in Wichita. We traveled to Orlando to meet Senator Geraldine Thompson, who was in the process of pushing her revised version of the Victims of Wrongful Compensation Act through the Florida congress, along with the bill's lobbyist, Richard Pinsky. We spoke with James' current lawyer, Robert Barrar, who took over James' case after his mentor Ellis Rubin died some years ago. We spoke to Pete Gallagher, the longtime Florida journalist who worked on the story with my father in the late 1980s. We spoke to Don Horn, the Miami-Dade State Attorney who worked on the investigation that got James free in 1989. We spoke to the Edmon family, who have for the past 25 years helped James to survive out of a self-sacrificial sense of moral and religious compassion. We spoke to Barry Schoek, the founder of the Innocence Project in NYC, to get an authoritative account of the issues facing the wrongfully convicted in America, and to ask what can be done to fix the situation.

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We shot the film over the course of several trips to Florida, New York, and Kansas (Where James currently lives) in 2014. I shot the film using super-16 lenses from the 1960s and 70s. The film was completed as efficiently and efficiently at possible. We made the film without any funding, any grants, any “crowd-funding,” or any outside help. We brokered several low-cost deals to acquire archival material with different people who’d been holding on to photographs and footage from the past 45 years. Our 2nd Camera Operator works for an airline, and was able to fly with us at no additional cost. I called in a favor from a friend I used to play music, and he agreed to develop an original score with me. I rented a practice room at a piano store in Berlin for 2 Euros an hour and recorded piano tracks for the film. I edited, colored, mixed, and scored the film in my apartment in Brooklyn.

Cast & Creative Team

Featuring

James Joseph Richardson
Don Horn
Theresa Edmon
Barry Schoek

Peter Gallagher
Tim Edmon
Richard Pinsky
Senator Geraldine Thompson

Directed by

Ty Flowers

Original Score

Ty Flowers
Phil Nicolazzo

Editing

Ty Flowers

Cinematography

Ty Flowers

Audio Recording | Additional Camera

Connor Kammerer
Mike Vasilinda

Research

Charles Flowers
Miguel Sigler-Delgado

Director Bio

Ty Flowers is a multi-disciplinary media artist whose work primarily focuses on the moving screen. He grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and attended the University of Florida in Gainesville. He moved to New York in 2008. He has shot and edited Television programs for The History Channel, Science, Natgeo, Discovery, A&E, Bio, and the Travel Channel. His work has been exhibited at or been featured in Spin Magazine, Pitchfork, Stereogum, NPR, Noisey, and New York Live Arts. This is his first feature film.

