



CHAPTER & VERSE

A film by Jamal Joseph

97 Minutes
Not Yet Rated

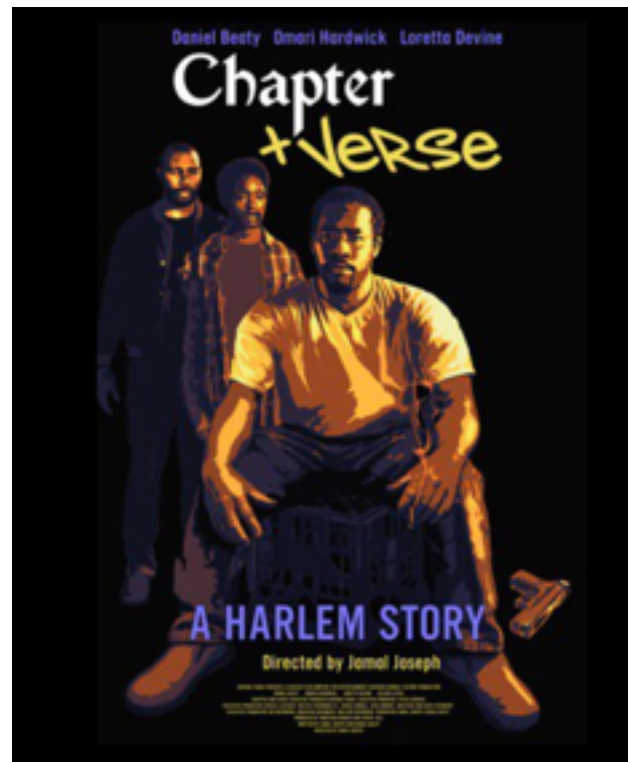
Harlem Film Company

<http://chapterandversethefilm.com/>

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/jamaljoseph/review/188914422/fb1a3d0088>

BEHIND THE SCENES:

<https://vimeo.com/139134929>



SYNOPSIS

After serving eight years in prison, reformed gang leader S. Lance Ingram re-enters society and struggles to adapt to a changed Harlem. Living under the tough supervision of a parole officer in a halfway house, he is unable to find a job that will let him use the technological skills he gained in prison. Lance is forced to take a job delivering for a food pantry where he befriends Ms. Maddy (LORETTA DEVINE), a strong and spirited grandmother, and assumes responsibility for her 15-year-old grandson Ty, a promising student who is pulled into a dangerous street gang. When gang members decide to punish Ty for disobeying the “law of the streets,” Lance risks sacrificing his “second chance” at freedom so that Ty can have a “first chance” at a better life.

With *Chapter & Verse*, director Jamal Joseph, a leader of the Black Panther Party who spent time in prison as a result of his involvement in the organization, reflects upon what it means to forge your own destiny in an outwardly harsh society.

THEMES

From Harlem to Prison and Back Home Again

Just after the 2016 presidential election, stocks for the two largest private for-profit prison companies rose 40% and 30%, respectively (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-11-18/private-prisons-get-a-boost-from-trump>). One in three black men in the United States will end up in prison (<http://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/>) and while black citizens make up 13% of the population of the country, they represent 40% of its inmates (<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/rates.html>).

Chapter & Verse, in an intimate Baldwinesque drama, puts a face to these statistics, dealing with the question of what could happen to a black man when he is released from the walls but still prisoner to the broken system of re-entry.

As *Spirituality & Practice* remarks: “the director hits the mark with this rounded and realistic portrait of an ex-convict trying hard to start a new life. All around him are those who have failed in this endeavor – homeless addicts, crazy bullies on subways, black men harassed by police, and gang members finding solidarity in violent rituals.” (<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28193/chapter-verse>)

“All over Harlem, Negro boys and girls are growing into stunted maturity, trying desperately to find a place to stand; and the wonder is not that so many are ruined but that so many survive.” - James Baldwin, Notes of A Native Son.

CAST

DANIEL BEATY / LANCE



Daniel Beaty is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning playwright, actor and director of stage. His original productions include the solo shows **THROUGH THE NIGHT**, for which he received Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk and Drama League nominations

and won the AUDELCO Award for Outstanding Solo Performance and the 2010 Ovation Award for Best Male Lead Actor; **EMERGENCY!** which ran off-broadway and also earned Obie and AUDELCO prizes and the ensemble work **RESURRECTION**. Recent productions include his ensemble musical **BREATH & IMAGINATION** and solo shows **MT. JOY** and **THE TALLEST TREE IN THE FOREST**, based on the life of Paul Robeson. He is a proud member of New Dramatists and an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University. **CHAPTER & VERSE** marks his debut using his remarkable gifts as writer and performer in a feature film.

LORETTA DEVINE / MS. MADDY



The legendary Loretta Devine originated the role of Lorell Robinson in DREAMGIRLS on Broadway and has had a stunning, diverse, award-winning career on stage and in film and television: WAITING TO EXHALE; THE PREACHERS WIFE; URBAN LEGEND; I AM SAM; WOMAN THOU ART LOOSE; CRASH; FOR COLORED GIRLS. She received acclaimed for starring in BOSTON PUBLIC and

received a 2011 Primetime Emmy for her role on GREY'S ANATOMY. She is currently starring in the NBC comedy THE CARMICHAEL SHOW.

OMARI HARDWICK / JOMO



Omari Hardwick stars as 'Ghost' on the hit Starz Original Series *Power* (2016 NAACP Image Award nomination).

Other television credits include *Saved* and *Dark Blue* for TNT, and BET's *Being Mary Jane* for which he earned 2 NAACP Image Award nominations. He made his TV series debut in Showtime's *Sucker Free City* for director Spike Lee.

Feature credits include the upcoming *Shot Caller* for director

Ric Waugh, Lionsgate's *For Colored Girls*, Sony Pictures' *Sparkle*, indies *Middle of Nowhere* and *I Will Follow*, both for director Ava DuVernay, 20th Century Fox's *The A-Team*, Lionsgate's *Kick-Ass* for director Matthew Vaughn, Touchstone's *Miracle at St. Anna*, reuniting him with director Spike Lee, Touchstone's *The Guardian* opposite Kevin Costner and Ashton Kutcher, and Columbia's *Gridiron Gang*. In addition, Hardwick is an accomplished poet and spoken word artist. He has written over 4,000 poems, including "Little Black Boy Wonder," performed and produced by Hardwick with Marlon Wayans, David Oyelowo, Eriq LaSalle, Jay Ellis, Sugar Shane Mosely, Bill Duke, among others.

SELENIS LEVYA / YOLANDA



Multi-talented actress, Selenis Leyva (pronounced SELL-EN-EES LAY-VA) can currently be seen starring as Gloria Mendoza, the quick-witted Latina in the Netflix hit series, *Orange is the New Black*. Selenis may be a recognizable face to internet viewers, but her career already spans mediums television, film, and theater with roles opposite

Kevin Bacon, Sarah Jessica Parker, James Gandolfini, amongst others. With credits including roles in *The Good Wife*, *Girls*, *Sopranos*, all the *Law & Orders*, *Blue Bloods*, *Person of Interest*, *Sex & the City 2*, *Nickelodeon's Taina*, *Maria Full of Grace* and many more, this proud born and raised New Yorker has been a part of many iconic series and the list continues to grow. In addition to her on screen credits, Selenis loves the stage and recently wrapped an off-Broadway run in the Cherry Lane show, *Basilica*. Coming up, Selenis can also be seen opposite Viola Davis in the independent feature *Custody*, recently featured at the Tribeca Film Festival.

JAMAL JOSEPH / DIRECTOR, CO-WRITER



Jamal Joseph is a full Professor of Professional Practice and former chair of Columbia University's Graduate Film Program. He is the Executive Artistic Director of New Heritage Theater and Films and the Founder of the acclaimed Impact Repertory Youth Theater of Harlem and a Co-Founding Partner of the Harlem Film Company

(HFC). He is an alum of the Sundance Directing Lab and the Third World Newsreel Film and Video Workshop. He serves on the advisory boards of the Writers Guild Initiative, Imagination, the Ghetto Film School and the Maysles Film Institute.

Jamal credits his time spent in the Black Panther Party and Leavenworth Federal Prison as the fire that forged his creative sword. While in prison he earned two college degrees, wrote five plays, two volumes of poetry and founded a ground breaking theater company that brought prisoners together who previously been divided by race, culture and violence.

Jamal's directing credits include DRIVE BY: A LOVE STORY and DA ZONE for Black Starz, HIP HOP IN THE PROMISED LAND for Comedy Central and HUGHES DREAM HARLEM for PBS. His writing credits include KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTH BRONX for A & E, THE MANY TRIALS OF TAMMY B for Nickelodeon, and ALI: AN AMERICAN HERO for FOX. Jamal is the author of *Tupac Legacy* (Atria Books) and his memoir *Panther Baby* (Algonquin Books).

His awards include a Cine Golden Eagle, a National Black program Consortium Prized Pieces Award, a Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame Award, a Union Square Award, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship and an Academy Award nomination for Best Song for his with Impact in the film "August Rush."

CHERYL HILL / PRODUCER



Cheryl Hill is the Co-Founding Partner of the Harlem Film Company (HFC), an integrated film and media company. In 2015, HFC produced CHAPTER & VERSE, its first feature, which is scheduled for a theatrical release in 2017. HFC recently produced its first feature documentary BEHIND THE GLASS about children of

incarcerated parents.

Cheryl has more than 20 years experience in the film and television industry in New York and Los Angeles, and credited with bringing the Cheetah Girls property to Hollywood. She served as producer on three Disney movies: CHEETAH GIRLS, CHEETAH GIRLS 2 and CHEETAH GIRLS: ONE WORLD. With Kroyt Brandt Productions, Cheryl produced and directed the critically acclaimed CRUCIBLE OF THE MILLENIUM an award winning multi-part documentary that aired nationally on PBS. A major award from the National Endowment of the Humanities funded the series.

Cheryl's career highlights include the position of Creative Executive / Director of Development at the Walt Disney Studios, Hollywood Pictures Division where she worked directly with Jeffrey Katzenberg and Michael Eisner. As a member of the Hollywood Pictures team, Cheryl supervises development and production of 20 feature film projects, among them: THE JOY LUCK CLUB and DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN starring Eddie Murphy.



CHAPTER & VERSE a

harlem story









Fathers and Sons: Jamal Joseph depicts redemption in Harlem in 'Chapter & Verse'

By Maria Garcia Jun 9, 2016

In the early 1990s, New York City's only black mayor, David Dinkins, used anti-crime funds to establish Beacon centers in every school district, a landmark re-envisioning of the role of schools in the lives of students. The centers provided many services, and ensured that the children of working parents would not be left to fend for themselves after school. Dinkins once said that he felt he was "in charge of children, children I haven't even met yet." That assumption of responsibility and of paternity for his young constituents, from a politician who rose to prominence in Harlem, echoes through Jamal Joseph's debut narrative feature, *Chapter & Verse*.

Screening this Sunday at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival in New York City, the movie contemplates fatherhood and step-fatherhood, and the plight of black boys with no fathers. Its protagonist is an unlikely paternal figure, a former inmate who goes home to Harlem and meets the boy he never expected to meet, the one who compels him to revisit his own fatherless boyhood.

During the on-location shoot in Harlem, Joseph's diverse crew included a directing unit comprised of black men armed with walkie-talkies. Neighborhood children would often gather to watch the action. "Black boys would ask my crew: 'What are you doing?'" Joseph says, in an interview at his 135th Street office. "Black men with walkie-talkies who aren't cops are an unusual sight." Instead of telling the children to move away, Joseph had the men explain their filmmaking roles, and invite the children to participate in them. "We would bring them closer," he says. "Can you imagine what that meant?"

A former Black Panther, Joseph is a Columbia University film professor, screenwriter and author; he earned college degrees while serving time in Leavenworth. He calls himself a "brown man," a mixed-race African-American and Cuban. Like Lance, his protagonist in *Chapter & Verse*, Joseph grew up without a father. So did his accomplished star, Daniel Beaty. "Daniel and I know what that ache feels like," Joseph says, "and we know what it is like to have to heal it yourself."

In *Chapter & Verse*, a title that suggests the film's archetypal underpinning, Joseph crafts a heroic tale for Harlem. "Lance," short for Lancelot, is a recently released ex-con who lives in a halfway house, in a room that looks very much like a prison cell. Lance cannot find a job, despite his skill at repairing computers. Like the knight of Chrétien de Troyes's epic poem, he loves a woman who is married to another man. When Lance finally lands a job delivering meals to the elderly, he befriends one of his clients, Miss Maddy, who lives with her grandson Ty, a gang member in training. Finding the patterns of Harlem boyhood largely unchanged, Lance finally embarks on a perilous quest for identity and meaning.

Chapter & Verse is so intimate a portrait of a black man many of us know only as a statistic that one wonders while watching the movie if the story is about an uncelebrated, local hero. "Lance is inspired by a few really good men who I saw come out of prison and try to rebuild their lives," Joseph explains. "Sometimes I witnessed this while I was in prison. A man I thought was going to make it would come back, not because he intended to, but because of the lack of family or the lack of services or because, culturally, what they were caught up in made them make a choice that sent them back."

While Joseph's film is very much about black men and boys, he pays homage to the role of mothers and grandmothers in black families through Miss Maddy (Loretta Devine in a wonderfully nuanced performance). "Miss Maddy is a combination of great women that I have known throughout my life," the writer-director says. "She is my adopted grandmother Afeni Shakur, who just passed away and who was my big sister in the Black Panther Party." (Shakur, a committed activist all her life and the mother of late hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur—aka 2Pac—died in May at the age of 69.) Joseph also recalls the mentoring of the late Alice Arlen (Silkwood), a white screenwriter he met when he was a student at the Sundance Lab. "Alice was responsible for launching my career," Joseph says, "and she was godmother to my children."

If Joseph's shadowy streets in *Chapter & Verse*, often seen in long shot, and heavy with foreboding, fail to evoke the more storied Harlem, his handsome knight, named for the one of legend who represents fine amor or "pure" love, restores it. "Lance, who never had a father, unexpectedly gets the family he never had," the writer-director says. "He then takes on the role of the father for the son he didn't have with the woman he loves." Joseph refuses to shy away from the requisite bloodletting and street justice that are part of Lance's quest, a fact that will prove problematic for some audiences. "I am really happy when an audience is outraged and saddened," he says. "I want them to be and I want us to be."

<http://www.filmjournal.com/features/fathers-and-sons-jamal-joseph-depicts-redemption-harlem-chapter-and-verse>

