

"ONE OF THE BEST
FILMS OF 2020"

-UNSEEN FILMS

"A HAUNTINGLY
BEAUTIFUL FILM"

-TAKE ONE



LOVE



"TRANSFORMATIVE
FOR THE DOCUMENTARY
FILM GENRE"
-TAKE ONE

A FILM BY
HASAN OSWALD



LOVEWORLD MEDIA IN ASSOCIATION WITH RHINO FILMS PRESENTS

A FILM BY **HASAN OSWALD** "HIGHER LOVE"

PRODUCED BY **ALEXANDER SPIESS** AND **DEREK RUBIN** AND **HASAN OSWALD**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **STEPHEN NEMETH** CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY **ANTHONY PEMBERTON** AND **BETSY STAHL**

EDITED BY **KAIT PLUM** MUSIC COMPOSED BY **JOHN MCDOWELL** SOUND DESIGN BY **TRISTAN BAYLIS**



RHINO FILMS PRESENTS

HIGHER LOVE

Production Type..... Documentary Feature Film

Runtime..... 78 min.....

Genre..... Documentary Drama, Social-realism, Human Interest

Language..... English

Country of Origin..... United States

Country of Filming..... United States

Format..... 3840x2160, 24fps, 1:1.78 (16:9) color, Sound 5.1

Trailer..... *On Request*

Screener..... *On Request*

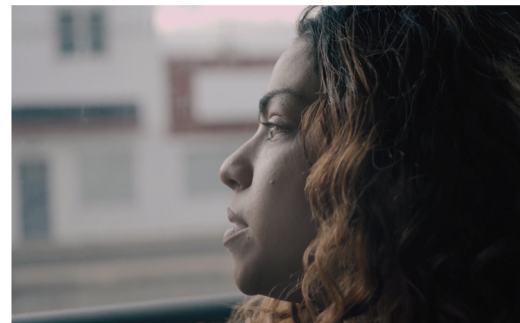
PR..... Karen Oberman | KO-PR | karen.oberman@ko-pr.com | (310) 623-2061

Distribution..... [Gravitas Ventures](#) iTunes Pre-order – October 3, 2020. VOD Release – November 3, 2020

Links..... [Website](#) | [IMDB](#) | [Instagram](#): @higherlovetfilm | [Twitter](#): @higherlovetfilm | [Facebook](#) |

LOGLINE

A blue-collar father tries to rescue his pregnant, heroin-addicted girlfriend from the dangerous streets of Camden, NJ. Once their son is born, a new journey begins for the fate of the baby and the family's sobriety that may split them apart forever.



SYNOPSIS (Extended)

Daryl Gant is a Camden native, father of eight, and printing press operator. He was raised by a single mother and strives to be a better father than his own, who abandoned him at birth.

His girlfriend, Nani, is the love of his life, but struggles to cope with a crippling crack and heroin addiction, and the nefarious lifestyle to support it. More troubling is that Nani is pregnant with their new baby boy, Darnez. It becomes Daryl's new-found purpose to forge a better future for the both of them.

Nani is also a Camden native, whose mother died with a needle in her arm. Now she struggles with the responsibilities of motherhood in the face of her own addiction.

Darnez was born healthy, but needs particular care growing up in an environment rife with safety and well-being concerns.

Nani's dealer, Iman, was once a drug dealing kingpin in Camden in the 1990's. He was also a father and factory man, until he caught a dealer's habit selling dope. He embodies the spirit of many disaffected residents of Camden, taking the the viewer on a tour of post-industrial American decay.

His own quest to sobriety will eventually force the hand of Nani to make a change, as they forge parallel paths to recovery.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



The first time I met Daryl Gant, the protagonist of *Higher Love*, he was yelling at me over a distorted speaker phone. It was late 2016 and I had spent the last few weeks on the streets of Camden, New Jersey, filming a group of four friends struggling with addiction. One of the people depicted in the movie was Daryl's girlfriend: Nani—a young, pregnant woman battling a devastating heroin addiction. Daryl's voice crackled through the phone, "What are you doing in Camden and what are you gonna do with this footage?" he demanded.

I didn't want to tell Daryl that I had no idea what I was doing there, that I was scared to death, and that my only semblance of a plan was to crash with family, abuse 30-day-return-policies and 18-month no interest credit card promotions, and sell my blood plasma to finance this film about a misanthropic post-industrial city down on it's luck.

I've followed an unconventional path to documentary film work. Leading up to *Higher Love*, I spent seven years abroad. During my travels, I filmed impromptu conversations I had with strangers, which taught me how the anecdotes of everyday people's lives could be used to shed light on larger systemic issues.

Returning home in 2015, I sought to immerse myself in a community that was shunned from the public view, and I wanted to hear the stories of a Post-Industrial American Dream gone bust. Only two hours from NYC (and thus fitting into my zero-budget production plan) Camden had always piqued my interest because of its notorious legacy as one of America's most dangerous cities. A legacy fueled by the nationwide opioid epidemic.

Inspired by the intimate access that directors like Zana Brinksi and Ross Kauffman brought to "Born Into Brothels" and the "Rebel Without a Crew" ethos of Robert Rodriguez, I bought a new camera, drove the two hours from New York City, and began knocking on the doors of trap houses and heroin dens. As I spent more time in Camden, I realized that the film couldn't be about policy or statistics. It had to be about people — the ones whose lives were ravaged by addiction and whose daily existence illustrated the nuanced toll opioids have on people, their families, and communities.

An earlier iteration of *Higher Love* was called "Below the Brine," after a Walt Whitman poem. Whitman, a Camden native, writes about a world that exists—in our midst, but out of sight—below the surface of the ocean. Using an unpolished and at times clumsy form of vérité film, my hope was to create a seamless veneer between filmmaker and subject to bring forth these stories that might otherwise have remained hidden below the surface.

The Higher Love Impact Goals

To give dignified voice to people living with addiction in post-industrial communities.

To support advocacy for the 1-in-8 children across America born to homes with substance abuse.

To invite viewers to respond on a human level and encourage them to be agents of change for the disease of addiction regardless of socio-economic background.

Camden, NJ is not alone as a post-industrial community mired in America's opioid epidemic. Communities like these are vulnerable to substance abuse, and particularly prone to the abuse of opiates and heroin.

Princeton Economist Angus Deaton aptly calls overdose deaths in these communities as "Deaths of Despair", indicating systemic joblessness, lack of opportunity, and exploitative targeting from the pharmaceutical industry to these pockets of the nation.

This film is not based in politics or policy. It is interested only in the human experience. And it is for this reason we are teaming up with community-based educational and domestic programs to support families and parents raising a new generation of children directly affected by the opioid crisis.

PRESS

VARIETY - "Slamdance Film Festival Winners...":

"The Documentary Feature Grand Jury Prize went to Higher Love, directed by Hasan Oswald."

FILM THREAT:

"Americans exist in this condition. Big Pharma aggressively markets addictive, profitable pain meds, and these ubiquitous drugs have seeped down into abandoned places and people. That these people are invisible and unknown is disgusting beyond the pale. Hasan Oswald shows us this life in Higher Love and calls us to action. Above all, holy shit, in the name of whatever gods may be, bless Daryl Gantt. Wherever you are, sir, we salute you. Here's hoping life ahead is good to you and your son."

UNSEEN FILMS:

"It is one of the best films of 2020 so far. This may have been the first truly great film I saw for Slamdance. It is a film that haunted me for days after I saw it. It is a tough tough film about what drugs are doing to society."

SCREEN COMMENT:

"Our TOP TEN FILMS from Sundance (Bonus from Slamdance)"

"Documentarian Hasan Oswald deserves an award for daring to point his camera where few others might. Oswald...has a fine career ahead of him based on "Higher Love,"

MOVIE BABBLE:

Director Hasan Oswald manages to focus on individual and the whole, using these relationships to tell an intimate story of addiction that acts as a microcosm. Higher Love is entirely raw and up close.

HORROR BUZZ:

"What is most interesting about Oswald's docu-style feature is the way in which horror manifests through the real-life monster of drug addiction and poverty."

FILM-FORWARD:

"Higher Love, Bastards' Road, Jasper Mall | Slamdance 2020"

"Director Hasan Oswald follows his subjects across several years, during which they repeatedly try to crawl out of the abyss, only to backslide into it. Observing without ever passing judgment, he nevertheless makes it clear that in this underprivileged environment, it's far too easy to choose getting high over facing the challenges of everyday life."

TAKE ONE CINEMA:

"Most stories need a point of view and with that point of view comes a set of morals and beliefs that angle the focus. For a documentary – or any film for that matter – to expel bias, there must be a highly nuanced approach that allows all views, in equal measure, in one space. Hasan Oswald's HIGHER LOVE achieves just that."

NOTABLE FESTIVALS



SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL



BROOKLYN FILM FESTIVAL



DOKUFEST



KRAKOW FILM FESTIVAL



*MELBOURNE DOCUMENTARY
FILM FESTIVAL*



*RHODE ISLAND INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL*

PRODUCERS



HASAN OSWALD

Director / Producer

Entering the film world only four years ago, Hasan Oswald has quickly established a unique ability to capture the human experience through verité cinema. His unfettered access to and intimacy with his characters creates a seamless veneer between the filmmaker and subject.

His work first caught the eye of award-winning filmmakers Nick Quested & Sebastian Junger (Restrepo) and he started his professional career as a cameraman for National Geographic's film *Hell on Earth: The Fall of Syria and the Rise of ISIS*.

He has since covered the water crisis in Flint, drug trafficking in Philadelphia, and his current project on the Yazidi Genocide in Iraq. *Higher Love* is his documentary feature directorial debut.



STEPHEN NEMETH

Executive Producer

Stephen Nemeth founded Rhino Films, a division of the iconoclastic record label Rhino Records, in 1998.

As a producer and executive producer, his credits include *The Sessions* (2012 Sundance Audience Award) *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, *War Dance*, *Fuel* and many others. He is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and recipient of the 2013 Global Action Award.

PRODUCERS



ALEXANDER SPIESS

Producer

Alexander is a filmmaker and journalist with a background field producing, writing, and editing non-fiction narrative. As a print journalist, he's commissioned for USA Today, The Poughkeepsie Journal, and Motif Magazine. His work in film includes projects for National Geographic, A&E, Showtime, Lionsgate, & History Channel.

Most recently Alexander worked on Nick Quested and Sebastian Junger's latest films for National Geographic; *Blood On The Wall* (AFI Docs 2020) and *Hell on Earth: The Fall of Syria and Rise of ISIS* (Tribeca 2017),.

He's currently producing on History Channel's limited series, *Unidentified*.

Higher Love is the first feature documentary co-production with Hasan Oswald and Derek Rubin.



DEREK RUBIN

Producer

Derek Rubin is an independent producer based in New York City with a background as a production manager. After a short (but not short enough) career in corporate sales, he quit his job and dove headfirst into the world of film & TV production.

Derek has worked on projects for Amazon, NBC Universal, AMC, Vanishing Angle, and Sony Pictures. His commercial work includes production managing and/or co-producing for Benjamin Moore, Sam's Club, JC Penney, Barbados Tourism and New York Lottery.

Derek's most recent credits include Production Manager and Associate Producer on *The Climb* (Cannes 2019 - Jury's Coup De Coeur Award Winner; TIFF 2019) for Topic Studios, as well as coordinating and editing all archival news footage on *The Loudest Voice* for Showtime. His upcoming documentary *Higher Love* (producer) follows a young family's struggle to overcome addiction and poverty while raising a baby at the height of the opioid epidemic in Camden, NJ.

CREW



KAIT PLUM

Editor

Kait is a documentary, commercial and narrative editor with over 15 years of experience in the industry. She has worked with award winning filmmakers, Nick Quested (*Restrepo*), Bobbito Garcia (*Stretch and Bobbito: Radio that Changed Lives*), Emilia Mello (*Waste Land*), and Pulitzer winning photographer Anthony Mark Saul.

Kait is a New Jersey native with an eye for cinema verité and documentary story telling.



TRISTAN BAYLIS

Sound Design

Tristan Baylis is a re-recording mixer and sound editor at Gigantic Studios. He has accumulated over 50 film and television credits. His credits include, *Slumber*, *Armed With Faith*, *Cradle of Champions*, *The Ted Bundy Tapes*, *Bloodline*.

Tristan had 3 films at The 2019 Sundance Film Festival, including *Before You know It*, *The Great Hack*, and *Tigerland*.

CREW



JORDAN P.H. STEIN

Colorist

Jordan P. H. Stein is a conform and finishing artist at Goldcrest Post NY. Jordan earned a BFA in photography with honors from Parsons School of Design in 2016 and is a published PDN Photographer.

His titles include, *Unsane*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Super Dark Times*, *Russian Doll*, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, *Juliet Naked*, *Beach Rats*.



JOHN McDOWELL

Composer

Musician and film composer John McDowell achieved worldwide recognition with his soundtrack to the Academy Award winning documentary *Born Into Brothels*. Winner of Best Musical Score at the Bend Film Festival.

McDowell is a highly gifted pianist, percussionist, and commissioned conductor. His other titles include, *Sold*, *Holy (un)Holy River*, *Salam - The First ***** Nobel laureate*, *Stolen*, and *Orgasmic Birth: The Best Kept Secret*.

CAST



DARYL

Daryl Gant is a Camden native, father of eight, and printing press operator. He was raised by a single mother and strives to be a better father than his own, who abandoned him at childhood.

His girlfriend, Nani, is the love of his life, but struggles to cope with a crippling crack and heroin addiction, and the nefarious lifestyle needed to support it. More troubling, is that Nani is pregnant with their new baby boy Darnez. It becomes Daryl's newfound purpose to forge a better future for the both of them.



NANI & DARNEZ

Nani is also a Camden native, whose mother died with a needle in her arm. Now she struggles with the responsibilities of motherhood in the face of her own addiction.

Darnez was born healthy, but needs particular care growing up in an environment rife with safety and well-being concerns.



IMAN

Iman was once a drug dealing kingpin in Camden in the 1990's. He was also a father and a mechanical engineer, until he caught a dealer's habit selling dope.

His own quest to sobriety will eventually force the hand of Nani to make a change, as they forge parallel paths to recovery.

PARTNERS

