

# **Thesis Project Proposal**

**Di'Monds M. Davidson**

Master of Fine Arts in Film & Electronic Media Thesis Proposal

**Project Included:**

One Short Film

**Roles:**

Writer & Executive Producer

**Thesis Advisors:**

John Douglass & Sarah Menke-Fish

Fall 2017

## Loglines and Synopsis:

**Rosebud**: Short Film, 10 – 15 minutes

Logline: An abused woman gains the courage to leave, loses it all once she fights back.

Synopsis: Kenny has repeatedly beaten Rose throughout their eight years of marriage. Despite the emotional and physical trauma, she is endured, Rose has stayed faithful to Kenny and has never reported the abuse. Rose attempts to make her final flee from Kenny, after he came home in a drunken rage reflecting his abusive behavior towards their 6-year-old son, Bud, but in the process of leaving, Kenny arrives home early from work and interrupts their escape. Kenny tries his hand at manipulation, but this does not stop Rose from leaving. Once upset, Kenny makes physical contact with Rose, which lead to a series of events that ends in someone's tragic demise.

## Primary Characters

- **Rose Davis (27)** – Rose was raised by her father in a rural town outside a metropolitan area on a farm. Rose and her dad had an unbreakable bond that was strained when Rose left home to move-in with her first boyfriend, Kenny, at the age of eighteen.

Rose and Kenny eloped, and two years later, after the birth of their son, Bud, the couple moved from their downtown apartment to a single-family home in the suburbs. There she served as a stay-at-home mom and housewife.

During their eight-year marriage, Rose was verbally and physically abused by Kenny. She tried leaving a few times, but Kenny always found a way to persuade her to stay. It wasn't until one night when Kenny came home in a drunken rage that Rose finally realized enough was enough. That night, Kenny's physical abuse was reflected on Bud.

The following morning, the family continued their daily routine. Kenny left for work, and Rose dropped Bud off at school. Rose visited her pastor where she shared her story of abuse with the reverend, and he suggested marriage counseling for the couple, but she wasn't in favor of his recommendation. Rose also reached out to some 'close' friends, but she found no luck there either.

Rose finally called her dad who welcomed her back home with open arms. He told her to leave that evening before Kenny got off work. Rose picked Bud up from school and rushed home to pack their belongings before leaving for good, but this plan was put to a halt when Kenny came home early from work.

The once soft-spoken housewife has now become an enraged mother willing to do anything to protect her young even if it meant placing herself in harm's way that lies in the hands of her husband.

- **Kenny Davis Sr. (34)** – Kenny met Rose at a Farmers’ Market where she was selling produce from her father’s farm. He and Rose dated for a few months before the two decided to move-in with one another. He later, married Rose at the age of twenty-five when she was only nineteen years old without her father’s consent.

Once married, Kenny began verbally abusing Rose, and he started physically abusing her after the birth of their son, Bud. The abuse derived from Kenny’s belief that Rose was cheating on him, after he was told he couldn’t have children as a child.

Kenny has a steady paying job that allows Rose to stay home to tend to their family’s needs. He’s manipulative and doesn’t allow her to have friends other than his own. He showers Rose with gifts to cover for his lies and infidelities, but when that doesn’t work, he often guilts her on being incompetent and unable to live without him.

He has never raised his voice or assaulted their child, but does one night when he comes home in a drunken rage.

When Kenny comes home early the following evening from work and finds Rose and Bud attempting to leave, he tries to persuade her to stay. He goes from being an abusive husband to a potential murderous monster.

- **Kenny “Bud” Davis Jr. (6)** – Bud is Rose and Kenny’s only child. He’s a very courageous little boy that carries a strong sense of curiosity and wonder. Due to the abuse he’s witness his mother endure, he’s developed a level of resilience that has sparked his protective behavior towards Rose. This trait is discovered when him and Rose fail at escaping from Kenny’s abusive, deceptive, and underhanded tactics.

## Primary Market/Audience

**Rosebud**: The primary audience are women between the ages of 18 – 49, who may identify with Rose’s character as well as wanting to educate themselves on the effects of domestic violence. The secondary audience are adults 25 – 54 that may identify with both the protagonist and antagonist, but they may also identify as a relative and/or friend of those who may be an abuser or victim.

## Genre/Tone

This project is a drama-based educational film that tells a simple story of domestic violence and the traumatic effect it may have on children. According to the Violence Policy Center, women are most often killed by someone they know, and the person usually uses a gun. The tone of this transformational piece is influenced by films like **What Love Got to Do with It**, **Enough**, and **Jason’s Lyric**.

## Conflict/Plot

The conflict found in this short is human versus human with the plot concepts complimenting the conflict with Chris Booker's, the *7 Basic Plots: Why we tell Stories: Overcoming the Monster* and Ronald Tobias', *20 Master Plots: And How to build them: The Pursuit*.

## Mission

The mission of this short film is to bring awareness to domestic violence, the signs of an abuser or a victim, and the traumatic effects involved with abuse.

## Visual Approach

My visual inspiration derives from 1990s African-American cinema such as Waiting to Exhale, A Time to Kill, and A Thin Line Between Love and Hate. This short will contain distance observation with a variation of wide shots and hardly any close-ups. The goal is to bring the audience into a situation where they are sought out as casual pedestrians who are playing roles as participants in the Bystander effect without physically being present of the violent situation. I plan on shooting in one location which will be a family home, which include both interior and exterior shots on location.

## Project Status

I have a finalized treatment, and I am currently working on the second draft of my script with my production's script editor.

## Business Plan/Funding

Crowd funding: Indiegogo and/or Kickstarter

Filmmakers Without Borders <http://filmmakerswithoutborders.org/>

“FILMMAKERS WITHOUT BORDERS (FWB) is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to empowering the next generation of digital storytellers. FWB filmmaking grants provide funding and support for independent filmmakers to share their stories. Funds are available for narrative, documentary, experimental, and new media projects in various stages of production.”

Panavision

<http://www.panavision.com/new-filmmaker-program>

“Panavision believes in helping students and beginning filmmakers achieve their dreams. More than 25 years ago, Panavision launched the New Filmmaker Program, an ongoing grant program that loans camera packages to film schools, training programs, and independent filmmakers at little or no charge. Panavision's commitment to the industry's future provides student and beginning filmmakers the opportunity to work with professional grade equipment early in their careers.”

## Distribution

For the production, I plan to share **Rosebud** on digital and social media platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, and Facebook. I also would like to produce a short 30 – 60 second promotional video of the film that may be shared on Instagram.

I would like the video to be shared in local communities, schools, and universities as an educational piece, but I also plan to enter the project into several film festivals. I would also like to collaborate with PBS in hopes of working with on their affiliates and/or member stations.

Ultimately, there will be a screening followed by a Q&A session with the Cast and Crew alongside of the Director.

If possible, I would like to work with a Short Film Distributor of an established organization who can help me get into festivals and make sales deals on my behalf. At the beginning of my festival run, I plan on entering festivals with a market that provides accredited delegates with an industry pack in hopes of finding a Distributor who is a good fit for the film and its goals.

In this search, **Rosebud** will be submitted to several festivals, including but not limited to Maryland Film Festival, Chesapeake Film Festival, CINE Golden Eagle Film & Video Competition, DC Web Fest, DC Shorts Film Festival, District Cinema Student Film Festival, American Black Film Festival, Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival, Virginia Student Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, and Tribeca Film Festival.

Also, Issa Rae, the creator of the YouTube series **Awkward Black Girl** and HBO's **Insecure**, uses her YouTube platform as a vessel for new creators, preferably those of color, to have their short films featured on her channel the first Sunday of each month. With her channel having generated over 20 million views and over 260,000 subscribers who a mostly women between the age 18 – 49, this would reach both **Rosebud**'s primary audience and market.

- To be featured on Issa Rae Presents #SHORTFILMSUNDAYS, the short film's creator must submit their film(s) to [submit@issarae.com](mailto:submit@issarae.com).

## Qualifications

I am inspired to tell the stories of those who're unable to share their stories themselves. Each day, I become more socially aware of domestic issues through the works of my mother, who is a juvenile investigator. Also, with being a volunteer at my hometown's local Boys and Girls Club and working with Discover the World of Communication, I have become more equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively facilitate storytelling of a diverse group of people. I do not want to just entertain an audience; I want to educate my audience as well.

I feel as it's my God-given purpose to make art that matters, for people who matter, for lives that matter. So, every screenplay that I write will speak on injustices or convey social observation from the lenses of a woman of color. I feel it is important as an African-American woman that I take the role of being a voice of the those who tend to go unheard by the masses.

Also, with the information that my background holds, I believe I am equipped to produce **Rosebud** due to my extensive training in the Film and Media Arts division of the School of Communication at American University.

The following courses listed below has taught me the structure of storytelling:

### Summer 2016

Film and Media Boot Camp

### Fall 2016

Film/Video and Direction Production I

**The Diary of a Collegiate Black Woman**

**The James Dawson Documentary**

Techniques/Aesthetics Editing

Writing for Visual Media

### Spring 2017

Film Theory & Practice

Dramatic Production

**Momma's Boy**

### Fall 2017

The Business of Television

Writing the Short Film

**Rosebud**

Producing Film and Video

Master's Portfolio Capstone

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## Portfolio

### The Diary of a Collegiate Black Woman

Director

<https://youtu.be/X51t-M05chk>

### Momma's Boy

Creative Director

<https://vimeo.com/221897974>

### James Dawson Documentary Sound

Recordist

<https://youtu.be/NmTyitUf2tA>

## Key Personnel

- **Writer** Di'Monds Davidson
- **Producer** Becca Castenada
- **Director** Kofi Gayle-Tendai
- **Assistant Director** Sid Dawson III
- **Director of Photography** Daiei Onoguchi
- **Sound Designer** Guiherme Magrin
- **Sound Mixers** Kayla Lattimore  
Shay Dawson
- **Script Supervisor** Caroline Chadbourne
- **Script Editor** Kat Cooper
- **Photographers** Eli O'Brien  
Hannah Shows
- **Cast**
  - I will be using Non-Union actors to keep costs low and legal obligations to the bare minimum. I plan on casting at a local theatre group in the DMV area as well as the use of online casting sites.
- **Rose** Tia Marie Beverly
- **Kenny "Bud" Jr.** Bryce Douglas
- **Kenny** Charles Turner
- **Police Officer** Adam Rosenfeld