



# DOWN CLAIBORNE

IRLANDE, USA / 2018 / 50 MINS

DIR: MOIRA TIERNEY



arts  
the art of film

# DOWN CLAIBORNE / DIR: MOIRA TIERNEY



Marie Laveau

Reverend Avery Alexander

**51 MINS / SUPER 8MM AND 16MM ON DCP / IRELAND/USA 2018**

TREME, NEW ORLEANS: Defying a highway overpass that split their neighbourhood in two, the local community reclaim their territory using dynamic mural paintings and the subversive traditions of the Mardi Gras Indians to create an alternative version of their history, referring to the various stages of the Civil Rights movement, including the Maroon tradition that united runaway slaves and Native Americans.

## **SYNOPSIS:**

One of the most striking aspects of New Orleans' topography is a highway that cuts right through the city, slicing through, among others, the historic 7th ward. Built in 1968, it dismantled one of the most active Black neighbourhoods, which still operates under the shadows of the "freeway". The local community reclaims their neighbourhood using a variety of tactics: mural painting, represented by the frescoes painted onto the concrete pillars supporting the highway overpass; collective masking traditions, as evidenced by the Mardi Gras Indians, in the neighbourhoods surrounding the highway.

These two elements of local culture share an insistence on the importance of history, highlighting its role in the perpetuation of the culture and in the ongoing resistance to its displacement. Their content often overlaps (the highway frescoes reference the Mardi Gras Indians as well as the Maroon tradition of runaway slaves and Native Americans forming independent communities) and both operate within the post-colonial "profession of hybridization", as defined by Haitian poet René Depestre.

The film zooms in on the Mississippi and down into the Treme, slides under the highway overpass and moves down Claiborne Avenue from pillar to pillar, building to a celebratory and cathartic climax with the Comanche Hunter and Hard Head Hunter tribes of the Mardi Gras Indians meeting in ceremonial battle on Mardi Gras Day.

**CAST / MUSIC:** Big Chief Kevin Goodman (Flaming Arrows), Big Chief Demond Melancon (Young Seminoles), Mario Abney, John Lacarbiere III, Rahsaana Ison

**CONTACT:** Moira Tierney (Director/Producer)  
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Big Chief Kevin Goodman

### STATEMENT:

This film took shape slowly, as a result of friendships and long conversations. In 2012, thanks to an Irish friend, I was invited to join Big Chief Kevin Goodman on Mardi Gras Day. I had some rolls of Super 8mm film with me and B.C. Goodman gave me permission to film their activities. I returned a year later with DVDs of the footage to share with participants, which led me to Big Chief Demond Melancon, who offered to record a series of Mardi Gras Indian songs for the project. As my relationships with community members developed, I began to understand the continuity which links their current activities to the historical experiences of their past. It became crucial to acknowledge this history - the challenge was how to integrate it into the film.

The activities of the Mardi Gras Indians are visually stunning; it would have been easy to make a film that was easy on the eye, without challenging the viewer in any way (New Orleans photographers do great business with their photographs of the Mardi Gras Indians). I realised, however, that their activities have an intimate relationship with the cycles of repression and resistance that form their history (from slavery up until the present day) and that it was crucial to refer to this history in the film. Once again, I followed the lead of local artists and filmed a series of historical murals, painted onto a highway overpass, as a means of introducing this history to the public.

I shot on Super 8mm and 16mm silent film, editing in camera as much as possible. I wanted the sound track to add layers of information to the image, without providing an authoritative "explanation". It was necessary to fill in the gaps in the official histories and I had the idea of the exchange of information via less linear circuitry. I constructed the "scenario" as a collage of voices: excerpts from New Orleans radio stations; spoken word (composed for the film by John Lacarbiere III); two jazz tracks contributed by Mario Abney, whose gigs I regularly attended in New Orleans; extracts from archival material or contemporary events listings; songs of the Mardi Gras Indians, courtesy of B.C. Goodman and B.C. Melancon; and the final voice-over, which was recorded impromptu by B.C. Goodman as we watched a cut of the film together.

### LINKS:

1 min film clip (Mardi Gras Day footage)	<a href="http://bit.ly/DownClaiborne">http://bit.ly/DownClaiborne</a>
3 min trailer	<a href="http://bit.ly/DownClaiborneTrailer">http://bit.ly/DownClaiborneTrailer</a>
Stills	<a href="http://bit.ly/DownClaiborneStills">http://bit.ly/DownClaiborneStills</a>

**FILM WEBSITE:** <http://moiratierney.net/down-claiborne.htm>

**PRESS:** Listed as one of the ten best films of 2018 by Nicole Brenez (Cinémathèque Française)

## CREDITS:

Cinematography and editing: Moira Tierney

Audio recording: Stephen Richardson and Moira Tierney

Sound mix: Paul Womack

Editorial Consultants: Big Chief Kevin Goodman, Flaming Arrows Tribe  
Mama Jennifer Turner, Community Book Center, Bayou Road

Narrators: Big Chief Kevin Goodman  
Rahsaana Ison  
John Lacarbiere III  
Atibon Nazaire  
Big Chief Honey Bannister

*Treme* Poem: John Lacarbiere III

Music: *Let's Go Get'em*  
*My Gang Don't Bow Down*  
Big Chief Kevin Goodman & The Flaming Arrows

*The Trial*  
*The Cross*  
Mario Abney (trumpet)  
Josh Atkin (alto & tenor), Chris Slone (bass),  
Rashon Murph (piano) and Julian Addison (drums)

*Hold'em Joe*  
Big Chief Kevin Goodman

*Indian Red*  
Big Chief Demond Melancon  
& the Young Seminole Tribe:  
Big Queen Alicia  
Big Chief Demond  
Spyboy Trigger  
Spyboy Shaudy  
Gang Flag Frank  
Tribal Rep Travis

Conch:  
Okai Music

Claiborne Avenue Murals: Commissioned by the New Orleans African History Museum.  
Artists: Robert Aquarius, Dwayne D Conrad, Lanis Domino,  
Cheryl Mckay Dixon, Ivan Watkins

Unifiers Soul Brothers  
Mural & Truck: Artist: Percy Taplet

Nuthin But Fire Mural: Artist: Jessica Strahan

Mardi Gras footage: Shot with permission from Big Chief Kevin Goodman  
Featuring:

Flaming Arrows:  
Big Chief Kevin Goodman  
Big Queen Angel  
Lil Queen Kavon Goodman  
Gang Flag Clarence Sasha  
Gang Flag Clarence's Sister Ingrid

Seventh Ward Hard Head Hunters:  
Big Chief Otto  
Big Queen Yvonne  
Gang Flag 'Big Easy' Eddie  
Spyboy Alphonse  
Spyboy Jay Mckay  
Harold

Ninth Ward Comanche Hunters:  
Big Chief Keke  
Spyboy Charlie  
Wildman Ro

Young Seminoles:  
Big Chief Demond Melancon

7th Ward Warriors:  
Gang Flag Merlin Dejean  
Big Chief Smiley Ricks  
Mardi Gras Mambo James

Many Thanks To:

Rene Broussard, Zeitgeist Multi-Disciplinary Arts Center, NOLA  
John Mhiripiri & Anthology Film Archives, New York; Barbara  
and Stephen at Filmbase, Dublin; Frankie Boué, Courtney  
Egan, Paula Gilligan, Ana Hernandez and Rontherin Ratliff,  
Jonique Hewitt, Maria Hinds, Jill McDermid and Eric  
Hokansen, Fred Hatt, Horton Humble, Ariel Jackson, Patrice  
Lerochereuil, Delia Nakayama, Jewel Robinson, Matthew  
Shilling, Mary Taylor, Tara Thierry, Eoin Tierney, Maya Weimer,  
Amy Wright, Maria Venuto at the Standby Program.

Super 8mm film:  
16mm film:  
Telecine:

Developed at Cinelab, Massachusetts  
Developed at Colorlab, Maryland  
Cinelab, Massachusetts

Production Funding:

Arts Council of Ireland



Completion Funding:

New Orleans Jazz and Heritage  
Community Partnership Grant



## MOIRA TIERNEY BIO:

Moira Tierney studied at University College Dublin (B.A.) and the École nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris-Cergy (DNSEP); she worked at Anthology Film Archives in New York from 1998-2001 on a Fulbright Scholarship. Her films "Matilda Tone" and "Down Claiborne" received Project Awards from the Irish Arts Council; "Nouakchott Rocks" (the first Irish-Mauritanian co-production on record) received Irish Film Board Distribution Funding for its screening at the Rotterdam Film Festival in 2012. Her work has been screened extensively at institutions, galleries and festivals including the Fondation Cartier in Paris, the Rio Film Festival, the London and Edinburgh Film Festivals, Anthology Film Archives, the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid and the Film Museum in Moscow. She was commissioned by the cross-border Peace III Initiative to make a film ("Are We There Yet?" 2010) and carry out workshops with schoolchildren on the Irish border and has carried out film workshops in Ireland, France and Estonia. She is co-founder of the SOLUS film collective, a Dublin-based group whose mission is to distribute Irish work abroad and to bring new international work to Ireland. Her films are distributed by the Collectif Jeune Cinema in Paris and by Third World Newsreel and the Film-Maker's Co-operative in New York. Recent presentations include screenings of "Down Claiborne" at FID Film Festival Marseille, Punto de Vista Film Festival in Pampona, Anthology Film Archives in New York and Wien Cultural Centre in Vienna; a career retrospective at the Film-Makers Co-op, New York and a French tour as part of Culture Ireland's programme for Ireland's E.U. Presidency in 2013.

## FILMOGRAPHY:

Down Claiborne	Super 8mm & 16mm (DCP) / 50' / 2018
Riba/Fish	16mm / 5' / 2017
American Dreams #5	16mm / 7' / 2016
St Joseph's Night	Super 8mm / 5' / 2014
Invent The Future	Super 8mm / 3' / 2012
You Still Belong	Super 8mm / 3' / 2012
Bellefont 31	Super 8mm / 20' / 2012
Are We There Yet?	16mm / loop installation / 2010
Nouakchott Rocks	Super 8mm / 20' / 2010
Collective Film	Super 8mm / 22 mins' / 2010
Live Large, Baby	Super 8mm / 19' / 2010
American Dreams #4	16mm / 7' / 2009
Lucha Libre	Super 8mm blown up to 16mm / 3' / 2009
Eat Lamb	Super 8mm / 7' / 2009
Live Action New York	Super 8mm / 15' / 2009
Performance Is	Super 8mm / 5' / 2009
Habibi	Super 8mm blown up to 16mm / 7' / 2008
Liberty Kids	Super 8mm blown up to 16mm / 5' / 2006
Hope's Voice	Super 8mm / 10' / 2006
Matilda Tone	Super 8mm blown up to 16mm / 25' / 2005
Circus	Super 8mm / 3' / 2003
American Dreams #3	16mm / 5' / 2002
Radio Haiti	Super 8mm blown up to 16mm / 4' / 2001
American Dreams #1 et #2	Super 8mm / 3' / 2001
Morzh / Walrus	16mm / 3' / 2001
Untitled / #318	Super 8mm / 3' / 2001
Tiger Me Bollix	Super 8mm blown up to 16mm / 3' / 2000
You Can't Keep A Good Snake Down	16mm / 4' / 2000
The Boys Are Back In Town	16mm / 2' / 2000
Ride City	Super 8mm / 10' / 1999