

TESSA

A MEGAN DAHL FILM



HANDSOME CHANCE FILMS PRESENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH HERE FOR GOOD FILMS

"TESSA" TESSA BROWN • MEAGAN BROWN • CHASE BROWN • MERIN BROWN • ELIAS BROWN

PRODUCED BY ADAM PINNEY • CINEMATOGRAPHY & EDITING BY KATIE HAWKINS

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY THOMAS BARNWELL & IAN DEATON

DIRECTED BY MEGAN DAHL



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STORY



LOGLINE


Tessa is a 7-year-old girl born with limb differences, adopted as an infant from an orphanage in Ethiopia by a loving family that instills in her that she can do anything. Tessa wants to swim. With practice, perseverance, and passion, Tessa competes in her first swim meet.

SYNOPSIS

Tessa is a documentary set in the South about finding freedom and independence, regardless of physical limitations, disability, and perceptions. The story follows Tessa, a 7-year-old girl born with limb difference, adopted as an infant from an orphanage in Ethiopia by a loving family in Austin, Texas. What Tessa wants to do is swim. With practice, perseverance, and passion, Tessa shows the true endurance of the human spirit by competing in her first swim meet at the Endeavor Games, the premier adaptive sports competition in the United States.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



The idea to make this documentary began in 2018 when Tessa decided she wanted to take the swim test at the YMCA in a small town south of Austin, Texas, a feat that most kids don't attempt until they're 8 or 9 years old. Despite being only 7, and despite having a different body configuration (Tessa was born with no legs and one partial arm), she took the test and passed! But that wasn't the end of her story, and it was just the beginning of ours.

I followed Tessa's journey learning to swim since she was just 2 years old and was always excited to see her progress and shining spirit. After talking with her swim coach Jackie and her Mom Meagan, it felt like stars were aligning in coming together to tell this story, but living in Atlanta while they live in Austin, Texas and putting together a small Production team and a self-funded and crowd-funded budget proved challenging.

As a film Producer, I've produced the short film *"That Was Awesome (2018)"* and the feature film *"How To Ruin The Holidays (2023)"* that both star adult actors with special needs and delve deep into themes of disability, accessibility, and autonomy, and those experiences have equipped me with the understanding of some challenges facing this community, and with the desire to continue helping tell these stories as best I can. It is a fine line to tell an inspiring story of hard work and finding joy while avoiding 'tokenism' or the misguided notion that Tessa is only inspiring because of her limb difference. This is a story about the systems and people who create spaces for people who look different and have different bodily requirements, and who persist in bringing dignity and access to those people not for a moment, but for a lifetime. Tessa is not "overcoming her disability;" she is exploring her passion, with a community that loves her providing support at every point.

This film follows Tessa's journey to compete in her first swim meet at the Endeavor Games, the premiere sports competition for athletes with disabilities, and it is my honor to document the experience and bring her story to the world. Tessa has lived her short life so far being 'Big Brave', learning to swim when many thought she couldn't, and treating herself with kindness, patience, and perseverance, and stepping out of the Producer role and into the Director role for the first time is my moment of 'Big Brave' following in her wake.

- MEGAN DAHL

TEAM



MEGAN DAHL DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Megan is an Atlanta-based Producer and Director and owner of Handsome Chance Films. She's been part of major productions including *Discovering Ardi* (Discovery Channel), *Too Many Cooks*, *Your Pretty Face is Going to Hell* (Adult Swim), *Lily's Mirror* (Handsome Chance), the award winning feature *The Arbalest* (Fake Wood Wallpaper), countless music videos for artists Skrillex, Galantis, Raury, 6lack, Dangermouse x Run The Jewels x Big Boi, and features *How To Ruin The Holidays* (Dad's Garage) and *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* (Pastel, A24). Megan was a member of ALMA "Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta" class of 2018, and has served as a panelist for Screencraft Writers Conference as part of the Atlanta Film Fest. This is Megan's first time Directing.



ADAM PINNEY PRODUCER

Adam Pinney is a writer/director whose 2016 film, *The Arbalest*, won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2016 SXSW Film Festival, and was previously selected to participate in the 2015 IFP Narrative Labs. Adam was the cinematographer for Joe Swanberg's *24 Exposures*, and for Adult Swim's viral short, *Too Many Cooks*. He is also an illustrator and Graphic Designer who has created posters for Jeremy Saulnier's *Green Room* and Macon Blair's Sundance winning film, *I Don't Feel at Home in this World Anymore*.



KATIE HAWKINS DP/EDITOR

Katie is passionate about telling stories that find the good in the world. She uses cinematography to tell stories that challenge, grow and inspire people to make the world a better place. The most recent stories she's helped tell include *Unforgivable* and *Clarkston: Mother of Exiles*.



CORY LOCATELLI PRODUCTION MANAGER

Cory is typically found miles from civilization, exploring wild rivers and rugged mountains, working to capture the untouched beauty of this planet. He has a deep passion for both the conservation and preservation of the remaining natural spaces on this planet, and he uses his images to instill awe and ignite a desire within the hearts of those who view his work, to engage in the protection of these still wild, yet often endangered places. When he's not waste-deep in a glacial river or scrambling up a sheer granite face, Cory can be found working alongside his filmmaking wife, Katie Hawkins, helping her to tell stories that find the good in the world.

FAMILY



TESSA BROWN MAIN SUBJECT

MERIN BROWN OLDER SISTER

ELIAS BROWN OLDER BROTHER

MEAGAN BROWN MOTHER

CHASE BROWN FATHER

JACKIE REILLY SWIM COACH

HAVEN SHEPHERD OLDER FRIEND



LINKS

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/375816037>

SCREENER

<https://vimeo.com/handsomechance/tessa>
password: screener22

WEBSITE

<https://www.tessathedocumentary.com/>

INSTAGRAM

<https://www.instagram.com/handsomechancefilms/>

IMDB

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14585210/?ref_=ttfc_fc_tt



SPECS

Project Type	Documentary, Short
Genres	Sports, Disability, Youth, Drama
Run Time	15:46
Completion Date	February 28, 2023
Production Budget	20,000 USD
Country of Origin	USA
Country of Filming	USA
Language	English
Shooting Format	Digital
Aspect Ratio	16:9
Film Color	Color
First-time Filmmaker	Yes
Woman Filmmaker	Yes
POC Filmmaker	Yes
Student Project	No

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