



UNIT CIRCLE LTD. and AYKM PRODUCTIONS
presents

AMERICA YOU KILL ME

The rise, fall, and legacy of gay rights warrior Jeffrey Montgomery,
& the ongoing struggle for equality in the Midwest.

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE FILM OVERVIEW

AMERICA YOU KILL ME, LLC.
1343 Lakepointe Street
Grosse Pointe Park, MI 48230

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227 Iron Street, #305
Detroit, MI 48207

Silver Creek

Silver Bullet

SYNOPSIS

"He is among the most visible and accomplished advocates for safety and equality of GLBT people in Michigan history... a hero and living legend."

Former Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm

For many Americans, it may seem as though the recent waves of change in LGBT rights happened overnight, but this is not so. A long road against intolerance and opposition was slowly paved for decades, by generations of activists across the nation who fought hard for every step.

This is a feature-length documentary film about the life and impact of one such leader.

In 1985, a young man was killed outside of a bar in Detroit. After the funeral, his boyfriend was horrified to learn that police were not even going to investigate the murder. To them, it was 'just another gay killing', and not worth the resources.

In 1991 he co-founded the Triangle Foundation to fight back against anti-gay violence and support victims of hate crime attacks and abuse. Undeterred by death threats, vandalism, sabotage, or even being placed on the hit-list of the Aryan Nation, he wielded wit and intellect to confront politicians and push local/national media to better report on gay issues.

Through advocacy and legal support, Triangle grew to encompass other needs of the community such as job discrimination, housing discrimination, social representation, and more. Montgomery was a critical voice during the media storm around the Scott Amedure murder, commonly known as the "Jenny Jones" Trial. He would coach prosecutors on battling the so-called 'gay panic defense' in dozens of trials, including the Matthew Shepard murder in Wyoming. For years, Triangle held back the worst of the right-wing legislative attacks, directly impacting tens of thousands of lives through support and legal counsel and stood as a beacon for a community held in contempt by much of its midwestern state.

By 2003, far from the coasts, it would become the 4th largest statewide LGBT organization in the country.

Beyond his foes on the religious right, Montgomery would make enemies even within the movement, among the wealthy conservatives who deemed his outspoken pro-sex, anti-racist, trans-inclusive positions to be too progressive or even dangerous.

In 2007 Montgomery retired in controversy, with his health in decline but his radical voice intact. This film is about the costs and rewards of activism, and what it takes to be strategically effective at creating change. It illuminates the path, and sacrifices, between a time when local law enforcement ignored gay lives as disposable, to one when Detroit police liaisons to the gay community dance in Pride marches.

Now in 2020, despite recent progress, this community faces renewed opposition, and new attacks. Our story examines the fate of progressive leaders who devote their lives to tireless work on behalf of others, and how motivated, inspired individuals can impact the lives of those around them.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

AMERICA YOU KILL ME is a feature-length documentary about gay rights warrior Jeffrey Montgomery. It has been filmed primarily in digital 4k, and when finished, will be approximately 90 minutes long.

In 2013 Jeff was persuaded by his brother, John, to share stories of his activist work, observations about the gay community's rise as a social and political force, and the goals still left to accomplish.

The project was initially imagined as a memoir told entirely in his own words, and a long interview (*conducted by Detroit radio host Craig Fahle*), became the foundation of the picture. While an illustrated version of this conversation could well have sustained an entire film, it quickly became clear this was a much larger tale. Thus, we reached out to other voices, including fellow activists and politicians, as well as those he impacted, enraged, or inspired. For the rest of his life we continued to capture his thoughts on current events, including the landmark Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage, the Orlando nightclub massacre, as well as what's needed to sustain and propel progress.

The original *tangible* goal had been to launch a speaking tour, kicking off a new phase in Montgomery's long career as an advocate, but with his passing that ending is sadly no longer possible.

What we *can* do is honor his work and create a permanent document of what he fought so hard for.

This is not a hagiography. He made mistakes, and he made enemies, and from the start of the project he was adamant about never being involved in the post-production editorial process.

While this film centers on an individual, it intends to raise awareness of other leaders who, like Montgomery, made sacrifices and fought hard to create a better world than the one they found. Activism is not without cost, and those who dedicate their lives to it do not often reap rewards of treasure or comfort. Current and future generations deserve to see, and viscerally understand, what those leaders did in order to create the social climate we have inherited.

The title, which has taken on additional meaning, comes from an acclaimed speech he gave at Brown University for the inaugural Matthew Shepard memorial, following the trial in 2000, articulating many of his core values and ideals. [That full address can be found here.](#)

Jeffrey Montgomery died on July 18, 2016 at the age of 63, but through this project his legacy lives on.

INTERVIEW SUBJECTS / APPEARANCES (selected)



JEFFREY MONTGOMERY - In interviews from 2013 to 2016, his voice is at the center of the film.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN - US Senator from Michigan (1979-2015)

MAYOR DENNIS ARCHER - 67th Mayor of Detroit (1994-2001). First mayor to meet with gay community leaders.

KATE KENDELL, Esq. - Executive Director, National Center for Lesbian Rights.

GREG VARNUM - Montgomery's former assistant, Triangle Foundation

SEAN KOSOFSKY - Director of Public Policy, Triangle Foundation

JENNIFER GRANHOLM - Michigan Governor (2002-2011)

IKE McKINNON - Detroit Police Chief (1994-1998), Detroit Deputy Mayor (2013-2016)

SUE HYDE - National LGBTQ Task Force. Director of Creating Change Conference (30 years)

REV. DR. RENEE McCOY - National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gay (NCBLG)

JOHN KAVANAUGH - Activist, Author - 'Welcome to The Gay Age'.

CURTIS LIPSCOMB - Executive Director, LGBT Detroit.

KARY MOSS - Executive Director, Michigan ACLU.

JAMES MONTGOMERY - Bandleader, Singer, older Brother.

JOHN MONTGOMERY - Producer, Restaurateur, oldest Brother.

TIM RETZLOFF, PhD. - Author, Professor of LGBTQ Studies/U.S. History @Wayne State University.

JIM LESSENBERRY - Former Triangle Board Chairman, Animal Behaviorist, Pilot.

And many more...

THE TEAM

DANIEL LAND

DIRECTOR / EDITOR / DP / VFX

Daniel Land is a Detroit-based filmmaker and visual artist. He completed his first feature-length motion picture in high school, graduated from the College For Creative Studies, and since directed music videos, commercials, and an array of narrative, documentary, animated, and experimental shorts. As a visual effects supervisor, he has led teams of artists to design and deliver purposeful VFX imagery for television series (Battles BC, Art of War) and Hollywood feature films (Saving Lincoln, Isa, Game of Death). On the historical feature 'Saving Lincoln', he also served as 2nd Unit Director. 'Voyagers', an animated short he co-directed with Paul Frieling, was a finalist in the 2015 Cinespace competition in Houston, and his music video for Audra Kubat's 'Sparrow' was nominated for a Detroit Music Award. In 2014 he was awarded a Kresge Arts Fellowship in Film Direction.

JOHN MONTGOMERY

PRODUCER

John Montgomery is a documentary producer, restaurateur, and former record business executive. He became the National Promotion Director (FM radio) for Warner Brothers Records from 1975-1977, after being the first WB salesman to gross \$1,000,000 a month in the San Francisco market. Heavily involved in promoting/marketing acts such as George Harrison, Fleetwood Mac, Neil Young, Rod Stewart, Bonnie Raitt, and as Vice President of Sales and Promotion for Sire Records (1977-1982) promoted Madonna, The Ramones, Talking Heads, Pretenders, and Dead Boys. As Jeffrey's older brother, he is also responsible for convincing him to open up and share his story for this film.

AUDRA KUBAT

COMPOSER

Detroit Music Award winning singer/songwriter Audra Kubat has released 5 albums to critical acclaim in a career that spans over 20 years. A composer, performer, and educator, Kubat's work has earned her a place in the community as a resource for empowerment through songwriting and music for all ages. Previous film collaborations include 'The Death of Michael Smith' and 'In-Zero'. Currently, she is promoting her sixth album, and teaching workshops and classes with Inside Out Literary Arts Project, Living Arts Detroit, Wolf Trap and the Detroit Institute for Music Education (DIME).

JIMMY DIXON

SOUND DESIGN

Dixon is an Audio Engineering graduate from Columbia University, and has served as sound editor of feature-length productions (Into the Wake) and short films (You Bet, Valhalla Blues). He founded Homestead Studios in 2013 for production sound, post-production, and musical recording. Recently, he produced, recorded, and mixed the latest Audra Kubat album, 'Mended Vessel'.

MARK BELTAIRE

MARKETING DIRECTOR / ASSOCIATE-PRODUCER

A 30-year veteran of broadcast, marketing and e-marketing, website creation and voiceover, Beltaire has been a friend of the Montgomery family since an early age, literally growing up with all three Montgomery brothers. As a close friend of Jeffrey's, he brings a unique understanding of Jeffrey's personal life and career. "Considering today's social and political environment there has never been a better time to tell Jeffrey's story than right now", remarked Beltaire.

CONSULTANTS / PARTNERS

KIMBERLY SCHROEDER, ARCHIVIST / HISTORIAN
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ALLEN BROTHERS, PLLC.

LGBT DETROIT

MICHIGAN ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)

NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS
KATE KENDELL, Esq., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JOHN CORVINO, PhD., PROFESSOR and CHAIR of PHILOSOPHY DEPT.
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TARGET AUDIENCE

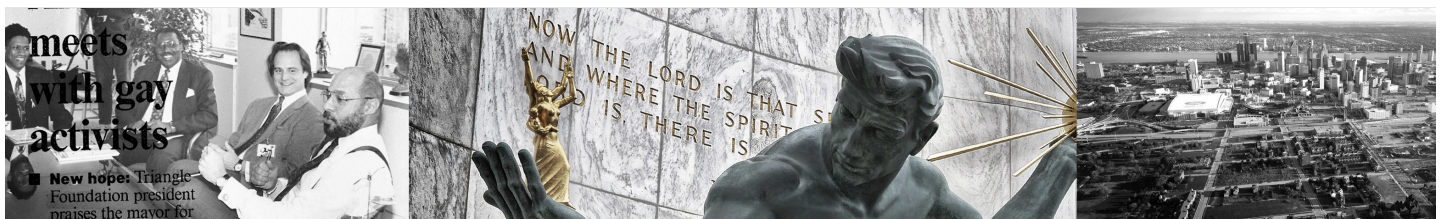
We see our core primary audience as young activists or LGBT folks who may be only vaguely familiar with the grassroots battle of years past, who are stepping into the next phase of the movement.

Montgomery ignited and nurtured the flame of social justice in new waves of activists while he was alive.

Even though he is gone, this film empowers his legacy to continue doing so.

The second, larger audience is a general public that may be relatively new to thinking about LGBT people and rights, who are ready to become allies. So much has happened in the past decades to bring this underserved and vulnerable group out into the mainstream consciousness, and we want to embrace the curious newcomer with a kind of 'Gay in America 101' approach to some topics. Many people have recently evolved their opinions and preconceptions, or are in the process of doing so, and the charisma of Montgomery serves him as an ideal ambassador to those outside the movement, both then and now.

Anyone who cares about social justice, equality - or even just courage - will find something of value here.



THE ROAD AHEAD

This summer and fall saw much progress. Weeks of final production and a few short months of dedicated post-production helped move the production forward.

A trove of archival footage has been processed, including Montgomery's many televised appearances as an advocate. We have a team at Wayne State University logging and licensing material, and the family has organized his personal collection and physical archives (newspaper clippings, photographs, writings, correspondence).

Currently our goal is to finalize remaining aspects of the documentary to make it "festival ready" for its April premiere at this year's FREEP Film Festival in Detroit.



FINAL THOUGHTS

This history deserves to be known to the current – and future - generations of leaders and activists, and all who have benefitted from their struggles. To those who are new to this topic, we hope the film can serve as an entry point to deeper empathy and understanding through the dramatic personal narrative of Jeffrey Montgomery.

We feel strongly that telling his story now is even more important than it was when we began. Renewed challenges and emboldened opposition now stand in the way of true equality. Montgomery was one of a kind, but his story parallels many of his contemporaries that fought, and still fight, for LGBT rights and protections. We hope to help inspire the next generation to advance these causes and fight for what they believe in.

