

PRESS KIT

LS3 STUDIOS PRESENTS

A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY · NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

# A Place Called Desire

*"the community that care forgot"*

A documentary by Leonard Smith III

| Best Documentary | Heritage Media Award | Silver Telly | WYES-PBS |
|---|---|---|---|
| BLACK FILM FESTIVAL OF NEW ORLEANS 2021 | LOUISIANA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION 2021 | TELLY AWARDS 2020 | BROADCAST FEBRUARY 7, 2022 |

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aplacecalleddesire.com

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Cover: aerial view of Desire. Courtesy of the HANO Collection, City Archives & Special Collections, New Orleans Public Library.

AT A GLANCE

# A community's story, told by the people who lived it.

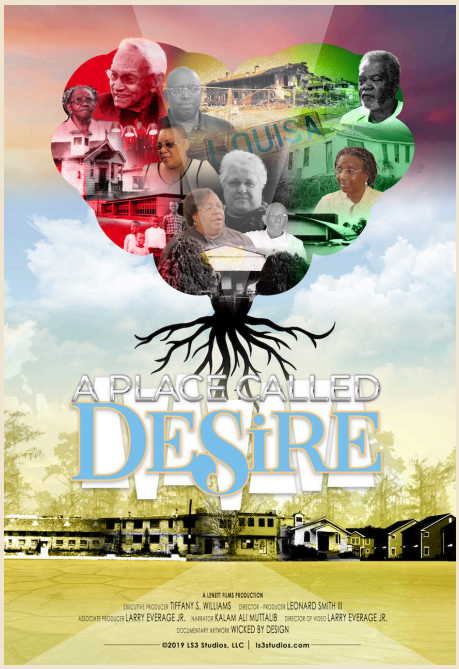
## LOGLINE

> Sixty people who called it home reclaim the story of Desire, the New Orleans neighborhood the headlines got wrong, from the promise of the 1940s to Hurricane Katrina and the New Desire.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

A Place Called Desire shares the stories of the New Orleans Upper 9th Ward Desire community. Producer and director Leonard Smith III recreates the historical memory of a community and documents the legacy of pride by those who lived in this post-World War II development. Smith enables the viewer to look beyond unfair stereotypes and see the thriving, loving community of Desire.[1]

| | |
|---|---|
| FORMAT | Feature documentary, English |
| RUNNING TIME | 86 min 45 sec, WYES-PBS broadcast version[2]<br>Festival version listed at 91–93 min[3] |
| COPYRIGHT | © 2019 LS3 Studios, LLC · festival release 2020[3] |
| COUNTRY | United States |
| SETTING | Desire, Upper 9th Ward, New Orleans, Louisiana |
| PRODUCTION | A Lenett Films Production for LS3 Studios, LLC |
| INTERVIEWS | 60+ residents and former residents, recorded since 2008[4] |
| ARCHIVAL | Family photographs and 8mm home movies of the Desire community[5]<br>HANO Collection, New Orleans Public Library<br>The Historic New Orleans Collection<br>Boseman Family Collection |
| FESTIVAL PREMIERE | New Orleans Film Festival 2020, Southern US premiere[3] |
| BROADCAST | WYES-PBS, New Orleans, Monday, February 7, 2022, 9 p.m.[6] |
| TRAILER | vimeo.com/586938373 |




Official poster. Artwork by Wicked by Design.

### IN ONE LINE

"Somehow the filmmaker shares hard truths with a gentle touch."
Dr. Al Kennedy, historian[4]

1 PBS, A Place Called Desire: pbs.org/show/place-called-desire · 2 PBS video page: pbs.org/video/a-place-called-desire-fg80kb · 3 2020 New Orleans Film Festival listing: watch.eventive.org/noff2020/play/5f627c1e572378430fd9ce04 · 4 aplacecalleddesire.com · 5 NNPA / BlackPressUSA: blackpressusa.com · 6 aplacecalleddesire.com/wyes-pbs-will-air-a-place-called-desire


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SYNOPSIS

# Two disasters, one community, and a feeling of being forgotten.

A Place Called Desire traces one of New Orleans' earliest subdivisions for Black homeownership, and one of America's largest housing developments, through the memories of more than sixty people who called Desire home. Their story is both a promising and a cautionary tale of what people can accomplish when given opportunities, and of how systems and society at large can both help to build and destroy a community's pursuit of the American Dream.[1]

Contrary to what the public was led to believe, there was a sense of normalcy growing up in Desire. The neighborhood was self-contained: churches of many denominations, public and private schools, shops, food trucks and record trucks, parks, and community centers for after-school tutoring. Homeowners shared streets with renters, and many families in government-subsidized housing dreamed of owning a home. But Desire's seniors were housed on land that would later be labeled a Superfund site, and a neighborhood school was exposed too. Then came Hurricane Katrina.

Since 2008, filmmaker Leonard Smith III, who grew up in Desire in the 1960s and '70s, has recorded the people who know this story best, weaving their interviews with family photographs and 8mm home movies.[2] The film is presented from a vantage point the headlines never offered: that of insiders.




New Orleans Public Library Bookmobile in Desire. Courtesy of the HANO Collection, City Archives & Special Collections, New Orleans Public Library.

## STRUCTURE · SIX CHAPTERS, SEVEN DECADES

OPENER

### A Place Called Desire

Who gets to tell a community's story? The film opens from the inside.

1940S – 1950S

### A Better Life

Early Black homeownership, and the opening of one of America's largest housing developments.

1960S – 1970S

### It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

Churches, schools, bookmobiles and neighbors. Hurricane Betsy and the 1970 Black Panther standoff.

1980S – 1990S

### The Struggle Is Real

Neglect, hardship and the Agriculture Street Landfill. A tight-knit community holding on.

RECKONING

### The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Hard truths about government, housing and health.

2000S

### "The New Desire"

Hurricane Katrina, displacement and the new development rising where the old one stood.

1 Synopsis, 2020 New Orleans Film Festival: watch.eventive.org/noff2020/play/5f627c1e572378430fd9ce04 · 2 NNPA / BlackPressUSA: blackpressusa.com/award-winning-filmmaker-genealogist-reveals-intimate-truth-and-personal-histories-of-upper-9th-ward-desire-community · Long synopsis adapted from the project statement by Leslie Smith Everage.


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THE FILMMAKER

# Leonard Smith III



Leonard Smith III, director and producer.

Leonard Smith III is a documentarian, genealogist and the founder of LS3 Studios, LLC. Since 1975 he has worked in every aspect of historical research, from genealogy, photography and technology to storytelling, filmmaking and music.[1] His studio has produced award-winning documentaries about musicians, institutions and family histories.

A Place Called Desire is the story of the community he grew up in during the 1960s and '70s. He recorded its first interviews in 2008 and spent twelve years in production, licensing archival images one photograph and one second of footage at a time after Hurricanes Betsy and Katrina washed away many family pictures. His guiding purpose: to "educate, entertain, and inspire others to tell their story."

## IN HIS WORDS

"There were struggles, many struggles, but there were also strengths and positives in this tight-knit community of thousands."

LEONARD SMITH III[2]

"One of the reasons I did this documentary is because I know that the people are still suffering to this day."

LEONARD SMITH III[3]

## KEY CREDITS

**DIRECTOR · PRODUCER · EDITOR**
Leonard Smith III

**WRITERS**
Terry M. Smith and Leonard Smith III

**NARRATOR**
Kalam Ali Muttalib

**DOCUMENTARY ARTWORK**
Wicked by Design

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**
Tiffany S. Williams

**ASSOCIATE PRODUCER · DIRECTOR OF VIDEO · CINEMATOGRAPHER**
Larry Everage Jr.

**RESEARCH**
Leonard Smith III · Valencia Hawkins, librarian[2]

**PRODUCTION**
A Lenett Films Production · LS3 Studios, LLC

1 aplacecalleddesire.com · 2 NNPA / BlackPressUSA: blackpressusa.com · 3 ABC12 WJRT: abc12.com · Credits from the official poster (© 2019 LS3 Studios, LLC) and the 2020 New Orleans Film Festival listing: watch.eventive.org/noff2020


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RECOGNITION

# Awards and festivals

WINNER
**Best Documentary**
Black Film Festival of New Orleans · 2021[1]

WINNER
**Audience Jury Award**
Black Film Festival of New Orleans · 2021[1]

WINNER
**Louisiana Heritage Media Award**
Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation · 2021[1]

SILVER WINNER
**Telly Award**
Non-broadcast, general · 2020[2]

GOLD WINNER
**AVA Digital Awards**
2020[1]

AWARD OF RECOGNITION
**Impact DOCS Awards**
Documentary Feature · 2020[3]

NOMINEE
**Humanities Documentary Film of the Year**
Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities · 2020[1]

FINALIST
**Best Documentary**
San Diego Black Film Festival · 2020[1]

SEMIFINALIST
**RootsTech Film Fest**
First RootsTech Film Fest[1]

OFFICIAL SELECTION
**New Orleans Film Festival**
2020 · Southern US premiere[4]

OFFICIAL SELECTION
**San Francisco Black Film Festival**
2020[1]

OFFICIAL SELECTION
**Paris Awards Film Festival**
Official selection

## WHAT CRITICS AND HISTORIANS SAY

"Essential viewing for anyone interested in New Orleans' cultural history and in Black struggle in the city and America. I can't recommend this movie enough."
ANTIGRAVITY MAGAZINE[5]

"There's no understating its value when it comes to collecting previously untold stories."
NOLA.COM · THE TIMES-PICAYUNE[6]

"Offers many unforgettable history lessons applicable to American history, Louisiana history, African American history, urban history … Somehow the filmmaker shares hard truths with a gentle touch."
DR. AL KENNEDY, HISTORIAN[7]

"Smith enables the viewer to look beyond unfair stereotypes and see the thriving, loving community of Desire."
WYES-PBS PROGRAM DESCRIPTION[8]

1 LS3 Studios: ls3studios.com/a-place-called-desire-unforgettable-history-lessons · 2 tellyawards.com/winners/2020 · 3 impactdocsawards.com/awards-of-recognition-july-2020 · 4 watch.eventive.org/noff2020 · 5 antigravitymagazine.com/feature/the-show-goes-on · 6 nola.com · 7 aplacecalleddesire.com · 8 pbs.org/show/place-called-desire


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COVERAGE

# Press, broadcast and interviews

## IN PRINT AND ONLINE

**ANTIGRAVITY MAGAZINE**
The Show Goes On (New Orleans Film Festival feature) · 2020

**NOLA.COM**
Second week of 2020 New Orleans Film Festival features documentary on 'Place Called Desire' · 2020

**THE GAMBIT**
The New Orleans Film Fest presents outdoor screenings · 2020

**WHAT NOT TO DOC**
New Orleans 2020: Documentary Overview · November 2020

**ACADIANA LIFESTYLE**
The True Story of Desire · June 2020 (archived)

**NNPA NEWSWIRE**
Award-winning filmmaker, genealogist reveals intimate truth and personal histories of Upper 9th Ward Desire community · syndicated in Black press titles

**THE DRUM**
In 'A Place Called Desire,' Leonard Smith III captures New Orleans history · archived

**DESKTOP DOCUMENTARIES**
Filmmaker Who Lost Home During Katrina Shares His Documentary Journey

**ABC12 · WJRT FLINT**
8th annual African American Film Series returns to Flint · 2022

## TELEVISION, RADIO AND PODCASTS

**WYES-PBS**
Broadcast premiere of the film · February 7, 2022

**WYES · STEPPING OUT**
Arts segment during the New Orleans Film Festival · November 13, 2020

**WWL-TV**
A Place Called Desire tells of struggles and triumphs in a New Orleans neighborhood · with Joe Caulo

**WWL-TV**
The Story Behind the Standoff · 50th anniversary report, 2020

**WWL-TV · THE 504**
A Place Called Desire on The 504, with Sheba Turk · October 2015

**WWNO · NPR**
Desire, Louisiana — Tripod: New Orleans at 300

**BLOGTALKRADIO**
Telling Family and Community Stories, with Bernice Alexander Bennett · March 31, 2020

**BLOGTALKRADIO**
A Place Called Desire with Leonard Smith, with Bernice Alexander Bennett · September 28, 2015

**NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**
Culture Conversation with Leonard Smith III

**NURTURING OUR ROOTS**
Interview with Dr. Antoinette Harrell · November 2015




Still from the official trailer, vimeo.com/586938373.

Every headline above links to the original story or broadcast. Archived copies from the Internet Archive are used where the original page is no longer online.


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SCREENINGS AND EDUCATION

# Watch it. Screen it. Teach it.

The film has been screened at festivals, at a private screening and panel discussion at the George and Joyce Wein Jazz & Heritage Center in New Orleans,[1] and in the 8th Annual African American Film Series at the Flint Institute of Arts in Michigan, followed by a panel with the filmmaker.[2]

LS3 Studios welcomes screenings by churches, schools, universities, libraries, museums, historical societies and festivals. Leonard Smith III is available for in-person or virtual question-and-answer sessions and panels.



Aerial view of the Desire community. Courtesy of the HANO Collection, City Archives & Special Collections, New Orleans Public Library.

## TEACH IT ALONGSIDE

American history · Louisiana history · African American history · Urban history · Racial history · Neighborhood studies · Studies of survival · Love and community

## MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO PRESS AND PROGRAMMERS

| | |
|---|---|
| TRAILER | vimeo.com/586938373 · embeddable |
| SCREENER | Private screening link for press, festivals and programmers, on request |
| IMAGES | Poster, production stills, archival photographs and filmmaker portrait, high resolution on request |
| INTERVIEWS | Leonard Smith III and featured community members, by phone, video or in person |
| ONLINE | aplacecalleddesire.com/press-kit.html · this kit and web-ready downloads |


PRESS AND BOOKING CONTACT

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1 aplacecalleddesire.com/private-screening-panel-discussion · 2 Communities First, Inc.: communitiesfirstinc.org/updates/2022-2023-african-american-film-series · Press kit prepared for LS3 Studios, LLC. All film images, artwork and text © 2019–2026 LS3 Studios, LLC. All rights reserved.


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