

4 Walls featuring S.T.A.R.R.

a slam poetry documentary

Synopsis

"4 Walls" is a film documenting the daily struggles and artistic endeavors of Carlton 'S.T.A.R.R.' Releford, a spoken word/slam poetry artist from Knoxville, Tennessee. This short-subject documentary features interviews, slams, and intimate revelations about life as a young black man trying to make ends meet. The film was a culmination of two years of work by director [George Washington Rogers, IV](#).



Background & History

"4 Walls" was originally intended to be a feature-length documentary revolving around *BlackSunshine*, a group of slam poets based out of Knoxville, Tennessee. However, due to budget and time constraints, this idea was abandoned in favor of focusing on just one member of the group, whose honesty and willingness to let the filmmakers into his personal life provided the basis for this project. "4 Walls featuring S.T.A.R.R." is the first in a series of showcase pieces for spoken word artists from *BlackSunshine*.

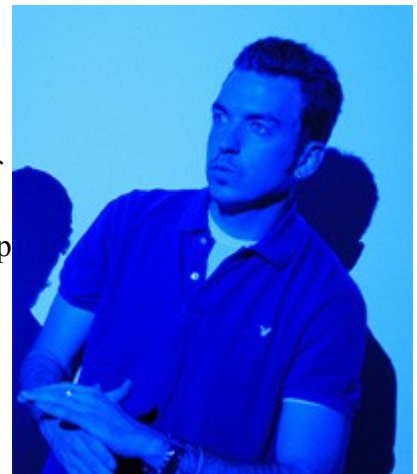
Currently, the documentary is being pitched as television pilot showcasing the slam poetry scene in the southern United States. Whether more "4 Walls" episodes are produced in the future remains to be seen. However, performance footage from the other members of *BlackSunshine* can be seen on this website and will also be included on the "4 Walls" DVD. In addition to S.T.A.R.R., the slam poets Black Atticus, Rhea Sunshine and Drop Knowledge are all featured in the [photo journal of the film](#), which is available through Blurb.

Screenings

In addition to being marketed for television, "4 Walls" has also been submitted for theatrical exhibition for several film festivals throughout the United States.

Director's Statement

The research for the documentary 4 Walls utilized a qualitative ethnographic approach as the main method to examine and understand Knoxville slam poets in their own environment. Using this form of ethnographic research allowed me to have an in-depth understanding of the poets' behavior and the reasons which governed that behavior. Focusing on Carlton "S.T.A.R.R." Releford from the spoken word group known as BlackSunshine, I was able to study and interpret the cultural diversity that emanated from the slam poetry movement. The fieldwork for this project consisted of over two years of observation and study. The 4 Walls documentary allowed me to present the results of this



holistic research methodology in a form that gave a first hand account of "S.T.A.R.R.'s" struggles and successes. Some techniques I used were direct first hand observations of the poet's daily behavior, participant observations, and conversations with different levels of formality ranging from small talk to long interviews, one on one, and in a group setting.

This method was appropriate because it allowed me to break down the barriers between being a spectator at a slam poetry competition and that of a fly on the wall that could see the poet as he lived his life from day to day. Instead of merely hearing the words he spoke with such conviction on stage, I saw first hand where those convictions came from. I experienced the entire birth cycle of the artist's poems. It's as if I saw the words incubating inside the poet, growing into sentences and phrases, and then culminating into that of a poem.



I saw the real and the raw, not just the slam competitions that people clamor and applaud for after the words are uttered on stage. It took this time intensive research to establish a rapport with the poet. Over a period of time, I was gradually welcomed into the "family" and worked to establish a close relationship with the poet. Each day of filming was different, requiring a fine mixture of respect, honesty, and time. Once I was accepted with open arms, I was allowed to observe unobtrusively to record the genuine candor of "S.T.A.R.R." Over time I was allowed to interact with the poet's family, friends, and acquaintances.

That I was accepted at this level shows the degree of involvement and intimacy I established with the artist. This required a great deal of personal time and resources in order to get a true insight into the inner workings of the poet. Having the ability to conduct in-depth interviews in the artist's environment allowed unparalleled access to the "why's" and "how's" of the many different situations that had surfaced in his life. Through this research I was able to discern the details of "S.T.A.R.R.'s" life and how he ultimately overcame the obstacles to make his voice heard.



Film Information

4 Walls featuring S.T.A.R.R.

Featuring: Carlton "S.T.A.R.R." Releford, Sonia Sanchez, Abiodun Oyewole

Director: George Washington Rogers, IV

Executive Producers: George Rogers, Brian Greer, Kenneth Stephens

Editor: Brian Greer

Music: BlackSunshine

Production Company: Brass Knuckles Productions

Category: Documentary (Short-Subject)

Running Time: 44 Minutes

Year of Production: 2007, USA

Official Website: www.4wallsfilm.com

The Filmmakers



George Washington Rogers, IV: Director, Executive Producer

Rogers is a graduate from The University of Tennessee with a dual Masters in International Business and Converging Media. His work deals with looking for the [authentic experience](#) in everyday reality through the use of audio, video and photography. He is also a published author, whose works include *4 Walls* (2007), *Eyes of the World* (2008) and *Non-Returning Status* (2008). Rogers has also produced and directed a number of award-winning films that include [Atrophy](#) (2003), [Gestation](#) (2004), [Consumption](#) (2004), [Transmissions](#) (2004), [4 Walls](#) (2007), and *Eyes of the World* (2008).



Brian Greer: Executive Producer, Picture Editor, Sound Editor, Sound Mixer

Brian Greer is a graduate of the University of Tennessee, and an award-winning independent filmmaker. Following college, Brian decided to follow up on his dream of making movies by collaborating with Wash Rogers on the short film "Atrophy." Since then, the pair have produced numerous short films and documentaries. Brian currently works in television production and also as a professional editor and videographer. His film credits include [Atrophy](#) (2003), [Transmissions](#) (2004), [Escape](#) (2005), [4 Walls](#) (2007), and *Eyes of the World* (2008).

