**PRESS RELEASE**

**“This Is [Not] Who We Are” Documentary Film**

**Boulder, CO — 2022**

It was one of the most shocking incidents of police racial profiling in Boulder’s recent history: a Black Naropa student, picking up trash outside his dorm, eventually surrounded by six officers with weapons drawn because they didn’t believe who he was. And it took a three-year collaboration of two Boulder-based filmmakers to fully illuminate how that incident fits into the panorama of Boulder’s racial history and makes us reflect on us who we are.

The resulting film, [“This Is [Not] Who We Are”](http://www.thisisnotwhowearefilm.com), premiered at the Boulder International Film Festival in March and and won the coveted "People's Choice Award". Co-directed by Beret E. Strong, of Landlocked Films, and Katrina Miller, of Blackat Video Productions, the film explores the gap between Boulder’s progressive self-image and the lived experience – historical and contemporary -- of its Black citizens. The film is being screened at various film festivals around the United States.

Black people have lived in Boulder continuously for nearly 150 years, but their history is not well known. Black families faced discrimination in housing, employment, education, health care, criminal justice, and social activities. By the 1920’s, Boulder had become a rallying point for the Ku Klux Klan. In the 1970s employment and housing opened up, but many problems remain. Although the particulars of Boulder’s history are unique, its social trajectory into the 21st century is nevertheless emblematic of many cities across the country that struggle to reconcile their liberal politics with the reality of their communities.

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***This is [Not] Who We Are*** braids the lived experiences of Black characters ranging in age from 12 to 78. Some stories are searing, while others are hopeful. The film seeks to open a space for dialogue among Boulderites and about cities like Boulder, overwhelmingly white, wealthy, and conflicted about issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Is a more economically and racially diverse future possible, both in Boulder and in cities like it across America?

“We began this project almost exactly three years ago, just before Boulder police profiled Naropa student Zayd Atkinson,” says Strong, a white filmmaker and long-time Boulder resident. “I realized I knew very little about Boulder's Black community. And though I have made films set in Micronesia, Latin America, and Africa, I had never made a film that addressed issues in my hometown.”

For Miller, a Black filmmaker who has lived in the Boulder area since her undergraduate days, the desire to explore the topic of race in Boulder began much earlier. “I started working in video production at 18. That passion brought me to Boulder where I had no idea what I was stepping into. Although the university had everything I wanted in terms of my education, it was isolating being the only Black person in the room everywhere I went.” She made a student film, *Blacklash*, that dealt with themes of inclusion and belonging to which she has always longed to return. “I want this film to help overcome the culture of denial that keeps this white city homogeneous, drives out Black talent, and turns away prospective talent. I want this city to be a safe place for my children and all children. I hope we spark deeper conversations around belonging, inclusion, and leadership.”

Strong’s journey was also a personal one. “Years ago, I wrote my doctoral dissertation about avant-garde poets. The real topic, though, was hypocrisy, the gap between words and behavior. Here I am again, looking at my and my community's hypocrisy and complicity with anti-Black racism.”

Ultimately, the filmmakers of ***This Is [Not] Who We Are*** believe the film’s story is not unique to Boulder, and that the issues it raises will resonate beyond the local community. “We made this film not just for the people of Boulder, “says Strong, “but for those of other cities with struggles not unlike ours. Viewers who watch our film will, we hope, be moved to engage in self-reflection, productive dialogue, and transformational action wherever they live.”

For more information about ***This Is [Not] Who We Are***, please visit www.thisisnotwhowearefilm.com

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