

# MDOCS

JOHN B. MOORE DOCUMENTARY STUDIES COLLABORATIVE



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## News of Note

### [Student Spotlight: Finding Jeff](#)

What is so great about documentary filmmaking is that you uncover amazing stories just by following one little good idea. The idea to document my journey finding Jeff, led to the discovery of a truly unique story of a man's love for radio.

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### [Alumni Stories: Barbara Stroock Kaufman '40 and Stacey Gerrish '87](#)

We walk past people with stories every day. Our student peers, faculty members, and neighbors all have narratives that together create episodes in the history of Skidmore and Saratoga Springs.

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### [React to Film: A student-led initiative to showcase documentary films that matter](#)

MDOCS Newsletter Contributing Editors Emily Rizzo, '18 and Rebecca Stern, 19 sat down with chapter leader Urvi Kalra, '18, to talk about REACT TO FILM and its fall program - The Hunting Ground (2012).

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### [Review: We Rock Long Distance](#)

This interdisciplinary workshop showcased documentary film-making techniques with an internationally-flavored perspective on three hip-hop artists.

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### [Documenting MDOCS' first Storytellers' Institute](#)

This past June, Skidmore students, professors, and professional documentarians came together for MDOCS' inaugural Storyteller's Institute.

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### [Directors's Note - October, 2015](#)

This fall we are excited to enter our sophomore year! MDOCS has jumped into fall with renewed commitment to Skidmore and the Saratoga community with some amazing campus collaborations and interdisciplinary visits.

[Read More...](#)



## Upcoming

[Get details and the whole listing on the MDOCS website.](#)

### Mini-Residencies

[Oct. 21-13, Jesse Flower Ambroch](#)

- Oct. 21, Doc Date in LI 113, 4-5pm
- Oct. 22, Sound Meditation in Wilson Chapel, 7pm
- Oct. 23, Workshop: Sound effects for Radio/Film in LI 113, 2pm

[Oct. 28, Alex Lewis and Jake Nussbaum](#)

- Oct. 28, Doc Date in LI 113: Radio Doc, 4-5pm
- Oct. 28, Expandable Sound in Wilson Chapel, 7pm

[Nov. 3-4, Bill Daniel](#)

- Nov. 3, Who is Bozo Texino (film) in Davis Auditorium, 7pm
- Nov. 4, Discussion/Workshop: DIY Exhibition in Falstaff's, 5:30pm
- Nov. 4, Pop-up Exhibit and Performance, Tri-X with Bill Daniel and Friends

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# Student Spotlight: Finding Jeff Story of a Documentary Film Project

October 12, 2015 by Emily Rizzo '18

## *Finding Documentary*

The end of my freshman year was rapidly approaching and my summer plans remained nonexistent. All I had was an urge to study documentary film, a camera, a tripod, and four months of free time. I researched and discovered that Skidmore had an MDOCS summer course entitled Making the Documentary Film which was open to anyone and occurring during the same time as the [MDOCS Storytellers' Institute](#). I would even be able to participate in the Institute's public events and workshops. So with great satisfaction, I registered for the course. Now I knew my summer would not be wasted, and I would be using my time to progress as an individual. I would have no distractions and no other responsibilities. I didn't even coordinate with friends to join me. With one click I devoted my whole self to a month of studying my newly found passion, to delve into documentary film, to live and breathe film within the quiet green stillness of Skidmore in the summer.

After a month off from school, I repacked the bags I had never finished unpacking, and returned to Skidmore. My Making the Documentary Film course, taught by Christopher Dale Moore, a documentary filmmaker and historian, met for four days a week for the five weeks of the session. It was a busy month: within this timeframe, we would choose our topics, envision storylines, film the footage, edit the footage into one cohesive piece, and then premiere our films to the class and members of the MDOCS Storytellers' Institute. I did not know whom I would be living with, who would be taking the class with me, or who would be teaching the course. I had never made a documentary film before either. But I was blindly excited for the unknown.



Rizzo interviews Jeff the Painter with Reece Robinson, '18, on second camera.

## *Finding A Subject*

I chose to make a film that drew on my experience as a radio DJ at WSPN, Skidmore's radio network, focusing on my journey to find and meet the only person who ever called my Skidmore radio show. Since I started in fall 2014, an unnamed man had consistently called to let me know when I made mistakes on the air or to ask questions that had no relevance to what I was saying. To say the least, this man intrigued me. And I knew I wasn't the only one he called. Over the year I had spoken with many other WSPN radio DJs who told me stories about a guy who called their shows as well. I heard rumors that he was homeless or lived in his pick-up truck, but no one that I spoke could give me concrete answers about who he was or why he called.

## ***Collecting Stories***

From the moment I chose my topic, I was off. I spent a week and a half collecting stories from Skidmore radio DJs about their callers. I found that a dining hall worker named George, who has had a radio show for 18 years, knew exactly the person I was looking for. As I described my caller's voice to George, he recognized my description as a man known as "Jeff the painter." But who was Jeff the Painter?

To find out, I proceeded to call out to Jeff on the airwaves for several days. Miraculously, he responded and agreed to come into the station for an interview. For two hours I spoke to Jeff about why he loves the radio so much, why he calls in, and the human connection he feels while listening. Turns out Jeff the painter has been listening to the Skidmore radio since the day it started. He was also the first ever caller to the station. From the way he answered, I believe he had been waiting for a long time for someone to ask him these questions.

## ***One idea, amazing stories***

What is so great about documentary filmmaking is that you uncover amazing stories just by following one little good idea. The idea to document my journey finding Jeff, led to the discovery of a truly unique story of a man's love for radio. With documentary film, you have to fully devote yourself and keep an open mind in order for these greater possibilities to arise. And from this summer I learned that it is okay, maybe better, to not know which way your film is going. We are documenting life, and life is unpredictable.

Finishing a 20-minute documentary film is one of my greatest accomplishments, and I owe it to the MDOCS summer program. I could not be more grateful to the MDOCS professors and fellow students for pushing me to move beyond my known limits and guiding me to produce a piece of art that I am proud of. This summer experience was the catalyst for my love for documentary. I premiered my film to classmates and MDOCS faculty with a beam of delight as I watched them get to know Jeff just as I did. They laughed at his jokes, empathized when he spoke of his loneliness, and smiled when we first met. My film evoked emotion and human connection, which was inspiring and motivating. I am now determined to continue my studies and to keep on telling stories.

This fall, I'm working in an [MDOCS Documentary Projects class](#) led by documentary filmmaker and artist Nicky Tavares to edit the film and add a bit more material. Stay tuned for news of the final product!



**Consultation with prof Chris Moore and Institute fellow Jonna McKone (seated).**

# Alumni Stories: Barbara Stroock Kaufman '40 and Stacey Gerrish '87

## Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project

October 15, 2015 by Rebecca Stern '16



From left: Stacey Gerrish '87, Barbara Stroock Kaufman '40, and Rebecca Stern, '16

We walk past people with stories every day. Our student peers, faculty members, and neighbors all have narratives that together create episodes in the history of Skidmore and Saratoga Springs. Taking the time to sit down and record each voice helps contextualize our home. This year, I look forward to discovering stories both from those who knew Skidmore and Saratoga decades ago as well as today's Skidmoreans as part of the [MDOCS Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project \(SSMP\)](#) and using a recorder to share important community voices.

This year's first interview happened just before the fall semester began. On August 30, SSMP traveled to conduct an interview with Barbara Stroock Kaufman, class of 1940 in her Woodstock, VT home. Joined by her granddaughter, Stacey Gerrish '87, she discussed what the Studio Art major entailed, dorm life on the downtown campus of a women's college, and living in Saratoga Springs in the late 1930s. Barbara never graduated (leaving college to get married, as many of her generation did), but continued sculpting, a craft that she cultivated during her time at Skidmore. Barbara's anecdotes on strict dress codes and making snow sculptures during the winter because of a lack of art supplies bring to life what a typical art student might have experienced at Skidmore over 75 years ago.

Stacey, a second generation Skidmorean, also welcomed the chance to recall her Skidmore years, noting that she went to Skidmore because of her grandmother's fondness of the school. A student in Management & Business, Stacey still uses foundational skills that she learned at Skidmore and had clear memories of reading news pulled from a tickertape (AP wire) once a week at lunch time on WSPN. [In this featured clip](#), Stacey recounts a story of what happened when her boyfriend surprised her with a secret kitten on her dorm window seat in Jonsson Tower.



Barbara Stroock Kaufman '40 and her granddaughter, Stacey Gerrish '87

Unfortunately, on September 13, just two weeks after our interview, Barbara passed away. Her departure highlights why we need to pause in our own lives to listen to those who are around us. You never know what you will find out to help understand what it is that we love about Skidmore and Saratoga.

We'll be conducting interviews throughout the school year – so please be in touch if you've got a story you'd like to share or suggest ([rstern2@skidmore.edu](mailto:rstern2@skidmore.edu)).

To hear the full interviews, and for additional SSMP oral histories, [check out the Project's website](#).

## React to Film: A student-led initiative to showcase documentary films that matter

October 15, 2015 by Emily Rizzo '18 and Rebecca Stern '16

REACT to FILM is a nationwide initiative which uses documentary film to inspire people to engage in the real issues of today. Stella Langat '16 and Urvi Kalra '18, an environmental studies major who is passionate about spreading awareness, are among many college chapter leaders all over the nation organizing screenings of social issue documentaries to generate discussion and create change. Skidmore's student club Film Appreciation Troupe (F.A.T.) has welcomed this collaboration.

[Click here to listen to the full interview.](#)

For more information on the program, [see their Facebook page.](#)



Urvi Kalra '18



Full house at screening of *The Hunting Ground*

REACT TO FILM campus leader Stella Langat, '16, adds that "The Hunting Ground was our 3rd successful event. Last spring, we screened *Virunga* and *Matt Sheppard is A Friend of Mine*. We would like to thank all the departments and clubs that co-sponsored the screening. At the event, over 100 students, a few professors and 6 counselors both from Skidmore as well as a local organization, Wellness Cares, attended.

The Hunting Ground aims to bring awareness to the topic of sexual assault on college campuses. Unfortunately, the documentary addresses an extremely relevant issue at Skidmore.



Discussion after screening

So the discussion after the screening was both very engaged and productive. The students raised important questions and suggestions on how the issue could possibly be dealt with, including information about a newly formed group called "Walk With Me," in which students walk in groups back to their dorms or apartments. Students were surprised that the SGA was not represented at this event, and hope to make connections later. It is heartening to know that React to Film has contributed to raise awareness about this important issue, which we will continue to address."

## ***Learning to Film a Music Performance with Justin Schell (We Rock Long Distance)***

October 2, 2015 by Roslyn Wertheimer '16



Justin Schell with Filming Music Performance workshop participants outside Falstaff's

If you wanted to know anything about being a documentarian, then Justin Schell's Filming a Music Performance was the residency for you. On campus from September 22-24, Schell led a workshop, met with classes, and organized a hip-hop performance -- a whirlwind 3 day visit. If you wanted to learn something about hip-hop, then this was the workshop for you. If you wanted to have insight into some cultures around the world, then you guessed it, this was the workshop for you.

The September 23 MDOCS workshop focusing around the documentary *We Rock Long Distance* had all of these elements -- which made students with very different majors, come together in a two-part interdisciplinary experience.



On Tuesday afternoon, the workshop started off with Justin Schell introducing his documentary film *We Rock Long Distance* ([trailer](#)) and practice to a small group of students--several from host Liz Macy's Music of Southeast Asia class (Music), and describing some of the technical processes that went into making his film. The film focuses on three hip hop artists: Maria Isa, Tou Saiko Lee, and M.anifest. All three of them have roots in Minnesota (where Schell is also from), but equally deep ties (family, cultural and more) in countries around the world. [Maria Isahas](#) roots in Puerto Rico, [Tou Saiko Lee](#) in Thailand, and M.anifest in Ghana. But of

course, Schell needed the funds to travel around the world to film in these beautiful places, which was a difficulty that he shared in the workshop. He also shared how some venues do not have the best sound system and that proved to be challenging when he stands by the idea that "good audio makes your video look better". So in light of this fact, Schell and the students in the workshop went over to Falstaffs, the venue where the concert would take place two days later. The students got to toy with the cameras and microphones, provided by MDOCS, and figure out where the best angle would be for the cameras and where the best spot would be for recording audio.

Wednesday, September 24-- the next day-- was the screening of Schell's film. The majority of the audience was expecting that the film would focus more on hip hop and the music that the artists would create. But in a nice turn of events, the film really showcased the families that supported these talented artists, and gradually the film was less about music, and more about these families around the globe. You could not help but smile when Maria Isa was with her loving grandma, who only said the kindest things about her. Or when Tou Saik's grandma did a duet with him on stage. For M.anifest, it was his mother in Ghana who was so happy to see her son as they celebrated her birthday for the first time together in 10 years. It was also his grandfather, in which M.anifest soon realized that he had much more in common with him than he thought. His grandfather wrote poetry in the 1940s, and M.anifest could not help but draw the connections between his grandfather's poetry and his own lyrics he writes for his raps. But all of these families simply supported what they were doing, and that is where the love of hip-hop came from.



Schell workshop on filming music performance @ Falstaff's

The next night was the big night, the show where Maria Isa, Tou Saik, and Reskape, would all come together and perform on campus. RES KP was not highlighted in the documentary, but has been to Skidmore's campus before to perform and also has Senegalese roots, so it only made sense to add him to the docket as well. They each took their turns performing their sets, and the crowd absolutely loved them.

performers, and because the energy in the room was so high, I knew I would be mad at myself if I had left." Another student boasted about the diversity of the show saying, "For my four years at Skidmore, there has not been one time where there were three performers from different cultures all on one stage at Falstaffs."

One student mentioned, "To be honest, I was not planning on staying for the whole show, but when I heard the talent that was coming out of these

To say the least, the show was a success and was loved by all. Schell declared that the next step would be to show *We Rock Long Distance* in Puerto Rico, Thailand, and Ghana, in order to truly show how their families and their music have shaped their lives.

Missed the event? Get a taste of the performance with this time-lapse video accompanied by a Maria Isa track!



Time-lapse video. Roslyn Wertheimer.

The *We Rock Long Distance* residency was supported by Skidmore's Department of Music, MDOCS, Speakers Bureau, the Department of World Languages and Literatures, Asian Studies program, International Affairs program, Hip Hop Alliance, Lively Lucy's, and Raices.

Watch video at:  
<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2015/100215-we-rock-review.php>



## ***Documenting MDOCS' first Storytellers' Institute***

*June 15, 2015 by Matt Barnes '15*

This past June, Skidmore students, professors, and professional documentarians came together for MDOCS' inaugural Storyteller's Institute. The residents lived, worked, and ate in close proximity, and in so doing forged valuable, productive relationships with one another. And, maybe predictably, we at MDOCS' did some documenting of the month's unfolding.

Featured on the Tumblr are excerpts from interviews conducted between the fellows that broadly show who they were and sort of experiences shaped them. Some student projects, some still in progress, are showcased as well. For a sense of the activities that filled our non-production hours, see the Storytellers' Institute in Pictures.

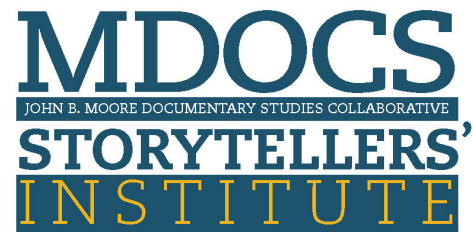


**Storytellers' Institute Fellows: Welbon Rios & Barnes, '15.**

## Director's Note

October 15, 2015

In June 2015, MDOCS capped off its year of firsts with the successful inauguration of the Storytellers' Institute, a five-week creative-academic experience with 2 keynote presentations, 7 documentarians as resident fellows, 2 Skidmore faculty, and 10 Skidmore student participants. "Family Stories" turned out to be the right theme as this group of storytellers connected in interviews, dinners, screenings, exhibit openings, master classes and critiques. Six additional students took a documentary filmmaking class and participated in Institute activities – to good effect, as Emily Rizzo, 18, describes her project, *Finding Jeff*.



As we brainstorm ideas for next year's Institute—which will explore the boundaries between fact and fiction in documentary storytelling—you can get a sense of the energy from this year in pictures and by listening to and looking at some student projects that got underway this summer in a [Tumblr collection](#) curated by Fellow Matt Barnes '15.

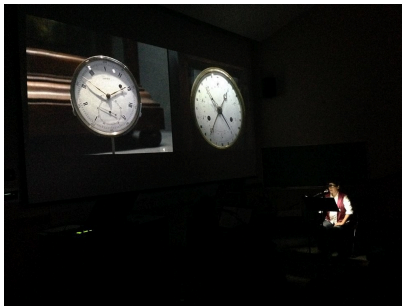
This fall we are excited to enter our sophomore year! MDOCS has jumped into fall with renewed commitment to Skidmore and the Saratoga community with some amazing campus collaborations and interdisciplinary visits. In the classroom, MDOCS filled production classes in film and audio documentary, drawing on the talents of Nicky Tavares and Adam Tinkle. The semester is rounded out with project-based workshops in archival storytelling and filmmaking and our first storytelling for the screen class led by screenwriter Nicole Coady.

Community partnerships continue, including in a photo workshop led by Saratoga-based photographer Michael McCabe and support for the Adult and Senior Center of Saratoga's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration – starting with a screening of *Women of 69 Unboxed*, a documentary film about lives lived by this

transitional generation, with discussion led by screenwriter and alum Liz Roman Gallese, '69, and director Peter Barton, as part of a [Sunrise Symposium](#).

LI 113, the MDOCS/Visual Literacy Forum space, is hopping with student-led workshops in audio and video recording and editing. Seeking to dust off old skills or develop new ones? Check out the [program](#)!

And finally, the professionals who turn creative thoughts into action continue to expand our horizons. Experimental documentary filmmakers Jacquelyn Goss and Jenny Perlin kicked off the year with live narration of their film *The Measures*, and class visits, including with host Nicky Tavares.



[Live Narrating the Measures](#)

Learn about [Justin Schell's](#) mini residency, (*We Rock Long Distance*) from a student perspective, including a stop-motion concert video by Roslyn Wertheimer. This event, organized by Liz Macy (Music), brought film and music performance together on the screen and off. [For details on other September events, see our website.](#)

In October and November, the pace doesn't slacken – please join us for audio documentarians leading a listening night (*Expandable Sound*), the return of Skidmore alum Jesse Flower-Ambroch (for a sound meditation and workshop on sound effects in film) and a visit by "hobo filmmaker and tramp photographer" Bill Daniel for a screening of his film *Who is Bozo Texino?* and the pop-up Tri-X exhibit with student and community participation.

This year's newsletter will continue to showcase student engagement with documentary – and in this new, online format, incorporate media to liven things up. We hope you enjoy!

Jordana Dym  
Director