

ILIKENIRVANA PRESENTS

Sometimes I Dream in Farsi



Tagline

Some movies are made to help you remember.

Logline

Pirooz Kalayeh uncovers a traumatic event with racism when he was a child and seeks to heal himself and his family through interviews and dramatic reenactments that seek an understanding about the world between Iran and America, heartache, loss, and the American Dream.

Medium Synopsis

Sometimes I Dream in Farsi (SIDIF) is a documentary that examines a childhood traumatic event in 1985 when Pirooz Kalayeh was refused a haircut because he was Iranian. His father, who was with him at the time, protests by conducting a sit-in, which results in a police escort off the premises. Since Pirooz was only nine years old, he has blocked this memory, but through therapy and the film's reenactments and discussions, he hopes to heal this old wound and create a dialogue to help audiences reflect on how discrimination affects children and form better ways to communicate and address all those who might be involved in such traumatic events.

Long Synopsis

SIDIF is a documentary that interweaves Pirooz Kalayeh's examination of a racist incident in his childhood with a journey back to his childhood home and discussions with family members and the people in his life - actors, musicians, and students - that offer healing, perspective, and closure.

The film begins with Pirooz and Hooshmand, his father, discussing the racist incident in a barbershop in New York. Each of them recounts what happens when Pirooz was nine years old and a barber refused to cut his hair. As Pirooz recounts how he was afraid his father was going to be taken away when the police arrived, he breaks down. His father offers his condolences for having gone through the situation but encourages Pirooz to be stronger.

This film then cuts to discussions with Pirooz's mother, Shahin, and his younger brother, Panauh, who offer their perspectives on what Pirooz was like as a young child.

Shahin tells Pirooz to "cry" and "let it out", disagreeing with her husband's tough love approach. The two of them look through a photo album together and discuss Pirooz's love for puzzles and how his friends were every ethnicity when they were living in Indiana.

Panauh remarks on Pirooz's creativity. This is inter-cut with Pirooz and his father's journey back to their old home in Delaware, where they encounter old neighbors and visit the barbershop location where the incident occurred.

This signals the first of several dream montages that transition between each section of the film. Each montage shows slow motion shots of a child playing and different moments of archival footage from the family's life together. Sometimes these are shots of them as children, Pirooz's grandmother singing, views of Iran, or the American landscape they drive through.

After the dream montage, Pirooz and his father explore their old neighborhood. They run into a neighbor who offers them hugs and then another who assumes they are robbing the house and lets them know her concern because the security alarm went off. She then proceeds to harass the camera operator, repeatedly telling him to shut off the camera.

Pirooz sees this incident as a microaggression, and his father and him argue this during a hike through a Nature Center close to their old home. Hooshmand sees microaggressions as pine needles in comparison to larger trees and discusses him losing his pension after working for 25 years with a company as “true racism”.

The film then returns to Pirooz and his mother in a hair salon, as she offers her perspective on racism, recounting how there were too many incidents to name just one.

The film then cuts to Pirooz discussing his gravitation to art after the incident, which coincides with a series of interviews from students and actors from his latest film CTRL ALT DEL that is screening in Philadelphia. One student remarks how she had traveled from Atlantic City to Philadelphia because Pirooz’s classes had such an impact on her.

The film then cuts back into the initial discussion in the barbershop between father and son. Hooshmand continues to hold a hard stance that Pirooz needs to be strong in the face of adversity. He tries to dismantle racism as being a product of nationalism and tribalism. Pirooz continues to try and get him to understand that intellectualizing the incident isn’t possible for a nine-year-old child. Pirooz breaks down again after he tells his father he wants to be told he is loved in this situation. Pirooz’s father is unable to offer any warmth and continues to discuss how strength is needed for Pirooz to heal himself.

Actors, Kevin Ramsey and Ray Haratian, then discuss how the traumatic incident was discovered during a shoot for Pirooz Kalayeh's previous film APOCALYPSE LATER. Ramsey asks Pirooz what was his Apocalypse, and this results in his first breakdown. Pirooz tries to downplay the incident, but Ramsey and Haratian both comment on the moment's significance and for him to continue exploring.

The film then cuts to Aquiles Legrave, a friend from Colorado, who discusses a recent dream, where he carries his dog Ronan up the same mountain where he lost his wife in a lightning accident eight years earlier. He remarks how seeing Pirooz at that moment was much needed because the previous day was her birthday and he needed support.

The film then cuts back to Pirooz’s father shocked at the vulnerability of his son and his inability to heal him. Pirooz tells his father he doesn’t need a solution to his problem but to simply have his story heard.

The film returns back to a shot of Aquiles, as we see Pirooz talking to him off camera, curious as to why so many people are bringing moments of grief in reaction to his racial trauma.

The film enters another dream montage. This time the various archival footage we have seen thus far is interspersed with the audio of writer Bobbie Louise Hawkins reading a poem about the American landscape that goes along with the Persian music underneath.

The film then reveals Aquiles, Pirooz, and his cousin, Meina, listening to the poem outside Bobbie’s old home. Aquiles discusses how this is the perfect Bobbie piece to hear, and how she was such a great mentor because she understood that people were unfinished and that she empowered them to find answers without telling them what to do.

After the discussion outside Bobbie’s house, the film cuts back to Pirooz and his father in the barbershop. They discuss racism once again, but then Pirooz says they should try Gestalt Therapy, and switch roles to offer healing to one another. Pirooz plays himself as a child and an actor plays the racist. When the actor is hesitant, Pirooz takes over the role of the racist and acts out the argument with his father.

Pirooz and his father then switch once again. This time Pirooz plays his father and his father plays the child. Once Pirooz begins discussing going to the Nature Center after the haircut, Pirooz's father breaks down. Pirooz tells him he loves him and the two hold each other.

Pirooz then asks his father to play the racist. His father gets into position above a young woman playing the child in the barber's chair. He stands for a few moments before saying he cannot play the racist.

The entire crew is silent.

Pirooz tells his father to role play as he sees fit.

Hooshmand pats the young woman playing Pirooz as a child on the head and asks where she is from.

After she says she is from Iran, he says: "Welcome."

The film then shows Pirooz thanking everyone for participating in the Gestalt Therapy. Everyone hugs one another as the credits roll.

Topic Summary

My multicultural upbringing and adult pathways have led me towards a life of independent thought and self-reliance. In fact, such ideals were encouraged early on in my childhood having emigrated to the United States after my family's forced upheaval after the Iranian Revolution. This was a major shift in my perspective of government systems and authority that led me to question everything, and eventually shaped my decisions towards the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., The Jack Kerouac School, independent cinema, Zen Buddhism, and ultimately six feature films that explore the ways in which multicultural representation, the American dream, social media, and technology are taking shape in society.

SIDIF will be told in five interweaving sections united by dream montages:

1. A re-creation and discussion of the incident with racism in Delaware and being refused a haircut when I was nine years old with my father and mother
2. A visit to the barbershop in Delaware where the incident took place, as well as the past family home and an encounter with old neighbors
3. A look at my films and how this past incident has shaped me as an individual and artist
4. A road trip from New York to Boulder, Colorado with my cousin, Meina, where we visit the home of my mentor, Bobbie Louise Hawkins.
5. Documentation of how the traumatic incident was found through inquiry with actors Ray Haratian and Kevin Ramsey.

Dream Montages: The dream sequences serve as counterpoint to the other narratives and a transitional tool. For example, a sequence could begin with the image of a child, who represents a younger version of myself, playing with puzzles or in a playground in slow-motion. Then we would hear a voiceover of my father reciting a Rumi poem, or my cousin Meina echoing her experiences in America, or my voice as I share a journal entry of that time. This would be coupled with Persian music as well as shots from other parts of the film: the American landscape, archival footage of my grandparents visiting from Iran, pictures of me as a child, and so on.

Artistic Approach

I often mix genres and mediums in a film like I would in a painting. This is one of the main focal points of [SHOPLIFTING FROM AMERICAN APPAREL](#), which operates as much as a painting as it does a hybrid narrative. The film incorporates animated G-chat sequences, Flash-animated paintings behind longer text sequences, and shifts in camera and image quality for a varied texture to the overall film.

My mixing also includes an exploration into performance and authenticity, for which I will often keep shifting directing approaches to keep actors or subjects in a state of immediacy. These methods might include puzzle-piecing actors, shifting between scripted material to improvised outlines and vice-versa, using no script or outline, or even co-creating sequences with actors with and without rehearsals. Sometimes I will stick to a script for an entire film as in [THE HUMAN WAR](#), operate completely from a structured outline as we did for [BRUNCH ON THE FOURTH OF JULY](#), or allow a documentary to have fictional elements breathed into it, as we did in several of the sequences in [BRAD WARNER'S HARDCORE ZEN](#).

Since I have worked as a touring musician, music is often an integral piece of my films, usually delivered in short, music montages as we did in [THE HUMAN WAR](#) or [SHOPLIFTING](#), or in blatant Giligan's Island type centerpieces, as we did in my horror comedy release [ZOMBIE BOUNTY HUNTER M.D.](#), which includes narrated musical numbers (with LA based band Spindrift), fight sequences, and stop-time animation to create a stylistic, adventure satire and cautionary tale on the hits-driven culture of the Facedown Generation.

My references for [SIDIF](#) are the works of Abbas Kiarostami, Caveh Zahedi, and Marlon Riggs. My hope is to make a film somewhere between Riggs's [BLACK IS](#), [BLACK AIN'T](#) and [TONGUES UNTIED](#) that will reflect the Iranian-American experience and the constant mediation between cultures immigrants face.

[SIDIF](#) will be primarily a traditional documentary, but its dream sequences will offer a texture to interweave between different segments of the storyline and a meditative space to help transport audiences into the world of the unconscious, memories, and dreams.

Project Stage and Timeline

[SIDIF](#) is currently in post-production with a rough cut completed. Additional refinements will begin by August 31, 2018 with a final edit by January 1, 2019. Sound-mix and color correction will be completed by March 20, 2019. Final cut is estimated by May 1, 2019.

Audience & Distribution

Distribution and Marketing Strategy

Our hope is to continue the grassroots marketing campaigns we have done for other films, such as [THE HUMAN WAR](#), [SHOPLIFTING FROM AMERICAN APPAREL](#), and [BRAD WARNER'S HARDCORE ZEN](#). Along with grant applications, we will document the entire process from production to a final film through the [SIDIF Blog](#), solicit [support through Patreon](#), create a Seed and Spark fundraiser in July 2018, and apply to several marquis festivals. Some of these include Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, Tribeca, Los Angeles Film Festival, Busan Film Festival, Hot Docs, American Documentary Film Festival, AFI Docs, and DOC NYC. Among these festivals, Sundance, SXSW, and Tribeca would be our frontrunners since director Pirooz Kalayeh made it far along the selection process and was encouraged to submit future films. We are also hoping to enter into other festivals Kalayeh and producer Aaron Lee Dowell have already been accepted to with past films, including Beloit International Film Festival, Buddhist Film Festival Europe, and San Diego Black Film Festival.

Along with marquis and community festivals, we will be soliciting different VOD and television markets for inclusion. Specifically, we will target PBS, because of Dowell's past history placing CONGRATULATIONS with PBS - LA and Kalayeh's inclusion of THE CELLO PROJECT on PBC - NC. In addition, since Kalayeh has been approached by Gravitas Ventures for his other films, he will make contact with them again for potential placement with Hulu, Amazon, and Netflix. Other distributors that will be contacted include [eFilm Torrelodones](#) in Spain, which distributed Kalayeh's THE HUMAN WAR, and Kalayeh's contacts in Paris, which formerly distributed ZOMBIE BOUNTY HUNTER M.D. via Vodd in France.

Our hope is to have a festival release, PBS broadcast, VOD distribution, and screening tour to 12 US cities. All ILIKENIRVANA films have been [screened in select cities in the past](#), along with festival premieres. Through our past partnership Local Screen via Instrum International, who helped release HARDCORE ZEN, SHOPLIFTING FROM AMERICAN APPAREL, and THE HUMAN WAR, we have developed solid relationships with the following theaters across the United States: Northwest Film Forum (Seattle); Cinemagic (Portland); University of Colorado – Boulder; Sie Film Center (Denver); Highland Theatre (Akron); Indiescreen (Brooklyn); Landmark's Clay Theatre (San Francisco); Roxie Theater (San Francisco); Trocadero Theatre (Philadelphia); Alamo Drafthouse (Austin); The Logan Theatre (Chicago); and Los Feliz Theater (Los Angeles).

Since the film deals with children facing racism, we would like to include as many schools as we can during the screening tour. That is why, we will be contacting primary and secondary schools in the cities where theatrical screenings and festivals will occur. We also plan to visit colleges we have both attended or taught courses through, including Compton College (Los Angeles); Monroe Community College (Rochester); Yonsei University (Seoul); European Graduate School (Saas-Fee); Woosong University (Daejeon); Naropa University (Boulder); University of Colorado (Boulder); NYU (NYC); University of California (Los Angeles); Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles); and University of Southern California (Los Angeles).

Intended Audience

America is as racially charged as I can recall. Each week that passes, offers different examples of how disenfranchised people are facing adversity, whether this is due to color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or religious discrimination. Since this film deals with racial trauma experienced in childhood and the unspoken story of Iranian immigrants living between Iran and America, we believe this film will have a wide appeal to first generation immigrants, as well as those segments of society who have firsthand experience dealing with racial tension. Because the film approaches its topic in a therapeutic fashion, with hopes for uniting, to see how such traumas affect the youth of America, we believe that the film will be a peace offering, whereby all – regardless of classification – will be able to relate to the adversities felt by this child and family and form a lasting empathy. For this reason, the film appeals to all who hope to create a dialogue of mutual exchange and goodwill. Its effect may also extend beyond those already compassionate to such events to others who may not realize that such childhood traumas can have such lasting effects. In addition to this broad audience, there will also be those who are interested in Kalayeh's previous works and themes, and his various explorations within cinema for the past decade. SIDIF will also appeal to independent artists, particularly filmmakers, and the alternative mainstream, as well as fans of showcased individuals from his previous films, who also make appearances to discuss Kalayeh and his process, such as Brad Warner, Randy Blythe (Lamb of God), Kirpatrick Thomas (Spindrift), Caveh Zahedi, Tao Lin, Noah Cicero, Alexandra Naughton, and others.

Audience Engagement and Social Impact

My objective is to look at this traumatic moment in my life where a barber refused to cut my hair when I was nine years old and how it has shaped me to make films that help eradicate discrimination and prejudice for any who are disenfranchised. I believe that seeing me deal with this traumatic event will help others deal with similar incidents in their lives and bring a level of empathy and understanding that will help people see immigrants and any marginalized Other as a part of humanity.

I will continue engaging with commenters on the blog, create a space on the website for others to share their stories, offer workshops at local high schools and colleges that coincide with our select screenings at 12 theaters across America, offer speaking engagements via the website for elementary and middle schools, and also offer additional community events throughout my lifetime that champion multicultural storytelling and screenings of other artist's work that deal with traumatic events in all the shapes and forms this may take in media arts.

KEY CREATIVE PERSONNEL

AARON LEE DOWELL – PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER



Aaron Lee Dowell is a filmmaker and professor from Compton, CA. He's made more than half a dozen short films as well worked on several feature films and web series. Most recently he co-produced the documentary [CONGRATULATIONS, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN: LIFE AFTER FOSTER CARE](#) which aired on PBS SoCal this past January. He also won Best Comedy at the Long Beach Indie Film Festival for his short film [LET'S GO FOR A RIDE](#). His work tends to explore the mundane in the lives of People of Color. His films have screened at San Diego Black Film Festival, Zanzibar International Film Festival, Korea International Ex-pat Film Festival. He's currently an Adjunct Professor of Film/Video at Compton College. He has a B.A. in African-American Studies from Morehouse College and an M.F.A. in Film Production from Loyola Marymount University.

THOMAS BELLIER – ORIGINAL MUSIC

Thomas Bellier, is a French musician, composer and producer based out of Los Angeles, CA. Bellier is currently active with the world music 'Arabian fuzz' psychedelic six-piece, Al-Qasar as well as with his thunderous psych outfit, Blaak Heat (Tee Pee Records/Svart Records). The 2011 production of Patrick Dubost's theater play Les Neuf Coriaces featured an entire score by Bellier. He has also worked on recording, mixing, and mastering sessions for the likes of the Deftones, Danzig, Soulfly, Behemoth, Monster Magnet, Bill Ward (Black Sabbath), and Marty Friedman (Megadeth). Bellier trained under Grammy-winning producer Matt Hyde (Slayer, Deftones) and started engineering and producing records in 2014. Bellier obtained a Master's in Public Administration from Science Po (Paris, France) in 2009 after an undergraduate exchange program in philosophy and sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. He has contributed articles to Rolling Stone Magazine, Vice Magazine, leading French newspaper Libération, and New Political Science.



PIROOZ KALAYEH – WRITER, EDITOR, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER



Pirooz Kalayeh is a filmmaker, artist, and author. His films include [SHOPLIFTING FROM AMERICAN APPAREL](#), [THE HUMAN WAR](#), [BRAD WARNER'S HARDCORE ZEN](#), [ZOMBIE BOUNTY HUNTER M.D.](#), and [CTRL ALT DEL](#). His films have screened at Beloit International Film Festival, On Vous Ment Film Festival, Buddhist Film Festival Europe, and select cities across the USA via Local Screen. His novel [THE WHOPPER STRATEGIES](#) details an advertising executive's journey to package Enlightenment in a Box. His sixth feature [APOCALYPSE LATER](#) is currently in post-production with ILIKENIRVANA Productions.

Fundraising Strategy

We will first apply for [non-profit standing through IDA](#). Then we will apply to several Documentary funding grants by July 10, 2018. Our hope is to obtain at least 40K in support. Along with our application for grants, we will solicit funds via Kalayeh's Patreon page, as well as creating a two-tiered Indiegogo and Seed & Spark campaign for the "Production" and then "Post-Production" phases of the film in July 2018 and September 2018, for 20K each, respectively, to complete the film and be in a position for festivals.

Funding to Date

Source	Amount	Status
IDA - Nonprofit Status	1000	Accepted - 6/20/2018
Dorothea Lange—Paul Taylor Prize	10,000	In Process - 5/14/2018
The Miller / Packan Film Fund	25,000	In Process - 5/14/2018
NEA Grant - Second Art Works: Media Arts	10,000	In Process - 7/3/2018
California Documentary Project Grant	50,000	In Process - 11/1/2018
Sundance Institute	40,000	In Process - 7/9/2018
Impact Partners	30,000	In Process - Rolling
Pare-Lorentz Doc Fund	15,000	In Process - TBD
Nakedge Films	Unknown	In Process - Rolling
Patreon	\$30 per month	In Process - Rolling
Indiegogo	20,000	In Process - 7/11/2018
Seed & Spark	20,000	In Process - 9/1/2018

Previous ILIKENIRVANA films have garnered over \$50K in support via [four, successful Indiegogo campaigns](#).

Supplemental Questions & Information

[SIDIF Blog Excerpts](#)

Day 1 - Sometimes I Dream in Farsi

Today was the first day of shooting, and I already cried like a baby.

My therapist warned me that I'd have issues. She wanted to do this Gestalt Therapy during our sessions, but I told her I'd save it for the camera.

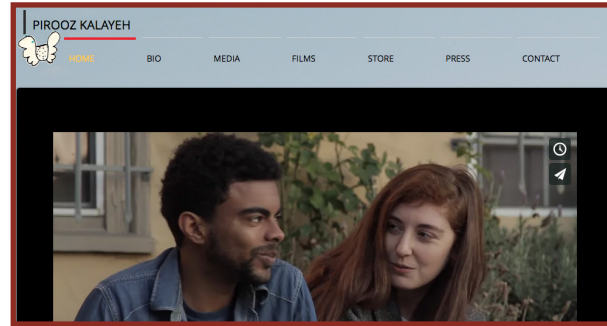
**For more of the blog, please click on the [link](#).



Work Sample



[Director's Reel](#)



[ILIKENIRVANA - Website](#)

Current Sampling



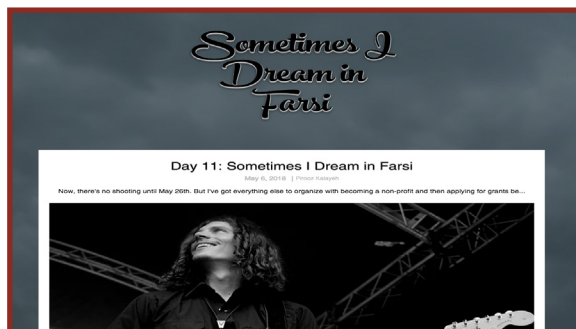
[Gestalt Therapy - Clip 1](#)



[One Word or Eight - Clip 2](#)



[Film Website](#)



[Blog](#)