

RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF CRAFT BEER IN AMERICA.



ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

WEBSITE: OnePintFilm.com

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ONE PINT AT A TIME



LOGLINE

Black brewery owners, brewers and influencers across America are hustling daily to reshape the future of the country's overwhelmingly white, multi-billion-dollar craft beer industry.

SYNOPSIS

Craft beer generates tens of billions of dollars annually for the US economy. Despite beer's Egyptian and African heritage, these traditions have been mostly forgotten and are rarely found in American brewing culture. Today, Black-owned breweries make up less than 1% of the nearly 9,000 breweries in operation. Eager to shift the historical perception of who makes and drinks beer, Black brewers, brand owners and influencers across the country are reshaping the craft beer industry and the future of America's favorite adult beverage.

MAIN SUBJECTS



ALISA BOWENS-MERCADO

Alisa Bowens-Mercado is the owner and brewmaster of **Rhythm Brewing Company** in New Haven, Connecticut. She is the first Black beer brand owner, female or male, from her state. Alisa is also a professional Latin-American dancer and instructor, and for the past twenty years, has owned and operated her own dance studio, Alisa's House of Salsa.

HUSTON LETT

Huston Lett is the co-owner and head brewer of **Bastet Brewing**, one of the few Black-owned breweries in the state of Florida and among the newest additions to Tampa Bay's craft beer scene. Before starting his brewing journey, he was an aspiring artist and earned a college degree in graphic design and worked as a professional designer for over twenty years.



JON RENTHROPE

Jon Renthrope is the CEO and brewmaster of **Cajun Fire Brewing Company** in New Orleans, Louisiana. Established in 2011, Cajun Fire is the first Black-owned brewery in the American South. As a cultural ambassador, Jon is an integral part of the New Orleans small business community. He is working toward opening a new brewing facility and cultural hub in Eastern New Orleans, an area largely abandoned after Hurricane Katrina.



ADDITIONAL CAST

Day Bracey, Ed Bailey, Mike Potter, Ale Sharpton, Corey Hinton, Latiesha Cook, Teri Fahrendorf, J. Jackson-Beckham, Celeste Beatty, Garrett Oliver, Chris Harris, Sean Nordquist, Tom Ross, Khris Johnson, Leo Sawadogo

FILM & CREW



One Pint at a Time began R&D in 2017 and launched production in 2018, filming in states such as Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas, Colorado, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Georgia and Louisiana. Production continued through the COVID-19 pandemic with post-production ending in Summer 2021.

Director/Producer/Editor

Aaron Hosé

Producers

Aaron Hosé, Brigitte Hosé

Executive Producers

Jonathan Vieira, Brigitte Hosé, Aaron Hosé, Milan Chakraborty, Sanjay Sharma

Co-Producers

Jason Gregory, Jonathan Vieira

Associate Producers

Brandon Wilson, Adam Dawson, Buzzy Torek, Ryan Haggerty, Matt Thornton, Shakeel Radford, Christine Kane, George Lopez, Iggy Harrison, Dennis Guy, John VonMutius, John Schaub, Yancy Faulkner, Eric Buist, Jordan Hayman



DIRECTOR BIO

Aaron Hosé is a producer-director-editor with over 25 years in the film, television and video industry. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies and Master of Fine Arts in Film from the University of Central Florida. His films have been featured at hundreds of festivals worldwide, including Academy Award- and BAFTA-qualifying events, and have been distributed on platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, Vudu and Tubi. Aaron has been recognized extensively for his work. To date, he has earned nineteen regional EMMY® nominations resulting in nine EMMY® Awards, including wins for producing, directing, and editing.

TECHNICAL SPECS

Runtime: 89min, 74min, 68min

Language: English

Closed Captioning: English

Genre(s): Documentary, Social Issues, African American, Food, History, Women

Film Color: Color

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Shooting Format: Digital (4K/5K)

Projection Format: DCP (2K flat), ProRes mov, 4K and 1080p mp4, Bluray

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

Craft beer has changed my life. Ever since I fell in love with it in 2014 in Asheville, North Carolina, it became a personal quest to discover as many breweries as possible. The more breweries I visited, however, the more I noticed that my wife and I were the only—or among the very few—people of color inside taprooms. After conducting some preliminary research into the craft beer industry, I realized it was heavily white male dominated, from brewery owners, to management, down to the brewing and bar staff.



My desire to better understand the lack of diversity in the craft beer industry is the catalyst for **One Pint at a Time**. I wanted to shine the spotlight exclusively on stories of people working in craft beer that look like me. Over the course of four years, my team and I observed how many of these brewers fought—and struggled—to create a new narrative for Blacks within the industry. This is a multi-billion-dollar American business. Yet, Black-owned breweries are earning **less than 1% of the money** and continue to face hurdles rooted in discriminatory traditions. These are alarming facts. Ultimately, I hope 'One Pint' will contribute to the ongoing conversations about the need to diversify craft beer. May this film act as a mirror and inspire breweries to take those actions necessary to make this industry one that is more diverse, inclusive, equitable and just.



- Aaron Hosé

FILM FESTS



One Pint at a Time premiered in October of 2021 and has since received:

- **130+ official selections** to film festivals, plus numerous special screening events at breweries, conferences and universities
- **A combination of 70+ awards**, special honors (opening/closing film), nominations and special mentions
- **Exposure in 20 countries** across North, Central and South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Winner** – Best Documentary Feature Premiere – 30th Heartland International Film Festival (Oct. 2021)
- **Closing Night Film** – 8th Baltimore International Black Film Festival (Oct. 2021)
- **Winner** – Audience Award for Documentary Feature – 8th Baltimore Int'l Black Film Festival (Oct. 2021)
- Nominee – Gordon Parks Award for Excellence in Black Filmmaking – 19th Tallgrass Film Festival (Oct. 2021)
- **Winner** – Best Documentary – 19th Twin Cities Black Film Festival (Oct. 2021)
- Official Selection – 10th Montclair Film Festival (Oct. 2021)
- **Winner** – Insight Feature Award – 16th Orlando Film Festival (Oct. 2021)
- Official Selection – 30th St. Louis International Film Festival (Nov. 2021)
- Official Selection – 36th Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival (Nov. 2021)
- Official Selection – 39th Three Rivers Film Festival (Nov. 2021)
- **Opening Night Film** – 18th Rome International Film Festival (Nov. 2021)
- **Special Jury Prize** for Remarkable Protagonists – 18th Rome International Film Festival (Nov. 2021)
- **Winner** – Best Documentary Director – 10th Austin Revolution Film Festival (Feb. 2022)
- Official Selection – 22nd Santa Fe Film Festival (Feb. 2022)
- Official Selection – 27th Victoria Film Festival (Feb. 2022)
- Nominee – Best Documentary Feature – 12th NewFilmmakers Los Angeles (Feb. 2022)
- **Winner** – Audience Award for Documentary Feature – 15th Amelia Island Film Festival (Feb. 2022)
- **Winner** – Audience Award for Documentary Feature – 15th Gasparilla International Film Festival (Mar. 2022)
- Official Selection – 16th Salem Film Festival (Mar. 2022)
- Official Selection – 25th Sonoma International Film Festival (Mar. 2022)
- Official Selection – 46th Cleveland International Film Festival (Mar-Apr. 2022)
- Official Selection – 49th Athens International Film + Video Festival (Apr. 2022)
- **Closing Film** – 11th Julien Dubuque International Film Festival (Apr. 2022)

FILM FESTS



HIGHLIGHTS (CONT'D)

- Official Selection – 30th Arizona International Film Festival (Apr. 2022)
- Official Selection – 26th Kansas City FilmFest International (Apr. 2022)
- Official Selection – 13th Milwaukee Film Festival (Apr-May 2022)
- Official Selection – 28th San Luis Obispo International Film Festival (Apr-May 2022)
- **Winner** – Best Documentary – 19th Seattle Black Film Festival (Apr-May 2022)
- Official Selection – 34th NorthwestFest International Documentary Festival (May 2022)
- **Winner** – Best Documentary Feature – 6th National Black Film Festival (Jun. 2022)
- Official Selection – 21st San Francisco Documentary Festival (Jun. 2022)
- Official Selection – 24th Roxbury International Film Festival (Jun. 2022)
- **Closing Film** – 3rd Filmocracy Fest (Jul. 2022)
- **Closing Night Film** – 6th Deep in the Heart Film Festival (Jul. 2022)
- **Winner** – Jury Award for Best Documentary Feature – 6th Deep in the Heart Film Festival (Jul. 2022)
- **Winner** – Audience Award for Feature Film – 6th Deep in the Heart Film Festival (Jul. 2022)
- **Winner** – Grand Jury Award for Best Feature Film – 6th Deep in the Heart Film Festival (Jul. 2022)
- **Winner** – Best Documentary Feature – 6th DC Black Film Festival (Aug. 2022)
- **Winner** – Best Feature Film – 5th Project NERD Film Festival (Aug. 2022)
- **Winner** – Festival Choice Award for Feature Film – 3rd Detroit Black Film Festival (Sep. 2022)
- **Winner** – Award of Merit for Documentary Feature – 5th Impact DOC Awards (Jan. 2023)
- Official Selection – 24th Spokane International Film Festival (Feb. 2023)
- **Winner** – Best Feature Documentary – 2nd Barcelona Indie Awards (Mar. 2023)
- **Winner** – Best Producer (Documentary Over 40min) – 3rd Int'l Motion Picture Awards (Apr. 2023)
- **Winner** – Best Cinematography for Documentary Feature – 12th Marina del Rey Film Festival (Jun. 2023)
- **Winner** – Best People of Color Film – 3rd Fort Smith International Film Festival (Aug. 2023)
- Official Selection – 49th Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers (Sep-Nov. 2023)
- **Winner** – Best Editing – 3rd Robinson Film Awards (Jan. 2024)
- **Winner** – Best Director Feature Documentary – 4th London Director Awards (Feb. 2024)
- Finalist – Best Feature Documentary – 2nd Liverpool Indie Awards (Mar. 2024)

REVIEWS & TESTIMONIALS

"An enlightening film, One Pint at a Time will have you drinking up all sorts of new information."

Chagrin Film Festival

"One Pint at a Time surveys the black craft beer landscape with rich insights."

Larisa Apan, Montclair Film Festival

"One Pint at a Time is a delight from start to finish... a must-see but you've been warned... you will want a beer. Grab me one too. Cheers!"

William F. Reed, Victoria Film Festival

"One Pint at a Time excels by putting a face on a problem... and showing the way forward to a more diverse beer scene."

Chris Drosner, Milwaukee Magazine

"Black brewers are still fighting to build prominence, and their efforts are the focus of Aaron José's excellent documentary."

Orlando Weekly

"...an invaluable and visually captivating spotlight on the adversities of Black Americans realizing their dreams to own a brewery."

Ale Sharpton, Thrillist

"A keen and passionate look into the history of beer and the innovative and boundary-pushing Black brewmasters and business owners."

Brittanie Chandler
Manager, Ted Rogers Hot Docs Cinema

"9 out of 10. Very easy to watch and very enjoyable. Highly recommended for any craft beer lover as well as any startup business owners looking to get their foot in the door."

Chris Salce
Film Threat

"4 out of 5. A passionate portrait of brewing culture that is in need of some changes - and the group of people who are doing just that."

Richard Gray
The Reel Bits



FOR MORE INFO

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ONE PINT AT A TIME

By [Chris Salce](#) | June 18, 2021

SHARE



Brewing beer has been around for thousands of years. Within the past decade, the craft beer business has been on the rise, with micro-breweries popping up in nearly every location that it's possible to fit a brewing system in. Most of the business is predominantly owned by white males, with minorities and women only making up a tiny portion of brewery owners. Less than one percent of the brewing industry is black-owned, but some breweries are trying to change that.

One Pint at a Time is a documentary that follows three black brewing masters who are trying to break into the industry they love. Writer/director Aaron José introduces us to Alisa Bowens-Mercado, owner and master brewer of Rhythm Brewing Company; Huston Lett, co-owner and head brewer of Bastet Brewing; and Jon Renthrope, CEO and brewmaster of Cajun Fire Brewing. They tell of how they managed to break into the business. While each of them went on a unique path, all of their stories have one thing in common: they have the same struggle of being a minority in a white-dominated business.

“...they have the same struggle of being a minority in a white-dominated business.”

Each account is quite interesting, and they all have a deep well of knowledge of the brewing business. Beyond the usual highs and lows of owning a company, Bowens-Mercado, Lett, and Renthrope have to jump through a continuous set of additional hurdles. Bowens-Mercado is not only a minority but also a female. Very few people are aware that women are not often found working in a brewery unless they are a beertender (aka taproom server). She has everything

working against her.

I am all for craft brewing and have dabbled in the art a bit. I enjoy conversations revolving around beer and can listen to anyone talk about the technique of brewing. All of the hops and fermenting going on throughout the film made me thirsty for a beer. I should forewarn some: there are some politics involved when the owners describe their struggles. However, the politics are not just thrown in for the sake of being political and stirring the pot. José credibly shows that for some well-meaning and hard-working folks, everything they do is a political struggle. The reasoning behind it comes apparent in the final few minutes, as it is revealed what the breweries have been working on together, alongside other breweries across the country. *One Pint at a Time* is very easy to watch, and it is very enjoyable.

One thing I wish was in this documentary is at least one brewery/owner from the western United States. Two of the breweries are situated on the east coast, and one is located in the south. I think there are likely similar stories across the U.S. that could have been featured, but I am sure that some behind-the-scenes reasoning made it easier to focus on the three breweries featured. I highly recommend *One Pint at a Time* for any craft beer lover as well as any startup business owners looking to get their foot in the door.

ONE PINT AT A TIME (2021)

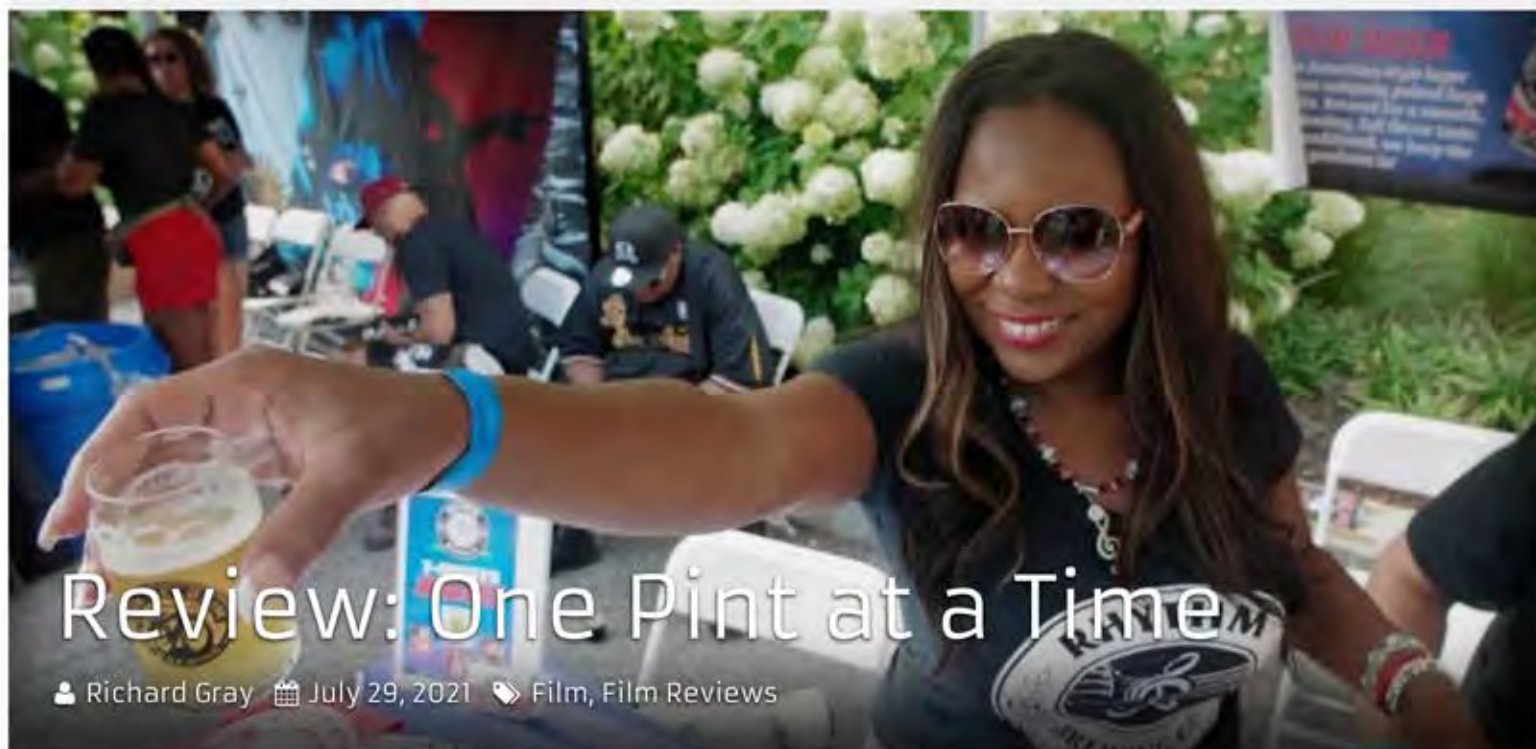
Directed and Written: Aaron Rose

Starring: Alisa Bowers-Mercado, Huston Lett, Jon Renthrope, etc.

MOVIE SCORE: 9/10



"...for any craft beer lover as well as any startup business owners looking to get their foot in the door."



Summary

A passionate portrait of brewing culture that is in need of some changes – and the group of people who are doing just that.

4





There's about 9,000 craft breweries across the United States alone. The billion dollar industry is one of the great successes of the last few decades. Yet as popular documentaries *Crafting a Nation* have demonstrated, the landscape is predominantly led by (bearded) male and overwhelming caucasian brewers.

Which is the narrative that **ONE PINT AT A TIME** is hoping to divert. Following director Aaron Hose's earlier short films *Brewchurch* and *A Fresh Perspective* — examining a modern church-owned brewery and the first-ever Black beer festival respectively — this feature looks at the vast array of African-American brewers breaking barriers across the country.

"We're just doing what beer nerds do," says Huston Lett, co-founder of the Tampa-based Bastet Brewing as he starts a mash out of a home garage. Drawing inspiration from Egyptian history, his attempt to find a home for his business and get the word out on his beer is just one of several stories Hose explores.



With only a fraction of breweries owned or run by women, and less than 1% of them being Black-owned breweries, Hose's film conveys two things: how marketing and historic structures have perpetuated the idea that African-Americans don't drink beer, and why this doesn't have to be the case in the future. Indeed, it goes one step further in drawing a link between the African origins of beer and the historic Black ownership of the product, something Garrett Oliver, beer expert and co-founder of the Brooklyn Brewery, has often made a case for. "This always belonged to us," he concludes.

Montclair Brewery co-owner/head brewer Leo Sawadago, for example, learned to brew from his very traditional mother, who always considered brewing to be a 'woman's business.' It's only in the modern era that the narrative has been flipped, making it harder for women and people of colour to break into the industry. Dr. J Jackson-Beckham, a recently appointed Equity and Inclusion Partner for the Brewers' Association, talks about diversity versus diversification. It's not enough to just introduce diversity in the workplace, the culture has to change as well.

Leaders of that include Corey Hinton at Soul Brothers Brewing in Georgia and Ale Sharpton, a craft beer authority and journalist. There's Jon Renthrope of Louisiana's Cajun Fire, the first Black-owned brewery in the American South. Rhythmn Brewing's Alisa Bowens-Mercado is the first Black beer brand owner of any gender in her state, and tirelessly works to promote her brand. Comedians Day Bracey and Ed Bailey amplify those voices on their Drinking Partners Podcast.



As a fellow beer geek from the other side of the globe, living within walking distance of at least half a dozen breweries, this is ultimately relatable as a story of people who love craft beer and are looking to build businesses in their communities. As the film concludes with the impact of the pandemic and the beer community's responses to Black Lives Matter, **ONE PINT AT A TIME** encourages us to not only support these emerging talents, but to seek out the stories and processes behind them. More than anything, I want to drink a whole lot of new beer.



BEER

9 questions for "One Pint at a Time" beer documentary director Aaron Hose

Among the seemingly countless films on tap at this year's Milwaukee Film Festival is something for everyone. Beer lovers even get a film of their own in 'One Pint at a Time.'



By [Bobby Tanzilo](#)

Senior Editor/Writer

Published Apr 27, 2022 at 9:03 AM

Among the seemingly countless films on tap at this year's [Milwaukee Film Festival](#)[®] is something for everyone. Beer lovers even get a film of their own in "[One Pint at a Time](#)[®]."

The film, which screens twice, was directed by Aaron Hose and follows the paths of a number of African American craft brewers.

Only one percent of craft breweries are Black-owned – following in the trail blazed by [People's Brewery owner Theodore Mack Sr.](#) – but these stories of passionate folks pursuing their love of beer gives us hope that will change.



The 88-minute film from 2021 also shows the hurdles many face in trying to get started in the business and it's a fascinating and frustrating and optimistic ride, but one you won't want to miss.

I caught up with Hose – who will attend both Milwaukee screenings along with Brigitte Hose, the film's producer – to ask him about the film.

OnMilwaukee: Do you have a background in beer or brewing yourself?

Aaron Hose: Personally, I do not have a background in brewing – never really considered it, to be honest. I can certainly appreciate the painstaking labor it takes to produce a great beer. In making this documentary, I quickly learned that brewing is part chemistry, part art, and a whole lot of glorified janitorial work and patience.

What led you to the subject for the film?

In 2014, my wife Brigitte (the film's producer) and I headed on a roadtrip to Asheville, North Carolina, which was just bestowed with the title of "Beer City, USA" by USA Today. This was the first time I fully delved into craft beer. I had tasted a few craft beers previously, but in Asheville we were finding quality beer after quality beer – these were leagues tastier than anything we had ever consumed from macro brands – Bud, Miller, Coors. We were instantly hooked.



Over the next several years, craft beer became an essential part of our vacations. Everywhere we traveled to, we would search for local breweries. No two breweries – or beers – were ever the same. Each new beer was like a new discovery. Not knowing what you would get was part of the fun and the adventure.

Despite our new infatuation with the beverage, the more breweries we visited, the more we realized how homogenous the clientele – and most of the brewery staff were. Nine times out of 10, Brigitte and I were often the only people of color – or among the very few – POC inside taprooms as clients. And this realization translated to the taproom and brewing staff and management. Not only did we see very few POC as employees, but also very few women.

With my "curious filmmaker" hat on, my desire to understand the lack of diversity in taprooms eventually evolved into my examining the lack of diversity within the American craft beer industry as a whole. This led to the start of the "One Pint at a Time" documentary in 2017. Now, here we are, five years later.

The film definitely seems hopeful and positive about people of color becoming more involved in the world of beer. Are you seeing what you think is a positive trend? Are you optimistic?

A lot has shifted for the better since those early years in 2014-17 of me and Brigitte becoming avid craft beer supporters. Back then, there wasn't a whole lot of data being collected yet by the Brewers Association with regards to the ethnicity or gender of brewery owners. It wasn't until 2018 that some of this data began to emerge.

Nowadays, we definitely have more minority- or female-owned, or female co-owned, breweries, more white-owned breweries with a female or minority-owned head brewer, and a larger number of breweries with more diverse employee bases. And depending on where you go to get your beer, you're bound to see broader representation in the taproom clientele.

Surely, there's still a long way to go, however.

Yes. The question remains, does this progress constitute a pint "half full" or "half empty"? When you consider that in the U.S. today there are over 9,000 breweries in operation, yet, less than one percent of these are Black-owned, that's a long

and very steep mountain to climb. When hundreds of new breweries are popping up each year, yet only 1-2 handfuls of them are BIPOC-led, that and it of itself speaks volumes.

Do you think the Black is Beautiful project – which is featured in the film – helped in terms of opening people's eyes to the need to diversify the brewing world?

Absolutely. Unfortunately, it took the death of George Floyd to "awaken" the beer industry the way that it did. Luckily, this turned into a prime opportunity for 1,200-plus breweries worldwide to use their influence within their respective communities to produce a beer to fundraise and fight against racial inequality.



The Black Is Beautiful campaign also opened up the doors for long-overdue brewing collaborations between white-owned breweries and their Black and Brown counterparts. During the campaign, several brewers across the U.S. became inspired to act with more intentionality in their push to diversify the industry. They began opening paid internships dedicated to training and exposing "applicants of color" to the benefits of starting a career in beer-making.

Did you learn anything new making the film or did what you find reinforce what you already knew about the challenges for people of color in brewing?

There are many Black and Brown brewers in the same boat as those presented in the film. We may have focused exclusively on the Black experience in our documentary. But we realize now – plus in having shown the film in different parts of the country – that there are a lot of systemic issues still in place affecting the progress of many BIPOC regardless of where their breweries are located.

The challenge of beer brand owners to secure proper funding and a viable location for their brick and mortars are just two of the most alarming trends.

What do you hope folks take away from the film?

For F&B business owners, managers, etc., we hope they'll use the film as a mirror to look at their own business acumen, and to consider if their staff is as diverse as it can – and should – be and if their taproom or eatery truly is a "welcome space for all."

For consumers, we hope they'll be inspired to act more intentionally with their money by seeking out more minority-owned breweries in their communities to support. This approach can also extend to minority-owned wineries, distilleries, bottle shops, brewpubs, etc. This is a sure-fire way we, as consumers, can help move the needle in the right direction.



Are you working on another film?

Right now we are developing a few spin-off projects from this documentary. The first one is a docuseries following the next phases of one of the film's main brewers.

The other project is a hosted Anthony Bourdain-Parts-Unknown-style show that will cover more stories of BIPOC in the professional beverage industry across North America and beyond.

OK, what's your beer of choice?

I can't currently answer this; too many favorites. What I can say is, I am sucker for high gravity, double-digit pastry stouts. The best ones taste like liquid candy. Amazing.

"One Pint at a Time" screens Thursday, April 28 at 9:15 p.m. at The Times Cinema, and Saturday, April 30 at 1 p.m. at The Avalon Theater.





Huston Lett of Bastet Brewing in Tampa with his garage homebrew setup before he opened his own brewery. Photo courtesy One Pint at a Time

Film Fest Finds: Film Spotlights the Challenge for Black-Owned Breweries

Struggle is punctuated with joy in the Milwaukee Film Festival documentary *One Pint at a Time*.

BY CHRIS DROSNER

It's a fact that you know if you've been to a brewery or beer-centric bar just about anywhere: "Beer people" are overwhelmingly white.

Brewery owners are even whiter, and the 2021 documentary *One Pint at a Time* excels by putting a

face on that problem – and it is a problem – and showing the way forward to a more diverse beer scene.

A screening Saturday at the Avalon Theater was the second of two showings as part of **Milwaukee Film Festival**.

Fewer than 1% of brewery owners are Black, according to *One Pint at a Time* director Aaron Hosé. The film's bread and butter is depicting a handful of Black men and women who either opened their own breweries or aspire to do so.

Many of their stories are common in the craft beer world – they happened into home brewing and discovered a passion, a chance sip of a stout or Belgian ale opened a new world to them – but all of them spoke of a desire to bring this good stuff to Black people largely ignored by the larger craft beer industry.

Another theme unifying the cast of characters is struggle.

Jon Renthrope founded **Cajun Fire Brewing** in New Orleans as a contract brewery in 2011, the first Black-owned brewery in the South. He's faced one setback after another as he works to open up his own brewery – along with a culture hub to ignite his East New Orleans neighborhood.

Alisa Bowens-Mercado speaks of the double-whammy

of sexism and racism as challenges getting her **Rhythm Brewing Co.** off the ground in Connecticut.



And the film follows brewer Huston Lett as he opens his **Bastet Brewing** in the Tampa Bay area with a partner; a friends-and-family opening night is followed quickly by the shutdowns and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a talkback after the screening, José described the pandemic as a “plot twist” that derailed the original concept: following the featured brewers to the prestigious beer judging contest at the Great American Beer Festival.

The 2020 fest didn’t happen, but another unforeseen event provided the clincher to the film: In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, more than 1,000 breweries across the world participated in the Black Is Beautiful beer collaboration. José noted that the effort to highlight and raise funds for racial and social justice ended up being the biggest cause ever undertaken by the brewing industry and a perfect positive note with which to tie up the film.

Hosé began filming *One Pint at a Time* in 2018 at Fresh Fest in Pittsburgh in 2018, billed as the first Black beer festival. That footage provided the most engaging section of the film: people of all races smiling, laughing and talking over beer. It was a

beautiful depiction of the joy, camaraderie and community that has long drawn me to beer culture – but of course, it’s much more welcoming to white people than folks of color.

It was a powerful takeaway from the film – along with how abundant charisma and passion is in the African American corner of the beer business. From Fresh Fest co-founder Day Bracey to Brooklyn Brewing brewmaster and industry legend Garrett Oliver to Lett, Renthrope and Bowens-Mercado, nearly everyone on screen holds your attention and makes you believe that we all must do better by people of color in this industry.

That glow carried over into an event at **The Sugar Maple** that featured beer from two Black-owned breweries, 18th Street Brewery of Gary, Indiana, and the year-old **Moor’s Brewing**, which is based in Chicago and makes its three beers so far at 18th Street.

The brain trust of Moor’s was on hand to discuss how Moor’s came to be and how they approach selling craft beer to their core Black demographic. Co-founders Jamhal Johnson and Damon Patton said they’re working on opening up their own brick-and-mortar brewery and taproom and expanding into new markets, with Milwaukee on their radar.



Creating change 'One Pint at a Time'

Black-owned breweries are breaking stereotypes

Gabriela Yero Miami Times Contributor

Nov 16, 2021



Alisa Bowers-Mercado with other Black brewers and their "Black is Beautiful" beer cans.

(Provided by Aaron Hose)

Black brewers are part of a multibillion-dollar business but represent less than 1% of its earnings, in an industry where U.S. craft beer sales are already steadily declining, as reported by The New York Times in 2019.

Now, those Black brewers – along with business owners and influencers – are working hard to redefine the future of craft beer across the nation.

"One Pint at a Time," a documentary produced by Aaron Hose and his wife, Bridgette Hose, shares the stories of minority craft brewers as they challenge preconceived notions about who drinks – and brews – beer.

The couple realized the need for raising awareness of Black brewers after visiting multiple breweries and discovering they were usually among the very few, if not the only, people of color in the taprooms. Hose said his curiosity and desire to understand that lack of diversity led him to create the film.

"One Pint at a Time" is playing at the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival until Nov. 19, 2021. The documentary made its world premiere last month and has played at several other film festivals, including the Heartland International Film Festival and the annual Baltimore International Black Film Festival, among others.



Director Aaron Hose filming "One Pint at a Time" in Atlanta.

(Provided by Aaron Hose)

Hose's vision for the documentary was to demonstrate the importance of representation, while also bringing into the discourse the role played by Africans and Egyptians in beer's history – something that's largely been ignored, as many people are unaware of where beer actually originated.

For four years, the Hoses followed Black brewers as they faced discrimination and financial obstacles to build a reputation for themselves.

Helping craft a vibrant community

Cajun Fire Brewing Company in New Orleans is the first Black-owned beer brand in the American South and among the first in the nation, according to the film. Jon Renthrope, CEO and brewmaster, founded the company to challenge the idea that Black people don't drink beer.

"The journey is about more than just beer. Beer is only one element of it," states Renthrope in "One Pint at a Time."

Cajun Fire faced significant discriminatory and financial hurdles in trying to secure a physical location for its brewery in east New Orleans. Although it was established in 2011, Cajun Fire still does not have a home.

In 2016, Renthrope acquired a 10-acre commercial property in an area that was abandoned after Hurricane Katrina, but still hasn't been able to build. Multiple "Coming Soon" signs have been stolen from the property, as well as the 200-yard wire fence that surrounded it.

"It ain't just a random vandalizing, it's actually intentional," he says in the documentary.

Renthrope hasn't allowed the setbacks to discourage him. In fact, he says they motivate him to keep fighting to create progress and open up doors for others. His plans for the eventual brewery include a multicultural center to create jobs, commerce, opportunity and a sense of community in the area, where he grew up.

As a Black man competing against several long-established top-tier breweries predominantly owned by white men, he believes being unconventional is critical.

"Unfortunately, for Black-owned businesses, I would say it's fight or flight," he said.

Celebrating a rich cultural history

Other Black brewers are equally committed to altering the perception of who makes and drinks beer, as well as to paving the way for those who will come after them.

Tampa's newest brewery, Bastet Brewing, is one of Florida's few Black-owned breweries. The name is an homage to ancient Egypt, one of the world's oldest beer-making cultures, symbolized by the Egyptian cat goddess, Bastet.

Huston Lett, co-owner and head brewer, established the company in 2014, but it took five long years for him and partner Tom Ross to acquire a space. They struggled with discriminatory and financial obstacles, especially during the pandemic.



Jon Renthrope, Cajun Fire CEO and Brewmaster
(Provided by Aaron Hose)

Lett and Ross say they're proud to be a part of "One Pint at a Time," because they want to raise awareness and advocate for more diversity in the industry. Lett stated that as a Black man, he has had to prove himself a lot more than a white man would in the field.

"We push diversity and inclusion, because if the same group of people are brewing the beers, the flavor profiles and the cultural influences aren't going to be different," he said.

He added that he doesn't think the solution is to hire people of color simply for the sake of hiring them, but rather to eliminate the biases and give everyone a chance, as long as they possess a passion for craft beer and a strong work ethic.



Huston Lett (L) and Tom Ross, partners of Bastet Brewing.
(Provided by Huston Lett)

Finding a home in a male-dominated industry

Rhythm Brewing Company is the first Black-owned beer brand, female- or male-owned, in Connecticut. Alisa Bowers-Mercado, whose nickname is "Lady Lager," is owner and brewmaster. She named the brand after her love of music. Everyone, she says, needs to "find their rhythm."

And while she's received a lot of pushback for being a Black female in a white male-dominated industry, she describes it as her "ultimate motivation."

Mercado emphasized that she has been a Black female entrepreneur for more than 20 years, having managed her father's construction company as well as her own dance studio, "Alisa's House of Salsa," experiences that prepared her to face any discriminatory obstacles that came her way.

Lady Lager hopes to be the first Black female-owned beer brand to receive international distribution, and plans to do so by making sure that all the big players – such as Guinness and Heineken – know who Rhythm is. She also wants to challenge the idea that people of color don't drink beer. In fact, they can drink it and own it.

"If you walk in a room, and you're the only one that looks like you in that room, know that you are in the right room, because that's when change happens," she said. "It's bigger than me and a can of beer."



Alisa Bowers-Mercado, Rhythm Brewing Co.
Owner and Brewmaster
(Provided by Alisa Bowers-Mercado)

Creating Black brewery spaces

Black Brewers Day Bracey, Ed Bailey and Mike Potter created the world's first Black beer festival in 2018, Fresh Fest, which later split in two and has now been rebranded as two distinct events Blacktober Fest and Barrel & Flow Fest.

Hose said that in an interview, Bracey, Bailey and Potter s stated: "We made a beer festival that highlights Black people because we were sick and tired of being the only Black people in town."

The "One Pint at a Time" director hopes the film will contribute to seeing more people that look like him in taprooms and in breweries across the nation. Hose stated that, while filming, the conversation often centered around the need to control the narrative.

"Beer history is Black History," said Hose.

He aims to distribute the film on powerhouse streaming platforms in order to reach a wider audience. He also expressed his intention to develop a shorter edit of the film for educational purposes.

"[Black-brewed craft beer is] not just a beverage," said Mercado. "It's a movement."

Fighting racial injustice – with beer cans

Following the death of George Floyd in 2020, Weathered Souls Brewing Co. in San Antonio, Texas, and Green Bench Brewing Co., Florida's first Black brewery, partnered to launch Black is Beautiful. The racial equity initiative invites breweries to produce their own twists on a dark stout (using a provided base recipe) and offer it to customers in a "Black is Beautiful" label. One year into the campaign, 22 countries and 1,225 breweries are distributing the label and have raised \$3 million dollars in support of organizations that champion racial equality, police reform and diversity education.