

ABOUT

Producer's Statement

Volumes have been written about America's long and tortured history of racism, an unjust penal system and the barbaric imposition of the death penalty. Moreese Bickham's life story--told in his own voice--takes the viewer deep into the wrenching truths of all those realities. A survivor of 38 years at the infamous Angola Prison in Louisiana, including 14 years on Death Row during which time he was given seven execution dates, Bickham shares his story with a powerful and eloquent dignity. It's a story of redemption and grace. Moreese Bickham never gave up, never backed down and never uttered a hard word about anyone. *Seven Dates with Death* shines a light into the soul of this 98-year-old survivor. The result is an examination of the soul of America.

Mike Holland/ Director



Seven Dates with Death is the 22-year-old Holland's second short documentary. His previous film, *Stateless*, the story of Syrian refugees who have newly settled in Detroit and their battle with anti-immigrant activists, was named Best Documentary at the Trinity International Film Festival. It was also published as an "Editor's Pick" by The Atlantic magazine in January 2016. In both his films, Holland adheres to direct story telling by attaching the film's voice closely to its subjects, leaving the audience free to construct their own conclusion. A graduate of Ithaca College, Holland was led to create *Seven Dates With Death* by his college roommate, Austin Quinn, who suggested that Holland "read my mom's book" when Holland expressed interest in exploring capital punishment. Quinn's mother, Joan M. Cheever, wrote *Back From The Dead: One woman's search for the men who walked off America's death row*. Moreese Bickham was among the survivors she featured in the acclaimed book about the human effects of the 1972 U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing the death penalty.

Joan M. Cheever/ Executive Producer



An award-winning journalist, author, lawyer and community activist for the poor and homeless, the 59-year-old Cheever cherished her 19-year friendship with Moreese Bickham. The two met while Cheever was researching *Back from the Dead*, a book inspired by her experience as an appellate attorney for Walter Williams whose execution Cheever witnessed on Texas' Death Row. Cheever and Bickham traveled the United States speaking at civic clubs, universities, anti-death penalty seminars and book clubs. Time for fishing, Bickham's favorite pastime, was included in every trip. They were together on January 20, 2009, when Bickham, who had survived Jim Crow and seven dates with death in the electric chair, greeted the inauguration of the first African-American president of the United States. He was on his knees in prayer, his Bible in one hand while his other hand wiped the tears from his face.

Garrett Nicholson/Cinematographer



Nicholson is a freelance cinematographer who resides in Los Angeles. A graduate of Ithaca College with a bachelor's degree in cinema and photography, he has written and produced commercials in addition to documentary film work. His honors include being named a finalist for the 2015 Gordon Willis Student Heritage Awards for best student cinematography. Nicholson is experienced in a wide variety of camera systems and setups that continue to serve as his tools in discovering new and unique ways to tell stories. His attention to detail and devotion to authenticity during the filming of *Seven Dates With Death* required his rescue with a power saw after a cell door jammed and he was locked inside for several hours in the abandoned prison leased by the filmmakers.