INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL GLASSMAN AND TOM MARKHAM
WINNERS OF THE UCHV SHORT MOVIE PRIZE 2013

UCHV Where are you from, and what are your majors?

TM I am from Nashville, Tennessee. English major.

MG I'm from Louisville, KY, and I'm an Architecture major.

UCHV When did each of you start making movies and how did you come to team up to make "Justice"?

TM I've always enjoyed movies, and I participated in a number of theatrical productions in high school, usually as a tech crew member or stage manager. At some point, that love of theater became a love of making movies, which I did with my high school friends mostly as a summer hobby. After senior year, we decided to turn our hobby into something more official, so we founded Hutch Obliged Productions, a film production company whose goal is take the low-budget, Do-It-Yourself style of filmmaking to a much larger audience. Since then, I've done everything I can to foster that mentality and make films back home or here on Princeton's campus. Michael and I knew we were both interested in film, so when we saw the UCHV's contest, we had to take advantage of this fun opportunity to both make a good film and to contribute to a very relevant topic here on campus.

MG I started making movies as soon as I got my first camcorder as a kid and haven't stopped much since.
What was your budget?

I'm not sure the exact number, but the budget was very close to $0.00. We mostly used our own equipment or borrowed things from roommates and friends.

For those who have no idea about how to make a movie, could you briefly describe what the process was in this case?

For me, every movie starts with a story. You have this vision in your head that you think is worth sharing on a screen with others. For this particular contest, that "story," or topic, was justice. With such a broad prompt it was important first to determine what kind of story we were going to tell. Michael and I sat down and brainstormed: what did we think about justice? What did it look like here at Princeton? We found that we honestly didn't know the answers to these questions, so the movie formed out of that. We wanted to see what people at Princeton thought "justice" was, and what it meant to them as Princeton students. From there it was a matter of collecting other people's thoughts and shooting footage here on campus. We chose the important, picturesque "Princeton" shots in order to ground the viewer in this context.

"Justice" is a mini-documentary in three parts, with each part conveying a Princeton student's views about justice. The sound and the visuals, though related to each other, aren't synchronous. What drove that decision? How did you find the subjects you interviewed? Were there others whose interviews you discarded, and, if so, why? How did you choose the locations for the visuals? At various points, key words are flashed on the screen. Tell us about those choices.

Princeton is a very special place in that its student body is incredibly diverse in background and activities and beliefs. We had a feeling this would generate an interesting conversation about justice, so we decided to interview students who represent different unique parts of the
Princeton experience. We had friends across these many backgrounds that we trusted and knew would provide thoughtful insight, so we interviewed them. The three students that appear in the film are the only three we interviewed. We had plans on interviewing more, but time constraints and conflicting schedules kept us from doing so.

In terms of the style of shooting, we noticed there was a sort of duality that appeared in our conversations about justice. On one hand, students had their own personal intrinsic views on the subject, while on the other hand, the Princeton context cast a very real influence and in a way generated its own sense of "justice." We wanted to capture this duality visually and see if we could reconcile the two pieces. The students' personal beliefs, as expressed in the interviews, were separate voices in a conversation united by this campus. This is where the words flashed on the screen came in. They expressed the key terms each student thought about justice and were flashed on top of a shot of campus to illustrate the reconciliation of the personal and communal senses of justice.

UCHV How would you characterize the movie's message?

TM The movie's message is not an easy one to pin down, and we sort of made it that way by design. Justice is a very tough word to define, especially in a place where people come from different backgrounds and have different beliefs. What we found is that while there was no one agreed upon definition of justice among the three interviews, there were some ideas in common, and these are the threads that bring people together and allow them to create a sense of communal justice out of many personal voices. Think of it as a sort of "E Pluribus Unum" idea: here at Princeton, we're not all the same, but we do share certain values in common that allow us to create a sense of harmony as a student body.

UCHV Any final thoughts?

TM This contest was a great opportunity for both aspiring thinkers and filmmakers. I would like to thank the Center for Human Values for sponsoring the contest. It was a valuable way to keep doing something we love while also addressing important issues relevant to Princeton. I would certainly encourage any students with even the slightest interest in film, or justice, to partake in this event next year.