

BUCKSKIN | A film by Mars Verrone | Press Kit



General Information:

Film Title: Buckskin

Runtime: 00:17:20

Genre: Documentary Short

Country: United States

Language: English

Year: 2026

Logline:

An experimental portrait of the filmmaker's grandfather: Carroll B. Williams Jr., a ground-breaking African-American forester, reflecting on his work and legacy in the twilight of his life.

Short Summary:

Carroll B. Williams Jr. (1929-2024) was the first African-American to receive a doctorate in forestry and entomology, the first African-American scientist to be hired by the U.S. Forest Service, and among the first African-Americans to be a part of the environmental science and forestry faculties at both Yale and UC

Berkeley. Featuring stunning 16mm cinematography, this experimental documentary explores the life and legacy of a groundbreaking scientist through intimate conversation with his daughter and grandchild. The film engages questions around personal and collective memory, the human/nature divide, the ongoing impact of settler-colonialism in the Americas, and the possibilities and limitations of an individual human life in effecting social change. At times, *Buckskin* is grand in its scope: envisioning how white supremacy has shaped human societies and natural environments alike over nearly a century. At other times, the film is deeply personal: a moving portrait of a fascinating and exceptional person told from the perspective of a loving and curious grandchild.

Contact Information:

[Film Website](https://www.lunette-films.com/buckskin) | <https://www.lunette-films.com/buckskin>

For General Inquiries:

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For Film Festivals & Distribution:

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Website: <https://www.lunette-films.com/>

Social Media (IG): [@lunettefilms](https://www.instagram.com/lunettefilms)

Asset Download Links:

- [Download Stills](#)
 - Credit: Stella Rae Binion (IG: [@stellastellaraerae](https://www.instagram.com/stellastellaraerae))
- [Download Poster](#)
 - Credit: Xander Opiyo (IG: [@xanderopiyo](https://www.instagram.com/xanderopiyo))
- [Download Headshots](#)
- [Download Clips](#)

Technical Specifications:

Language: English

Resolution: 2K

Shooting Format: 16mm

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

FPS: 23.98

Sound: Digital 5.1

Accessibility: English & Spanish subtitles, OCAP, AD

Select Festival Screenings:

- True/False

- New Directors / New Films
- Full Frame
- Ashland Independent Film Festival
- DOXA
- SFFILM
- Indie Lisboa
- Mountainfilm
- Provincetown
- DC/Dox
- Palm Springs Shorts Fest
- Rooftop Films
- BlackStar
- Hudson Film Festival
- Nashville Film Festival
- New Orleans Film Festival
- BFI London

Awards:

- Sidewalk Film Festival, Best Black Lens Short Film (2026)
- Nashville Film Festival, Freedom 250 Award (2026)
- Mountainfilm Commitment Grant (2025)
- Brown Girls Doc Mafia Sustainable Artist Grant (2023)

Select Press:

- *Dazed*, [The best films we saw at Philadelphia's BlackStar Film Festival](#)
- *Taxi Driver*, ['Buckskin' di Verrone: il prezioso dialogo con la foresta](#)
- *The Independent*, [New Directors/New Films April 8-19](#)

Filmmaker Statement:

From a very young age, I always associated my grandfather with trees. I understood as a child that his line of work had something to do with trees - nature, wilderness, forests. But he also reminded me of a tree. A Redwood, specifically. Powerful and sturdy and self-assured. His presence in a room felt rooted. His wisdom, larger than life. I remember during summertime visits feeling intimidated by his deep, booming voice, his tall stature, and his prominent U.S. Marine tattoos. But then I would soften at his smile, his full laughter, and his genuine curiosity around hobbies and schoolwork. His care felt vibrant and lush like sunlight pouring through bright green leaves.

Buckskin arose from a desire to engage with my mounting feelings of anxiety and grief around the interconnected existential crises of climate change and global fascism. I felt driven to learn more about indigenous land stewardship and non-Western conceptions of environmentalism as antidotes to these crises.

So, I turned towards my own family history, seeking to better understand my grandfather's work and philosophy as a forester (especially in relation to his own mixed native heritage). In spring of 2022, I spent a week with my grandfather, my mother, and my best friend Stella (the film's director of photography) at his beautiful home in Panorama Hill - aptly named for its stunning views of Berkeley, California. My initial approach to interviewing my 92-year-old grandfather was somewhat naive: I arrived with a slew of direct questions about climate science, politics, and history. Quickly, I learned he was some combination of uninterested and unable to answer such questions. His mind would wander, he would fixate on mundane details, he would retell the same (seemingly irrelevant) story over and over again. I realized at his age, the mind reveals what is most significant and only the most powerful feelings and memories pierce through. So, I yielded to these cognitive patterns, allowing them to determine the shape and scope of the film. For hours we sat at his creaky kitchen table, and over mugs of coffee and bowls of oatmeal we shared reflections, expressed our fears, and asked each other questions. Nine decades holds an infinity of experiences, but the recurring chorus throughout his memories was one of pride for his accomplishments and love for his family.

I left this experience with far more questions than answers. I felt disturbed by the relentless anti-Black discrimination and violence that followed Grandpa Carroll through the decades. I was disquieted by the notion that the future he was facing at the end of his life was not necessarily a positive one. It wasn't until two years later, when my grandfather passed away in March 2024, that I was able to return to this material and edit the film. I found that his memories and wisdom of course did not provide clear solutions to the existential crises of our time, but instead served as a generative point of reflection to consider the complexity of human beings, the severity of the stakes at hand, and the longevity and necessity of the fight ahead.

The film features lush 16mm cinematography, archival photographs, experimental visuals, and an immersive soundscape made up of field recordings from Muir Woods as well as my own distorted harp compositions. My artistic intention was to create a sensation of being suspended in between different states of being: between life and death, between past and present, between plant and animal. I want my viewers to have a meditative, surreal, and dream-like experience while watching; akin to the humbling, wondrous feeling one gets sitting in the midst of ancient Redwood trees. Surrounded by abundant life and constant noise, and yet deeply peaceful and quiet.

As many of us grapple with what we can or cannot do about the profound threats of climate change and fascism, *Buckskin* offers an opportunity to ruminate on a life devoted to fighting these very forces. This film considers the contradictions of being a non-Western subject living within the West and attempting to combat its harms. I hope to speak to a challenge that many people of color in America experience, of being victims of colonial violence while also finding that often our only access to power exists within colonial institutions (as my grandfather experienced in the U.S. Forest Service and higher academia). Additionally, *Buckskin* invites viewers to engage with the extraordinary world around them, to ignite the thrill of finding their place within it, and to consider with equal parts wonder and skepticism: what are the possibilities of a single human life?

Team Bios:

Mars Verrone (Director, Producer, Editor, Composer, Colorist)

Mars Verrone is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker, musician, and educator from Los Angeles, CA, currently based in Brooklyn, NY. Most recently, Mars directed, produced, edited and composed original music for their short documentary, BUCKSKIN, about their grandfather Carroll B. Williams, a ground-breaking African-American forester. They also produced feature documentary, WHO MOVES AMERICA (dir. Yael Bridge), which was funded by ITVS. Both films premiered at the True/False Film Fest 2026. As a first-time producer, Mars produced Emmy-nominated and Oscar-shortlisted feature documentary UNION, (dir. Stephen Maing, Brett Story) which premiered at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival in the U.S. Documentary Competition and won a special jury prize for “The Art of Change.” The film was distributed by PBS POV and the Criterion Channel. Mars received a Cinema Eye Honors Award for “Outstanding Achievement in Production.” In 2026, UNION was nominated for the “Best Documentary” Emmy. In 2022, Mars directed, produced, and edited short documentary GOLDEN VOICE, which continues to be programmed at LGBTQ+ festivals and events across the globe. Mars is a Sundance Documentary Producers Fellow, NBC Original Voices Artist Mentor and Fellow, PGA Create Fellow, Firelight Media Impact Fellow, Brown Girls Doc Mafia Sustainable Artist Fellow, and Dear Producer Mentee. In 2026, Mars was selected as one of Filmmaker Magazine’s “25 New Faces of Film.” In 2024, they were selected for DOC NYC’s “40 Under 40” cohort. Their work has been supported by Sundance Institute, Ford Foundation, Field of Vision, and the International Documentary Association, among others.

Stella Rae Binion (Director of Photography)

Stella Rae Binion (they/she) aspires to breathe underwater, embodying an ongoing project of “undrowning” (after Alexis Pauline Gumbs) and speculations of Black loving continuance. Stella Rae is a Chicago-based poet, filmmaker, 16mm cinematographer, printmaker, and bodywork practitioner. Their practice includes poetic research, investigations within fugitivity and the Black outdoors, honor work as prayer and divination, witnessing through language and imaging, and the celebration and protection of Black queer people. Stella Rae received a BA in Media Theory and Creative Writing from Brown University in 2023.

Credits:

For Grandpa,
Who said Redwoods were the masters of the universe.
I love you and I miss you.
Marianne
BUCKSKIN
Directed, produced, edited & music by Mars (Marianne) Verrone
Cinematography by Stella Rae Binion
Sound recording: Mars (Marianne) Verrone Additional sound recording: Ripley Barnes
Post Sound Services: Nocturnal Sound Re-Recording Mixer: Eli Cohn

Sound Editors: Jack Sasner, Sam Berliner-Sachs

Editorial Consultants: César Martínez Barba, Yana Nafysa Dombrowsky-M'Baye

Lab Services: Colorlab

Colorist: Mars (Marianne) Verrone

Photos courtesy of Williams family archive

Text from:

Carroll B. Williams, "A Proposal for the School of Natural Resources, University of California, Berkeley."

Carroll B. Williams, "Positions and Projections: Views from the Yale Community on Issues in Ecology." Yale Alumni Magazine, 1970.

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