

TENTH ANNUAL  
**MEDIA  
THAT  
MATTERS**

**Shades of the Border** (12:00 min)  
Directed by Patrick Smith  
Produced by Patrick Smith  
*Winner of the Racial Dialogue Award*



### **About the Film**

The racial issues that exist on the island of Hispaniola can hardly be described as “black and white.” Perceptions of race among Haitians and Dominicans have been evolving (or devolving) over several centuries of political, military, and social unrest, and can’t be consolidated into a brief explanation or short documentary. Thus, as a filmmaker from the United States, the intention for the film was not to create all-encompassing viewpoints, both Haitian and Dominican.

The initial idea for the documentary came from the story of an Austin woman who was unable to adopt two abandoned, Dominican-born, black children because their skin color (and lack of documentation) prevented them from getting Dominican citizenship. After some research, it was clear that this wasn’t an isolated incident, but that millions had been denied citizenship (and thus certain human rights), based on how “Haitian” they appeared to be and not based on where they were born.

Faced with the economic burden of providing for an entire population of illegal Haitians crossing the Dominican border, compacted by an already poverty-stricken population of Dominicans, the Dominican Republic strains to find a solution that isn’t “color-based.” Sadly, the peripheral effects of this issue are much more severe, often leading to violence, destruction of homes, inaccessible education, abusive working conditions, and the list goes on.

Shades of the Border explores a commonly-held notion from the Dominican media that race does not lay a role in the conflict, contrasted with an almost completely-inverse working-class opinion that the shade of someone’s skin on the island of Hispaniola speaks volumes about the individual.

### **Filmmaker Bios**

After earning a dual degree in business and communication, Patrick Smith dove into freelance commercial work with companies ranging from the Environmental Protection Agency to the Nagasaki Department of Tourism and a variety of oddities in between.

Though he is currently earning his MFA in film and video production at the University of Texas at Austin, he attributes most of his growth as a filmmaker to experimentation outside of academia, having lived, studied, and worked in New Zealand, Egypt, Fiji, the Dominican Republic, and Japan, continuously assimilating foreign styles into his own personal methodology.

His goal is to make films that resonate deeply in people, be it visually or contextually.

He also loves dinosaurs, sweeping film scores, and Honey Bunches of Oats.

### **Take Action Links**

**Take Action with Ciné Institute** (<http://www.cineinstitute.com/why-film/>)  
See how film is being used to provide jobs and skills, inspire youth, and give a creative voice to the people of Haiti.

**Take Action with Makarios International & Dominican Joe**  
(<http://www.cineinstitute.com/why-film/>)  
Buy locally grown coffee beans and support educational and economic development projects in the Dominican Republic.

**Take Action with The International Institute for Sustained Dialogue**  
(<http://www.sustaineddialogue.org/>)  
How do we open up dialogue across borders of culture, race, religion and zeitgeist? Investigate how the IISD is trying to transform international relationships and cultivate citizens' capacity for change.

**Take Action with The Dream Project** (<http://www.dominicandream.org/>)  
Spend your summer in the Dominican Republic and volunteer to teach and build classrooms for students in low-income communities.

**For more information about *Shades of The Border* and the other films from the tenth annual Media That Matters Film Festival, visit [www.mediathatmattersfest.org](http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org) or contact us at [festival@artsengine.net](mailto:festival@artsengine.net).**



