

**Director's Statement on what were some of the obstacles you faced in making the film:**

With PTSD, trust – in self, friends, family, institutions, and the familiar – is destroyed. How could this happen to me? How could someone do this to me? How could all of these things fail me life? It's a devastating effect that shook Luis, Ashley and Erundina to the core. So the part of the journey that was not recorded was building the trust and credibility *before* we ever rolled camera. For each person in the film, I think having the camera was sometimes cathartic and actually connecting, breaking isolation. Other times, it felt invasive and made them feel vulnerable. I know how sacred each story; each detail and each re-visiting of the past is for them and *for* me. I know it's hard after spending so many raw hours together to have to see me make editorial choices and omit things. I give a lot of thanks to Luis, Ashley and Erundina for that trust.

More predictably, fundraising for documentaries is always a challenge and wanting to shine a light on courageous but not always sympathetic folks battling their symptoms is ambitious and not an easy *sell*. But through the support of the Carter Center, Mental Health America, blood, sweat and tears of my crew, and a very supportive community that I am fortunate to have, we got it made and distributed.

The Carter Center played a critical role on many levels via the Rosalynn Carter Mental Health Journalism Fellowship. First, it is an extremely competitive submission process and so being accepted was a huge validation personally to the importance of the project. It comes with a stipend that was critical to keep the editorial ship running. The community via The Carter Center has been extremely supportive of my work as a storyteller, interpersonally (morale!), as well as providing the very journalistic, ethical and clinical guidelines for telling stories about vulnerable populations. The storytelling required a high degree of ethical and moral consideration. The Carter Center and ongoing, unfettered access to its leaders and network provided me with a tremendous amount of support. On a personal and professional level, it was extremely gratifying to present the work to many of my colleagues there at the Fellowship Conference as well as being invited back to present to key members of the Atlanta community, Ambassador Peters, President Carter, Mrs. Carter, and members of their family. Having an audience like that will remain one of my most treasured career achievements.



THE CARTER CENTER  
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

*Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope.*

17 February 2017

Attention: Erin Wallace  
Vice President of Communications and Marketing; Chief Communications Officer  
Mental Health America Media Award  
Mental Health America  
500 Montgomery Street, Suite 820  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Support for Ben Selkow Award Nomination

Dear Ms. Wallace:

It is with pleasure that I submit this letter of support for the nomination of Ben Selkow for a Mental Health America Media Award. The Carter Center Mental Health Program works to improve access to quality mental health services and reduce stigma and discrimination. We accomplish this through informing public policy and anti-stigma activities domestically and internationally, as well as, through the Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism Program. The fellowship program, of which Mr. Selkow was a recipient in 2010, educates journalists about mental health issues so they can report more accurately on them.

Mr. Selkow was selected from a highly-competitive pool to pursue a project that resulted in the release of *BURIED ABOVE GROUND* in the fall of 2015. Rosalynn Carter Fellows are required to design, manage, and complete their fellowship projects independently while maintaining their employment. Fellows are selected based on the quality of their reporting, timeliness of the proposed project, and feasibility to complete the project within the constraints of the fellowship. Mr. Selkow excelled as a Fellow. We were impressed with how thoughtfully and artfully he was able to capture the lived experience of PTSD in three vastly different contexts. Not only was he able to convey the complexities of PTSD, but he also was able to powerfully demonstrate the hope for a life in recovery from trauma.

Mr. Selkow was and continues to be an asset to the journalism fellowship program as an intelligent, passionate documentary filmmaker with a demonstrated continuous commitment to mental health issues. He is most deserving of the MHA Media Award. Not only is his work like none other in style and depth, but his humility, compassion, and dedication merit such recognition as well.

Mr. Selkow receives my highest endorsement. Such recognition of his work through the MHA Media Award will allow him to share his very important story with the rest of the world. If you have any specific questions or would like to hear more about Mr. Selkow, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at (404) 420-5165.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Palpant Shimkets, M.S.  
Associate Director, The Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism