

DENIAL
DIRECTED BY DEREK HALLQUIST



NORTHEAST US PREMIERE
2017 Mountaintop Film Festival
Sunday, January 15th at 7PM
Monday, January 16th at 5PM
Wednesday, January 18th at 8PM

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SHORT SYNOPSIS:

DENIAL is a documentary feature about electricity, identity, family, and about the many ways we lie to ourselves when faced with overwhelming facts. It is the story of a family coming to terms with hard personal truths against the backdrop of a global crisis.

LONGER SYNOPSIS:

DENIAL follows the story of Dave Hallquist, CEO of a Vermont electric utility, seen through the lens of his filmmaker son Derek, to whom he has granted intimate access for nearly 15 years.

As a self-described “closet environmentalist” Hallquist is dedicated to addressing the way electricity use in America contributes to climate change. But his mission is balanced with the utility’s charge to provide affordable and reliable service. For Hallquist, increasing the efficiency of the grid is the only meaningful route to merging these priorities.

He implements one of the country’s first ‘smart’ grids, decreasing outages, increasing the capacity for renewable sources and building a national reputation as an energy pioneer. Resistance, however, comes in many forms - traditionalists balk at the renewable intermittency, solar and wind advocates think Hallquist is dragging his feet, and the public fears that ‘smart’ meters on their homes will send private information about their energy use to the government.

But as Hallquist struggles to build the kind of transparent company whose honest approach can get stakeholders to accept the realities of how we generate and deliver electricity, he realizes he must apply that same transparency to his personal life and reveals to his son a lifelong secret. Dave Hallquist, who presents as a chainsaw-wielding, hardhat-wearing CEO in a male-dominated industry is a woman inside.

Now, Derek’s family must face facts that feel far more immediate than the melting of the polar ice caps. And denial emerges as a common theme linking all of these issues. Ultimately the personal and the societal come together as Derek learns that his father, newly named Christine, is still indeed his father - and that Christine’s unique perspective as the first American transgender CEO to transition in office, may be just the what the limiting, binary worldview on energy and the environment needs.

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FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

When I was in high school, I became interested in the camera, how I could capture moments and watch them later. It became a method of dealing with complexities I couldn't understand, especially people. My dad and his job at the electric company was one of my early subjects. As I became an adult and went to Emerson College for film, I ended up in Los Angeles working in television and on commercials. Many colleagues kept debating how we could stop using fossil fuel by switching transportation to electricity. I was stunned. I would always say, "What?! Where do you think the electricity came from?... It started as a fossil fuel." I would explain that my dad was the CEO of an electric utility and how bad electricity is from a waste standpoint. My friends and colleagues were always stunned by my perspective

After watching, "Who Killed the Electric Car" and not seeing any information about how bad it would be for the environment if the electric grid was also fueling all our cars, I was furious with the ignorance of people in my field. So, in 2009, I started following my dad to work again. I wanted to debunk the belief that electricity is easy and less harmful to the environment. In 2011, my world was rocked by dad's private message to my family and me-- he wanted to be a woman. He identified himself as a woman. After sitting with that for almost a year, I realized I couldn't keep that out of the film. The team and I turned the camera on my family and within months it became very clear that the struggles my family and I faced were all too similar to the struggles of society. The film became all about different layers of denial, different stages of dealing with grief. It became an insane ride that I was now not only documenting, but also living. At times it was absolutely maddening, but the crew reminded me of why we are all doing this. The message of this film is so important right now.

I made this film with others who agree with me on one major point; we can't ignore facts any longer. This movie is meant to prove that, although very different, life is better when you accept reality and move forward. Anyone who says we need to go back and make something the way it was when it was great, is trying to sell you something. In fact, they may be trying to sell you their bottled water, or dry aged steaks.

I will never forget the day the news about my dad's gender identity went public and my mom, dad and I were watching it. I was also filming it, but as it ended, an unimaginable feeling came over me. I couldn't even pay attention to what I was doing. It was as if the weight of everything was gone. I no longer had to keep my dad's secret. My mom didn't have to fake it anymore, she could do what she wanted. It was probably a bit of an unrealistic release, but it felt so good. I have never felt such a literal freedom before. I cried and cried in a way I never knew. I felt closer to both my mom and dad. I felt proud.

I hope the audience, especially the educated and elite members, realize we are all wrong. I hope they get it, that things are complicated. Even when we realize they are complicated, they are even

more complicated again. The point of life is to be complicated. If we can just stop pretending to know everything and listen, I think we can start to finally solve almost every problem that exists.

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SUBJECT - CHRISTINE DAVID HALLQUIST

Christine David Hallquist – Christine (formerly Dave) started her career designing power systems and became the Power Systems Manufacturing manager for the second largest computer company in the world at the age of 29.

As she approached mid-life, she started advising companies on how to create positive results through inclusive processes. She worked with many major global companies including Miller Brewing and Keebler. She spent two years with Honda of America helping to create more inclusive and collaborative processes, from concept to design to manufacturing. Christine had the opportunity to enter the energy field and joined VEC in 2000 as the Engineering and Operations Manager and has been the Chief Executive Officer of Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) since 2005.

Christine is a board member for VELCO, Vermont's transmission company, President of the Northeast Association of Electric Cooperatives, as well as the Vice-Chair of the Strategies and Technology Advisory Committee for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The NRECA provides 2/3 of America with electricity. With Christine's inclusive leadership, VEC has been recognized as a national leader for technical innovation and VEC moved from bankruptcy to become an A+ rated company by Standard and Poor's and outages have been reduced by 2/3.

VEC's electric portfolio is greater than 95% carbon free and more than 80% comes from renewable sources. These results could not have happened without a highly involved and committed workforce. VEC offers its employees a wide opportunity for growth, including emotional resilience training and leadership training, which more than 80% of its employees has participated in. All employees are involved in the annual update and review of the strategic plan. VEC is now working on products and services to provide beneficial electrification through converting heating, cooling and transportation to electricity with the goal to reduce Vermont's carbon footprint.

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BIOS - PRODUCTION CREW

Derek Hallquist received a filmmaking degree from Emerson College and started his career in LA shooting TV shows for the Discovery networks. Derek was Director of Photography for *The House I Live In*, which won the 2012 Grand Jury Prize and aired on *Independent Lens*. He also shot extensively for *Reagan*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2011 and won an Emmy Award. Derek's production company, Green River Pictures, released his short documentary *The Opiate Effect* in, 2011, which Attorney General Eric Holder used it for outreach and is part of the Library of Congress.

Aaron Woolf is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose work has focused on the human dimension of government policy. He is the director and producer of the critically acclaimed film, *King Corn*, his sixth feature documentary, for which he was awarded a 2008 George Foster Peabody Award. His work has been released theatrically in the US, Europe and Japan and broadcast on PBS, the Sundance Channel, and numerous international networks including Italy's RAI, ARTE, and Australia's SBS. Woolf has also expanded on his documentary exploration of social issues in business and politics. In 2007 he opened *Urban Rustic*, a Brooklyn NY grocery specializing in locally sourced and organic foods and was the 2014 Democratic nominee for Congress in New York's 21st district. He lives with his wife Carolyn and daughter Eloise in in Elizabethtown, NY.

Anoosh Tertzakian is an editor based in New York. Most recently, she edited Alex Gibney's Emmy-nominated *Sinatra: All Or Nothing At All*. She has worked on many feature-length documentaries including Alison Ellwood's *The History of the Eagles*, *99%: The Occupy Wall Street Collaborative Film*, and Eugene Jarecki's Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner *The House I Live In*. She studied film at the American University of Paris and received her M.A. in Cinema Studies at NYU Tisch.

Shirel Kozak is a producer at Charlotte Street Films, documentary filmmaker Eugene Jarecki's production company. Most recently, she co-produced a short for the new Amazon series *The New Yorker Presents* as well as the 2015 Sundance award winning film (T)ERROR (ITVS, BBC). She also worked as co-producer on the 2012 Sundance and Peabody award winning film *THE HOUSE I LIVE IN* (ITVS, BBC), as associate producer on the Emmy award winning film *REAGAN* (HBO) and as the production manager on *FREAKONOMICS* (Magnolia). In addition to working in production, she served as outreach development director for a national outreach campaign to raise awareness and inspire action around the issues explored in *THE HOUSE I LIVE IN*. Outside of the documentary world she has also produced the comedic short web series, *THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM*, which is currently in postproduction.

Christopher St. John (*The House I Live In*, *Reagan*, *Freakonomics*) is a producer and journalist with broad experience in print, broadcast and documentary film. He began his career in production at ABC News, working for Good Morning America before moving to the News Magazine division, where he contributed extensively to 20/20 and Primetime. Prior to producing DENIAL, he produced (T)ERROR (2015), THE HOUSE I LIVE IN (BBC/ITVS, 2012), which won the 2012 Sundance Grand Jury Prize, and received wide theatrical release in the fall of 2012. Christopher also co-produced FREAKONOMICS (Magnolia, 2010) and the Emmy Award winning REAGAN (HBO, 2011). Prior to entering production, he served as a regional correspondent in Southeast Asia for a number of US and international publications.

Daniel DiMauro is a documentary film director, producer and editor from Brooklyn, NY. Currently, he is directing his first feature film, STONE COLD HITMAN. He frequently collaborates with documentary filmmaker Eugene Jarecki. At Jarecki's company Charlotte Street Films, he served as archival producer, head researcher and additional editor on the Sundance 2012 Grand Jury Prize and Peabody Award winning documentary THE HOUSE I LIVE IN, as well as associate producer and head archival researcher on the Emmy-award winning REAGAN, and assistant editor on FREAKONOMICS. Most recently he acted as additional editor on a short for the new Amazon series The New Yorker Presents and as archival producer and post production supervisor on (T)ERROR, winner of a special jury prize at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. DiMauro has received prestigious recognition for his work with archival research, including nominations for a 2012 IDA Award and a 2013 FOCAL International Award. When he's not making documentaries, DiMauro directs music videos, many of which have been featured on popular websites such as Pitchfork, Stereogum and Vice.

Eugene Jarecki is an award-winning filmmaker, public thinker, and author. He is one of only two people to have twice won the Sundance Grand Jury prize for documentary, most recently in 2012 for *The House I Live In* which examines the crippling effects of the American War on Drugs. His prior film, *Reagan*, which examines the life and legacy of the 40th US president, received wide critical acclaim and won an Emmy Award after premiering on HBO for the occasion of Reagan's 100th birthday. In 2010, Jarecki worked alongside Morgan Spurlock and Alex Gibney as director of a documentary film inspired by the bestselling book *Freakonomics*. Earlier that year, he directed *Move Your Money*, a short online video and attendant campaign encouraging Americans to move their money from "too big to fail" banks to well-rated community banks and credit unions. The film went viral, becoming an online sensation with over 7 million hits in just its first three weeks online. To date, an estimated 4 million Americans have 'moved their money.' Jarecki's film *Why We Fight*, winner of the 2005 Sundance Grand Jury Prize and a Peabody Award, has been broadcast in over forty countries and released theatrically in over 250 US cities. In 2009, Simon & Schuster published Jarecki's acclaimed book, *The American Way of War: Guided Missiles, Misguided Men, and a Republic in Peril*, which explores how militarism disfigures America's foreign and defense policies as well as her broader national priorities. Jarecki's first documentary, *The Trials of Henry Kissinger* was released in over 130 U.S. cities and won the 2002 Amnesty International Award, was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award and has been broadcast in over thirty countries. In 2002, TRIALS was selected to launch BBC's prestigious digital channel BBC4 and the Sundance Channel's documentary division. Jarecki also executive produced 2015 Sundance Special Jury prize winning *(T)error*. Most

recently, Jarecki directed an episode of Amazon's *The New Yorker Presents* entitled *El Cyclist* which looks at U.S. – Cuban relations on a endearingly personal and intimate level.

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CREDITS

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Derek Hallquist

written by
Derek Hallquist
Aaron Woolf
Anoosh Tertzakian

co-directed and edited by
Anoosh Tertzakian

produced by
Aaron Woolf

producers
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Daniel DiMauro
Christopher St. John

original music by
Kyle Wilson

camera
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Aaron Woolf
Daniel DiMauro
Mark Covino
Matt Snell-Callanen
Chris Frierson

Executive Producers
Eugene Jarecki
Aaron Woolf

Executive Producer for ITVS
Sally Jo Fifer

appearing
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DR. PHILLIP SCHEWE
MIKE AHMADI
DR. CORTNEY WARREN
PATRICIA HALLQUIST
MARY HALLQUIST
SEN. PATRICK LEAHY
JOHN THOMAS HALLQUIST
JILLIAN HALLQUIST
KIERSTEN HALLQUIST
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REP. TONY KLEIN
SEN. BERNIE SANDERS
GOV. PETER SHUMLIN
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co-producer
SAVANNAH WOODS

consulting producer
SAM CULLMAN

supervising producer - itvs
SHANA SWANSON

consulting producer - itvs
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supervising sound editor &
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KARA ELVERSON

associate producer
ANDREW MCLAIN

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ALEX MARTIN
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PATRICIA HALLQUIST

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MARK SCHAEFFER
BILL MCKIBBEN
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SHAINA SILBERSTEIN
SAM KUN

THE EMPLOYEES OF VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
PRIDE CENTER OF VERMONT
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WCAX
NRECA
ST. ALBANS MIDDLE SCHOOL
ROOHAN REALTY
UMIAQ
SKIDMORE MDOCS PROGRAM
VERMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

SLEEPLESSNESS
written by ALEJANDRO MARTÍ
arranged and performed by KYLE WILSON

SUNBURN
written by KYLE WILSON
performed by MILAGRES
produced by FRASER MCCULLOCH
courtesy of KILL ROCK STARS

NEW ELECTRICITY
written by KYLE WILSON
performed by KYLE WILSON
courtesy of MILAGRES

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