

Out of my HEAD

Migraine. It's Not Just a Headache.



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Synopses

LOGLINE:

A filmmaker, seeking treatment for her daughter's migraine attacks, discovers a confounding neurological disease, and learns why a condition so ubiquitous and severe remains deeply misunderstood.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

A filmmaker sets out to investigate the devastating migraine attacks that have her daughter in their grip. As mother and daughter seek understanding and ever-elusive treatment, we follow them into a bizarre and fascinating world populated by doctors, neuroscientists, other migraineurs, and such unexpected characters as Lewis Carroll, Thomas Jefferson, and Joan Didion. We learn that, rather than a terrible headache, migraine is a complex, deeply stigmatized neurological disease afflicting nearly a billion people worldwide. This kaleidoscopic journey, told through interviews, cinema vérité, art and animation, explores the history, impact and raw emotion evoked by this unpredictable and confounding condition.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

When a filmmaker investigates the devastating migraine attacks which have her daughter in their grip, she discovers migraine is not just the terrible headache she always thought it to be, but a mysterious neurological disease afflicting nearly a billion people worldwide. She decides to make a film and trace the journey, as mother and daughter seek understanding and ever-elusive treatment.

Along the way we hear from doctors, neuroscientists, and other migraineurs. Among them: an Iraq war veteran whose migraine attacks stem from combat related traumatic brain injury; a college professor deciding whether she dare go off her migraine medication to have a second child; a husband who becomes a migraine activist on his wife's behalf; and Joan Didion, reading from her legendary essay "In Bed." Their journey takes us on a wild ride through migraine's fascinating history and bizarre symptomology, amid subjects ranging from the gut/brain connection to art and spirituality.

From Alice in Wonderland to the N.B.A.'s Dwyane Wade, from the Declaration of Independence to the music and art of Hildegard von Bingen, migraine has figured prominently in the human condition. Yet the disease remains largely a mystery to medical science – underfinanced, stigmatized, and invisible.

This is the story of people living in chronic pain, with a disease that has no cure – how it affects them and their loved ones, how they cope, how they see the world through its prism. It's the deeply felt story of a daughter and mother coming to terms with a condition that will always be a part of their lives.

Director's Statement

When my daughter Emma was fourteen, she experienced temporary blindness for several hours. It was terrifying but resolved itself. Two weeks later, it happened again accompanied by dizziness and vomiting. Panicked, I took her to an ophthalmologist and was shocked when he diagnosed her with migraine. How could this be? She didn't even have a headache. He sent us to a neurologist, and thus began our long, challenging and fascinating journey into the world of migraine.

Our world was rocked by my daughter's illness as her symptoms worsened and she became progressively incapacitated. The more I talked about Emma's migraine attacks, the more I discovered that countless people I knew also suffered from them. Why didn't I know that? Were people hiding the condition? If so, why? Or had I been hearing my friends mention the word "migraine" and dismissing it from my mind as just a really bad headache? Either way, it was clear I'd stumbled into a remarkably pervasive, yet invisible, misunderstood and stigmatized disease.

As my research continued, I also uncovered the strange beauty of migraine: sparkling lights, hallucinations, feelings of transcendence, artistic inspiration. I learned that migraine's history included Thomas Jefferson, Lewis Carroll, Hildegard von Bingen, Virginia Woolf. The journey took me into the world of neuroscience, and the magnificent, confounding complexity of the brain.

There was an important, compelling, even entertaining story to be told here, with profound relevance to millions of people. And I, as a documentary filmmaker whose life had been hijacked by this neurological disease, was the one to tell it. Partnering once again with producer Jacki Ochs, who has also seen migraine impact members of her family and other loved ones, we set out to make this film and bring migraine out of the dark. By doing so, we hope to create greater understanding and support for the millions who suffer, often in silence and isolation; and to encourage greater funding for scientific research into better treatment, and one day, possibly a cure.

The Team

Susanna Styron, Writer/Director

Susanna most recently wrote and directed the short film, HOUSE OF TEETH, starring Deborah Hedwall and Amanda Kristin Nichols. Her career as a director began with Columbia Pictures' SHADRACH, starring Harvey Keitel and Andie MacDowell, which premiered internationally at the Venice Film Festival. Her other directing credits include A&E Television's 100 CENTRE STREET, created by Sidney Lumet, for which she also wrote; and the web series ALL DOWNHILL FROM HERE. Susanna has written several award-winning television movies for Hallmark Hall of Fame and Lifetime; and written for the TV series BORGIA, created by Tom Fontana. Susanna's previous documentary, the award-winning 9/12: FROM CHAOS TO COMMUNITY about the volunteer effort at Ground Zero, was also a collaboration with Jacki Ochs. She has published nonfiction prose in The Yale Revue, Spin Magazine, Real Simple Magazine and The New York Times. Susanna teaches Screenwriting at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. For Susanna's complete filmography [CLICK HERE](#)



Jacki Ochs, Producer

Jacki is an award-winning documentary producer and director. Her film VIETNAM: THE SECRET AGENT premiered at New York Film Festival and won Special Jury Prize at Sundance Film Festival. Her LETTERS NOT ABOUT LOVE won the Best Feature Documentary at SXSW Film Festival. Her work has been seen and broadcast worldwide. Jacki executive produced Keith Beauchamp's Emmy nominated UNTOLD STORY OF EMMETT LOUIS TILL which won the Freedom of Expression Award from the National Board of Review, and Kristi Zea's EVERYBODY KNOWS...ELIZABETH MURRAY. Jacki has been the recipient of the Guggenheim and two MacDowell Colony Fellowships and has been Executive Director of the Human Arts Association, a fiscal sponsoring organization for art and media-based productions, since 1977. She is Adjunct Professor at Pratt Institute's Film/Video department. For Jacki's complete filmography [CLICK HERE](#)



Francisco Bello, Editor

Francisco is an Oscar® and three-time Emmy nominee. He shot and produced SALIM BABA, a 2008 Best Short Documentary Oscar® and 2009 Emmy Nominee. Highlights for 2017 include editing the SXSW Narrative Grand Jury winner MOST BEAUTIFUL ISLAND, THE REAGAN SHOW for CNN Films, and ACORN AND THE FIRESTORM for ITVS. Prior editorial work includes the Peabody winning BEST KEPT SECRET, the Cine Golden Eagle winning CODE OF THE WEST, and the Karen Schmeer Editing Award winners OUR NIXON and WAR DON DON (for which he was also awarded 2 Emmy Nominations). Francisco co-directed DREAMING AGAINST THE WORLD, seen at the 2015 Telluride Film Festival, New York's Asia Society, the Museum of the Fine Arts in Boston and China Institute. He is currently developing both a scripted and non-scripted miniseries.



Wendy Blackstone, Composer

Wendy has created over 130 film scores ranging stylistically from offbeat to contemporary orchestral to rock to jazz. She composes for fiction, nonfiction, from dramatic films to comedies. When Ms. Blackstone finished scoring DEAR DIARY, EP Steven Spielberg said, “Wendy’s music took the show from a 3 to a 9.” Directed by David Frankel, the show went on to win an Oscar. Nine of the films Wendy has scored have either been nominated or won Academy Awards. Feature films include: LOST IN FLORENCE, Juan Campanella’s LOVE WALKED IN (starring Terence Stamp, Denis Leary); Nick Gomez’s NEW JERSEY DRIVE, EP, Spike Lee; Latin music for Betty Thomas’ comedy ONLY YOU; Susan Seidelman’s comedy THE DUTCH MASTER starring Mira Sorvino. Wendy has scored five primetime television series, and her recent documentary scores include HBO’s GIRL IN THE RIVER, HBO’S WARNING: THIS DRUG MAY KILL YOU, AMERICAN JIHAD, and Berliner’s WHITEY VS US and PARADISE LOST 3.



Maya Edelman, Animator

Maya was born in Kiev, USSR and went on to study animation and film in her beloved New York City. Her work is focused on expressing complex characters through cel animation and illustrations. She wrote and created a credit sequence for the feature film COLLECTIVE:UNCONSCIOUS which had its premiere at SXSW. Her paper sculpture was featured at the Recess Gallery’s MARIE LORENZ: FLOW POOL show during an evening with Underwater New York, and her illustration work was featured in the LIMINALITY exhibition at Gowanus Print Lab in 2015. She has been an exhibitor at Brooklyn Zine Festival (2014,2015) with books including QUITTING and BOOBS, PUBES AND CUKES. She often prefers to tell stories in the form of short animations and GIFs, but is currently in development on a short film titled NEOTENY which will combine animation and phone footage.



PRINCIPAL CINEMATOGRAPHERS

Edwin Martinez is a Bronx-born filmmaker whose award-winning work has screened theatrically, nationally, internationally, on major television and news outlets. His first feature documentary, TO BE HEARD, won awards at DOC NYC, Seattle International, and other festivals. He produced EL EFECTO CLEMENTE (ESPN), edited CITY OF TREES (PBS), and was cinematographer for WHAT ALICE FOUND (Sundance Special Jury Prize), as well as many other films. He is an Assistant Professor of Film in the SUNY Purchase Film Conservatory.



Stephen McCarthy's work appears regularly in prime-time documentary series including PBS's American Experience, American Masters, Frontline, Nova, Nova: Science Now and P.O.V. His work as DP includes THE AFRICAN AMERICANS: MANY RIVERS TO CROSS, two seasons of HBO's MASTER CLASS and PBS's series FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR, among others. Stephen teaches cinematography at Boston University, RISD, The Maine Media Workshops and MIT.



Stefan Thissen is a Berlin-based German cinematographer and filmmaker, who has contributed to numerous internationally screened political and cultural TV documentaries, including the BBC's KILLING THE STORY. Also, for BBC, he DP'd the TV portraits HELMUT KOHL and ANGELA MERKEL among others. Stefan has shot numerous documentaries for PBS, Channel Four, and the German networks ZDF and ARD.



Phillip Van is an award-winning writer/director. His work has appeared in The New York Times, Creativity, Shots, Rolling Stone, Wired on MTV, Pitchfork, Stereogum, G4tv and AdAge's Best Ads. His commercial work has won D&AD, One Show, Promax, Hermes and national Addy awards. While in graduate school at NYU, he received a Student Academy Award and a BAFTA/LA honorable mention for his thesis film. His work has received accolades at festivals including Berlin, Sundance, HBO US Comedy Arts, Seattle, Aspen and Gen Art.



Participants (In order of appearance)



Emma Larson's first migraine came in the form of loss of vision at the age of 14. Things got worse from there.



Joan Didion, the revered author, reads from "In Bed," her acclaimed essay about her experience with migraine.



Sheila Lineberry's migraine attacks made her fear she was going to die – a fear which spread to her children and husband.



Isiah Lineberry became a migraine activist in an effort to get help for his wife **Sheila's** condition.



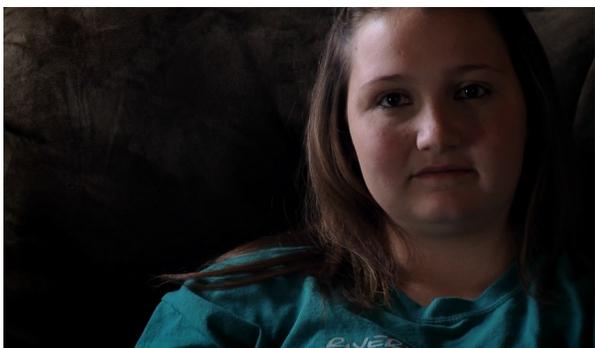
Mercy Lineberry remembers many times in her childhood when she believed her mother **Sheila** might die because of the intensity of a migraine attack.



When **Billie Jernigan** lost her job due to migraine, she also lost the insurance which had allowed her to manage her disease.



David Jernigan returned from combat in Iraq with migraine, induced by a traumatic brain injury. He understood for the first time what his wife **Billie** and daughter **Morgan** had been going through.



Morgan Jernigan experienced her first migraine as an adolescent, most likely having inherited the disease from her mother **Billie**.



Melina Triantos had her first visit to a pediatric neurologist at age 11 after years of migraine symptoms.



Melissa Preston Bulyko's migraine disease, involving daily migraine attacks, continues to worsen and become more difficult to treat.



Joanna Kempner and her husband **Joe Drury** wanted to have a second child. Joanna wasn't sure she could endure going off her migraine medication in order to get pregnant.



Siri Hustvedt has suffered from various neurological conditions all her life, and has written eloquently about them in several books. She and her husband **Paul Auster** describe life as a couple coping with her disease.



Keith McQuirter was disbelieved by his colleagues when he was unable to come to work because of migraine, as they understood it to be a condition which only afflicts women.



Andrew Levy shares his rich knowledge of well-known people with migraine including Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Woolf and Lewis Carroll, learned from extensive research for his memoir about life with migraine.



Bollywood choreographer **Shiamak Davar** found an outlet for his migraine disease in his work, creating dances that reflect his inner experience.



After years of agony, **Lisa Sokolov** developed her own method for lessening the intensity of migraine: a technique using vocalization and the body.



During Headache on the Hill, legendary **Congressman John Lewis** meets with Georgia activists to help advance legislation in Congress to support migraine research.

Medical Professional Participants (In alphabetical order)

Susan Beard, DNP, CPNP

Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Neurology, Monroe Carell, Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, Nashville, TN

David Borsook, MD, PHD

Professor, Harvard Medical School

Director, Center for Pain and the Brain, Boston Children's and Massachusetts General Hospitals Director, Save the Childs Brain, Boston Children's Hospital

Rami Burstein, PHD

John Hedley-Whyte Professor of Anaesthesia and Neuroscience, Harvard Medical School

Vice Chairman of Research, Department of Anesthesia and Critical Care, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Andrew Charles, MD

Professor of Neurology

Meyer and Renee Luskin Chair in Migraine and Headache Studies

Director, UCLA Goldberg Migraine Program, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

David Dodick, MD FRCP (C), FACP, FAHS, FAAN

Professor of Neurology, Director of Headache Program, Mayo Clinic of Medicine, Scottsdale, AZ Chairman, International Headache Society

Chair, American Migraine Foundation

Peter Goadsby, MD, PHD, FAHS

Professor of Neurology, King's College, London

Joanna Kempner, PHD

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

Lori Lazdowsky, RN, BSN, CPN

Reiki Master, Nursing Clinical Coordinator, Boston Children's Hospital

Alyssa Lebel, MD

Assistant in Neurology, Assistant in Pain Medicine, Boston Children's Hospital

Director, Chronic Headache Program, Boston Children's Hospital

Richard Lipton, MD

Professor and Vice Chair of Neurology, Co-Director of the Montefiore Medical Center, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY

Elizabeth Loder, MD, MPH, FAHS

Chief, Division of Headache and Pain Department of Neurology, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA

Klaus Podoll

Department of Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, Medical Faculty, RWTH Aachen, Germany

Allan Purdy, MD, FRCPC, FACP, FAHS

Professor of Neurology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

President, American Headache Society

Robert Shapiro, MD, PHD

Professor of Neurological Sciences

Larner College of Medicine at the University of Vermont

Laura Simons, PHD

Director, Biobehavioral Pediatric Pain Lab, Stanford University Medical School

Complete Cast (In order of appearance)

Emma Larson
Joan Didion
Dr. David Dodick
Dr. Elizabeth Loder
Sheila Lineberry
Isiah Lineberry
Mercy Lineberry
Billie Jernigan
David Jernigan
Morgan Jernigan
Dr. Rami Burstein
Dr. Allan Purdy
Dr. Richard Lipton
Dr. Alyssa Lebel
Melina Triantos
Melissa Preston Bulyko
Dr. David Borsook
Dr. Andrew Charles
Joanna Kempner, PhD
Siri Hustvedt
Dr. Robert Shapiro
Keith McQuirter
Dr. Peter Goadsby
Andrew Levy
Paul Auster
Laura Simons, PhD
Dr. Klaus Podoll
Shiamak Davar
Joe Drury
Lisa Sokolov
Lori Lazdowski, RN
Susan Beaird, DNP
Honorable John Lewis

Principal Crew

Writer/Director	Susanna Styron
Producer	Jacki Ochs
Editor	Francisco Bello
Composer	Wendy Blackstone
Animator	Maya Edelman
Principal Cinematography	Edwin Martinez Stephen McCarthy Stefan Thissen Phillip Van
Additional Cinematography	Daniel Brohawn Jonathan Kaufman Jason Longo Tom Neff Bob Nesson Martina Radwan Michael Reff Thorsten Thielow James Williams Tom Zaleski
Experimental Footage	Jonah Moran
Production Sound	Steven Bogнар Francis Coakley Chris Durfy Brian Gilbert Sam Kashefi Rich Mach Dina Moore Edward O'Connor George Shafnacker Jörg Theis Rajesh Tiwari
Associate Producer	Claire Silberman
Field Producer (India)	Laurel Chiten Laura Petrella
Graphic Design and Brain Animation	Todd Ruff
Sound Design	Margaret Crimmins
Re-recording Mixer	Ken Takeuchi
Music Recording & Mix	Richard Martinez
Post Production Supervisor	Digital SYNC TANK
Intermediate provided by	TECHNICOLOR-POSTWORKS NEW YORK
Colorist	Sam Daley
Web Design	Amazon Pixels
Fiscal Sponsor	Human Arts Association
Marketing Strategist	Nancy LaPook Diamond

Audio post-production services provided by Onomatopoeia Inc.,
through New York Women in Film & Television's Fund for Women Filmmakers
Audio description provided and voiced by Michele Spitz of Woman Of Her Word

Quotes from the Film

When I say a headache, I don't mean just a headache. I mean something that would totally brutalize you.

– **Joan Didion**

I tell people that migraine is so much more than just a terribly disabling headache. Migraine is a neurological disorder where certain networks in the brain become activated. Headache is one component of it.

– **Dr. David Dodick**, *Director, Headache Program, Mayo Clinic Arizona*

People will say, 'It's just a headache.' They're not just headaches. There are days that I don't see anything except for shapes all day long.

– **Billie Jernigan**

Frequently when they come to the office they say, 'I want my migraine cured.' I would look at them and say, 'If I can cure your migraine, I'm going to get the Nobel Prize.' That's how big that is.

– **Dr. Allan Purdy**, *Prof. of Neurology Dalhousie University*

For doctors who like to be finished, who like to fix things, this can be a frustrating career.

– **Dr. Elizabeth Loder**, *Mass. General Hospital Chief, Division of Headache, Brigham and Women's Hospital*

The emotional component of pain cannot really be separated from pain intensity, because it's all part of how our brain circuit puts things together.

– **Dr. David Borsook**, *Director, Center for Pain and the Brain, Mass. General Hospital*

Pain is a very distributed system. It's not localized to one spot that you could zap if you needed to; or give one medication that would, like a heat-seeking missile, go to that area and turn it off.

– **Dr. Alyssa Lebel**, *Director, Chronic Headache Program, Boston Children's Hospital*

The state of funding for headache research in general, but migraine research in particular, is scandalous in its almost complete lack of commitment to the commonest neurologic problem that affects Americans.

– **Dr. Peter Goadsby**, *Prof. of Neurology, King's College, London*

Your physiology is very much tied to your psyche, and there is no way to separate the two, or to really allow a pill to resolve everything that's going on.

– **Laura Simons, PhD, Director, Biobehavioral Pediatric Pain Lab, Stanford U. Medical School**

I remember several occasions, I'd probably say ten if not more, where she thought she was going to die.

– **Mercy Lineberry**

The literature is mixed on many of the holistic therapies. We don't have solid data. But there's so many things in life and in the world that we don't have scientific data on. But we know that people respond positively.

– **Lori Lazdowsky, RN, BSN, CPN, Boston Children's Hospital**

The common refrain for people that have migraine is, 'No, no, no. It's not just a headache.' I think we need to take that a step further and say it actually is not headache at all.

– **Dr. Robert Shapiro, Prof. of Neurological Sciences, University of Vermont**

It's more complex for a man to be struck down by something that seems so ephemeral as a migraine, but is as disabling as taking a gun out and shooting him, stopping him in his tracks.

– **Dr. Peter Goadsby, Prof. of Neurology, King's College, UK**

We've seen kids who've presented with headaches as young as four or five years old.

– **Laura Simons, PhD, Director, Biobehavioral Pediatric Pain Lab, Stanford U. Medical School, CA**

I felt betrayed by my body. I felt scared all the time. I've never felt anxiety like that.

– **Emma Larson**

When fear accompanies chronic illness, it always makes it worse.

– **Siri Hustvedt**

Patients who have chronic pain and have anxiety, it makes their pain worse.

– **Dr. David Borsook, Director, Center for Pain and the Brain, Mass. General Hospital**

Testimonials

Masterpiece...beautifully written and filmed.

– **Judge Anne Thompson**

An impressive deep dive into a condition that impacts millions, especially women. What an important service this film does! Bravo!

– **Victoria Riskin**, *Film Writer and Producer, Past President of the Writers Guild of America*

A terrific achievement; education in a profound way.

– **Joan Gussow**, *Emerita Professor of Nutrition and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University*

A moving, illuminating and necessary film.

– **Annette Insdorf**, *Film Historian, Educator and Author, Columbia University*

Astounding. Enlightening. Terrifying. Hopeful. I was moved by the stories of individual pain and inspired by the common humanity we all share.

– **Tom Fontana**, *Producer/Writer, Creator of OZ and BORGIA*

An excellent job with communicating the struggles, frustration, despair and perseverance migraine patients encounter.

– **Janelle Schafer**

Amazing. Sad. Inspirational. A must see for anyone in primary health care.

– **Roger O'Toole**

The film captures the entire family experience – patient, spouse, parent – authentically spot on.

– **Tammy Rome**, *Migraine Advocate*

Migraine doesn't kill, but it kills the soul.

– **Filmgoer**

Very powerful! An important message to get out to the medical professional and public.

– **Bobbi Sue Brown**

I don't suffer from migraine, but watching the film has made me understand completely how it feels to live with them, and the importance of investigating more about them. It's a film which I personally want to show everyone, to make them understand what is the meaning of the 'migraine.'

– **Anonymous**

Grabbed my heart strings from the beginning. Made me feel horrible how I treated an employee who suffered from migraines.

– **Anonymous**

Very moving, just the motivation I needed to finish my PHD about migraine! I want to show this to all my colleagues!

– **Linda Buntinx**

Superb!

– **Simon Evans**, *Migraine Action*

This film gives voice to many aspects of migraine as a neurologic disorder and as a human experience.

Congratulations and thanks.

– **Dr. Richard Lipton**, *Executive Director, Montefiore Headache Center*

EXCELLENT. The stories were phenomenal.

– **Mary Franklin**, *Executive Director, National Headache Foundation*

FAQs

What was the inspiration for OUT OF MY HEAD?

Susanna's daughter, Emma, and several of Jacki's family members suffer from migraine. When Susanna's daughter first experienced migraine, she had episodes of partial blindness with dizziness and vomiting, but no head pain. It was terrifying. When Emma was diagnosed with migraine, Susanna was shocked to learn how many people live with the disease. She and Jacki decided that there was a story to tell about a condition which deeply affects so many families yet remains largely misunderstood and stigmatized.

Have the director and producer worked together before?

Yes, Susanna and Jacki made a documentary film in 2006 titled 9/12: FROM CHAOS TO COMMUNITY about the volunteer community at Ground Zero in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

How was the film funded?

The film was funded by private foundations, organizations and individuals, including a successful Kickstarter campaign supported by over 850 people. Principal funders include Association of Migraine Disorders, The Mayday Fund, Migraine Research Foundation, and The Garrett and Mary Moran Family Foundation.

How long did it take to complete the film?

We shot our first interviews in November 2009, so from beginning to end the film took almost eight years to complete. The process was start and stop, related to fundraising and other professional obligations.

How did you find the characters?

We started with Susanna's daughter, Emma, since she was the catalyst for the film. Emma was a great fan of Joan Didion's essay "In Bed," so we knew we wanted to interview Joan and have her read from the essay. We were thrilled Joan agreed to an interview. Susanna had known Lisa Sokolov, and knew of her system for coping with migraine. After reading several of Siri Hustvedt's perceptive pieces about her migraine experiences, Jacki and Susanna reached out to her.

We met Andrew Levy, and Sheila and Isiah Lineberry while filming Headache on the Hill in Washington DC.

We were introduced to many of our medical and scientific experts at an annual scientific meeting of the American Headache Society, and several more at a meeting of the International Headache Congress in Berlin.

Susanna serves as a mentor for a writing workshop for veterans and their caregivers. It was there that she met Billie Jernigan, who told Susanna that her entire family suffered with migraine.

While working in India, Jacki's husband worked with Shiamak Davar and learned of his migraine, which led to his participation.

Knowing we wanted to address pediatric migraine, we contacted Dr. Alyssa LeBel at the Boston Children's Hospital Headache Clinic. She introduced us to her incoming new patient, Melina Triantos.

What did you learn in the course of making the film?

One of the most critical things we learned is that migraine is incredibly complex. While characteristics are shared, attacks manifest in many ways, are experienced differently by each individual, and can shift. Discovering patterns, ‘triggers,’ and possible ways to make the condition less intense are therefore unique to each person who lives with migraine. This, coupled with the stigma of chronic pain, can cause alienation and isolation.

We were also struck by the impact living with migraine has on the entire family. The caregivers can feel guilty, overburdened and overwhelmed.

What do you hope the film will accomplish?

We believe OUT OF MY HEAD will create greater awareness and understanding of migraine. This can make a huge difference to people with migraine – at home, at school, in the workplace, and, actually everywhere. It’s not just the physical suffering that makes migraine so difficult to bear. It’s also the sense of isolation, and of being misunderstood. Compassion can help to alleviate emotional suffering. This is the case with any illness but presents a particular challenge with “invisible” illnesses, like migraine and other forms of chronic pain.

A feature film about migraine – which is not only informational but engaging and moving – can have a huge impact.

We also hope it will lead to greater funds being made available for research into more effective treatments, and maybe one day, a cure.

Who should I contact for additional information?

info@outofmyheadfilm.com

Susanna Styron Filmography

House of Teeth, Director/Writer, narrative short, 2016.

All Downhill From Here, Director, web series, four episodes, 2015.

Borgia TV series (Canal Plus), Writer, two episodes, 2012-2013.

Many Hands: Haiti After the Earthquake, Director/Producer, documentary short, 2010.

9/12: From Chaos to Community, Director/Producer, feature documentary, 2007.

In From the Night, Writer, Hallmark Hall of Fame, CBS-TV, 2005.

Back When We Were Grown-ups, Writer, Hallmark Hall of Fame, CBS-TV, 2004.

Crossing the Line, Writer, Lifetime Television, 2003.

Bottlecaps, Director/Writer, episode of "100 Centre Street" A&E TV series, 2002.

Taking Back Our Town, Writer, Lifetime Television (Christopher Award; Environmental Media Award), 2001.

Shadrach, Director/Writer, feature film, Columbia Pictures, 1998.

A Day Like Any Other, Director/Producer, narrative short (Special Jury Award, San Francisco Film Festival; Gold Award, Houston Int'l Film Festival), 1987.

Calling Home, Director, narrative short, 1984.

Wanda's, Director/Writer, narrative short, 1984.

Why I Live at the P.O., Director/Writer, narrative short, 1983.

In Our Own Backyards, Producer/Director/Editor, documentary short (numerous awards), 1982.

Suspended Sentence, Producer/Director/Editor, documentary short, 1976.

Jacki Ochs Filmography

Out of My Head, Producer, feature documentary, 2018.

Everybody Knows...Elizabeth Murray, Executive Producer, feature documentary, 2016.

MergerWatch, 15 years, Producer/Director, documentary short, 2012.

Plane Trap, Producer, documentary short, 2007.

9/12: From Chaos to Community, Producer, feature documentary, 2006.

Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till, Executive Producer, feature documentary, 2005.

Lenny Bruce Tribute, Producer/Director, ACLU documentary short, 12 min., October 2004.

George Soros/A Tribute, Director, International Crisis Group documentary, 10 minutes, 2003.

Letters Not About Love, Producer/Director/Editor, 16mm documentary feature, 58 minutes, 1998.

Shock Art, Director, HDTV, 4 15 min. documentary shorts, 1995.

Century's End, Producer, Donald Fagen Music Video, Warner Brothers, 1989.

Imaginary Music, Director, Music Video, Enigma Records, 1988.

Jazz Summit, Producer/Director/Editor, video documentary, 30 minutes, 1987.

Coalition for the Homeless, Director, PSA featuring Susan Sarandon, 1987.

A Price for Progress: VDT Hazards, Director/Cinematographer, documentary short, 1987

Vietnam: The Secret Agent, Producer/Director/Cinematographer, 16mm feature documentary, 1984.

Other Children, Cinematographer, narrative short, directed by JoAnne Akalaitis, 1979.

Wit's End, Producer/Director/Editor/Camera, 16mm experimental, 30 minutes, 1976.

Press Release

When I say a headache, I don't mean just a headache, I mean something that would totally brutalize you. – Joan Didion

Why does an illness which affects close to a billion people worldwide remain so deeply misunderstood and stigmatized? OUT OF MY HEAD, the award-winning feature documentary film, brings attention to the complex neurological disease, migraine.

The film, named Best International Documentary at the Melbourne International Documentary Film Festival, was selected to screen at numerous film festivals and medical and advocacy conferences and has been shown in 29 cities and 8 countries.

Written and directed by Susanna Styron and produced by Jacki Ochs, OUT OF MY HEAD sets out to investigate the devastating migraine attacks that have the filmmaker's daughter in their grip. As mother and daughter seek understanding and ever-elusive treatment, we follow them into a bizarre and fascinating world.

Along the way we hear from doctors, neuroscientists, and other migraineurs. Their journey takes us on a wild ride through migraine's fascinating history and bizarre symptomology. From Alice in Wonderland to the N.B.A.'s Dwyane Wade, from the Declaration of Independence to the music and art of Hildegard von Bingen, migraine has figured prominently in the human condition. Yet the disease remains largely a mystery to medical science – underfinanced, stigmatized, and invisible.

This is the story of people living in chronic pain, with a disease that has no cure – how it affects them and their loved ones, how they cope, how they see the world through its prism. It's the deeply felt story of a daughter and mother coming to terms with a condition that will always be a part of their lives.

OUT OF MY HEAD has been featured in a wide range of media from The New York Times and Marie Claire to scientific publications such as The Lancet and Brain and Life Magazine. The Hollywood Reporter describes OUT OF MY HEAD as "informative and engrossing." A "heartfelt documentary shedding much-needed light on a too often misunderstood condition."

OUT OF MY HEAD is being distributed by [Kino Lorber](#). Currently available for educational licensing, the film will be released on DVD and streaming platforms on June 9th, 2020 during National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month. Kino Lorber offers the best in contemporary, classic and documentary films that aim to engage, provoke, stimulate, and entertain today's audiences.

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Contact: team@outofmyheadfilm.com

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