Director's Statement

Ali's Story is a film about sound – how it lingers, how it heals, how it resonates. It is about dance as celebration, expression, and survival. It is about the spaces we share and freedom we find in movement. It is about how a Nina Simone remix changes someone's life.

The project began with a simple question: Can we tell an emotional visual story using one perspective and a handful of vinyl records?

As someone who has spent years working with music, culture and sound, I was drawn to Ali's way of narrating his life. The structure would mirror a DJ mix: Ali's voice and record selections drive the arc, while archival fragments, choreographed solo dance, and New York textures form a visual counterpoint.

But as I spoke with DJ Ali Coleman in Brooklyn during the summer of 2023 filming, researching, and listening more deeply, that question opened into something larger. Ali's life, and his reflections on the NYC Cabaret Law and the movement to repeal it, revealed how sound, memory, and motion help shape personal identity and collective history.

The story ended up exploring both what dance means to an individual, and what it means to a community when that freedom is threatened or disrupted.

Hearing directly from someone who experienced the effects of Cabaret Law enforcement also showed me how coalitions form among very different kinds of people until they become a movement. Ali is the kind of everyday person who finds himself at the center of that process.

And that spirit carried into the making of the film itself: a small team of collaborators with different perspectives shaping dialogue, music, sound design, and multi-sourced footage while threading archival fragments into the rhythm of Ali's life and records.

Making *Ali's Story* taught me to pay closer attention to what unites us in a time when it can feel so seductive to disconnect.

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