



## AWFJ EDA Award @ DOXA 2017 Filmmaker Interview:

### Julia Hechler on LES CLOYS

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In a particular Parisian neighborhood, residents have devised a means of establishing their own cultural identity and reclaiming their person power through the creation of a slanguage they call Verlan (back to front). American filmmaker Julia Hechler captures their trending tongue on film. Read what she has to say about the importance of language, getting to know your subjects and her next career moves.



#### **How and why did you encounter and commit to the subject/theme of your film and the main characters in it?**

I was studying abroad in Paris while in college and I lived with students who played soccer with a group of friends in a park near our apartment building. I went to their soccer games a few times and made friends with the people they were playing soccer with. I was really interested in the form of slang that this group spoke, so I wrote my college thesis about it. But it's hard to portray people's personalities in research papers and these protagonists have such dynamic personalities, so I wanted to go back. After I graduated from film school, I received a Fulbright grant to make a documentary about them.

#### **What did you learn about the subject/theme from making the film?**

The movie is about the slang that this community of young people speaks. While making the film, I learned more about their experiences with people from outside of their community borrowing words from their slang. Many of them told me that they don't mind as long as it's done respectfully.

#### **What did you learn about filmmaking from making the film?**

I was once told that people love to talk about themselves, so I shouldn't mind asking people as many questions as I want for journalistic purposes. I think that can be true of some people, but I learned while making this film that it's also important to recognize that some people answer questions out of a feeling of obligation toward you because, especially when you bring a camera

into the situation, there's a particular power dynamic during interviews. I think it's very important to be sensitive toward your subjects' vulnerabilities and potential preferences for privacy.

**What were your biggest challenges?**

It was surprisingly very difficult to get film permits because the parks department didn't want us to film on the days when a lot of children would be in the parks: Wednesdays and weekends. That was understandable since it's important for kids to get to spend free time in the parks. But it was important to film in the park because that was where the group of friends we were filming met. And we knew that we wouldn't be getting in the way of the children's playtime since we were just a crew of two people. In the end, it all worked out and we got the permits that we needed.

**Do you think that being female gave you a distinct perspective and/or way of handling the filmmaking process?**

The subjects of the movie are all male, so my being female probably did give the movie a unique perspective into the protagonists' lives. Being American and filming French people made me even more of an outsider, so it was a great opportunity to learn a lot about the community of friends while I was filming.

**What are your plans for the future?**

I plan on continuing to make documentaries and continuing to work as an editor! Right now, there's a short documentary in post-production that I am co-producing and co-editing called Her Room by the Kitchen, directed by Romina Romero-Hermoso. It's about a young Mexican woman's experiences working as an au pair in Seattle.

**Who are the Filmmakers whose work has inspired/influenced your own?**

Sandy Cioffi is an amazing filmmaker and I was lucky enough to be a student of hers in film school. Gretchen Burger makes incredible movies and I have learned a lot from her as well. The films by the Maysles brothers are also hugely inspiring for me.

**What advice do you have for other female Filmmakers who are trying to make their way through a still male-dominated industry?**

Find female mentors and co-workers and surround yourself with people who respect women. Even though you sometimes have to fight harder in order to be taken seriously, remember that you have important stories to tell and that the film community is a better place with women in it.

*(<http://awfj.org/female-gaze/2017/05/05/awfj-eda-award-doxa-2017-filmmaker-interview-julia-hechler-on-les-cloys/>)*