

ARTIST'S PALETTE

K A F I A

COMING HOME

H A I L E

THE FILMMAKER & ARTIST IN HER OWN WORDS

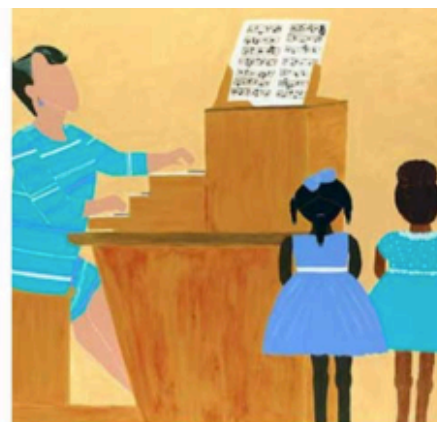
**AFTER 18 YEARS, I NEVER EXPECTED TO RETURN HOME TO ATLANTA.** I spent my childhood enthralled by movies that made me excited to see the world and use stories to unite people across cultures. After graduating from Spelman College, I landed my dream job as a tribes and culture analyst at the Pentagon and deployed to Iraq in 2008. I loved helping the U.S. military understand Iraq's tribes, but I wanted to share cross-cultural stories with a larger audience.

I returned to Washington, DC and prayed for guidance on putting my purpose into action. I rediscovered my love of films and began my foray into visual storytelling by learning to paint. On weekends, I wrote screenplays and participated in local art shows, but the time had come to fully commit to my purpose. In 2012, I enrolled in film school at University of Southern California. There, one of my scripts placed in the top 50 of the Nicholl Competition, administered by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Then *Fortune Magazine* lauded a short film I wrote as a "must see." Los Angeles

was good for my career, still, it never felt like home. In 2015, I was invited to speak on a panel in Atlanta and was proud to see the Hollywood of the South had retained its southern hospitality. Struck by the city's sense of community, my weekend visit became a year-long stay. I was hired to direct a music video for Atlanta native Yamin Semali, who I met through manager and producer Jeff Johnson II, a friend from Morehouse College. Then my Spelman classmates commissioned a painting for our reunion, increasing my exposure as an artist. Now I've grown to appreciate this city's best asset—its people—and decided to make Atlanta my home.

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