

When those who  
have nothing defy  
those who have  
everything



# VERONA

THE STORY OF THE EVERETT MASSACRE

# Contact

Completed 2017

Running time: 95 min.

Denise Ohio  
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[Trailer](#)  
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Crew felling trees. *Courtesy of the Northwest Room, Everett Public Library.*



Three men working at the Seaside Shingle Mill in Everett, December 1907. The man standing in the hole in the floor is using a kneebolter saw. *Courtesy of the Northwest Room, Everett Public Library.*



Shingle packer at the Union Mill, 1910. Shingle packers worked so fast, it appeared they were weaving shingles together. This earned them the name, "shingle weavers," a name that soon applied to everyone who worked in a shingle mill. *Courtesy of the Northwest Room, Everett Public Library.*



A highly skilled shingle sawyer at an upright shingle saw. Shingle sawyers were recognized by their lost fingers or hands. These men were militant on behalf of their union. Strikes usually meant violent confrontation with law enforcement and gunmen hired by the mill owners. *Courtesy of the Northwest Room, Everett Public Library.*

# Synopsis

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## LOGLINE

When those who have nothing defy those who have everything.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

*Verona: The Story of the Everett Massacre* blends interviews, never-before-seen documents, first-hand accounts, and forensic evidence to uncover the story of a free-speech fight in Everett, Washington, that left seven dead on November 5, 1916. With a style that feels at home alongside the work of Ken Burns and Steve James, *Verona* focuses on the people caught up in the violence that comes when those who have nothing defy those who have everything.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

On November 5, 1916, the steamship *Verona*, packed with members of the Industrial Workers of the World, were met at the City Dock in Everett, Washington, by Sheriff Donald McRae and 140 armed deputies. When the shooting stopped, five men were dead, two dying, six missing, and dozens wounded.

What had started as a strike between the town's shingle weavers union and the mill owners turned



Built in 1910, the *Verona* was one of the fastest steamships on Puget Sound. Courtesy of the Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Association.

into a free-speech fight between the IWW and Sheriff McRae, a man elected twice with the support of labor. The violence escalated, leaving the town torn in half, the shingle weavers union destroyed, and seven men dead. All the while the mills kept turning out millions of red cedar shingles and making the mill owners rich.

With stunning historical footage and expert analysis, *Verona: The Story of the Everett Massacre* reveals how the conflict between them that have and them that don't destroys lives, not just in violent confrontations, but in the day-to-day existence of working people.

With a style reminiscent of Ken Burns and Steve James, *Verona* relates the forgotten story and explores how those who have power and money continue to successfully turn the rest of us against each other.



The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) produced crude but effective artwork to memorialize this long-forgotten violent conflict. Courtesy of the Northwest Room, Everett Public Library.

# About the director

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Denise Ohio

Monroe, WA

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Denise Ohio lives and works with her spouse outside Monroe, Washington, where they raise lavender and honey bees. This is her third film.



IWW free-speech demonstration in San Diego, California, 1912. *Courtesy of the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SOC3828 and SOC3829.*

# Director's statement

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## Why did you tell this story?

I was fascinated about this story first because I'd never heard of it and second, because people who ostensibly should have been on the same side were successfully turned against one another. I wanted to explore why and how that happened.

## What elements of the story feel relevant today?

We continue to debate issues of civil rights versus security, economic opportunity versus economic exploitation, and equality before the law. The arguments people were having on the streets of Everett in 1916 were fundamental concepts of what it means to participate fully and equally in American society. We continue these debates to and continue to see when those who have nothing defy those who have everything.

## Was there a particular lesson learned after this violent event?

The legend of the Everett Massacre overtook the events leading up to and occurring on 5 November 1916, including the lesson that the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) won the 8-hour day and better working conditions in the logging mills and camps. This isn't accurate, and yet the belief exists to this day. I think that dismisses the hard work done by thousands of nameless people who struggled to achieve those changes.

The lesson I took from what happened is how courageous ordinary people could be on behalf of the rights of others. Townspeople joined members of the I.W.W. to stand up for the right of free speech, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly and they spoke up knowing they risked



Ordinary people like boardinghouse-owner Letelsia Fye stood up to the authorities in Everett. When she saw Wobblies dragged off to jail by deputies for speaking on the corner of Hewitt and Wetmore, Telsie, an owner of a respectable boarding house and mother of two, got up on the soapbox in defiance. "I said I could recite the Declaration of Independence...then I made a few remarks, and as I did I saw the officers coming toward me, so I jumped down and got away." *Courtesy of Dan and Shelly Fye.*

losing their jobs or getting jailed or beaten because it was the right thing to do. Because there are some things worth standing up for.

# Credits

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*Verona: The Story of the Everett Massacre*

Written, produced, and directed by Denise Ohio

Camera (Washington)

Bob Watson

Camera (Maryland)

Bryan Mong

Animation

Ryan Roye

Transcripts

Sara Barnes

Legal Neil Sussman, Law Offices of Neil Sussman

“The Internationale”

Music by Pierre De Geyter

Performed by Dave Moore

“And the Band Played On”

Music by Charles B. Ward

Lyrics by John F. Palmer

Performed by Dave Moore

*With*

Norman H. Clark

David Dilgard

Margaret Riddle

Bill Marcantel

Daniel L. Robinson

Shirley Suttles

Jean C. Findlay

Celia Melder

Charlotte Sthol

*Thanks to*

Catherine Minden

Dave Oehlers

Sarah Johnson

Eileen Simmons and Roger Berger

Randy Riddle

Everett Women’s Film Festival

City of Everett

Snohomish County Labor Council

Frank Melder, Robert Sthol, and the family of

Charles O. Curtiss

Walt Robinson, Gail Robinson, and the family of

Abraham Rabinowitz

The family of Walker C. Smith

Bud Beard, Krystine A. Beard, Anne Beard-Rozell,

and the family of Jefferson Beard

The Virginia V. Foundation

Industrial Workers of the World

Dan and Shelly Fye

Alice O’Brien

Nicolette Bromberg

Elizabeth Westrate

Margot Roth

Darren Sylte

Jason Webley

Darryl Chapman

Bonnie Rowan

Kristin Firth

*Archive materials courtesy of*

Northwest Room, Everett Public Library

Everett Museum of History

Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Association

University of Washington Libraries, Special

Collections

Joe Williamson Collection, Puget Sound Maritime

Historical Society

PEMCO Webster & Stevens Collection, Museum of

History and Industry, Seattle; All rights reserved

Monroe Historical Society

Jeremy Harmon/*Salt Lake Tribune*

Idaho State Historical Society

Minnesota State Historical Society

Seattle Public Library

Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and

Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

California State University Northridge

Archival images, film, and/or video materials from

the collections of the Library of Congress

National Archives at Kansas City

National Archives at Seattle



Striking textile workers face off against Massachusetts State Militiamen in Lawrence during the IWW-led strike, 1912. *From the Prints and Photographs Division, the Library of Congress.*



Labor disputes often resulted in violence. *Private collection.*



Strikes only work if everyone sticks together. *From the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.*

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OF ALL THE WORKERS**

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ON EARTH**

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IS  
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ONE BIG UNION**

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GOOD PAY OR BUM WORK

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**WHAT TIME IS IT?**

**ORGANIZE NOW**

**ORGANIZE RIGHT**

**TIME  
TO ORGANIZE**

**JOIN THE I.W.W.**