



# MEMORIA(L)

A film by Ian Kelly

9 minutes - USA - 2022

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## MEMORIA(L) — SYNOPSIS



### **Logline:**

This beautifully animated documentary takes us back to Memorial Day, 1937, when Chicago police killed ten striking steelworkers. How do we remember this history?

### **Synopsis:**

*Memoria(l)* is a short animated documentary about the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre. On that day, over a thousand striking steel workers, and their supporters, marched towards Republic Steel in Southeast Chicago to establish a picket. They were met by hundreds of armed police officers, who open-fired on the strikers. Dozens were wounded. 10 were killed. A news crew captured the whole scene on film, producing one of the earliest filmed documents of police violence. Now, nearly a century later, how do we remember this history?

## MEMORIA(L) — DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In the early 1900s, my ancestors immigrated to the U.S. and worked in the steel mills in Western Pennsylvania. It was hard work and they had few protections. When steelworkers like them tried organizing for better labor conditions, they were violently suppressed. I wanted to learn more about the labor history of steelworkers, and soon after relocating to Chicago I heard about the Memorial Day Massacre.

I learned that on Memorial Day, 1937, workers at Republic Steel were just a few days into a strike when police opened fire on their picket line. Dozens were wounded. 10 were killed. A news crew captured the whole scene on film, an incredibly rare occurrence for an event at that time period.

I sought out the footage of the massacre to see it for myself. What I saw was very shocking. In the footage, the violence erupts out of nowhere. You see shots of strikers and police all lined up across from each other — the scene is intense but nothing about it suggests the violence that's about to come. Then there's a cut in the footage, and all of a sudden the next image is of the police firing at the crowd. It all happens very quickly, and is over in seconds. I sat with the footage for a long time, playing it back slowly, looking at each frame. Looking at the faces of the strikers and the police.

Sitting in a dark room, scrubbing back and forth through the footage, I kept thinking about the protests against police violence in 2020. The images from 1937 of police firing tear gas and beating protesters resonated with contemporary images of police violence. The footage of the massacre shows, viscerally, the long legacy of state violence against working class people in this country. I couldn't shake the images or the sense of how familiar they were — and I set out to make a film about the massacre.

My goal for the film was to enliven the history — to make this moment from nearly a century ago feel present and meaningful. I decided to use animation as a way to bring it to life. Animation is an incredible medium for telling stories of personal or historical memory. Memory is imperfect, and subjective. It has omissions, or inconsistencies. Animation shares a lot of these qualities, and can render memory in a beautiful and interesting way. Animation can enliven events for which there isn't an archive or historical record. Or it can communicate an emotion that doesn't exist within the archive. These are the qualities that I wanted to capture in this film.

The violence enacted by police against the strikers in the 1930s has a direct relationship to state violence against the working class and protest movements today. Learning about the Memorial Day Massacre helps us understand our current moment — where police brutality and anti-labor sentiments remain prevalent. A goal of this film is to illuminate this connection — to demonstrate the ways in which the past informs the present.

## MEMORIA(L) — FILMMAKING TEAM



**Ian Kelly, DIRECTOR/ANIMATOR:** Ian is a filmmaker, editor and animator currently pursuing an MFA in Documentary Media from Northwestern University. His previous short film, EDDIE, played in major film festivals, including the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Cleveland International Film Festival, and Salem International Film Festival.

Ian previously worked as a video editor and animator for RLMG, a digital design studio specializing in museum media, editing videos for the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture among others.

Ian was the Assistant Editor on the short film, *The Neighbors' Window*, winner of the 2020 Academy Award for Best Live Action Short. Ian was also post-production assistant on *A Night at the Garden*, nominated for the 2019 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short.



**MYNTI, BACKGROUND ILLUSTRATOR:** Shanti Mirdayanti (MYNTI) is an illustrator and animator born in Massachusetts, who spent her years growing up in different cities abroad. She returned to the East Coast to pursue her BFA in Animation at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, where she began to build her colorful body of work, filling it with lively compositions, expressive characters, and imaginative worlds -- inspired by her childhood in ever-shifting, unfamiliar environments.



**Kate In, SOUND DESIGN / MIX / MASTERED:** Kate In is a music composer, producer, and multi-instrumentalist specializing in analog and digital music production and sound design for the screen. Drawing from her background in stop-motion animation and video arts, Kate uses music composition and production to create vivid, fantastical, and moody universes. She is currently an MA student in Sound Arts and Industries at Northwestern University.



**Jeanette Dominguez, SOUND DESIGN / MIX:** Jeanette Dominguez is a graduate student in the MA in Sound Arts and Industries program at Northwestern University. She is expanding and utilizing her skillset to develop dynamic media in public programming. Jeanette's practice converges at field recording, multimodal storytelling, sound production, and design.

## MEMORIA(L) — CREDITS

### **Directed, Animated & Produced**

Ian Kelly

### **Archival Sources**

SE Chicago Historical Society

Library of Congress

The National Archives

Bill Bork

### **Background Illustrations**

MYNTI

### **Production Assistant**

Maya Wanner

### **Sound Design**

Jeanette Dominguez

Kate In

Ian Kelly

### **Sound Mix**

Jeanette Dominguez

Kate In

### **Sound Mastered**

Kate In

### **Music**

Blue Dot Sessions

### **Special thanks to**

Bill Bork

Christine Walley

Carol Quirke

Marco Williams

### **Thanks to**

Zaki Al Abdullah

Anna Bauman

Laura Gede

Ella Harmon

Kyle Henry

Jacob Kessler

Zemin Li

Rasheed Peters

Calum Walter

Jiaxin Wei

Meghan Wells

Xi Ye

Naomi Zidon

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[Study Guide](#)

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