

FORMER NBA PLAYER MATT BARNES PENS "MY BLACK MARK" IN ADVANCE OF HOLLYSHORTS FILM FESTIVAL

Matt Barnes penned a thought piece on how a high school hate crime he experienced forever changed his life; subject of new film at HollyShorts Film Festival

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“

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Matt Barnes

star Matt Barnes has penned a short essay, "My Black Mark," recounting how an episode involving the KKK in high school impacted his understanding of his identity - a topic his film Black Mark, set to debut at the HollyShorts Film Festival August 10th.

An excerpt from his essay reads:

"Blackness is, once again, front page news, and trending on social media nationwide. By now, you have heard that

while speaking at the National Association of Black Journalists conference in Chicago last week, the question of Vice President Kamala Harris's Blackness was brought into question: "Is she Black? Is she Indian? What is she, really?" asked former President Donald Trump, asserting that being Black conferred some sort of social advantage.

We all know that the questions are to be expected; politicians in this country have been using race to discredit their opponents for decades, while the social construct of race is more fluid than ever from social science to coffee shop debates, with real life consequences.

Let's leave it to the special interests to push their agendas. The incident, however, did remind me of the tension navigating my own dueling identities, and how I set out to tell my story.

On Saturday, August 10th, my documentary BLACK MARK debuts at the [HollyShorts Film Festival in Los Angeles](#). I am proud of this film and invite you to attend the premiere.

The film recalls how a hate crime I experienced as a senior in high school forever changed my life. More specifically, it recounts how an incident involving my sister led to me getting into a fight

to protect her, which led to a suspension, which led to the local KKK breaking into my school to tag it in hateful graffiti, hanging a mannequin with my jersey from an oak tree in effigy, and attempting to burn the classrooms to the ground in an overnight invasion.

The next day, I learned from my white supremacist first cousin (yes, you read that right), that the KKK had put a hit on my head, and they were planning to kill me. Around-the-clock security was deployed, buying my family just enough time to pick up and move.

I call this episode my Black Mark – a definitive, life changing moment in my life that was so profound that my existence on this earth was never the same again. My Black Mark is, at once, scar tissue of my racial trauma, but also my emblem of hope and survival that I leaned on through episodes like the Donald Sterling disaster while with the Clippers, and my social justice advocacy throughout my life.

Up until those fateful few days in 1998, I had struggled to understand my mixed race, Italian-Black identity. I was stuck in-between - never white enough for the Italian side of the family, never black enough to feel belonging on the other side because I was not “fully Black.”

The incident, however, changed everything: from that moment on, I was a Black man."

It been just over 25 years since Matt Barnes' Black Mark awakening. Anniversaries – whether celebrated or maligned – "are an opportunity to look back and ahead, and was the intent of the BLACK MARK film," notes Barnes. Reflecting on the importance of the film, he concludes, "I know that I am no different than countless Black people across our country fighting to understand their own dueling identities (the average African American has a quarter European ancestry, for example), and who are victims of racism just like me. In turn, my hope for the film is that it will encourage viewers to use their very own Black Marks as way to tell their stories, on their own terms."

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Black Mark film poster with former NBA player Matt Barnes

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