

# a hole in a fence

A Film by  
**D.W. Young**

46 minutes, English, Color, 2008

[www.aholeinafence.com](http://www.aholeinafence.com)



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**Praise for D.W. Young's**

# **a hole in a fence**

*"D.W. Young's A HOLE IN A FENCE peers through a rusted door in a blighted section of Brooklyn's Red Hook neighborhood and finds a world of surprising richness and tantalizingly ambiguous possibility. What seemed a wasteland teems with life, personality, even art. But can such an eccentric oasis survive the encroachment of developers and the lures of "progress"? The dilemma may be all too common in modern America, but Young's film approaches it with an uncommonly lyrical precision, finding the magical in the concrete -- and soulful significance in the hard choices communities must make."*

**- Godfrey Cheshire, Film Critic and Director of *Moving Midway***

*"Thought-provoking."*

**-USA Today**

*"A complex exploration of urban community living."*

**- The Guardian (UK)**

*"This is a sensitive, multilayered look at the complexities and tragicomedies of life in a neighborhood under siege."*

**- Tom Angotti, Director, Center for Community Planning & Development, Hunter College/CUNY**

*"Takes us on a tour of the shifting social landscape of Red Hook's waterfront neighborhood and its people on the brink of large-scale change."*

**-Brooklyn Historical Society**

*"An interesting in-depth look at the forces that shape our communities."*

**- Cleveland Plain Dealer**

*"Young's focus is crisp and his subject original, using the mystery of *The Yard* to speak on the larger issue of preserving New York City history."*

**-DVD Talk**

*"A remarkable film. More than just a portrait of a neighbourhood, it is also a commentary on the social, cultural, and economic divide in America."*

**- Cynical Cinema**

*"A story about an unspoiled corner of Brooklyn, a secret place."*

**-Nathan Lee, WNYC**

*"Fascinating... viewing should be mandatory for every city planner in New York, the U.S.--hell with it--the world."*

**- TrustMovies**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION *"Red Hook, Brooklyn was, until a few years ago, one of New York's last ungentrified frontiers. D.W. Young's documentary captures the neighborhood's transformation."*

**- Cineaste**

WINNER – 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Port Townsend Film Festival, 2008

OFFICIAL SELECTION – 2008 Athens International Film and Video Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION – 2008 NewFilmmakers Documentary Series, Anthology Film Archives

OFFICIAL SELECTION – 2008 San Francisco International Documentary Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION – 2008 Brooklyn Film & Arts Festival

**Nominated for 2008 International Press Academy Satellite Award - Best Documentary DVD**

# a hole in a fence

Chronicling the changing fortunes of Red Hook, Brooklyn, *A Hole in a Fence* explores the complicated issues of development, class and identity facing one of New York City's most unique neighborhoods.

It's the story of a vanished homeless community and the young architect who documented it; of an urban farm run by local kids amidst a landscape of industrial decay; of young graffiti writers losing their stomping grounds; of the arrival of a controversial Ikea megastore; of a photographer's vision of nature's renewal; of the doomed struggle to save a rare part of the neighborhood's working waterfront; and of a filmmaker's discovery of a fleeting, hidden world on the other side of a rusty old fence.

## Synopsis

Brooklyn is in flux.

Rampant development and gentrification are transforming the borough's neighborhoods, often controversially. For many, everything is happening too fast and unpredictably, for others the change is welcome. For developers the moment's a gold rush. For people on the edge of society it means even less security.

Brooklyn is also full of abandoned lots. Most people barely notice them, the same way they don't register graffiti or surveillance cameras. They're part of a filtered topography.

This film is a look at one of these lots in the neighborhood of Red Hook. Once an active part of the area's waterfront business, it suffered the same fate as much of the local maritime industry and was left to decay. For many years it served as a squatting spot for the homeless, who lived in the empty shipping containers and buildings scattered about its relatively vast space.

That world is now gone, the squatters kicked out to make way for large scale development. Luckily a small sliver of it was documented by Benjamin Uyeda, an architect and activist, and his brother Nathan. Using only found materials in an attempt to discover new and practical ways to aid the homeless, he built his own shelter and spent several weeks living in the lot in 2004.

The lot's residents were expelled in 2005. After this it became more sealed, accessible only via a couple of small, tight holes in its rusty fence hidden from casual view. When filmmaker D.W. Young first noticed one of these in Spring of 2006, it was possible to sneak through and enter a desolate, otherworldly expanse of massive, graffiti covered concrete blocks and ponds full of reeds. The scale of the place, the distinct maritime character of the structures, and the secluded feel prompted him to investigate its story further.

Interviews with local graffiti artists and a photographer who'd shot inside only reinforced how much the lot's future was bound to that of the adjacent Todd Shipyard, which had recently been demolished to make way for a massive new Ikea box store. A highly divisive issue for years, Ikea's arrival was no longer in doubt. The fate of the attached graving dock however, one of the few dry docks in the New York area, remained undecided. Speaking with advocates of the graving dock's preservation, such as local Waterfront Museum owner David Sharps, it grew evident that a failure to achieve compromise on this issue might very well mark a critical split in the road for the neighborhood.

Insight from Ian Marvy, co-founder of the local Red Hook Farmer's Market, a real working urban farm around the corner from the lot, further detailed the uncertainty of the neighborhood's future, as well as its often rough past. Other locals and Brooklynites added yet

more perspective. More than anything, it became clear most of the hard questions for the neighborhood had no easy answers.

The film was completed in early 2008, but the lot's place in the shifting flux of Brooklyn remains uncertain. The Ikea opened in June 2008; the graving dock advocates lost their fight; the impact on the Red Hook Farmer's Market is yet to be seen. Rumor has it the spot will soon become a Bed Bath and Beyond store. The fence surrounding it is now full of holes and much of the old mystery is gone.

In the meantime, the issues of development, class and identity it represents remain at the heart of the diverse borough's continual evolution.



The Hook, Red Hook 2008 - Photo by Benjamin Uyeda  
A Hole in a Fence copyright D.W. Young 2007

## Director's Statement

Coincidence played a major role in the evolving scope of the film. What began as a short, focused take on urban exploring and decay broadened considerably after I met Benjamin Uyeda (by pure chance), and he agreed to share his own unique experiences with me. It soon became clear that there was no way to look at this one particular spot in such detail without addressing some of the ongoing issues in the neighborhood. In many ways these reflect Brooklyn as a whole and need to be debated if there's to be hope of positive compromise.

The film was conceived from certain acts of transgression and curiosity, and hopefully it's a celebration of the exploratory spirit too.



Director D.W. Young in Red Hook - photo by Serge J.F. Levy  
A Hole in a Fence copyright D.W. Young 2007

## Credits

Director: D.W. Young  
Soundtrack: David Ullmann  
Producer: Judith Mizrachy  
Street Interviewer: Jason Hernandez-Rosenblatt  
Editing: D.W. Young  
Cinematography: D.W. Young  
Additional Cinematography: Nathan Uyeda  
"Homeless in Red Hook" courtesy of: Benjamin Uyeda  
Title Graphics: Ami Plasse

### Cast:

Ian Marvy  
Dario Modon  
Animesh Nayak  
Dorothy Anna Niedzwiecki  
PZ  
Sekum  
David Sharps  
Sonja Shield  
Larry Steant  
Blair Van Sant  
Roberta Weisbrod  
Benjamin Uyeda

## Bios

### ***D.W. Young - Director***

D.W. Young is the writer and director of the award-winning documentary *A Hole in a Fence*. His 2009 short *Ami Underground* (Festival Cinerail, Paris 2010) is an entertaining look at the unique subway drawings of NYC artist Ami Plasse. His most recent film, the short dark comedy *Not Interested* (2010), premiered at SXSW and was nominated for a 2010 Casting Society of America Artios Award. He lives in Brooklyn.

### ***David Ullmann - Soundtrack***

Guitarist /Composer David Ullmann is a lifelong New Yorker, a graduate of the New School Jazz BA/BFA program and a member of the group *Mission: on Mars*.

### ***Benjamin Uyeda - Architect & Activist***

Ben Uyeda is a Design Principle at *Independence Energy Homes*, an architecture firm specializing in the production of sustainable housing, and a visiting lecturer at Northeastern University.

### ***Jason Hernandez Rosenblatt - Street Interviewer***

Jason Hernandez-Rosenblatt is a published author and award-winning filmmaker born and raised in Brooklyn.

### ***Judith Mizrachy - Producer***

Judith Mizrachy has a background in both film production and distribution. She has produced several of D.W. Young's films including *A Hole in a Fence* and the short *Not Interested* (SXSW 2010). She is a graduate of the Masters Cinema Studies program at NYU and lives in Brooklyn.

# The Hollywood Reporter

## Int'l Press Academy announces nominations

Satellite Awards to be presented Dec. 14

By Gregg Kilday  
November 30, 2008

Getting a jump on rival awards groups, the International Press Academy announced its nominees Sunday for its 13th annual Satellite Awards.

Vying for best motion picture drama are "The Reader," "Slumdog Millionaire," "Revolutionary Road," "Frost/Nixon," "Milk" and "Frozen River."

In the best comedy or musical motion picture category, the nominees are "Happy-Go-Lucky," "Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist," "Vicky Christina Barcelona," "Tropic Thunder," "In Bruges" and "Choke."

The group also announced its ten best films of 2008, citing, in alphabetical order, "Ballast," "Changeling," "Doubt," "The Dark Knight," "Frost/Nixon," "Frozen River," "Milk," "The Reader," "Revolutionary Road" and "Slumdog Millionaire."

Among the TV nominees, the best drama series contenders are "Brotherhood," "In Treatment," "Primeval," "Life on Mars," "Dexter" and "Mad Men."

Best comedy or musical series nominees are "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia," "30 Rock," "Pushing Daisies," "State of the Union," "The Colbert Report" and "Skins."

The group chose nominees in 22 film categories, 12 TV categories, six DVD categories, and five DVD categories. The winners will be announced at awards ceremonies on Dec. 14 at the InterContinental Hotel in Century City.

### DOCUMENTARY DVD

Chicago 10 - Paramount

Days That Shook The World – BBC Warner

My Kid Could Paint That – Sony Pictures

Life In Cold Blood – BBC Warner

The King Of Kong: A Fistful Of Quarters – New Line Video

Young@Heart – Lionsgate

Gonzo: The Life And Work Of Hunter S. Thompson – Magnolia Home Video

Jewish Americans – PBS Paramount

Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story – Interpositive Media

**A Hole In a Fence – First Run Features**

## Ikea came, Ikea saw, Ikea conquered

By Shahnaz Habib, Wednesday July 2 2008

. . .A recent documentary made in the neighbourhood captures all this angst and more. DW Young's ***A Hole in a Fence*** begins as a curiosity project about a gash in a rusty metal fence around an abandoned concrete field in Red Hook and turns into a complex exploration of urban community living. Behind the hole, graffiti art and shipping containers that have been turned into homes for the homeless and an almost confrontational view of the Statue of Liberty indicate subversive, creative minds at work on what architect and activist Benjamin Uyeda calls "unclaimed, undiscovered territory." The documentary asks searching questions to community members on both sides of the Ikea debate. In 2008, mere days after Ikea opened amid much fanfare, most of it orchestrated by Ikea itself, the vehemence of the opposition to Ikea is poignant to watch. The lot is now up for sale and there is little doubt that its history will be erased, perhaps by Bed Bath & Beyond, which is rumoured to be interested.



**Cleveland Plain Dealer:**

### MOVIE NEWS AND REVIEWS

## 'The Dark Knight' and more: DVD releases for Dec. 9

by Chris Ball/Plain Dealer Reporter  
December 6, 2008

### "A Hole in a Fence"

What lies behind a small opening in a battered fence in a hard-to-reach waterfront section of New York City? In this 2008 documentary, the filmmakers climb through the rusty fence and explore a large, mostly empty space in Red Hook, Brooklyn, within view of the Statue of Liberty. They talk to homeless squatters, graffiti writers, urban farmers and neighbors, build their own temporary living space and develop a portrait of this unusual abandoned lot. New plans to build the world's largest Ikea store next door suddenly shift the film's emphasis onto issues of urban development and neighborhood preservation. This is an interesting in-depth look at the forces that shape our communities. Unrated, 46 minutes. DVD extras: an extended interview, a photo gallery and a short film, "Views From the Red Hook Grain Terminal." From First Run Features.



# Money

SECTION B

Monday, December 1, 2008

## Watch, Listen & Read

By Michelle Archer, special for USA TODAY

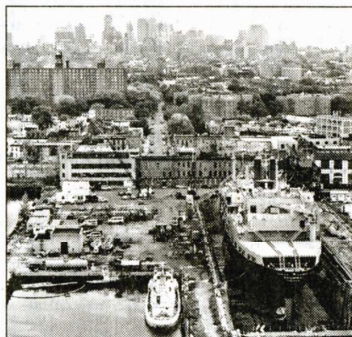
### On DVD

#### **A Hole in a Fence**

First Run Features, Dec. 9, \$19.95

In 2006, director D.W. Young originally set out to make a documentary about an abandoned lot in gritty Red Hook, a Brooklyn "residual" neighborhood that juts into New York Harbor. Though rusty metal fencing cloaked the lot from the street, Young could access the lot by the titular hole in the fence, unveiling a vast space that was once a haven for graffiti artists, the homeless, decaying shipping containers and, improbably, a Cornell architecture student.

Thought-provoking interviews with Red Hook residents, artists and preservationists — including those angling to save a doomed dry dock — highlight the price of progress, for better or worse.



**A Hole in a Fence:** Chronicles the changes in Brooklyn's Red Hook area, home of the former Todd Shipyard.

By John Bartelstone,  
First Run Features



## ***Film Critic Nathan Lee Revisits “A Hole in a Fence”***

***Mon, Jan 5, 2009***

In Spring 2006, D. W. Young’s documentary “A Hole in a Fence” was filmed in an abandoned lot in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Since he made the film, the area has changed drastically. Now there’s an Ikea behind the lot, more graffiti on the walls, and fewer residents crashing out for the night. WNYC’s film critic Nathan Lee revisited the lot with Young to hear his take on how world behind the fence has changed.

### Film Critic Nathan Lee Revisits “A Hole in a Fence”

Mon, Jan 5, 2009

Cinema

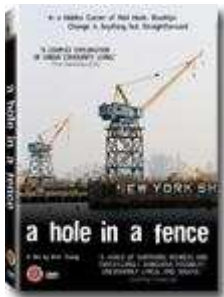
In Spring 2006, D. W. Young’s documentary “[A Hole in a Fence](#)” was filmed in an abandoned lot in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Since he made the film, the area has changed drastically. Now there’s an Ikea behind the lot, more graffiti on the walls, and fewer residents crashing out for the night. WNYC’s film critic [Nathan Lee](#) revisited the lot with Young to hear his take on how world behind the fence has changed.





reviewed by **Brian Charles Clark**

## **A HOLE IN A FENCE**



Our image of Brooklyn—of New York City in general—is of wall-to-wall people. But, as filmmaker D.W. Young discovered, there are plenty of wide-open spaces in the city. You just have to know where to look. Like through a hole in a fence.

The hole in question gapes in a fence surrounding an abandoned industrial area in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn. A home for the homeless and a canvass for graffiti artists, the open space behind the hole in the fence becomes a sounding board for a young architect (Benjamin Uyeda) and filmmaker. In **A Hole in a Fence**, Young explores issues of class, urban development, the renewal of nature and a host of other

issues.

Using impromptu street interviews as well as more formal ones, Young collects a vast array of opinion in a very short film. Central to the film is the survival of the abandoned lot and other features of the Red Hook industrial waterfront landscape, as an Ikea superstore is going in nearby. Will the Ikea bring jobs and economic development, as developers promise, or will it bring out-of-town traffic to congest the neighborhood, and will the profits from the store leave the area?

**A Hole in a Fence** doesn't offer pat answers. Rather, it excels at exploration through dialogue. This film is an example of what so many communities in our changing society need: more open discussion of the issues of development, especially as they affect low-income residents. More, the film is beautifully photographed, well-edited and full of intellectual challenges. Highly recommended for all those interested in the future of the urban landscape, the renewal of cast-off buildings and spaces, and the intersection of class and identity.

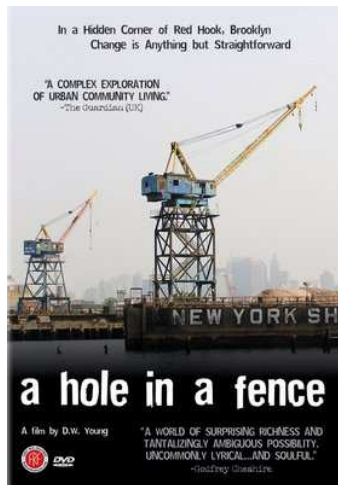
### **Extras:**

The DVD has an additional bonus film, "Views from Red Hook Grain Terminal"; Photo Gallery; Extended Interviews; Resources; Trailer.

# TrustMovies

## A HOLE IN A FENCE: fascinating view of "progress"

Friday, December 26, 2008 - by James van Maanen



There are a million and one ways to make a movie, I suppose -- as many as there are individual movie-makers. One brilliant way is now on display from first-time filmmaker **D.W. Young**, who has trained his eye on **A HOLE IN A FENCE** and come up with something like an entire universe for us to consider. Part of the film's joy lies in its brevity, although I doubt Mr. Young planned his movie around this concept. In only 46 minutes (plus some extras you'll want to watch), you'll be forced to think hard about everything from community decay and gentrification to class differences, big box stores (specifically Ikea), architecture, art, graffiti, where ships go when they require dry land and how, if you needed to, you might best construct a temporary home. And this is just a part of it.

Young's film takes place in Red Hook, Brooklyn, which is not that far from where I live in Jackson Heights, Queens. I've never been to Red Hook, but after watching this short documentary, I feel as though it's as important as where I *do* live. That's because the subjects addressed by Young and his interviewees are happening all over the U.S. and the world and constitute a continuing problem/opportunity. One of the nice things about

the movie is how it manages to include both success and failure, and thus sees progress as incremental, dependent on who is doing the observing, and full of very nearly as many negatives as positives. (In fact, maybe *more* negatives. And yet, somehow, we still seem to progress. Or did, until recently.)

In the large and interesting cast of characters you'll meet is one young man, Ben Uyeda, who begins the film as a student of architecture and by the end has his own business. Ben -- smart, energetic and positive -- is one guy I'd want on my side as Armageddon approaches. It's his temporary home that's constructed here in one of the film's most interesting sections. He later gives the abode to one of the area's homeless, who then loses it to "progress." What happens to the vacant lot we see through that hole in the fence is what is happening to our world. With plenty of intelligence, understanding and surprising subtlety (but without shouting or undue finger-wagging), Mr. Young gives this view focus -- via an aperture that just keeps widening the more you think about it. Obviously, anyone interested in documentary filmmaking will want to see *A Hole in a Fence*. Viewing should also be mandatory for every city planner in New York, the U.S. -- hell with it -- the world.

*A Hole in a Fence*, by the way, is yet another in the sterling array of documentaries and narrative films offered by **First Run Features**. Take a look at some of its many releases over the years, and if you have not seen them *all*, start working your way through. In the realm of catholic taste that is also of a very high order, this company is up there with the likes of Film Movement and only a very few other distributors.

# CINEASTE

America's Leading Magazine on the Art and Politics of the Cinema

Vol. XXXIV No. 4

## Staff Recommendations

*Cineaste* Editors Tout Their Favorite Recent DVD Releases

### ***A Hole in a Fence***

Red Hook, Brooklyn was, until a few years ago, one of New York's last ungentrified frontiers. D. W. Young's documentary captures the neighborhood's transformation. His story begins when he ventures through the eponymous hole in a Red Hook fence. On the other side, he finds a shantytown nestled in a graffiti-covered lot. Intrigued, the director interviews various Red Hook habitués, who variously refer to the lot as "Bum's Manor," an art gallery, and a prostitution stroll. His investigations lead him to architecture student Benjamin Uyeda, whose class assignment was to propose a redevelopment plan for the neighborhood. Rather than a typical approach that would raze the rubble to make way for new commercial space and housing, his design works with the existing urban landscape. Uyeda's innovative approach inspires the film to ask larger questions about urban planning and the new Ikea store that has become the symbol of Red Hook's gentrification. While the minority and poor residents look forward to the megastore's opening and the new jobs it will bring, a more affluent class of urban pioneers bemoans the loss of the neighborhood's character. The unemployed living in the projects make a strong case, but so too does the advocate for a ship-repair dock, the founder of a community farm, and the director of the Red Hook waterfront museum. We are left to ponder whether Uyeda and his ilk are romantics, taken by the rust, decay, and bittersweet remnants of America's golden age of manufacturing, or whether their ideas about sustainability and adaptive reuse make for a sensible and responsible strategy. (Distributed by First Run Features, [www.firstrunfeatures.com](http://www.firstrunfeatures.com))—**Rahul Hamid**