

Wilkerson followed “Injury” with “Who Killed Cock Robin?” (2005), a fiction feature set in Butte. The film portrays the life of a rootless teenager in a dead-end town: shoplifting, hanging out in abandoned mines, grappling with the decline of employment prospects and labor movements.

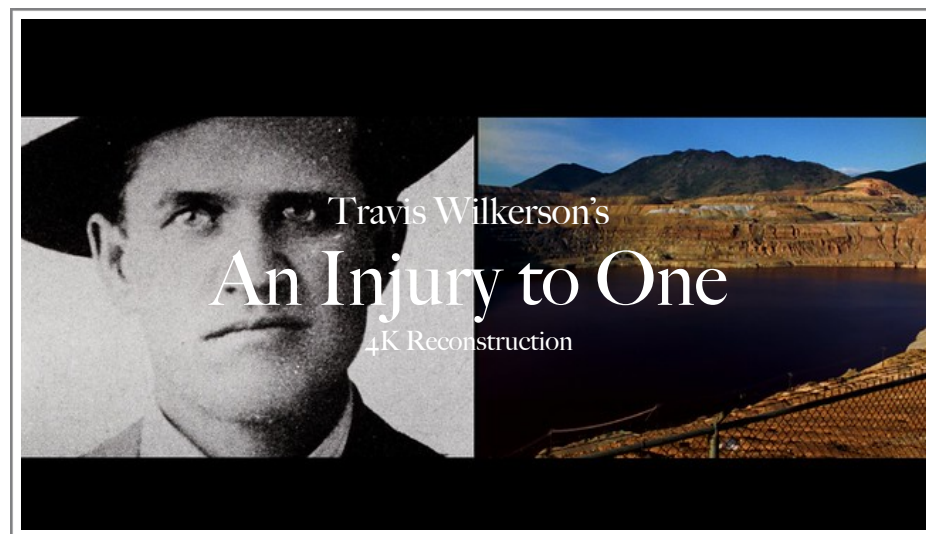
More recently he has been collaborating with several like-minded filmmakers, including Jon Jost and John Gianvito (whose “Profit Motive and the Whispering Wind” is another recent landmark of American political cinema), on an omnibus project, “Far From Afghanistan,” timed to the 10th anniversary of the war in Afghanistan and inspired by the Vietnam-era compendium “Far From Vietnam.”

In his voice-over, Wilkerson repeatedly refers to Little as someone with an “image of a different kind of world.” Not least among its many virtues, “An Injury to One” makes it possible to imagine a different kind of cinema. ♦

Coming soon to Acropolis:

- *Escape* (Dir. Masao Adachi, 2025)—Los Angeles premiere, June 30 at 2220 Arts + Archives
- *The Misconceived* (Dir. James N. Kienitz Wilkins, 2026)—Los Angeles premiere, July 9 at Brain Dead Studios with Wilkins in person (screening in 35mm)
- *The Misconceived* (Dir. James N. Kienitz Wilkins, 2026)—July 10 and 11 at Now Instant Image Hall with Wilkins in person (screening digitally)
- *The Plagiarists* (Dir. Peter Parlow, 2019)—July 11 at 2220 Arts + Archives with co-writer James N. Kienitz Wilkins in person ♦

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ABOUT THE FILM

An Injury to One provides a corrective—and absolutely compelling—glimpse of a particularly volatile moment in early 20th century American labor history: the rise and fall of Butte, Montana. Specifically, it chronicles the mysterious death of Wobbly organizer Frank Little, a story whose grisly details have taken on a legendary status in the state. Much of the extant evidence is inscribed upon the landscape of Butte and its surroundings. Thus, a connection is drawn between the unsolved murder of Little, and the attempted murder of the town itself.

Archival footage mixes with deftly deployed intertitles, while the lyrics to traditional mining songs are accompanied by music from William Oldham, Jim O'Rourke, and the band Low, producing an appropriately moody, effulgent, and strangely out-of-time soundtrack. The result is a unique film/video hybrid that combines painterly images, incisive writing, and a bold graphic sensibility to produce an articulate example of the aesthetic and political possibilities offered by filmmaking in the digital age.

This version is not precisely a “remaster” but rather a meticulous reconstruction of the original vision of the film. Where the original material was available, it was used, in the highest quality available. Where such material no longer exists, adequate substitutions were made. The result is something new, both resolutely of the past while firmly in the present. The richness of the film material is almost unimaginable from the original version—more lush, more expressive, more heartbreaking, too.

TRT: 53 min

In person: Travis Wilkerson

A Second Look: An Injury to One by Dennis Lim

The following article was originally published by the Los Angeles Times, October 30, 2011

With parts of the country in the grips of a newly radicalized mood, it's tempting to wonder what an American political cinema would look like. As it is, the most prominent model we have is Michael Moore, a lightning-rod figure whose agitprop bluster can be both cathartic and frustrating. Most of what we think of as political documentary is strictly content over form, determined above all to get across the stakes surrounding a particular issue. The picture is even less encouraging in the fiction arena, where openly political filmmakers such as John Sayles or even Oliver Stone are very much outliers.

A look back at the great tradition of the political avant-garde reveals exactly what our age is missing. From Dziga Vertov in the Soviet Union of the 1920s to the wave of European filmmakers who emerged or became radicalized amid the convulsions of the

the late '60s — Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, who formed their Dziga Vertov Group “to make films politically”; the husband-and-wife team of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, the German film essayists Harun Farocki and Hartmut Bitomsky — it's clear that radical politics and radical art go hand in hand

There is little in the current cinematic landscape that matches or evokes the anger and the sense of injustice that have galvanized the protesters at Occupy Wall Street and its proliferating offshoots. You know things are bleak when people are positioning the financial-crisis indie thriller “Margin Call” as a movie of the moment.

Perhaps it will take time, but while we're waiting, class warriors and curious bystanders alike might want to check out Travis Wilkerson's “An Injury to One,” one of American independent cinema's great achievements of the past decade, just issued on DVD by Icarus Films.

Barely an hour long, 2002's “An Injury to One” is a film about a place: Butte, Mont., where Wilkerson lived as a teenager. Founded as a gold-mining outpost in the mid-19th century, it became a boom town in the early 20th century with the discovery of copper and the dawn of the electricity age (not to mention the outbreak of World War I). Its natural reserves depleted, Butte has become an environmental disaster zone, its open pit now a mile-wide toxic lake.

The film is also about a man, Frank Little, a half-white, half-Cherokee organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World union (known as the Wobblies), who arrived in Butte in summer 1917 as miners were toiling under unsafe conditions and perishing by the thousands. Dubbed “the agitator” by the union-busting overlords at the aptly named Anaconda Mining Co., Little was dragged out of bed one night and lynched, his body tagged with a note bearing the numbers 3, 7, 77 (the feet-and-inches dimensions of a Montana grave, according to one interpretation). The murderers were never prosecuted.

Most of all, “An Injury to One” is a film about a system: a dossier on capitalism and its discontents. Wilkerson delivers his indictment in a clipped, incantatory, even-keeled voice-over. He combines archival images with striking landscape shots, uses graphics and text as strategic punctuation and induces an atmosphere of melancholy rumination with music by Will Oldham, Jim O'Rourke and others.

He also widens the scope to include musings on leftist writer Dashiell Hammett, who traced his personal politics to his time in Butte, working as a detective for the mining company and, according to legend, perhaps playing a role in Little's death. (In Hammett's seminal 1929 novel “Red Harvest,” the mining town is called Poisonville.)

Data-mired documentaries such as “An Inconvenient Truth” are sometimes damned as glorified PowerPoint presentations, but “An Injury to One” uses multimedia slickness to revive the art of agitation — a rallying cry in the form of an illustrated lecture.