

DANI'S TWINS Director's Statement: Brad Allgood

When I met Dani 11 years ago, she was still recovering from an accident that left her paralyzed from the chest down. In late 2019, when she told me she and her husband Rudy were pregnant with twins, I knew I had to capture her journey on film. I learned that only five quadriplegic women in the world have living twins, so capturing Dani's journey would be a one-in-a-billion opportunity.

Dani was hesitant - in fact, she had been approached by a well-known celebrity to tell her story. But she was concerned that her story (and the disability community) would not be represented accurately. Disability narratives tend to focus on medical issues and on "fixing" people, contributing further to the marginalization of people with disabilities. These social barriers and attitudes often shape the identity and inhibit the ability of people with disabilities to live and interact in the same way as nondisabled people.

In order to reach a broad audience, I set out to make an entertaining, engaging and genre-defying film highlighting Dani's emotional journey, instead of placing issues front and center. I believe that in the most personal stories we can find universal truth, and that authentic emotional experiences will create lasting impact.

Then Covid happened. And because Dani has only 30% lung function, our team was unable to continue filming with her. Dani was devastated - this was the only chance to capture her story, and the viability of the project was threatened. We worked together to find a solution: the only option was for Dani to take the reins and film herself. With some basic camera and audio equipment and remote camera training, Dani shouldered the responsibility. With limited hand mobility, it was a steep learning curve and a difficult task - especially because she was blacking out multiple times a day, and balancing pregnancy, marriage, and a full-time job. But she persevered. Dani captured pivotal, raw, and intimate moments leading up to her emergency C-section. Ultimately, Dani received additional camera and producer credits for her enhanced storytelling role.

Dani and producer Andy Arias have informed my approach and discourse related to disability. Our team has collaborated with the disability community throughout the entire process, including disabled mothers around the world. As a result, this is more than a film about pregnancy and disability. It centers on the importance of acceptance, education, and community.

I am eager to share this remarkable tale with audiences far and wide. Dani and her story portray the authentic voice that the disabled community has been striving for in media - and that has been lacking for decades. I hope this film inspires viewers to see people with disabilities for what they can do, instead of what they cannot.