

Filmmaker Bobby Razak:

By Dan Funes

I, as well as anyone within Mixed Martial Arts, will say that the best thing about the industry is that you are always among friends. Between the city-to-city shuffle, it can be much like a traveling circus—you see more of people you meet on the road than you do of your own family back home. It's a stressful life, jumping from hotel rooms to airports, but the personalities we meet, as extraordinary as they might be, help keep us sane and provide a true fraternity. Fans often imagine that that's the case for the fighters and coaches that make up the sport, but they often forget that, likewise, it's not easy being a part of the media.

Bobby Razak, combat sports' most regarded filmmaker, may not be a traditional journalist per se, but he travels the same path—in his case, he traveled across the globe to get one step closer to taking us all behind the scenes into the world of Mixed Martial Arts.

Hailing from Tottenham, the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in London, Razak will often pass as refined on his accent alone. However, the motley population didn't mean that Razak was limited to a soft and culturally padded childhood, it also made for rough times within a harsh reality.

Coinciding with any ideas you might have of enjoying Tottenham's scenic spots, afternoon tea parties, offering of different restaurants, and countless conversations in exotic tongues (some say upwards of 300 dialects and languages), you would also be wise to make it a careful visit. As with most European neighborhoods that flirt with the poverty line, Tottenham provides just enough economic stability to keep the criminal element active—the poor can still rob from the relatively rich, but it has nothing to do with giving back. At every turn, Razak was confronted with the choice of being involved with both aspects of his society—one side that embraced culture and another side that grinds its youth into an urban criminal machine. Razak, driven by what he calls an internal destiny, was determined to take the best from both.

Acquiring a passion for the arts and gaining the street smarts to put his love into action, Bobby left his home to eventually join the MMA family in North America.

Fast-forwarding many years, it was then that I met Bobby Razak at Miguel Torres' gym in Highland, Indiana. Miguel had been kind enough to invite me to train, and after a session with Torres' students, I sat back as a film crew set up and started delving into the life of one of MMA's toughest men to crack. Needless to say, I was impressed with Razak's ability to draw out Miguel's story for his upcoming film *Sangre Nueva*—an artwork will tell you as much about the artist as it does about the subject.

After getting a sense of who Bobby was and what he had been through, I was quick to set up the interview that I will now share. Still, the following shouldn't be read as a news piece between a journalist and an interviewee. Think of it instead as a conversation among friends.



MMA FILMS

AUTHORITY: On many different levels you have a long-standing relationship with combat sports and film. How did that all start?

RAZAK: It's a very long story, but to put it in a nutshell, I ALWAYS wanted to be a filmmaker. My dad gave me a Bruce Lee poster when I was six years old. When I saw it, it was love at first sight. I said to myself, "I'm going to be Bruce Lee or I'm going to make a Bruce Lee film." Basically, because of that poster, my father put me on a path. I was destined to be involved in martial arts, combat sports, and movie making.

AUTHORITY: Talking about your early life, we all know that there are some nice parts of London and others that can, well, be a bit rough. Can you tell us a little bit about your area?

RAZAK: I'm surprised you know about that actually! A lot of people don't know about how things are there. I was born and raised in Tottenham. It's an inner city, urban place. No one really made it from Tottenham. It was a rough area, economically depressed. But I had a very strong family unit. They kept me going. My dad was a hard working guy. My mom too. They kept me, minimally, out of trouble. Besides that, I always had a great sense of destiny. I always knew I was going to achieve something. So while people from back home started crumbling, dying, or ending up in jail, I was this tiny light for everyone. They always said, "Bobby is going to do something." In the end I was able to have some success but really, no one makes it from Tottenham. Some people say it's the sh*t of London.

AUTHORITY: That environment can add character. From an early age, you likely learned the lesson that sometimes it's a person's spirit that gets them through. Did you have any experiences where you were left wondering if you were going to make it, if you were going to be able to get off those rough streets?

RAZAK: Of course! There were many. You also have to realize that I was a man of color in England. So A) I wanted to be a filmmaker and B) I was a man of color. It was a very nepotistic society in London. No one ever gives you many opportunities. Many times, man, I didn't think I was going to make it. I knew I had to leave London and come to a place where green was the real color. It's ironic that now I can go back to London and have meetings with executives because when I was coming up, no one, no one, wanted to speak to me. There were many rough times. On top of that, the people that I surrounded myself with were never achieving anything. I found out that if you want to be successful in life you have to surround yourself with good connections and amazing people that can take you to the next level. I knew I had to go out and explore the world and get my wings. All the rough experiences that I have been through shaped who I am.

I hide that a lot you know. You and Miguel (Torres) were the only people that immediately saw it in me. I have a good way of hiding it. I play the role, that I grew up nice in London and all of that. But you and Miguel were like, "No." (Laughs) It made me kinda quiet. I was thinking to myself, "Man, this motherf*cker! I can't fool you or Miguel." It tripped me out. Normally, I can go in anywhere and tell people I'm a filmmaker that grew up in London and it's like I can play it off like I'm the Prince of Dubai's son or something. (Laughs) I was trying to play that card with you and Miguel and it wasn't going!

AUTHORITY: (Laughs) Well, you know it! Miguel, the subject of one of your new films, comes from a similar situation, obviously a different country, but the same kind of rough streets. In Miguel's case he found his way out through martial arts and education. What kept you on this path of destiny?

RAZAK: It was a fusion of things. It was educating myself and making independent films. There were a lot of details that focused my determination. It was small things like getting together camera equipment, acting, doing my own stunts. At an early age, I was studying every Bruce Lee move, every Bruce Lee picture. It led to me exploring the martial arts. I became a historian of boxing and combat sports. Going to school helped as well. It was one part of keeping my focus. If you don't have any guidance you have to go to school and get your degree. Ironically, what I did learn in school didn't help me much in the long run, but it kept me focused. It was kind of like Miguel. You know, Miguel got his degree and of course he's not using it right now, but it kept him focused. It was enough to keep him training and make him a champion. It's the same for you, you're from El Salvador and I'm sure you didn't having it f*cking easy.

School for me was an exercise in focus. But my path was shooting independent movies, meeting connections, studying the fight game, training, competing, fighting, and ultimately coming to America.

AUTHORITY: Let's hear about some of your personal background in combat sports. I mean hey, I was ready to do some training with you the other day.

RAZAK: (Laughs) I know, I said, "Hey bro, let's go train." And it was like calling you out! You were all, "Yeah" right away! To be honest, I respect that. When another person is willing to train with you, you get to know what they are all about. It trips me out on a few levels, because I could have been a killer and you were still all about it. But, back to the question, yeah I did train back home. You could say I was among the pioneers of MMA in the UK. There was a guy I trained with named Lee Hasdell. He's known as the grandfather of UK's Mixed Martial Arts. He fought Fedor, he fought bare-knuckle, you name it; he did it all. When he was just



if you want to be successful in life you have to surround yourself with good connections and amazing people that can take you to the next level.

starting, I had been training briefly and met him when he was fighting in Rings in Japan and competing for (Akira) Maeda. I kind of went under his wing and he showed me the ropes. I actually competed in UK Rings and fought in front of Maeda. I built on that path. I wanted to compete. I Thai boxed and boxed, it was something that I wanted to do. I think of myself as one of the founding members of UK Mixed Martial Arts. I fought in one of the early tournaments and I was known as one of the pioneers there. I loved to fight. And also too, I was a man of color and there weren't many of us (involved in the sport) back in the day. It was after UFC 3 or 4 that we started getting involved in MMA in the UK. It was very, very grassroots. In the first fight I had, man, I was sh*tting my pants. Back then if you got put in mount, you was f*cked. Think of when Marco Ruas mounted Remco Pardoel. Remco Pardoel tapped out instantly. Back in the day, when you got mounted, you thought your life was over. The game has evolved a lot! But, I was one of the guys that really advocated the sport back in the early years in the UK.

AUTHORITY: In thinking about that, you saw that positive energy in your life too. You saw the bad elements on the streets of UK, but you also shared camaraderie with Mixed Martial Artists that were willing to put it all on the line. How did that help you realize that you could discipline yourself towards success, that you could work hard and make something of yourself regardless of what you started with?

RAZAK: It's funny you say that bro, you're always asking smart questions. I was always surrounded by great fighters. And whomever you surround yourself with raises the bar. I feel that happened when I was around

great fighters like Mark Coleman, Kevin Randleman, Miguel Torres, and Fedor. Whoever I've been around that's a part of this sport, raised the bar for what I wanted to do with my life. Yes, I liked to compete but, more than anything, I wanted to bring martial arts and MMA filmmaking to another level. Being around the sport, training my body and my mind, being in fights and seeing how far I could push myself, all of that let me see what I was capable of. If you can push yourself mentally in a fight, there's nothing you can't do. If you step in there, you show that you are on another level. You have to have balls and courage to step in there. Any man that can step into the ring and put it all on the line, can do anything in life. It's the hardest sport in the world. It's just about the hardest thing in the world and, man, it's a mindf*ck.

AUTHORITY: Oh, that is true. But fighting was not the ultimate goal, you eventually moved on to other pastures. Looking back now, what were some of the things that led to you finally leaving home and coming to the US to pursue film?

RAZAK: I was born and raised in London, but I never got a job in London. I went to millions of job interviews, seminars, everything. But no one ever hired me after college. There I was with a degree from a somewhat prestigious school—an all boys semi-boarding school that's 500 hundred years old called Somerset, that has history from Sarah, the Duchess of Somerset—but I was never able to get a job in England. Everywhere I went the doors were locking. I told myself that if I wanted to become something I was going to have to go to another country, that if I ever wanted to work in England, I was going to have to start somewhere

else and come back. That was the basic turning point. I just couldn't get any work. I had to do extracurricular things. Whatever I had to do to pay the bills. Whatever I needed to do to hustle. I came from a hustling environment. But that wasn't the core of who I was. At my core, I was still an artist. I said to myself, "I can either stay here and do nothing with my life and drop off like all of my other boys, or I can go ahead and do something with my life." I kept pushing and kept pushing on those doors but finally, I said "F*ck it. I'm going to America."

AUTHORITY: Clearly there were some major obstacles in your life back in the UK, but coming to the US could not have been easy either, there must have been things pulling you back into the hustle. This town (Los Angeles) is not easy on anybody. Tell us a little bit about coming to the US and please elaborate on why it provided you with more opportunities.

RAZAK: Man, it's been my lifelong battle—to walk away from the hustle. After you've been hustling all your years, when you see the chance to make a quick buck you start shaking. That's how my hometown raised me. I was always in that process. It's been a transition, I won't lie, I had to come here and hustle too. I was an illegal immigrant, I didn't have a green card, but I did what I had to do. I had to keep working. I had to keep at the hustle. But you know, as bad as some people say American is, God bless this f*cking country, man! It doesn't matter if you're green, if you have money, you can eliminate that color line to a certain degree. I've filmed in some racist pockets in America, where people will still look at you. But ultimately, if you're driving an Aston Martin and you're a prestigious filmmaker and people know your work, then people are willing to overlook that color issue. That's what I respect so much about this country, if you can succeed, you can reach a point where you can always find work. In London it doesn't matter how much money you've got, it doesn't matter what you do, you're still a nigg*r. It doesn't matter if you're a f*cking billionaire in London, you'd

still be a nigg*r. That's the bottom line. But in America, they'll shake your hand. Hey, they might still think you're a nigg*r in their head, but they're still going to do business with you, you know what I'm saying? That's the difference!

AUTHORITY: Coming here with little money and no real reputation, you probably had to knock down a couple of doors. Can you tell us about your first few jobs in the film industry and what led to your success?

RAZAK: At first I was a runner and a PA, a production assistant. I did that for a couple of years, but I never lasted too long in the PA system. I was such a go-getter. I wanted to get behind the camera. I wanted to be a director. I did the PA thing very briefly and it wasn't calling out to my spirit. In fact, the main thing I did when I came here was actually work as a bouncer. I bounced at just about every club in Hollywood: The Hollywood Athletic Club, The Barfly, Backstage, Ivar. It got to the point where I was thinking I'd either be a PA the rest of my life, and keep getting in trouble, or I was going to go out, meet the right people and get the money to make my own movie. I said to myself, "I'm not going to leave it in the hands of the judges. If you want to be the champion, you have to rip it." So, I decided I was going to make a movie, I was going to get it into a film festival, I was going to sell it, it was going to be a badass film, and I was going to be successful. Really, bouncing is what let me raise the money to do my first film, Rites of Passage, which was at Sundance a few years ago. After that first film, everything started to roll. It got some attention. You could say it's an MMA industry movie that was ahead of its time. What I do know is that everything that's happened for me started from there.

AUTHORITY: That's something we have talked about before off the record. The Entertainment Industry is very closed. It's very difficult to find your way in. On the other hand, the MMA world is very new and it's wide open.

Mask said, "I have no money for you. All I can give you are 50 t-shirts. But, if you put my t-shirts in the movie and (Tapout) on the back of the box as a sponsor, I will make it up to you when I'm a millionaire." Many years later, he stuck to his word.



Almost anyone can be anything they want to be in MMA—if you're willing to bust your ass and willing to do it. There's no legacy in MMA, no one is walking in and taking over the family business. Up to this point, that's not how MMA works. In that respect, how did MMA help you break your way into Entertainment?

RAZAK: After Rites of Passage, I was able to get a meeting pretty much wherever I wanted. With agents, with the CAA (Creative Artists Agency), I started producing regularly, working with MSNBC Digital Network. Work was flowing. But focusing on MMA in Rites of Passage also led to me to befriending Charles "Mask" Lewis. I don't think I ever told anyone about this, but Charles "Mask" Lewis came to me about 12-13 years ago and said to me, "I want to be in Rites of Passage. I want the Tapout logo all over the movie." So I said, "Well, how much money do you have for me, bro?" And Mask said, "I have no money for you. All I can give you are 50 special Rites of Passage edition t-shirts. But, if you put my t-shirts in the movie and (Tapout) on the back of the box as a sponsor, I will make it up to you when I'm a millionaire. When I make my brand the next Nike, I will give you work." Many years later, he stuck to his word. I created relationships with the MMA people long ago, with the UFC, Tapout, Dethrone, with others. As they expanded, I expanded as well. They give me a lot of opportunities now. This business is all about relationships. You can't make it without relationships. I looked out for them and now they help look out for me.

AUTHORITY: It's always interesting to hear about Charles "Mask" Lewis. Everyone knows that he, like the fighters he helped, put everything on the line. It says a lot about him, and how highly you thought of him, if he was able to get your help with what was essentially an I.O.U. That's not something that is typical in the Film Industry, it is however a trust that exists in the MMA world. That also says something about your ability to recognize when people are genuine and when people have the spirit to push themselves towards success.

RAZAK: I have a radar for that bro. I can tell when a person is going to be successful. That goes for the subjects I pick for my movies too. I know when I have someone that is going to be a champion. It's almost a sixth sense that goes off in me. It's one of the reasons I've been working with Robert Drysdale over the past couple of years, really pushing him, because I knew he was going to be something. I filmed that commercial of him about a year and a half ago. I held onto it in a can and he's starting to blow up. Now you see his commercials on TV and at live events. I have an incredible radar and I had that radar about Charles "Mask" Lewis. I knew I could trust him and I knew he would succeed.

AUTHORITY: From your personal experience, what can you tell us about Charles "Mask" Lewis?

RAZAK: I'll tell you what man, Charles "Mask" Lewis was a very complicated individual. He wasn't squeaky clean. He was very complex. Ironically, the more I got to know him, the less I felt that I knew him. He was the only guy that I felt like that with. It was very bizarre. Before he died, it was almost as if we could sense it. I was filming Underdogs and his last couple of commercials and I remember when we were filming the scene where he jumps off the building that he was very scared, and we had talked about the concepts of life and death. It was like he knew he was going to die and I felt it too. I also have a great talent for figuring people out, but he was the one guy that eluded my ability.

I spent the most time with him the last six months before he died. We were shooting Underdogs. It was his vision to do a movie on the history of MMA. But he said he wanted to really push himself, to do something crazy. I said, "Well, why don't you jump off a building?" He actually jumped off the Montecito (gesturing with his finger) right over there. He was very different during that time. He seemed very internal. I'd heard he was praying a lot. It was something that until then I hadn't heard about him. I don't know that he'd ever even mentioned God to me. But during those last months, he was talking about death and talking about his own passing. He had become very emotional. He was opening up a lot, crying. I actually have some very powerful interviews. He was talking about his legacy. It seemed like he had some premonition that he was going to die. He would talk to me a lot about day-to-day things, but the whole time he just seemed to be preparing himself on another level.

He wanted more from Tapout, he felt that he was just touching the surface. He would not rest. And it wasn't like he just wanted global domination. He just wanted to touch people's lives. He wanted to make a difference. I spent so much time with him, but the whole time I was thinking, "Wow, I really don't know this guy." I don't think anyone really knew him. He was a very internal person.

Another thing about Mask, (laughs) man, he just had this way of communicating. He just had a unique way of communicating with everyone. (Laughing) Man, I thought him and I were the only ones that communicated that way, but supposedly, he did it was hundreds of people. Basically, he would just make these series of jokes to pump me up. Oh man, I remember he used to tease me and say, "Bobby, man, your bonus is going to be a white woman! After you get a white woman, then you're going to make it in America!" He had been telling me this stuff for years man! Pumping me up in his own way.

AUTHORITY: We're in a sport where there are a lot of complicated characters, everyone from the people in suits, to the people backstage, to the ring girls, to the fighters and the trainers. So many of them are complex and puzzle-like. They make for not just an interesting sport, but also an interesting culture. Can you tell us about being part of that culture and how MMA has welcomed you in from Tottenham.

RAZAK: It's true. Even looking at the Fertitta's and Dana White, looking at where they came from and how they developed. It's a very colorful past. I think MMA is the one sport that can bridge that tremendous gap from street urban to an upscale, multi-million dollar business. The reason why is, in MMA your destiny is in your fists. It's that way in anything that anyone does, but it's most prevalent in MMA. Even in our areas of business as a journalist and as a filmmaker. To gain respect you have to go in there, train, visit the gyms, understand the game and prove that you have a certain level of ability. That's the way people come to respect you in MMA. I see it time and time again in this culture, where your future lies in your fists. If you're able to fight and work your way up, even from the streets, then you can bridge that gap to the money guys. It's not like being a brain surgeon, where you have 12-15 years of schooling and residency to go through a long series of ranks. In MMA, you can bridge the gap in one year on your abilities alone. That's the beautiful thing about this sport. I mean, look at Dana. Man, Dana's street, Dana's gangsta in my mind. He can go talk to millionaires in suits but he can go talk to guys from the streets too.



“I want to show everyone that it is art”

AUTHORITY: That’s another thing that people overlook, how deep and far back your relationship goes with the sport.

RAZAK: Rites of Passage was being filmed about 12-13 years ago. Prior to that, I was co-promoting a fight promotion back at a club I used to bounce at, the promotion was called Neutral Grounds. Chuck Liddell actually fought at one of my shows. I was bouncing and doing PA work, but when I decided to do my first film, I decided to do it on something that I knew and loved. I choose MMA. As my Film career took off, I was always known as the guy to go to when there was anything fight-related. To outsiders of MMA, no matter who they were or what they knew, I was the fight expert. The pinnacle was when Sports Illustrated did a piece on me and they called me “The King of MMA Programming”. I felt as if all my hard work had paid off when I received that kind of accolade from the greatest mainstream sports publication in the world.

AUTHORITY: That does take us back to all of the things you must have gone through to make those early projects happen. We hear countless stories of people coming to LA, living in their cars, washing dishes, and that’s just to barely scrape by. In your case, you had the extra burden of pumping a lot of money into your work. What was that process like?

RAZAK: At one time, Charles and I were homeless together, bro. But the projects needed money. It came from a combination of things (laughs). There was bouncing cash, telemarketing cash, hustling cash. Charles “Mask” Lewis was funding a lot of it. Wherever him and Dan “Punkass” Caldwell were getting the money from back in the day. Who knows? Selling t-shirts, whatever creative means they went through.

There were many times when Tapout would sell t-shirts and as soon as the money came in, they would transfer it to me so I could put it into projects. We were able to do a lot back then. Pit Fight, which became popular through a big commercial last year, was shot seven years ago. We had some innovative work to show for our effort, but the money wasn’t really coming back. There was no pay. Anytime we had money coming in it would go right back into the machine—production and editing. Most of the time, my crew made more money than I did. We had investors, which thought the sport was a get-rich-quick plan, but they realized, often very brutally, that it wasn’t. But we had to keep pumping a lot of money in before it paid off. I’m still on the fence too. I’m an indie filmmaker, right? But now, just in this year, it’s finally starting to pay off. Now I’m booked solid. They call me an overnight success but it took 13-14 years.

AUTHORITY: You said you and Charles were homeless?

RAZAK: Yeah. It was about 10-12 years ago. I was living out of my car. He was living out of his car. I remember one of the stories that really goes back. Charles, Dan, and me used to meet at a restaurant called House of Pies in Los Feliz. I didn’t have money to finish Pit Fight and I had to tell Charles and Dan that I needed a couple of G’s. Big Mo had stepped up to fight Mark Coleman in a real bare-knuckle fight as part of the movie but I needed \$2,000 to pay Big Mo. When I told the Tapout guys, they said they just didn’t have it. I told them the film was going to be in jeopardy. Dan said, “Damn. Let me make some moves.” So Dan shows up about five hours later, just a few hours before we were going to get ready for the shoot, with two paper bags. One was full of cash. I said, “Dan!? Where

the hell did you get this money?” Dan just told me, “Forget about it. You have your money. Finish this movie. Make sure everyone is wearing Tapout.” Inside the other bag was a carrot muffin. So here he was at my place at 2 am, with a bag full of cash and a carrot muffin. I asked him what the deal was with the muffin and he told me, “Well, I remember you liked carrot muffins from House of Pies.” Dan was careful and thoughtful enough to think, “There’s no way I’m just going to show up with thousands of dollars in cash.” I can only imagine the moves and shakes he did to get that money together. He knew that I was going to stress out, so he brought me that muffin. That sh*t bro, it blew my mind! When he brought me that muffin, I was thinking, “Man, this guy is my brother. This guy is my f*cking hero.”

AUTHORITY: It is a privilege for you to be able to see a lot of fighters as their true selves. This sport requires them to have different personas and only on one level are they able to be themselves. What are some of the things you do to make them comfortable enough to approach you and be captured on film?

RAZAK: I think it’s my personality. I think a lot of people can feel a connection with me. I see a lot of media people trying to step into our world and they’re just coming from a whole other universe. Thinking back to Miguel again, I think that he recognizes that I’m in some ways the same as him. There’s a connection there: he’s from East Chicago; I’m from East London. There’s not much difference. He had to fight to become a champion. I had to fight to become a director. I think that connection exists with anyone that’s had to struggle to get ahead.

Also, I’m not a guy to be f*cked with. People know that I can step up if I need to. People will give me that respect. I mean I’ll spar with anyone; I’ll roll with anyone. I’ve got some skills. With you it’s the same way. I know you’ve got some skills. A lot of people can open up to a person like you. I mean, many guys have asked me about Charles “Mask” Lewis and I really haven’t told them much but with you, I’ll tell you. I respect you. Yeah, being on this side of the interview, now I can see where other people’s respect helps me.

If anything though, I try to hide that ex-bouncer, ex-fighter part of me. I guess it just comes through, you know what I mean? True colors and integrity always come through. You know, what though, I’m coming to come out with the craziest story for you, I’ve never talked to any media people about this, but I’ll tell you about Lee Murray.

AUTHORITY: Oh, Sh*t!

RAZAK: My homeboy Lee Murray, I’m going to tell you: He beat the sh*t out of Tito Ortiz out in London. I knew Tito was going to get his ass beat that night because he was walking around China White, the nightclub, pushing his way around, drinking. I said to myself, “This guy is going to get himself in trouble.” It doesn’t matter that you’re the champ. You have to respect people’s turf. That’s why Lee Murray almost killed him that night; Tito did not respect the turf. Tito underestimated Lee Murray and Lee Murray knocked him the f*ck out and soccer kicked him in the head a bunch of times because of it. My thing about telling that story is that you just have to understand respect. When you’re on another man’s turf you have to show respect.

But yes, going back to the question, you have to be who you are. People will sense that. They will open up if you’re one of their kind. Also, I love

the fight game. I’m all about the fighters. I want to show who they are. If you ever had any problems you’d want these guys to be there for you. They are very loyal, and very intelligent. Sure, I’ve seen my share of dumbf*ck fighters, but they tend to crash and burn. The guys that have any kind of longevity in the MMA world look at things from an ethereal point of view.

When I show Miguel, I want to show people where he came from, who he is. It’s my honor to show that he is the greatest Mexican bantamweight fighter of all time. I really think he doesn’t even remember how many fights he’s had. He’s an incredible athlete and an incredible person too. It’s my honor, my pleasure, and my privilege to show what he’s all about. I want to show that Cain Velasquez comes from Yuma, Arizona, where his father struggled picking oranges so that Cain could one day fight on Pay-per-view, and maybe one day fight for the title. His dad still picks oranges in Yuma, Arizona but can you imagine the pride in his father? Can you imagine Gilbert Melendez’s father? Miguel Torres’ father? This guy knows his son is one of the greatest champions ever and he came from Mexico with nothing but gave all he had for his boy. These are beautiful stories, man.

AUTHORITY: Thinking about your passion and your goals, it’s interesting to see the results of a hard life. This comes up with fighters too. Sometimes you have a hard life and it makes you tough, but sometimes you have a hard life and it also makes you soft inside. This mission of yours, to show the world what MMA is all about, is a very noble mission.

RAZAK: I want the world to see these stories. I want to educate the general fan. When you go to events, you’ll have 15,000-20,000 people screaming for blood. You only have a select group of people that see the nuances. My thing is that I want to show everyone that it is art. There is a canvas of blood. There is a full story in every contest. Especially in a back and forth fight. It’s like a baby being born. There’s a beginning, there’s learning, then there’s jabbing and moving. There’s a feeling for range and then there’s going in for the kill. There’s a finish. I want to show the beauty and integrity of what goes on. Even when a guy gets knocked out, that, to me, is one of the most beautiful things.

Above and beyond, I want the general fan to see that there is a lot of skill, a lot of spirit involved. Sometimes, I feel like the average Joe going to a UFC event is missing so much. I want to educate them on the nuances of the training, the months of preparation, the mental aspect of the game. I can think of a lot of people that are giving Forrest Griffin a hard time about his last fight. That, to me, is disgusting. This guy stepped into the cage with Anderson Silva. That is enough to show that he has incredible heart and incredible skill. So he got knocked out? He tried. Anderson Silva is an incredible fighter. No one should doubt Forrest’s heart and skill. He just got caught that day. I want to educate people and teach them a little respect. Every fighter should be respected. Just going in there is a mental f*ck fest. It’s mental warfare. There’s a whole battle of just getting in there. I want people to respect that.

Also, I see myself as a champion too. I approach the film game as if I’m champion. If there’s anything you want to be in life, you have to put yourself on a quest to be the best in the world. I’m proud of the fact that I genuinely believe that I’m the greatest extreme sports director to ever live. My work proves it. Sports Illustrated says it. A lot of people say it. I know it for a fact. I believe it. That’s what keeps me on top. No one can f*ck with me bro. I bring that championship quality to my work. **A**