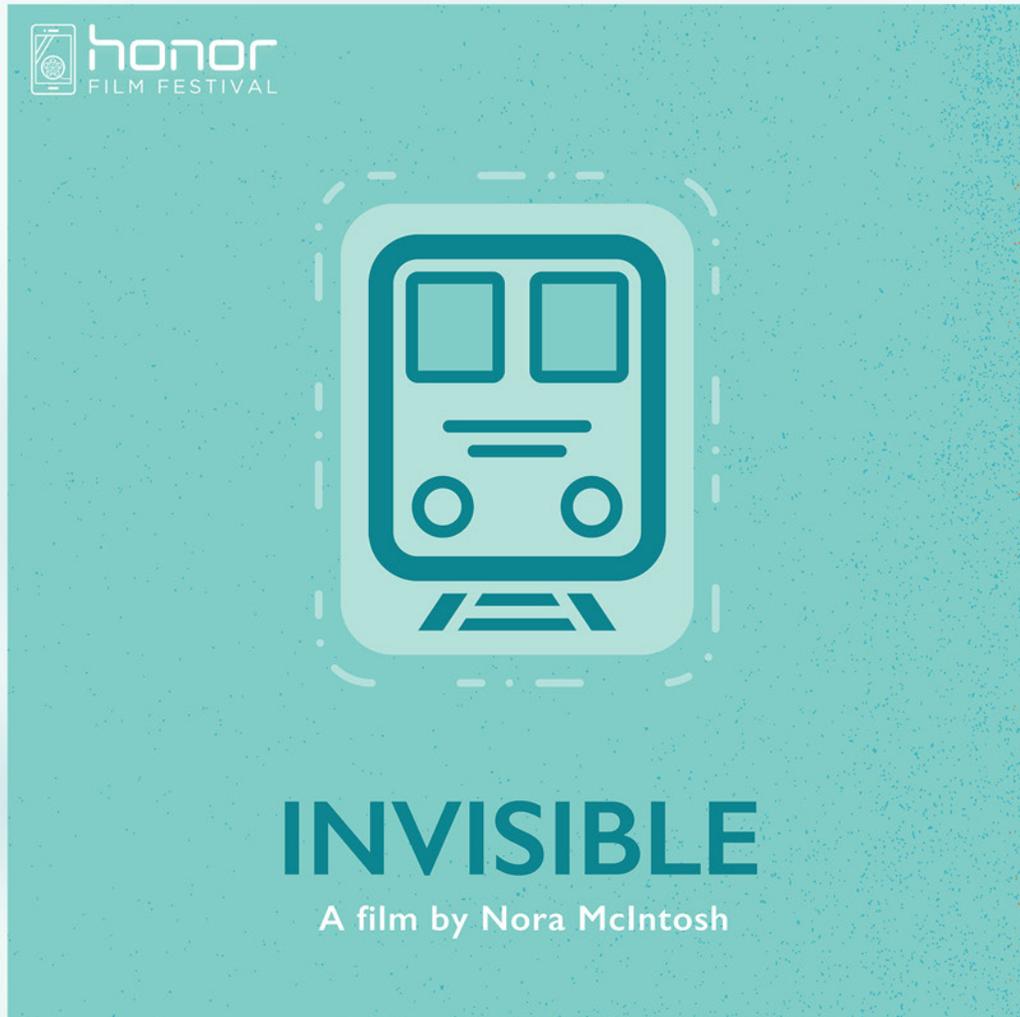


Top 10 Finalist



2016

I never carry cash. I usually go straight home after work on Muni. Tonight I found myself breaking those two norms and standing on a Bart platform to go find an elusive eye shadow palette from Wet N Wild that was only sold at the Target by Powell Street Station. Yes, really.

A young, fit, normal-looking man stood on the platform and started to address the crowd in one of those "oh no, things are about to get awkward for everybody" loud voices. But the words he said stopped me mid-judgment.

"Excuse me everybody, I just have something I want to say. Today I felt invisible. No one would look at me. Being homeless can happen to anybody. What would you do if this was your son, your daughter, your uncle, your cousin? I am hungry, but I'd rather feel hungry than invisible. Even if you don't have anything to give me, please just come up and say 'good luck, man'."

No one approached him as my train entered the station. I realized I had cash in my purse for the first time since I could remember. I walked up to him, handed him the money, looked in his eyes and asked his name. He looked at me, closed his eyes, and smiled this dreamy smile I'll never forget. Like he was smelling his favorite smell and remembering something happy.

He said, "this is what I've been praying to God for...my name is Jonah. Even if I forget yours, I'll pray for you. What is yours?"

I took his bare hand in mine, shook it, and told him my name. Then I told him that I see him. That he's not invisible to me. He said "thank you, I'll be praying for you." I let go of his hand and got on my train.

I never want to make anyone feel invisible ever again.