

**MEANWHILE**

A film by **Catherine Gund** and  
**Jacqueline Woodson**  
**Meshell Ndegeocello**  
**Erika Dilday**

Executive Producers: **Melony & Adam Lewis, Jack Shear, Mickalene Thomas**

**RT:** 88 Minutes

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

## **Log Line**

*Meanwhile*, a docu-poem in six verses about artists breathing through chaos

## **Synopsis**

MEANWHILE is a docu-poem in six verses about artists breathing through chaos. In dynamic collaboration, Jacqueline Woodson (text), Meshell Ndegeocello (soundscape), Erika Dilday (support), M. Trevino (structure), and Catherine Gund (direction), combine artists' expressions with historical and observational footage to unveil a rare cinematic mediation about identity, race, racism and resistance as they shape our shared breath.

## **Director's Statement**

MEANWHILE is not just a film; it's a journey, a conversation, an experience not an education, reflecting the chaos of existence and the beauty found within it. Since its inception in 2020, this cinematic poem has been a communal effort to explore the complexities of truth and identity. Cinema—like identity—is entirely constructed, merely and astonishingly, a practice. Natalie Diaz's poignant words served as our guiding light: "I don't know that the natural condition of life is a state of relief." In other words, our human condition is one of constant flux and uncertainty rather than a fixed truth.

A poem in six verses, MEANWHILE features multi-disciplinary artists breathing through the chaos. We watch these vanguards navigate the complexities of race, racism, and creative resistance not only in the moments of violence but in the ubiquity and legacy of that risk. Rather than focusing on finished products, we delve into process. Dance sequences are in rehearsal, drawings are halfway done, music is still in its composition phase, photographers take test shots, and in each sequence, we see the film being made. Our project lives as a constellation, willfully incomplete. We're not saying, look at this solution or resolution. Instead, we invite you to be with us, in the meanwhile.

Breath, a universal symbol of life and resilience, is MEANWHILE's throughline, symbolizing our shared humanity in the midst of daily crises. Inspired by the disorientation of the pandemic and the uprising in response to the suffocation of George Floyd, MEANWHILE captures the essence of 2020 as a historical moment, weaving together personal narratives, and artistic visions. My friend, the poet and journalist, Ivy Young, uses an oxygen tank throughout her days and nights. She advises us to "breathe through the panic and get to the next step so that you're okay in this moment."

We eschew images of trauma, committed to not re-traumatize nor to indulge violence or spectacles of pain. Society insistently traumatizes us to keep us controlled, fixed in space, unable to change, and exploits fear to maintain that system. Experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer once said, "There's a difference between filming the process of oppression versus the process of liberation." Centering the voices of artists allowed us to document the process of liberation while

remembering what got us here and what will take us to a free tomorrow. Together, we reclaim our agency and imagine new possibilities for the future.

In the tradition of docu-essay films being offered as letters, MEANWHILE is a love letter to ourselves, a reminder of our collective strength and flexibility. The author, narrator Jacqueline Woodson says, “This is not a love letter to this country, but to us, inside this country. We see us. We love us. We make eye contact and nod to us.” This film is a guide to nourish our intuitions while we’re alive, here, now. As viewers immerse themselves in the world of MEANWHILE, they are invited to contemplate identity, liberation, and the power of collective action. At a rough cut screening, a college student shared through tears, “I didn’t want the film to end because I don’t want to be alone again.”

Ultimately, I hope MEANWHILE sparks a new lexicon, a new way of seeing, one that transforms binaries and fixed identities. By understanding identity as an experience and embracing the chaos of existence, we open ourselves up to new possibilities and forge connections that transcend the limitations of our current reality.

– Catherine Gund, 2024

## **Film Festivals & Special Screenings**

Official Selection - 2024 NewFest  
New York, NY

Official Selection – 2024 Martha’s Vineyard Film Festival  
Martha’s Vineyard, MA

Official Selection – 2024 Frameline Film Festival  
San Francisco, CA

Official Selection – 2024 Margaret Mead Film Festival  
New York, NY

Sneak-Peek Screening – May 1, 2024 @ City University of New York  
New York, NY

Sneak-Peek Screening – April 22, 2024 @ Brown University  
Providence, RI

## **Credits**

Produced & Directed by Catherine  
Produced by Erika Dilday  
Written & performed by Jacqueline Woodson  
Soundscape by Meshell Ndegeocello  
Edited by M. Trevino  
Executive producers:  
Adam & Melony Lewis  
Jack Shear  
Mickalene Thomas

Co-Executive Producers:  
Ann & Graham Gund

Cinematographers:  
Jia Li  
Emerson Mahoney  
Catherine Gund

Sound Recordists:  
Errol Basdeo  
Samantha Cohen

Assistant Editing:  
Flavia Romani

Additional Music By:  
Chris Bruce  
Jebin Bruni  
Abe Rounds

In Association With:  
Just Films/Ford Foundation

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## About the Crew

### **Catherine Gund, Director & Producer**

Founder and Director of Aubin Pictures, Catherine Gund is an Emmy-nominated and Academy-shortlisted producer, director, writer, and activist. Her media work focuses on strategic and sustainable social transformation, arts and culture, HIV/AIDS and racial, reproductive and environmental justice. Her films have screened around the world in festivals, theaters, museums, and schools; on PBS, HBO, Paramount+, the Discovery Channel, Sundance Channel, Free Speech TV, Netflix, and Amazon Prime. She won the 2023 Gracie Award for Documentary Producer. Her films include: *Paint Me a Road Out of Here*, *Meanwhile*, *Angola Do You Hear Us? Voices From a Plantation Prison*, *Primera*, *Aggie*, *Chavela*, and *Born to Fly*. She has served on several arts, media, and justice nonprofit boards and has been a creative advisor on numerous documentary films. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. An alumnus of Brown University and the Whitney Independent Study Program, she has four children and lives in NYC.

### **Erika Dilday, Producer**

Erika Dilday, a producer, journalist, and media executive, is the executive director of American Documentary Inc. and executive producer of its award-winning documentary series POV on PBS and American ReFramed on WORLD Channel. Most recently, she was the CEO of Futura Media Group. Prior to Futura Media, she was the executive director of Maysles Documentary Center. Erika also held strategic planning and financial management roles at The New York Times, National Geographic Television, and CBS. She is a graduate of Harvard College, the Columbia School of Journalism, and Columbia Business School. In 2020, she was a Knight Neiman fellow at Harvard University.

### **Jacqueline Woodson, Writer**

Jacqueline Woodson is a novelist, poet and screenwriter. She is the author of more than thirty books. Her accolades include the National Book Award, a MacArthur Fellowship, Coretta Scott King Awards, and NAACP Awards among many others.

### **M. Trevino, Editor**

M. Trevino is an award-winning queer Latinx filmmaker, audio artist, activist and educator based in New York City. He has been making films and audio productions since 1999, and has collaborated with organizations like the Tribeca Film Institute, Downtown Community Television (DCTV), The Kitchen, Maysles Documentary Center and City University of New York. His works center on issues pertaining to gender, ethnography, ritual, and memory, and has been presented in major cities in the United States including New York, San Francisco, Houston and Detroit. As a filmmaker and film educator, he has been closely involved with immigrant and Latinx underserved communities.

### **Meshell Ndegeocello, Composer**

Meshell Ndegeocello is a German-born American singer-songwriter, rapper, and bassist. Her Grammy award-winning music incorporates a wide variety of influences,

including funk, soul, jazz, hip hop, reggae and rock. As a prolific multi-instrumentalist and poetic intellectual, Ndegeocello's music weaves together sensual sentiments, spinning storytelling and activism into its own (sub)genre of soul. Most recently, Meshell crafted the theme song for Netflix's "We The People."

### **Yannick Lowery, Animator**

Yannick Lowery is an interdisciplinary artist based in Philadelphia, PA. Inspired by the cultural dynamism of his native New York and present hometown, his work explores the creations of illustrated proverbs, portents, and historical souvenirs to guide the viewer through cultural introspection and responsible, imaginative perpetuation. Lowery has exhibited his work in galleries and museums internationally and his work has been featured in publications such as The Atlantic, The New York Times, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Time Magazine, and several others. Ultimately, his collage works are allegorical tools highlighting the robust ecosystem of community that inspire him and become central imagery for his practice.

**Creative Consultants:** César Martínez Barba, Dána-Ain Davis, Dawn Lundy Martin, Jessica Ruffin, Brett Story, Aljernon Tunsil, Carrie Mae Weems

### **Aubin Pictures, Production Company**

Aubin Pictures is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to develop, produce, and distribute documentary films that promote cultural awareness, strategic social transformation, and elevate the voices of people who identify as women, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and justice-impacted. Our five pillars are:

- Studio: documentary filmmaking to transform narratives;
- Impact: justice-oriented campaigns to amplify urgent issues;
- Workshop: fiscal sponsorship, project incubation, and community events;
- Lab: mentorship and training;
- Rewind: uncovering and activating our past work.

Aubin's thirteen feature-length and numerous short documentaries have screened at thousands of film festivals and theaters, as well as on Paramount+, HBO, Discovery, Sundance, Amazon, Netflix, and PBS. Our films have received two Emmy nominations, a spot on the 2023 Oscar shortlist, and hundreds of awards and other accolades over the years. Aubin's work covers a range of topics including art and culture, racial justice, criminal justice, reproductive justice, the LGBTQ+ community, HIV/AIDS, and democracy. Recent films include *Meanwhile*, *Paint Me a Road Out of Here*, *Aggie*, *Born to Fly*, *Angola Do You Hear Us? Voices from a Plantation Prison*, and *Chavela*.