



# SONGS FROM THE HOLE

**Directed by Contessa Gayles**

Presented by Impact Partners  
In Association with Artemis Rising Foundation  
A film by Cocomotion Pictures  
A film by Question & Culture

**\*\*WORLD PREMIERE - VISIONS - 2024 SXSW FILM & TV FESTIVAL\*\***



**Sales Contact:**

Cinetic Media

Isadora Johnson

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## SYNOPSIS

At 15, he took a life. Three days later, his brother's life was taken. A moving chronicle of forgiveness, family, and the transformative power of art, SONGS FROM THE HOLE weaves music and storytelling into an innovative documentary visual album.

Through clear-eyed narration and lyrical journal entries, incarcerated musician James "JJ'88" Jacobs reveals his innermost struggles as a person who has both committed and experienced violent harm. While serving a double-life prison sentence, he searches for healing and peace as he comes of age in this documentary-musical odyssey composed behind bars.

In a unique creative process director Contessa Gayles (*The Feminist on Cellblock Y, Founder Girls*) collaborated with protagonist/writer JJ'88 and producer/music producer richie reseda to interweave the collective storytelling of the film's non-fiction participants, with imagined memories, dreams and spiritual dialogues set to JJ'88's original music. The result is a powerful mix of truth-telling and dreaming that reveal the potential for healing and liberation within us all.

Runtime: 106 minutes

Website: [www.songsfromthehole.com](http://www.songsfromthehole.com)

Instagram: [@songsfromthehole](https://www.instagram.com/songsfromthehole)

## FILMMAKER BIOS

### **CONTESSA GAYLES - Director, Producer, Director of Photography, Editor, Writer**

Contessa is a non-fiction film director, DP, editor and an Emmy-nominated producer. She tells stories about identity, socio-political movement, healing, Black liberation and radical imagination.

Contessa's feature-length documentary visual album, SONGS FROM THE HOLE, world premiered at SXSW 2024, where it won the Audience Award, Visions category. Her documentary short, FOUNDER GIRLS (Exec. Producer Queen Latifah), premiered at the 2023 Tribeca Film Festival and broadcast on BET. Her work has been supported by Impact Partners, Field of Vision, Artemis Rising Foundation, the International Documentary Association, the California Arts Council, the DeNovo Initiative, and Queen Latifah's Queen Collective. She was an SFFILM filmmaker in residence and has been awarded fellowships with the Film Independent/Netflix Amplifier fellowship, the Bay Area Video Coalition MediaMaker fellowship, the Firelight Documentary Lab, the Chicken & Egg Eggcelerator Lab and the Open Society Foundations Soros Justice fellowship.

Previously, she was a producer at CNN, where she created, directed, produced, shot and edited award-winning original series and documentaries, including the feature documentary, THE FEMINIST ON CELLBLOCK Y, shorts; WOMEN WHO MARCH and WOMEN WHO MARCH: THE MOVEMENT, and series including; THIS IS BIRTH WITH LISA LING and the 2016 News & Documentary Emmy-nominated FEEDING AMERICA'S MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN.

### **richie reseda - Producer, Music Producer, Impact Producer**

richie reseda practices transformative justice in his relationships and daily life. He is a formerly-incarcerated music and film producer, content creator, organizer, and creative director. He

produced the feature film, SONGS FROM THE HOLE, as well as its original music. He co-created and co-hosted the Spotify Original podcast Abolition X, and creative-directs for The For Everyone Collective. While in prison he started the worker-owned media collective Question Culture, and co-founded Success Stories Program, the feminist-accountability program chronicled in the CNN documentary, THE FEMINIST ON CELLBLOCK Y, also directed by Contessa Gayles.

**JAMES “JJ’88” JACOBS - Writer, Co-Producer, Impact Producer**

JJ’88 is a musician, music producer, writer, vocalist and filmmaker from Long Beach, California. He is a prison abolitionist who served a 40-years-to-life sentence he was sentenced to at 15-years-old in California state prison. His music and story are the focal point of the visual album-documentary he wrote and co-produced, SONGS FROM THE HOLE, premiering at SXSW. He has released four singles since coming home from prison including his latest, “Hustla’s Lament.” He is quoted describing his work in Billboard and Respect Magazines.

**DAVID FELIX SUTCLIFFE - Producer**

David Felix Sutcliffe is a Sundance and Emmy Award-winning producer committed to ambitious and justice-driven cinema. David’s films have been distributed by Netflix, Hulu, POV, BBC, Canal+, screened at Sundance, Tribeca, True/False, CPH: DOX, and funded by Sundance, Ford, Facet, and Field of Vision among others. David’s debut feature (T)ERROR (Netflix, 2015) won a Sundance Special Jury Prize, an Emmy, and an Independent Spirit Award nomination, and was featured in The New York Times Magazine and This American Life. He was included in Filmmaker Magazine’s list of 25 New Faces of Independent Film, is an alum of the Sundance Creative Producing Lab and Edit Lab, a former Soros Equality Fellow and Pew Fellow, and received the IDA’s Emerging Documentary Filmmaker of the Year Award. David was a producer on Débora Souza Silva’s FOR OUR CHILDREN (Array/Netflix, 2024), a co-producer on Rodrigo Reyes’ 499 (Cinema Guild, 2021), and a consulting producer on Stephen Maing’s CRIME + PUNISHMENT (Hulu, 2018). He is currently producing Daniel Chein and Mushiva’s forthcoming sci-fi documentary TIME HUNTER (Sundance-supported).

## FILM CREDITS

Presented by Impact Partners

In Association with Artemis Rising Foundation

A film by Cocomotion Pictures

A film by Question & Culture

<b>Director</b>	Contessa Gayles
<b>Writers</b>	James “JJ’88” Jacobs Contessa Gayles
<b>Producers</b>	Contessa Gayles richie reseda David Felix Sutcliffe

**Co-producer** James "JJ'88" Jacobs

**Executive Producers**

Jenny Raskin  
Lauren Haber  
Geraldyn White Dreyfous  
Regina K. Scully  
Meadow Fund  
dream hampton

**Co-Executive Producers**

Kelsey Koenig  
Robina Riccitiello  
Lauren & John Driscoll  
Jennifer Pelling  
Dawn Bonder  
Daniel J. Chalfen  
Marci Wiseman

**Contributing Producer** Sako Fisher

**Directors of Photography** Michelle Kwong  
Contessa Gayles

**Editors** Contessa Gayles  
Rafe Scobey-Thal  
Princess A. Hairston

**Featuring**

James "JJ'88" Jacobs  
Victor Benjamin  
William Jacobs Jr.  
Janine Jacobs  
Reneasha Jacobs  
Jacqueline Williams  
Naaji Pruitt  
Lauren "Indigo Mateo" Jacobs

**Performances by**

Myles Lassiter	Kid James
Devonte Hoy	Adult James
Jovon Times	Big Brother
Africa Turner	Mom
Ernest Walker	Dad
Ryleigh Legget	Kid Sister
Kellie Evans	Adult Sister

**Additional Cast**

Mannie Thomas III	Incarcerated Man #1
Chris Johnson	Incarcerated Man #2
Trinidad Flores	Incarcerated Man #3
Justin Chung	Incarcerated Man #4

Graham Finochio	Incarcerated Man #5 & Correctional Officer #2
richie reseda	Incarcerated Man #6
Brandon Tucker	Incarcerated Man #7
Warren Jackson Jr.	Incarcerated Man #8
Evan Bracken	Incarcerated Man #9
Ken Hartman	Incarcerated Man #10
Jonathyn Barber	Incarcerated Man #11
Wayne Finochio	Incarcerated Man #12
Cameren LeBlanc	Incarcerated Man #13
Hugo Gonzalez	Incarcerated Man #14
Kristi Thomas	Visitor Woman #1
Kyla Toney	Visitor Woman #2
Ella Turenne	Visitor Woman #3
Maria Moore	Visitor Woman #4
Imani Justice Thomas	Visitor Child #1
Mia Glasgow	Visitor Child #2
Byron Scott Adams	Corner Store Man & Crime Wave Victim #1
Elijah Obiako	Homie #1
Nicholas Edmond	Homie #2
Henrie Thompson	Homie #3
Delano Foster	Church Camp Kid #1
Prince Udeh	Church Camp Kid #2
Demetris Owens Jr.	Church Camp Kid #3
Adam Cain	Gang Member
Deja Porter	Choir Member #1 & Crime Wave Victim #2
Mikiala Flemming	Choir Member #2
Demetris L. Owens	Choir Member #3
Andrew Mote	Choir Member #4
Z. Marchelle Williams	Choir Member #5
RJ Dawson	Correctional Officer #1
Craig Appelbaum	Juror #1 & KKK Member
Holly Kiger	Juror #2
Liz Wiltsie	Juror #3
Yazzmyn Evonnae	Juror #4
Izzy Ordaz	Juror #5
Ruth Brandt	Judge
Tezz Yancey	Bailiff
Jonathan D. Wray	Pastor
Darren Harwood	Rival Gang Member
Christina Tong	Neighbor
Dallas Schaefer	Cop #1
Robert A. Hernandez	Cop #2
Jordan Mathis	Crime Wave Victim #3
Zaiah Nay Young	Kid on Bike #1
Houston Xavier Mayfield	Kid on Bike #2
Bay Davis	Woman Minding Her Business & Crime Wave Victim #4
Contessa Gayles	Voice of Judge
Madeleine Ciliotta-Young	Voice of Public Defender

**Crew**

Assistant Camera	Vivian Lau
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Additional Camera	Antwan Banks Williams
Steadicam Operators	DeAndre Holmes Zachary Stanke Carl Alvin Octoman
Drone Operator	Erik Olsen
Digital Imaging Technician	Vivian Lau
Gaffers	Cassandra Mulcahy Haley Min Young Kreofsky
Key Grips	Andi Obarski Cassandra Mulcahy Peter Murphy Hanna Radjawané Becky Sapp
Grip & Electric Swings	Shauna Garrett Larissa Salazar
Choreographer	Mike Tyus
Makeup Artist	Ciarra Pringle
Costume Department	richie reseda Contessa Gayles
Art Department	richie reseda Contessa Gayles
Set Photographers	Amanda Austin Nicholas Edmond Wil Prada
Production Assistants	Wil Prada Karla Legaspy
Production Manager	Jennifer Crystal Chien
Production Coordinator	Skylar Economy
Associate Producer	Noura Ahmed
Office Production Assistants	Lauren Jimenez Ramsey Gayles
Development Consultant	Adriana Ambriz
Consulting Editor	Malika Zouhali-Worrall
Assistant Editors	Azadeh Nikzadeh

	Frances Richardson-Boone
Title & Graphics Design	Greg Chen, OUEEN Studios
Visual Effects Supervisor & Editor	Greg Chen, OUEEN Studios
Post Production Services	Yoyo Color FX
Colorist / Online Editor	Yohance Brown
Conform	Javae Monroe Benjamin Suleiman
Audio Post Production	analog-ny audio
Supervising Sound Editor / Re-recording Mixer	Keith Hodne
Co-Supervising Sound Editor / Sound Designer	Eric Di Stefano
Sound FX Editor	Eli Akselrod

**Visual Effects, "Most Hunted"**  
VFX Los Angeles, Inc.

Senior VFX Supervisor	Charles H. Joslain
VFX Supervisor	Izzy Traub Joey Sperber
3D/CGI Artist	Dimitri Zavora Patrick Iwekemd
Compositors	Ahmed Nasr Natalia Sepura Roman Magley Michael Chun
Rotoscoping Artists	Mehul Vekariya Carl Hinderburg
3D-Tracking Artists	David Plannerton Will Emerton

Animation, "Steel Grave"  
APESHIP Ent, STUDIOS

Art Direction	Javier Francisco Pretelt
Animation Director	Javier Francisco Pretelt
Animation Supervisor	Wilma Miranda
Animation Lead	Wilma Miranda
Assistant Animator	Melvin Uyttingco

Particle FX Animations	Melvin Uytingco
Compositing and FX	Giezelle Bernal
Color Stylist	Samuel Lim
Background & Layout Design	Samuel Lim
Coloring	Wilma Miranda
Production Manager	Rebecca Camping
Senior Producer	Javier Francisco Pretelt
Rough Storyboarding	Javier Francisco Pretelt
Storyboarding	Sungyoun Kim
Storyboard Cleanup	Sungyoun Kim
Character Design	Javier Francisco Pretelt
Character Design	Matthew Cartwright

**Original Score by**

richie reseda  
 Tairiq Bright  
 Garfield Bright  
 James "JJ'88" Jacobs

**Original Score Musicians**

Upright Bass	Aneesa Strings
Trumpet	Cesar Hernandez
Saxophone	Gianluca Gibbons
Piano	Jace Holmes-Floyd
Strings	Garfield Bright III
Keys	Tairiq Bright
	JJ'88

**Archival Media Sources**

James "JJ'88" Jacobs  
 Lauren "Indigo Mateo" Jacobs  
 William Jacobs Jr.  
 Janine Jacobs  
 Alicia "Aunty 'Licia" Adkins  
 Tower of Faith Evangelistic Church  
 Lizette Mateo  
 Rahael Asfaw  
 richie reseda

**Additional Media**

KCBS 2      KNBC 4      WXIA 11      CDCR  
 "Holding Back the Years": James Michael Hucknall, Neil Moss, BMG Rights  
 Management (UK) Limited, EMI April Music Inc.

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Justine Jacobs and Associates

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General Counsel, Cocomotion Pictures LLC

Caroline Billet

**Artist Management**

For James "JJ'88" Jacobs and richie reseda

Rahael Asfaw, Question Culture  
Management

For Contessa Gayles

Alexis Galfas, Cinetic Media

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BAVC MediaMaker Fellowship 2021 staff & cohort  
Chicken & Egg Pictures (Egg)celerator Lab 2022 staff & cohort  
Film Independent/Netflix Amplifier Fellowship 2021 - 2022 staff & cohort  
Firelight Documentary Lab 2021 - 2023 staff & cohort  
Impact Partners Producer Fellowship 2021 staff & cohort

SONG CREDITS (As they appear in the film credits)

**“SEED”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by richie reseda, JJ'88 and Tairiq Bright. Horns by All For One Brass Band. Keys by Tairiq Bright. Additional Organs by Garfield Bright III. Mixed by Garfield Bright III.

**“Letter to the Homies”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Dylan Wiggins, richie reseda and JJ'88. Guitar by JJ'88. Additional Strings by Garfield Bright III. Lead vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Garfield Bright III.

**“Betrayal”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Tairiq Bright, richie reseda, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Garfield Bright III.

**“Most Hunted”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Dylan Wiggins, richie reseda and JJ'88. Lead vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Garfield Bright III. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Garfield Bright III.

**“Overwhelmed”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Tairiq Bright, richie reseda, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Piano by richie reseda. Guitar by Garfield Bright III. Choir: Reneasha Jacobs, Indigo Mateo, Lalo Jimenez, JJ'88, Garfield Bright III, Tairiq Bright, richie reseda. Lead vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Christopher "Wicjones" Jones.

**“Steel Grave Choir”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by richie reseda and JJ'88. Horns by All For One Brass Band. Vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Garfield Bright III. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Garfield Bright III.

**“Steel Grave”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Tairiq Bright, richie reseda, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Horns by All For One Brass Band. Vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Christopher "Wicjones" Jones.

**“Wake Up”  
(Film Version)**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Tairiq Bright, richie reseda, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Keys by Tairiq Bright. Saxophone by Gianluca Gibbons. Vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Garfield Bright III. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T.

**“Rise and Shine”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by richie reseda, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Bass by JJ'88 and Garfield Bright III. “Vibraphone” by richie reseda. Guitar by Garfield Bright III. Bass by JJ'88 and Garfield Bright III. Saxophone by Gianluca Gibbons. Mixed by Garfield Bright III. Mastered by Garfield Bright III.

**“Most Hunted” (second movement)**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Dylan Wiggins, richie reseda and JJ'88. Lead vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Christopher “Wicjones” Jones.

**“Sea Floor”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by richie reseda, Tairiq Bright, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Viola and Guitar by Garfield Bright III. Vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Vocals Mixed by Garfield Bright III. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Christopher “Wicjones” Jones.

**“N8tive Psalms”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Tairiq Bright, richie reseda, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Trumpet by Cesar Hernandez. Bass by JJ'88 and Garfield Bright III. Vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Garfield Bright III.

**“ROOT”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by Tairiq Bright, richie reseda, Garfield Bright III and JJ'88. Lead vocals recorded in prison by richie reseda and JJ'88. Mixed by Richard Segal Huredia. Prison Vocals Mixed by Rob T. Mastered by Christopher “Wicjones” Jones.

**“No Time to W8ste”**

Written and Performed by JJ'88. Produced by richie reseda and JJ'88. Saxophone by Gianluca Gibbons. Additional Production by Garfield Bright III. Mixed by Garfield Bright III. Mastered by Garfield Bright III.

“No Time to W8ste: Original Music from *Songs from the Hole*”

Album Executive Produced by  
richie reseda  
JJ'88  
Rahael Asfaw

All songs were recreated from songs originally produced and recorded in prison by JJ'88 and richie reseda