



**WOMAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA
POWERED BY JAGUAR**

Anatomy of Wings

+ pre-recorded Q&A

In 2008 a group of Black girls in Baltimore signed up to an after-school programme, Wings, where they were taught filmmaking. Over the next 11 years it became not just a learning experience for them, but also a second family, where they were able to have honest conversations about their lives. As we follow the girls through their teens and into adulthood, we're given a frank and authentic look not just at the experiences of young Black women, but at the way in which filmmaking becomes an outlet for them to tell their stories.

A completely collaborative project between the Wings co-ordinators and participants, *Anatomy of Wings* is a touching and powerful story of community and authorship.

Programmed by Grace Barber-Plentie

Sirens and Church-bells sound together on a January night in Baltimore. Young women and their children light sparklers to celebrate that 2019 has arrived. Cut back to 2008. The young women are not yet mothers or first-generation college attendees. They are girls attending Dunbar Middle School in East Baltimore. It's a Thursday and they are getting on a van that will drive by abandoned row homes on their way to a prominent midtown arts college. It's their first day attending the 'Wings' Video Skills After School Programme for Girls. Unbeknownst to them, they will be getting on this van every Thursday through to their high school graduations. Their mentors, Nikiea, a Black youth advocate from East Baltimore and Kirsten, a white Baltimore-based filmmaker originally from the Jersey Shore, teach the six girls, who identify as Black, video skills inside a college classroom of sleek glass walls. Eleven-year-old Sheila points her camera in Nikiea's direction and says 'Miss Niki are you in this programme?' Nikiea says, 'Yes. I'm going to help.'

About a year later during a Thursday meeting, Brittany, one of the older influential girls, adamantly brings the conversation of teen pregnancy into the space of 'Wings.' Nikiea responds by sharing she is not willing to get pregnant because of choices she needs to make for herself. Kirsten shares about the health challenges her son experienced from his birth. Brittany acknowledges her mentors with empathy. But no one in the ensemble is quite sure why they are returning every week. As the months unfold, the group realises that they are called to make a documentary about their 'oddly-functional-second-family' existing across the residential-systems meant to divide them. Next, in a bitter-sweet turn of events, Danisha who has just graduated the eighth grade announces she is moving back to Seattle to be with her mother who is dying from HIV. Danisha commits to sending her video-diaries back to Baltimore.

Now 2010, several years into meeting every Thursday, the young women begin attending six different Baltimore City high schools and each invites a friend to 'Wings.' Brittany invites Cami who on her very first day shares how she slowly watched her mother die from HIV. Sheila invites Quandra who

becomes the first to express budding interests in boys through her videos. Then Tazz invites Tywana who articulates her hunger to be seen and heard by her family at home. Nikiea confesses that she had first been unsure if hanging out with white people was bringing her out of her character, but now with everyone coming together to share, share, and share some more, she is noticing a collective shift from the mindset of impoverishment to enlightenment.

Then on the eve of the girls' high school graduations, at a bi-annual retreat in the Maryland countryside, the self-defined second family erupts with a flood of emotion and misunderstanding they cannot control. Both mentors and mentees are left wondering whether 'Wings' will ever be the same – or if it will simply end? When the group realises that Quandra is pregnant they come back together to support her as she ponders motherhood, completing high school, and holding onto her dream of attending college. The group returns to Baltimore for prom season. But the unknown of what will happen after high school is further complicated when several of the young women resist writing their college essays. Nikiea grieves her realisation that mentors cannot change everything.

Now 2014 and removed from the lives they lived in high school, the 'Wings' group continues to work on their documentary. Though doing so has mostly shifted to inviting Kirsten to film important moments since most of the young women have chosen to put their cameras down. Brittany prepares for nursing in the medical field. Quandra navigates motherhood while attending college classes for pre-nursing. Tywana navigates her pregnancy while being briefly incarcerated. At a potluck gathering Danisha, who returned to Baltimore to study filmmaking, affectionately addresses Kirsten's skin colour as the inside of a hotdog bun. The 'Wings' second-family is closer than ever but the completion of their documentary feels uncertain just as the lives of the young women feel uncertain. We then learn that Danisha is not going to make it to her second year of college. She simply cannot give up her core identity as a young Black woman to acclimate to a white-normative curriculum. Kirsten grieves the loss of what Danisha worked so hard for.

Then in 2016, Tazz who was thirteen when 'Wings' began, turns 22 and decides to film an update with everyone who appears in *Anatomy of Wings*. Kirsten accompanies Tazz hoping for connection with everyone in the 'Wings' second-family. As Tazz interviews each of the 'Wings' women the audience learns that those who have become young mothers are very loving to their children. Tazz also asks how the documentary should end? Danisha, now working as a mentor to middle school girls says the film should end the way it began, with a group of women getting ready to go through some stuff, but equipped with a lifetime support system. Then returning to celebrate the 2019 New Year, the group lovingly questions if they are actually done filming? Maybe? Maybe not.

Production notes

ANATOMY OF WINGS

Directed by: Nikiea Redmond, Kirsten D'Andrea Hollander
Presented by: Raw Honey Films
Production Companies: Raw Honey Films, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Geneviève McMillan Foundation, MICA, HEBCAC, Fusion Partnerships, Inc.
Produced by: Nikiea Redmond, Kirsten D'Andrea Hollander
Associate Producers: Alison Welch, Charlton Hughes, Trinidad Rodriguez
Contributing Producer: Scot Hollander
Segment Producer: Jane Cottis
Cinematography: The Wings Collective
Contributing Cinematographer: Allen Moore
Editor: Trinidad Rodriguez
Consulting Editor: Richard Hankin
Graphic Designer: Katty Huertas
Colourists: Jeffrey Chance, Jimmy Powell
Original Music Score: Ellen Cherry
Additional Original Music: Danisha Harris
En-face Interview Audio: James P. Duffy
Additional Voiceover Audio: Camila Franco Ribeiro Gomide



Woman with a Movie Camera is powered by Jaguar and generously supported by Jane Stanton

With

Brittany Backmon
Brienna Brown
Sheila Butler
Quanisha Carmichael
Kata Frederick
Danisha Harris
Quandra Jones
Cami McCrief
Teshavionna 'Tazz' Mitchell
Tywana Reid
Cinnamon Triano
Marquise Weems

USA 2020
84 mins

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Silent Cinema: Body and Soul + intro Sun 31 Oct 14:20
20-22 Omega Sun 31 Oct 14:30; Thu 4 Nov 18:10
Member Picks: Moonlight Fri 5 Nov 18:10
African Odysseys: Black History Walks Presents: Cause for Concern: Equal Before the Law Fri 5 Nov 18:30-21:30
African Odysseys: A Date with the Devil: Darcus Howe's Journey from Black Power to Broadcasting Sat 6 Nov 12:00-18:00
African Odysseys: Travels with my Camera: Is This My Country? + White Tribe Tue 9 Nov 18:10
African Odysseys: Trouble in Paradise + Darcus Howe: Son of Mine Sun 14 Nov 15:30
Terror Vision: Tales from the Hood Thu 25 Nov 20:40
Missing Believed Wiped Session 1: The London Palladium Show Sat 27 Nov 13:00
Missing Believed Wiped Session 2: Introducing 'The Precious Things': Holiday Startime Sat 27 Nov 15:50
Seniors' Free Matinee, in partnership with African Odysseys: Once Upon a Time... When We Were Colored + intro Mon 29 Nov 14:00
Relaxed Screening: Petite Maman Tue 30 Nov 18:15

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk