

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Press Contact:** required viewing / [denise@requiredviewing.net](mailto:denise@requiredviewing.net)

Lauren Alexander / [lalexander@mmjccm.org](mailto:lalexander@mmjccm.org)

## **Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan's Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival Lineup Announced**

### **Lineup includes Films and Conversations that Explore Equality, Justice, Advocacy, and Social Responsibility over Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend 2022**

*Festival to Open with a screening of Sony Pictures Classics' **Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America**, followed by conversation with the filmmakers and film's subject, Jeffrey Robinson. Concluding with a special screening of HBO Documentary Film's, **A Choice of Weapons: Inspired by Gordon Parks** and followed by a conversation with surprise guests!*

**New York, NY (December 15, 2021)** - The Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan (MMJCCM) announces the lineup for its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival, which will screen in person and virtually January 13–17, 2022. Building on the festival's success over the past two years and the ongoing global conversations around racial and social justice, the festival will present impactful films and conversations exploring inequality, injustice, advocacy, and social responsibility through the lens of issues such as racial and economic discrimination, environmental justice, immigrants' rights, and religious intolerance.

The festival aims to inspire participants to reflect and take action in order to create a community of civic-minded individuals. Timed to coincide with Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend and in the spirit of Dr. King's legacy, the festival's goal is to promote social action that leads to positive change in our society.

"These films are not just entertainment. *Cinematters* celebrates the power of film as a vehicle for social change, with some of the most important films of the year," said Isaac Zablocki, Director of The Carole Zabar Center for Film, Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan. "These films shine a light on dark areas and bring action where our society needs movement."

Opening Night, on January 13, will feature a preview screening of Sony Pictures Classics' Award Winning **Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America** ahead of its release on January 14, followed by a conversation with the subject of the film, **Jeffery Robinson**, as well as directors **Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler**. Interweaving lectures, personal anecdotes, interviews, and shocking revelations, criminal defense/civil rights lawyer Jeffery Robinson draws a stark timeline of anti-Black racism in the United States, from slavery to the modern myth of a post-racial America.

Kareema B. Partin, Associate Director of the festival says, "As a festival, it is our job to not only show the films, but to further engage our audience. That is why all of our screenings will be followed by conversations with filmmakers and those who are currently doing the work to advocate for causes presented in this year's lineup."

The festival will conclude with a special screening of **A Choice of Weapons: Inspired by Gordon Parks** on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day/January 17. For decades, trailblazing photographer Gordon Parks brought the human struggle of the Black community out of the shadows and onto the pages of LIFE magazine. John Maggio's documentary explores Parks' enduring legacy through the lens of three contemporary photographers and spotlights his visionary work and its impact on the next generation of artists. Executive Produced by Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys, featuring interviews with LaToya Ruby Frazier, Jelani Cobb, Anderson Cooper, Ava

DuVernay, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Spike Lee, and Bryan Stevenson, among others. An HBO Documentary Films release.

Another highlight of the festival's programming is **Youth v Gov**, screening on January 16, the inspirational story of how since 2015, 21 plaintiffs, now ages 13 to 24, have been suing the U.S. government for violating their constitutional rights to life, liberty, personal safety, and property through willful actions in creating the climate crisis they will inherit.

The festival is presented in partnership between The Carole Zabar Center for Film and The Joseph Stern Center for Social Responsibility. Sheryl Parker, Director of The Joseph Stern Center for Social Responsibility says, "Our hope is that festival attendees will be inspired to take action on the issues the films address - and so we'll also be offering special programs and opportunities to connect with dozens of partners doing meaningful work on the ground."

*Cinematters* partners with dozens of community organizations and strives to make the festival as inclusive as possible, by offering free access and tailored programs to youth filmgoers and activists. The festival works with a proud youth committee sponsored by DOLBY.

Tickets go on sale December 16 with both virtual and in-person individual and ticket passes available. To purchase tickets and find up-to-date schedule and speaker information, visit **cinematters.film**.

#### **Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival Screening Lineup Includes:**

##### **AMERICANISH**

In-Person Screening on January 15, 6pm Spotlight Screening

Dir. Iman K. Zawahry

Narrative

In Jackson Heights, Queens, career-driven sisters Maryan and Sam and their newly immigrated cousin Ameera must navigate the consistent and sometimes conflicting demands of romance, culture, work, and family.

##### **A CHOICE OF WEAPONS: *Inspired by Gordon Parks***

In-Person Screening on January 17, 5pm

Dir. John Maggio

Documentary

Following Gordon Parks' career, from staff photographer for LIFE magazine through his artistic development photographing everyday Americans and his evolution as a novelist and filmmaker. Executive produced by Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys, featuring interviews with Latoya Ruby Frazier, Spike Lee, and Kareem Abdul-Jabaar. An HBO Documentary Films release.

##### **RICOCHE, *East Coast Premiere***

In-Person Screening on January 16, 4:30pm

Dirs. Jeff Adachi, Chihiro Wimbush

Documentary

When a young woman is shot by an undocumented immigrant on Pier 14 in San Francisco, the incident ignites a political and media furor that culminates in Donald Trump's election as President of the United States. In the eye of this storm, two public defenders fight to prove the innocence of the accused man. Winner, Audience Award for Best Documentary at CAAMFEST 2021.

##### **WHO WE ARE: A Chronicle of Racism in America**

Opening Night In-Person Screening on January 13, 7pm

Dirs. Emily Kunstler, Sarah Kunstler

## Documentary

Interweaving lectures, personal anecdotes, interviews, and shocking revelations, in *Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America*, criminal defense/civil rights lawyer Jeffery Robinson draws a stark timeline of anti-Black racism in the United States, from slavery to the modern myth of a post-racial America. Winner, Audience Award for Best Documentary at SXSW 2021; Winner, Best Documentary at Seattle International Film Festival 2021. A Sony Pictures Classics release.

## **YOUTH V GOV**

In-Person Screening on January 16, 2pm

Dir. Christi Cooper

### Documentary

A story of global importance that has already inspired numerous legal actions around the world, YOUTH v GOV is the story of America's youngest citizens taking on the world's most powerful government. Twenty-one courageous youth lead a groundbreaking lawsuit against the U.S. government, asserting it has willfully acted over six decades to create our climate crisis, thus endangering their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property. If these young people are successful, they'll not only make history, they'll change the future.

## **SHORTS BLOCK**

Screenings on January 17, 2-4pm

### **UNDER THE SUN AFTER THE WIND, *New York City Premiere***

Dir. Patrice D. Bowman

### Narrative Short

An isolated Black woman struggles with the chaos she sees online. An adaptation of the *Book of Ecclesiastes*.

### **MELTDOWN IN DIXIE, *New York Premiere***

Dir. Emily Harrold

### Documentary Short

In the wake of the 2015 Charleston Massacre, a battle erupts in Orangeburg, South Carolina between the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) and an ice cream shop owner forced to fly the Confederate flag in his parking lot. In doing so, this film explores the broader role of Confederate symbolism in the 21st century and the lingering racial oppression that these symbols help maintain. Winner, Best Short Documentary at Big Sky Documentary Film Festival and the Special Jury Prize at the Provincetown Film Festival.

### **HEAL THY NEIGHBOR: DENVER, *New York Premiere***

Dir. Mark Decena

### Short Documentary

The film shows how community-led strategies in Denver affect place-based conditions, and that the people most directly affected by systemic barriers and inequities are the best positioned to drive change in their communities. Therefore, now more than ever, building community power is critical to creating lasting change.

## **THEY WON'T CALL IT MURDER**

Dirs. Melissa Gira Grant, Ingrid Raphael

A group of women, bound by grief at losing their sons, brothers, and sisters, demand recognition for their losses at the hands of police in Columbus, Ohio. These women offer searing indictments of a criminal justice system that has failed them.

## **About Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival**

The Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan's Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival presents impactful films that engage the community toward a more democratic, inclusive, and just society. The festival explores themes of inequality, injustice, and social responsibility. Through films, special events, and conversations, we aim to

inspire participants to reflect and take action in order to create a community of civic-minded individuals eager to make a collective change. In the spirit of Dr. King's legacy, our goal is to promote social action that leads to positive change in our society.

**About The Carole Zabar Center for Film**

The JCC's film program showcases films that promote change and examine important topics. Our year-round Cinematters series presents previews and special engagements of films followed by discussions with filmmakers, actors, and other special guests. We also host four film festivals, including the ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York, the Other Israel Film Festival, the Israel Film Center Festival, and the Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival.

**About The Joseph Stern Center for Social Responsibility**

The Joseph Stern Center for Social Responsibility educates, inspires, and empowers people to work toward a better and fairer world through learning, volunteering, and activism.

**About the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan**

Together with its community, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan creates opportunities for people to connect, grow, and learn within an ever-changing Jewish landscape. Located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, the JCC is a vibrant non-profit community center on the Upper West Side. It also presents a robust slate of virtual programming, serving an even wider community. The JCC serves over 55,000 people annually through 1,200 programs each season that educate, inspire, and transform participants' minds, bodies, and spirits. Throughout COVID-19, the JCC has pivoted to meet the community online, exceeding 102,000 registrations to over 3,000 virtual classes and programs in the earliest part of the pandemic. Since its inception, the JCC has been committed to serving the community by offering programs, classes, and events that extend beyond neighborhood boundaries, reaching people at all stages of their lives. Learn more at [mmjccm.org](http://mmjccm.org)

###