

# **THE HOUSE ON COCO ROAD**

**DIRECTED BY:** DAMANI BAKER

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:** DAMANI BAKER, MAX OSTERWEIS, CAMERON RUSSELL **WRITTEN BY:** DAMANI BAKER, JON FINE, EISA DAVIS, CAMERON RUSSELL **PRODUCED BY:** DAMANI BAKER, DANNY GLOVER, BELVIE ROOKS **EDITED BY:** JON FINE **ORIGINAL SCORE:** MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO



## synopsis

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**The House on Coco Road** is an intimate portrait of an activist and teacher who moves her children from Oakland, California to participate in the Grenada Revolution only to find her family in harms way of a U.S. military invasion. It is the filmmaker's search for historical and emotional truth that will confirm his mother's place in American history.



In 1979 the Grenadian people carry out the first successful revolution in the English speaking Caribbean. Maurice Bishop becomes Prime Minister. The Revolution attracts workers from around the world including my mother, Fannie Haughton.

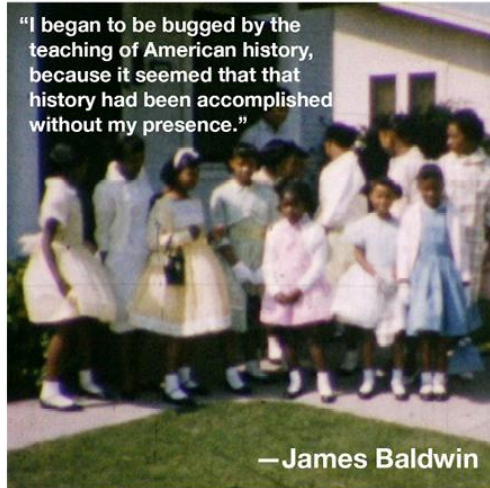
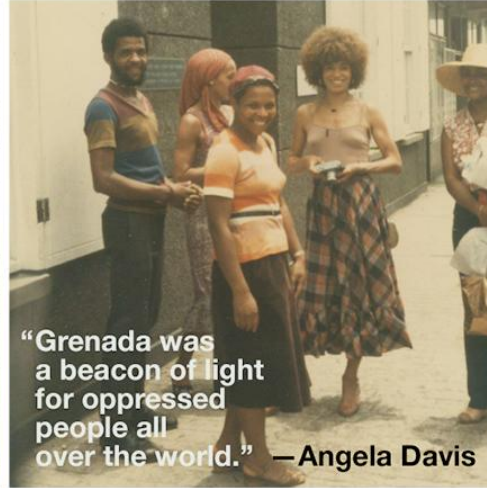
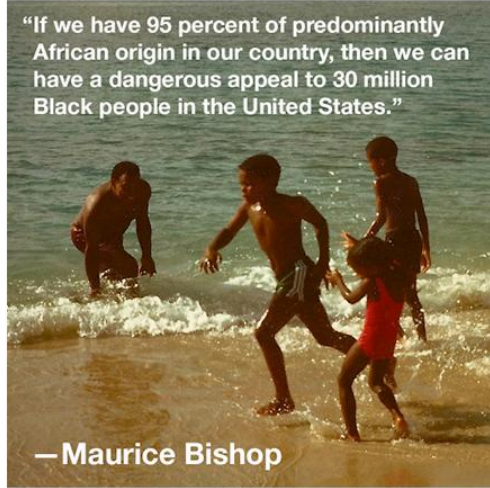
In 1982 Angela Davis, her family, and my mother visit Grenada to witness this miraculous Peoples' Revolution. In 1983 my mother is offered a position in the Ministry of Education and we leave our home in Oakland and move to Grenada. I'd never seen her happier.

Grenada was briefly our home. In 1983 the United States led a military invasion following the assassination of the young popular Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop. We hid under the bed for three days as bombs shook our new paradise, and changed its course forever.

Sixteen years later, in 1999, I returned to Grenada with my mother, and began shooting a documentary film, searching for her story, one that felt not just untold, but unfinished.

In 2014, I discovered a box of family super 8 footage of my great grandmother in rural Louisiana on the land our family sharecropped and my grandmother's migration west. I started to unravel my mother's path to activism. I started to understand why my mother, and a group of tireless women, had put their lives on the line, daring to build a better world. You may not know their names, but they have changed the course of history.

## quotes from the film



**“If we have 95 percent of predominantly African origin in our country, then we can have a dangerous appeal to 30 million Black people in the United States.”**

**—Maurice Bishop**

**“Grenada was a beacon of light for oppressed people all over the world.”**

**—Angela Davis**

**“I began to be bugged by the teaching of American history, because it seemed that that history had been accomplished without my presence.”**

**—James Baldwin**

**“I’m committed to human life—now it’s called social justice. I’m committed to humanity, to making the world a better place. You know, not just for my family, for everybody’s family.”**

**—Fannie Haughton**



### **Damani Baker, Director**

A native of the Bay Area, Damani Baker is a Brooklyn-based director and filmmaker. His first feature documentary about the life and music of Bill Withers, “Still Bill,” opened theatrically to critical acclaim in 2009 and was acquired by Netflix, Showtime, and BBC. Previous work includes “Return,” an award-winning film that explores the genius of traditional African medicine. Damani’s career spans documentaries, music videos, museum installations, and advertisements, and he has worked for clients including Rainforest Alliance, Puma, IBM, and Wieden+Kennedy, among others.

His current projects include over 10 films for museums in Nigeria and Chattanooga, Tennessee for Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Inc. Damani is a Sundance Fellow and alum of Filmmaker Magazine’s “25 new faces in independent film.” In addition to his work, Damani is a professor in the filmmaking, screenwriting, and media arts program at Sarah Lawrence.

*Damani Baker offers a moving personal and historical account of how he and his family were caught up in the 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada. The result is a fascinating and under-reported chapter in the never-ending struggle for justice on behalf of black men and women worldwide, as well as a scalding appraisal of Reagan-era racial attitudes at home and abroad.*

— LOS ANGELES TIMES



### **Meshell Ndegeocello, Composer, original score**

Mercurial and masterful, Meshell Ndegeocello has survived the best and worst of what a career in music has to offer. She has eschewed genre for originality, celebrity for longevity, and musical trends for musical truths. She has lived through the boom and bust of the industry and emerged just as she entered - unequivocally herself. Fans have come to expect the unexpected from Meshell, and faithfully followed her on sojourns into soul, spoken word, R&B, jazz, hip-hop, rock, all bound by a lyrical, spiritual search for love, justice, respect, resolution, and happiness. Groove driven, infectious melodic and lyrically meditative, Meshell's latest album, *Comet, Come To Me*, finds her returning to the same well of creativity that launched her career. Her 11th release, it is possibly a culmination of all previous work: lush, vocal, seeking, wise, collaborative, and driven by the signature bounce and precise pocket of Ndegeocello on bass.



### **Jon Fine, Editor**

Jon's a filmmaker and musician. Over the years he's worked as a producer, DP, director and editor. His work includes "Still Bill" about legendary songwriter Bill Withers, "The After Party" about arrests during the 2004 presidential conventions, "Jazz Days" a series of global concerts sponsored by UNESCO and Thelonious Monk Institute, "Herbie Hancock's Possibilities", the award-winning short "Flavio", and videos for Herbie Hancock, Antibalas, Raul Midon, Kaki King, Lionel Loueke and Lizz Wright. In 2015, Jon produced "Holy Forest" an album of songs recorded in The Gambia and the US. He's now producing "Africa Calling", a project in partnership with UNICEF, USAID, Angelique Kidjo and students from Benin's CIAMO school of music to raise awareness around malaria treatment and prevention in West Africa.

**cast**



**Damani Baker**



**Prestin Baker**



**Alimenta Bishop**



**Ronald Reagan**



**Yvonne Belfon**



**Angela Davis**



**Fannie Haughton**



**Maurice Bishop**



**Fania Davis**



**Jacqueline Creft**

## Grenada timeline

**21 miles long and 10 miles wide**, Grenada is rugged volcanic terrain. The jagged hills are lushly wooded with tropical tree crops that support the island's economy: nutmeg, cocoa, bananas, breadfruit, mangoes. Deep ravines cut through the mountains and lead down to the sea. Everywhere in Grenada, you can feel the sea stretch out before you and the dark-green mountains at your back.

- 1-500 AD - The Arawaks settled
- 700 - Caribs invade Grenada and kill off Arawaks
- 1498 - Columbus invades Grenada, names it "Concepcion"
- 1650 - The French town of Port Louis is built, marking the first successful European settlement in Grenada.
- 1763 - The Island ceded to the British by the treaty of Paris
- 1834 - Abolition of Slavery

Grenada is home to 110,000 people, the majority descended from Africans brought to the West Indies by the British to work as slaves on colonial sugar plantations. Since emancipation they have been peasant farmers, agricultural laborers, urban workers, and professionals.

- 1951 - Eric Gairy leads an island wide strike, that leads to his election and the beginning of the working class supported Grenada's People Party.
- 1961 - Evidence of Gairy's corruption is first seen in his tampering with elections.
- 1967 - At this point it is clear that Grenadians are suffering under the corrupt and repressive dictatorship of Eric Gairy.

– 1974 - Grenada gains independence from Britain, while Gairy is still in power.

– March 13, 1979 - The popularly-based New Jewel Movement lead by Maurice Bishop, overthrows the Gairy dictatorship and forms the People's Revolutionary Government.

– 1981 - US Military practices a mock invasion of Grenada called Amber and the Amberdines on Vieques Puerto Rico.

### GRENADA IS INTRODUCED TO MY FAMILY

– March 1982 - Fannie Haughton, my mother, along with Angela and Fania Davis visit Grenada. Angela Davis speaks at a National Women's Day celebration. My mother meets with Phyllis Coard and Jacqueline Creft and discusses moving to Grenada permanently.

– Spring 1983 - With my sister Kai Baker, we prepare to leave Oakland and move to Grenada. Family happily living in Grenada, mom is hired by the ministry of education to train teachers, my sister and I are enrolled in school.

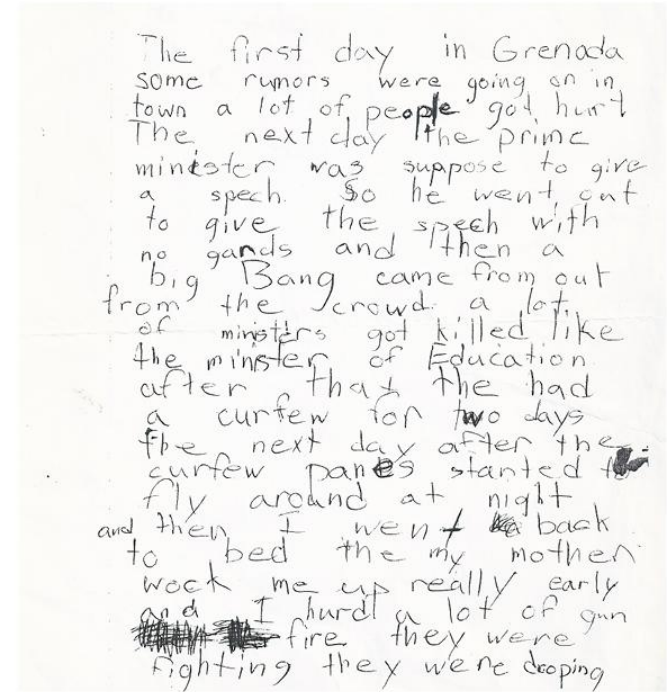
– October 13, 1983 - Prime Minister Maurice Bishop placed under house arrest.

– October 19, 1983 - Bishop released from house arrest by 10,000 supporters

– October 19, 1983 - Bishop assassinated with other members of his cabinet including Jacqueline Creft who had invited my mother to Grenada.

– October 25, 1983 - The United States invades Grenada.

– October 28, 1983 - Our family is evacuated off Grenada and flown back home to California.



"In Grenada's case, the ideas of 'Black Power' that developed in the United States and the freedom struggle of the African peoples in such places as Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau powerfully contributed to providing an understanding that the problems of the Caribbean man were very different from those in the British mother country or the United States and Canada. But unquestionably, through the Cuban experience we got to see scientific socialism close up. This, together with the process that has taken place in recent years in Guyana and Jamaica, has been teaching us, on the practical level of day-to-day political struggle, the relevance of socialism as the only solution to our problems."

– Prime Minister Maurice Bishop

## Grenada timeline (continued)

### THE HOUSE ON COCO ROAD IS BORN

- January 1996 - Undergraduate senior year at Sarah Lawrence College I wrote a thesis project, a feature fiction film script based on our family's experience in Grenada.
- Fall 1998 - While at UCLA Graduate Film School began developing documentary about Grenada. First round of fundraising begins.
- Summer of 1999 - Traveled back to Grenada for the first time with my mother since our forced evacuation with a full documentary production crew.
- 2000-2014 - Continued shooting of my mother and other related subject. Collection of family archive begins, including the discovery of a box of super 8 film that documents my family's migration west from Louisiana to California.
- March 2015 - Kickstarter Launched for second round of funding, successfully raising over 100,000.
- May 2015 - Editing begins on The House on Coco Road.
- July 2015 - The House on Coco Road is selected to attend the Sundance Producers Summit in Utah
- July 2015 - May 2016 Editing continues.
- **June 2nd 2016 - WORLD PREMIERE at the LA FILM FESTIVAL**



## credits

—  
directed by  
**DAMANI BAKER**

written by  
**DAMANI BAKER**  
**EISA DAVIS**  
**JON FINE**  
**CAMERON RUSSELL**

executive producer  
**MAX OSTERWEIS**

executive producers  
**DAMANI BAKER**  
**CAMERON RUSSELL**

editor  
**JON FINE**

original score  
**MESHELL NDEGECELLO**

produced by  
**DAMANI BAKER**  
**DANNY GLOVER**  
**BELVIE ROOKS**

producers  
**STEVE CHOO**  
**NANCY HECHINGER**  
**THE LIONS**  
**BIA LOWE**

producers  
**PETER LOWE**  
**NANCY STEPHENS**  
**MARCIA WITHERS**

Directors of photography

*Grenada*  
**ROGELIO ABRADES GONZALES**

*Oakland, Atlanta, Brooklyn*  
**DAMANI BAKER**



## credits

with

**FANNIE HAUGHTON**  
**ANGELA DAVIS**  
**FANIA DAVIS**  
**YVONNE BELFON**

and

**KAI BAKER**  
**PRESTIN BAKER**  
**KOHLI BAKER**  
**ALIMENTA BISHOP**  
**ANN BISHOP**  
**ZAHARI FINE**  
**VICTORIA HAUGHTON**  
**DESSIMA WILLIAMS**

location sound  
*Grenada, Oakland*  
**MARIA MURILLO**

additional camera  
**JON FINE**  
**CAMERON RUSSELL**

archival producer  
**DAHLIA KOZLOWSKY**

assistant editors  
**NICK LERMAN**  
**ERINN CLANCY**

sound mixer  
**ANDY GREEN**

mixed at **DUOTONE NYC**

original score recorded and mixed  
by  
**PETE MIN**  
**@LUCY'S MEAT MARKET**

musicians  
keyboards: **JEBIN BRUNI**



## credits

*guitar:* **CHRIS BRUCE**  
*percussion:* **GILMAR GOMES**  
*drums:* **ABE ROUNDS**  
*bass:* **MESHELL NDEGECELO**

*motion graphics and title design*  
**MY ACTIVE DRIVEWAY**  
*producer:* **SAEROM SEONG**  
*lead designer:* **HAN GYEOL LYU**

*colorist*  
**SHAWN KING**

*conformation*  
**GLUE EDITING & DESIGN**

*special thank you*  
**ROB HALL**

*research assistance*  
**AMI GLAZER**  
**SHAE MERMIS**

*music clearances*  
**JIM BLACK**

*Transportation (Grenada)*  
**CHRIS PASCAL**

*This film would not have been possible without the support of:*

**HAILE GERIMA,**  
**JOHN DOUGLAS AND**  
**ASAKE BOMANI**

*photographs courtesy of*  
**ALIMENTA BISHOP**  
**KATHY SLOANE**  
**KU-LING YURMAN**



## credits

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### "Island in the Sun"

Composed by  
HARRY BELAFONTE AND  
IRVING BURGIE  
Courtesy of RCA Records  
By Arrangement with Sony  
Music Licensing

### "The NPG"

Written by GLYN BUSH  
Performed by  
BIGGABUSH/LIGHTENING HEAD  
Courtesy of LION HEAD  
RECORDINGS

### "OYSTERS"

Written by BENJI HUGHES  
Performed by MESHELL  
NDEGEOCELLO  
Composed by BENJI HUGHES  
Courtesy of NAIVE RECORDS

legal counsel

**LISA CALLIF**  
**DONALDSON & CALLIF, LLP**



thanks

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was made possible through  
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*The Sundance Institute*

*Pacific Pioneer Fund*

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*Funding Exchange*

*Tupac Amaru Foundation*

*Vanguard Public Foundation*

...and 590 individual  
Kickstarter donors,



**OFFICIAL 2016 SELECTION**

**LA Film Festival**

**DOCNYC**

**Full Frame (Third Fridays)**

**Third Horizon Caribbean Film Festival**

**Matatu Festival of Stories**

**International Black Film Festival of Nashville**

**The Bahamas International Film Festival (Winner)**

**The Grenada Global Film Festival**

*"Among the most hotly anticipated films in the documentary section is "The House on Coco Road", an intimate family portrait set against the racial violence that accompanied President Ronald Reagan's war on drugs in the 1980s."* **London Daily Mail**

*"Crafted passionately, "The House on Coco Road, is a stunning mixture of intimate family portrait...and tribute to the women who fight for freedom, equality and justice on a daily basis."* **LA Film Festival'16 Review**

*"The Bay Area was well represented at the recent Los Angeles Film Festival! Notable was the documentary "The House on Coco Road" which traces the political and social activism of Oakland's Fannie Haughton."* **San Francisco Chronicle**

*"Films like "The Birth of a Nation" and "The House on Coco Road" have a healing effect by helping African-Americans reclaim their roots. Audiences can discover the truth about African-American history."* **TruthDig**



# **THE HOUSE ON COCO ROAD**

## **A FILM BY DAMANI BAKER**

Duration – 78 min

Contact – Damani Baker

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[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

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



THANK YOU