

# 23 MILE

a film by Mitch McCabe



## PRESS NOTES

<https://www.23milefilm.com>  
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UPDATED: July 12, 2024



# 23 MILE

## ABOUT THE FILM

### LOGLINE

Part experimental essay, part political diary, **23 MILE** follows Americans during cataclysmic events in the swing state of Michigan throughout 2020– including the plot to kidnap governor Whitmer– painting a complex portrait against the foreboding backdrop of societal instability.

### SYNOPSIS

Part verité essay, part political diary, **23 MILE** is an experimental nonfiction film following Americans during cataclysmic events in the Midwestern swing state of Michigan throughout 2020– including the plot to kidnap governor Whitmer– painting a portrait of a populace that defies media stereotypes. A document of complex discourse, the film forces viewers to question their own assumptions about race, class, social status and geographical demographics, drawing a surprisingly hopeful human portrait against the foreboding backdrop of societal instability.

Hullabaloo Films  
78 minutes | 2024 | DCP | USA





## LONG SYNOPSIS

The film opens with radio news from the first month of the pandemic: the Dow falling about 3,000 points every day, a caller unable to taste his St. Patrick's Day dinner. By April 2020, Governor Gretchen Whitmer enacted some of the strictest lockdown measures in the country, in order to address an alarming rise in Covid deaths (within weeks, the state had become one of the top U.S. hotspots). While the measures successfully flattened the viral curve, there were specific restrictions (e.g., closing garden stores, forbidding boating) infuriated some residents, seeing it as an overreach of government... or even, as a sign of an approaching authoritarianism. Historically a place with strong libertarian undercurrents, the "Recall Whitmer" movement was born, and increasingly large protest movements formed. At the same time, mass demonstrations for racial justice were organized to call attention to police violence and lack of government response. By the end of April, large groups of protestors- many of them heavily armed- occupied the state capitol in Lansing, making demands and screaming at officials. The footage was broadcast across the world (and became a warning for January 2021).

Stylistically rooted in classic verité documentary, **23 MILE** is an ensemble portrait of Michigan in 2020. In the form of an immersive political video diary, the filmmaker travels viewers back to an historic and ever-surprising chain of events. They listen far beyond the usual soundbite to capture widely variant protests and demonstrations, engaging with people who are not always what they seem, discoursing about ideas that refuse to fall into neat categories. Members of "Michigan Militia of Love" describe their efforts to protect Black Lives Matter protests and wanting to "change the narrative about militias." All sharing a need to be seen and heard, once Election Day finally arrives, discourse gives way to chaos. Encouraged by the Trump campaign, on November 4 (the day after the election), pro-Trump protestors and armed militia try to break down doors at TCF Center, where the vote is collected for Wayne County (which includes Detroit, a majority Black city). Newscasters comment on the deja vu of Miami in the 2000 Bush-Gore recount. In the words of one newscaster, "Just when you think a major chapter is over, and the story is over, it isn't! What's next?!"

A wide-angle photograph of the ocean at sunset. The sky is a deep orange, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a shimmering reflection on the water's surface. In the distance, an oil rig is visible on the left, and a smaller ship is on the right. The water is dark with small, choppy waves.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This work is informed by several key life experiences. I've been a door-to-door political canvasser—both paid and volunteer—since I was a teenager. I came out as a lesbian to my conservative family when I was in college, met with conversion therapy. As a result I had to learn to compartmentalize disagreement for my own survival. Identifying as a female-raised non-binary artist and activist, I am hard-wired to question norms and reject monolithic ideologies. My Michigan roots have played a key role throughout my work, my family history split between working class and newly upper middle-class life. All of this has led me to question norms and reject monolithic ideologies. These lived experiences, my filmmaking interests, and social/creative practice culminate in **23 MILE**.

I am proud of making a film that is boldly local. After all, we have a habit—in the cultural and predominantly “coastal” circles—to sneer at regional issues, until a presidential election year. I embrace the saying, “think globally, act locally.” **23 MILE** calls to question class, elitism, “bubbles”, political alignment, media narratives, anti-flyer-over state sentiment, overlap between some militia and progressive activists for prison/ police reform, etc. To me, this film is pro-human, pro-listen. If we do not inform ourselves and engage, we cannot change our world.

The intent of 23 MILE is the very act of exposure to shed some light, complications and all, on what appears to many other countries as a mystifying, chaotic, polarized political climate and electoral system. My intent for United States audiences is to impact Left-leaning political dialogue and— especially at this important moment— even if it causes discomfort to hear voices with which we passionately disagree. With so much hanging in the balance— the risks of our toppled democracy and fascism growing— I have come to be frustrated by documentary films elaborating on what we already agree on, or by parachute journalists with didactic reports on “Fly-over states”. Is it getting us anywhere? We learn nothing—except to trust the media even less. Meanwhile, we are losing the ability to debate, losing a tolerance for merely allowing our ears to hear anything that does not 100% tow the line our peers follow. That's scary to me. I know it's scary to most people. Isn't it scary to you? — Dir. Mitch McCabe



## CREATIVE TEAM



### **MITCH McCABE** (DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / CAMERA/ EDITOR) - **they/them**

Mitch McCabe is a queer artist, filmmaker and educator whose work spans narrative, nonfiction and experimental film, mining themes of class, politics and identity grounded in their native Midwest. Their short and feature films have screened at Sundance, True/False, New Directors/New Films, Sheffield, Ann Arbor, Camden, Clermont-Ferrand, Winterhür, Edinburgh, McEvoy Foundation for the Arts and New York Film Festivals. Their short films include: PLAYING THE PART (1995), CIVIL WAR SURVEILLANCE POEMS- PART 1 (Camden, TrueFalse, Doc Sheffield 2021), TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN (Sundance, 2007), SEPTEMBER 5:10PM (New York Film Festival, 2000), and HIGHWAY 403, MILE 39 (New York Film Festival, 2000) Their feature HBO documentary YOUTH KNOWS NO PAIN screened at IDFA, Lincoln Center and AFI Silverdocs. A 2019 Sarah Jacobson awardee and past fellow of MacDowell and the Flaherty Seminar, McCabe's work has been supported by MASS MoCA, NYSCA, Yaddo, LEF, Jerome and Djerassi Foundations. They

received their BA in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard College and their MFA from New York University. They live and work between Michigan and Ithaca, New York. McCabe's latest film, 23 MILE (2024) will premiere at True/False Film Festival. They are working on the full multi-part feature film project of CIVIL WAR SURVEILLANCE POEMS.



### **CHRISTIE HERRING** (PRODUCER) - **she/her**

Christie Herring is an award-winning filmmaker with a strong interest in the mechanics and poetry of change. She works across many forms and roles, with a love for nonfiction and collaboration. Recent editing and producing include THE BIG SCARY "S" WORD (Editor/Co-Producer, Hulu), CODE: DEBUGGING THE GENDER GAP (Producer/Editor, Tribeca), BIAS (Producer/Editor, Amazon), A TOWN CALLED VICTORIA (Editor, Independent Lens/PBS), THE POINT OF NO RETURN (Editor, NOVA/PBS), NORTH BY CURRENT (Post Producer, Berlinale, POV/PBS), and SILENT BEAUTY (Post Producer, HotDocs, Independent Lens/PBS). Her work as a Director includes THE CAMPAIGN (Director/Producer/Camera, PBS),

following California's struggle for marriage equality. Christie has directed several shorts films and consults as a Producer and an Editor on a wide slate of projects. She is the former Chair and a current Member of New Day Films, and her research background includes five years as a Project Director at the Harvard School of Public Health. She is an instructor with the American Film Showcase and received her BA from Duke University where she assisted filmmaker Raúl Ruiz. Christie received her MA in Documentary Filmmaking from Stanford University.





**JEREMIAH MOORE** (SOUND DESIGN + RE-RECODING MIXER) - **he/him**

Sound Artist, Mixer and Designer, San Francisco-based Moore realizes sound-visions collaboratively with filmmakers and other artists, with a primary emphasis on cinema and documentary forms. Highlights include sound design for Oscar-nominated documentary short "Last Day of Freedom", Joshua Izenberg's celebrated short "Slomo," and work for Pixar, McSweeney's, the Kitchen Sisters, Pacho Velez, Courtney Stephens, Cathy Lee Crane, Ellen Bruno, Irene Lusztig, Leslie Tai and Harrod Blank, with projects premiering at Sundance, Berlinale, Tribeca, SXSW, Toronto and True/False among others. Projects beyond cinema include sound diffusion for Ai Weiwei's "@LARGE" on Alcatraz island, a 100-channel live-mix of The Residents' "Eskimo." His mix for new-music project "Slow Beethoven" launched at Laurie Anderson's NYC studio, made the 2023 billboard charts.

**CATHY LEE CRANE** (CONSULTING EDITOR) - **she/her**

Cathy Lee Crane received the Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013 for her lyrical re-combinations of archival and staged material. Pasolini's Last Words (2012) was supported by the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship. It premiered at the Festival du Nouveau Cinema. Crane received the first survey of her work in 2015 as part of the American Original Now series at the National Gallery of Art. Since 2017, her ongoing work on the US/Mexico border, funded by the El Paso Border Arts Residency and the Creative Arts Fellowship at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center has thus far produced three iterations of its cross-platform design: Crossing Columbus (2020) a feature-length , terrestrial sea (2022) a short film awarded a Jury Citation from the Festival de Cinema da Fronteira in Brazil and presented as part of the (X)-trACTION collective she co-founded in 2020. As part of her summer 2022 residency at the Harun Farocki Institute, she presented a 14-channel installation sculptural work-in-progress Drawing the Line. She is Professor of Film at Ithaca College.

**MICHAEL TAYLOR, ACE** (CONSULTING EDITOR) - **he/him**

Michael Taylor is a New York City-based picture editor. A member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and American Cinema Editors, he likes cutting character based narratives best, whether fiction or nonfiction. Recent fiction credits include Dustin Guy Defa's "The Adults," featuring Michael Cera, which premiered at Berlin Film Festival, Edson Oda's "Nine Days", featuring Winston Duke, Lulu Wang's "The Farewell," featuring Awkwafina and Tzi Ma, Ira Sachs' "Love is Strange," featuring Alfred Molina, John Lithgow and Marisa Tomei, Rick Alverson's "The Mountain," featuring Jeff Goldblum, in addition to Alverson's earlier film "The Comedy." Recent documentary credits include a new project by Julia Loktev, Ethan Silverman's "Angel Headed Hipster: The Songs of Marc Bolan and T. Rex," (Tribeca 2022), Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady's "Freakonomics," Margaret Brown's "The Order of Myths" and Mitch McCabe's "Youth Knows No Pain."

**PAWEŁ WOJTASIK** (CONSULTING EDITOR) - **he/him**

Born in Łódź, Poland, Wojtasik came to the United States as a refugee in 1972, where he received an MFA from Yale University in 1996. His work has been shown at festivals such as Berlinale, New York Film Festival, Hong Kong International Film Festival, Ann Arbor Film Festival, Locarno International Film Festival and MoMA. His installation "360° Below Sea level" exhibited at MASS MoCA and Prospect.2 Biennial; "Single Stream" (co-directed with Toby Lee & Ernst Karel), showed at the Museum of the Moving Image in New York and the 2014 Whitney Biennial. His first feature film END OF LIFE premiered at DocLisboa the New York Film Festival.



**LUCAS NEUFELD** (CO-PRODUCER / ASSISTANT EDITOR) - **they/them**

A graduate of the BFA Film conservatory at Purchase College, Lucas Neufeld is a filmmaker and assistant editor based out of Upstate NY. They are currently in production on their first feature film, Alt-Right-Tab, coming in 2025.

**MARIA GAMBALE** (CO-PRODUCER)- **she/her**

Micaela is a force of nature whose diverse talents span the realms of filmmaking, media communications, and outdoor adventure. As a co-producer on "23 Mile," Micaela delved deep into research with a keen focus on breaking news during Michigan's pivotal 2020 election year. She also served as an associate producer on Mitch McCabe's in-progress film, "Civil War Surveillance Poems." Outside of her documentary work, Micaela has made waves as a digital content creator, working on and off camera with influencers and businesses to produce viral content that has amassed over 2 million views. Away from the hustle of the media industry, Micaela's spirit thrives in the great outdoors. Whether she's scaling rock faces, trekking through rugged trails, or embarking on spontaneous road trips, Micaela is an avid adventurer at heart. Her passion for outdoor exploration not only fuels her sense of adventure but also enriches her creativity, providing inspiration for her storytelling endeavors.

**MARIA GAMBALE** (FIELD PRODUCER, ADD'L CAMERA)- **she/her**

is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and writer based in Brooklyn, NY, and has worked in film, video, journalism and radio across three continents for over 25 years. Her film Sarabah, about Senegalese rapper-activist Sister Fa, was broadcast in the U.S. and Europe, also appearing at over forty festivals worldwide, and won several awards. Gambale also reports on the United Nations, with a focus on women and peacekeeping, and launched a Facebook Live Q&A series with women involved in conflict resolution in partnership with the publication PassBlue. Gambale is an adjunct professor in the film minor program at SUNY Purchase.

**NGUYEN PHAN ANH** (CPOST-PRODUCTION ASSISTANT) - **he/him**

Nguyen Phan Anh is a filmmaker from Hanoi, Vietnam and has worked on film sets across the world. A graduate of Ithaca College with a dual degree in Film and Sociology. Most notably he worked on the film Da 5 Bloods with Spike Lee in 2019 as a Production assistant. He has also worked on various TV Commercials in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam - both Freelance and with well-known production houses.

# CREDITS

**Director, Producer + Editor**

MITCH McCABE

**Producer**

CHRISTIE HERRING

**Cinematography**

MITCH McCABE

**Sound Design + Re-recording Mixer**

JEREMIAH MOORE

**Co-Producers**

LUCAS NEUFELD

MICAELA WILNER

**Consulting Editors**

CATHY LEE CRANE

MICHAEL TAYLOR, ACE

PAWEL WOJTASIK

**Colorist**

ROBERT ARNOLD

**Field Producer**

MARIA GAMBALE

**Additional Camera**

MARIA GAMBALE

SHANE McMURPHY

DOUG CLARK



Production Assistants NJ PHILLIPS  
LINDSEY MUTZ  
CHARLIE STEEN

Assistant Editors LUCAS NEUFELD  
IARI VARRIALE

Post Production Assistant PHAN NGUYEN

Dialogue Editor ANDREW ROTH

Motion Graphics Consultant BRAD LEWTER

Text + Titles ROBERT PIETRI

Archival Clearances KATE LINGLEY

Legal Services ROBERT CLARIDA, ESQ.  
REITLER KAILAS & ROSENBLATT

DCP CINEMATIQ

Captioning STORMMIGUEL FLOREZ

## THANK YOU

SARA ARCHAMBAULT  
JEANELLE AUGUSTIN  
NELS BANGERTER  
PETER BERLE  
AMY FALKNER  
MARY FESSENDON  
KELLY GALLAGHER  
ROBERT GEARHART  
LEO GOLDSMITH  
STACI HALL  
PAULA KINSEL  
JEFF KUSAMA-HINTE  
SCOTT MACAULAY  
CHRISTOPHER MCCABE  
LUCILA MOCTEZUMA  
FIONA OTWAY  
INNEY PRAKASH  
BRAD RAPPA  
JOHN SCOTT  
KATE TURNIPSEED  
PACHO VELEZ

## SPECIAL THANK YOU

CHRISTINA CROWLEY  
GABY COLLINS-FERNANDEZ  
ADAM DEWEY  
SAM GREEN  
TIMOTHY MCCAJOR HALL  
ELI HORWATT  
KATHY KIELISZEWSKI  
JIM KIERTZNER  
DESSANE LOPEZ-CASELL  
IRENE LUSZTIG  
ANGELO MADSEN MINAX  
SHAUNNA MAURIZI  
DEVON NARINE-SINGH  
JACK POWERS  
VADIM RIZOV  
LYNNE SACHS  
ADAM SEKULAR  
MIRA SIMON  
MANDI WRIGHT

## SUPPORT FOR THIS FILM PROVIDED BY

PRINCESS GRACE FOUNDATION, USA: 2022 SPECIAL PROJECT GRANT  
JAMES B. PENDLETON FUND, PARK SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS, ITHACA COLLEGE  
ITHACA COLLEGE, CENTER FOR FACULTY EXCELLENCE, SUMMER GRANT PROGRAM  
SARAH JACOBSON AWARD, FREE HISTORY PROJECT  
YADDO CORPORATION  
MACDOWELL

This project was completed with the support of the  
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY FISCAL SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM





# SCREENINGS

- TRUE/FALSE FILM FESTIVAL  
(World Premiere)
  - Friday March 1, (sold out)/ Saturday March 2, (sold out)/ Sunday March 3, 10a (sold out)
- FREEP/DETROIT FREE PRESS FILM FESTIVAL  
(Michigan Premiere)
  - Detroit Institute of Arts, Saturday April 13, 2pm
  - Birmingham 8, Sunday April 14, 2pm
- MARGARET MEAD FILM FESTIVAL, American Museum of Natural History
  - (NYC Premiere), May 12, 4pm (sold out)
- SAN FRANCISCO DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL
  - June 6 (sold out)
- CINETOPIA FILM FESTIVAL (Ann Arbor, MI)- Michigan Theatre
  - June 19, 21, 22
- DOKUFEST DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL  
(International Premiere) Kosovo, August 3-8
- WALKER ART CENTER, Minneapolis
  - September 6

Updating screening info: <https://www.23milefilm.com/>

News, Trailer, Social Media Links: <https://linktr.ee/23MileFilm>

UPDATED: July 12, 2024



## SELECTED PRESS

**IndieWire**

"... you shouldn't look away from their detailed film diary, in which they capture the distinct voices who make up the electorate of the consequential swing state... The film continuously catches you off guard, offering an unfiltered look at a state as it navigates COVID, threats to kidnap Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer, and Stop the Steal rallies in the wake of Biden's win."

**FILMMAKER**  
THE MAGAZINE OF INDEPENDENT FILM

"The result is McCabe's endlessly fascinating and elegantly crafted 78-minute video diary titled **23 MILE**, which serves as a much-needed cinematic reminder in this round two election year that uncomplicated narratives that simply confirm our preconceived notions do a disservice to us all."

**Hammer To Nail**

**23 MILE** effectively portrays complicated individuals in challenging situations at a difficult time for everyone. A difficult time that persists, consequently.

**Detroit Free Press**

"...McCabe described their film as a kind of "political science document or art piece" that documents the ways Michigan defies some conventional political narratives with footage featuring candid conversations with residents throughout the state and near the Macomb County thoroughfare after which the film is named. "To me, it's almost more than a location. It's kind of a symbol of complicated politics," McCabe said."

**COLUMBIA DAILY  
TRIBUNE**

"**23 Mile** stakes a refreshing unity of style and substance. So often, the film is visually stunning, immersing as it informs... When temptation needles us to define history as the distant past – made of people unlike us and situations unlike ours – artists inevitably come along. They show us how history is being written right here, right now, with every move we make... McCabe somehow manages to transcend both-sides objectivity, exhibiting affection for every person in the film without giving their every idea equal weight."

DETROIT  
**METRO** TIMES  
CRITICS' PICKS

...This year's fest includes a number of items of local interest such as the Michigan premiere of "23 Mile," an experimental doc by filmmaker Mitch McCabe that looks back at the surreal 2020 election year that included the FBI thwarting militias meeting in the basement of a vacuum repair shop to kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

**Hollywood  
Soapbox**

"...there's no denying that this film, more than most, is able to capture a moment – a moment that continues to linger well into 2024."

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*(in progress)*

### Podcasts

"KNOW YOUR ENEMY," 2019- current. Sam Adler-Bell and Matthew Sitman

"FIVE-THIRTY EIGHT"

"CHECKS AND BALANCES," The Economist

"THE ARGUMENT"

"YOU'RE NOT SO SMART"

"APOLOGIA"

"THE EZRA KLEIN SHOW"

### Books

***The Field of Blood: Violence in Congress and the Road to Civil War***, Joanne B. Freeman. 2018. [Link](#).

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**Abandoning Defensive Crouch Conservatism: Toward a Conservatism that is not Liberalism.** Patrick Deenan, Nov 17, 2021

**Leaving Conservatism Behind.** How I renounced the God-and-guns conservatism of my blue-collar roots and embraced class politics. Matthew Sitman ■ Summer 2016

**The Remnant and the Restless Crowd: Jonah Goldberg's 'Suicide of the West'**  
By Sam Adler-Bell. August 1, 2018

Melissa Gira Grant, "The Groups Pushing Anti-Trans Laws Want to Divide the LGBTQ Movement," The New Republic, Feb 17, 2022.

**The Atlantic Magazine:**

**How the Smug Politics of COVID-19 Empowers the Far Right.** A political binary touted by progressives has alienated huge numbers of people over the course of the pandemic. (Oct. 6, 2021), The Atlantic Magazine. By Simon Copland

**HOW POLITICS POISONED THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH.** The movement spent 40 years at war with secular America. Now it's at war with itself. The Atlantic Magazine. (May 10, 2022). By Tim Alberta

**The Liberals Who Can't Quit Lockdown.** Progressive communities have been home to some of the fiercest battles over COVID-19 policies, and some liberal policy makers have left scientific evidence behind. By Emma Green (May 4, 2021)

**America Is Growing Apart, Possibly for Good.** The great "convergence" of the mid-20th century may have been an anomaly. By Ronald Brownstein. June 24, 2022.

**THE NEW PURITANS.** August 2021.

**Roe Was Flawed. Dobbs Is Worse.** Yes, Roe was the product of an activist Court. But so was overturning it. By Tom Nichols. June 27, 2022.