

NOTA BENE PRODUCTIONS and HORIZONTAL FILMS present

Ji.hlava
IDFF 2024
Official
Selection

MILLENNIUM
FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL COMPETITION
2025

Official Selection
CINEQUEST
FILM FESTIVAL

AOK
Main
Selection

a film by NICOLE BETANCOURT

The Unfixing

All change starts with a story.

written, directed, produced & edited by NICOLE BETANCOURT • producer ROSE KOWALSKI
composer & sound designer BRAY POOR • consulting producers JEANNE BETANCOURT, CYNTHIA KANE, SHEILA NEVINS, BRAY POOR
directors of photography NICOLE BETANCOURT, ANDREW DENATALE, BRAULIO JATAR, ANNA MOLINS
post-production supervisor MARC DOMINICI • color & finishing CRISTÓBAL BOLAÑOS • re-recording mixer DANI ZACARIAS

n.b.
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PFX & POSTPRODUCTION

HORIZONTAL—FILMS

Press Kit



nota bene productions and Horizontal Films present

The Unfixing

A film by Nicole Betancourt

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Press Release

CINEQUEST FILM & CREATIVITY FESTIVAL North-American Premier for *THE UNFIXING*

A poetic journey from illness to healing by Emmy Award-Winning Director Nicole Betancourt

Acclaimed director Nicole Betancourt returns to the documentary scene with her second feature film, ***THE UNFIXING***, which World Premiered at the 28th edition of renowned Ji.Hlava International Documentary Film Festival, subsequent screenings were sold out at the festival. Known for her Emmy and Golden Spire award-winning work ***BEFORE YOU GO***, Betancourt weaves together personal and environmental narratives in this deeply evocative and joyful film.

"Between life and death, awake and dreaming, a path to healing emerges."

THE UNFIXING is a poetic exploration of a mother's journey from illness to healing, framed by the intensifying global climate crisis. The film presents a richly textured visual diary, capturing the intimate moments of Betancourt's personal struggles with a debilitating illness and the ripple effects on her family, all while engaging with larger ecological questions. As her body begins to break down, so too does the planet – both requiring a radical transformation and renewal.

Screening times:

3Below Theatre, San Jose, California - Saturday March 15th 6:50pm

Upcoming festivals:

17th Millenium Film Festival, Belgium - March 28th-April 6th 2025

In ***THE UNFIXING***, Nicole Betancourt, a Brooklyn-born mother of two, offers an immersive diary of destruction, grief, love, and renewal. After a surfing accident triggers inexplicable symptoms that leave her unable to work or parent her children, Nicole embarks on a journey of self-discovery. Her youngest child, Blue, shares their deep anxiety about inheriting a world ravaged by the climate crisis, while her older child, Pilar, battles Chronic Lyme disease — a disease spreading via bites from insects, like deer ticks, that is exacerbated by the climate crisis. Through an intricate blend of family archives, vérité, and animation, Nicole traces the interconnected threads of grief, joy, crises and connection. Her journey culminates in a heartwarming vision of hope and possibility, as she reconnects with the natural world and finds healing not only for herself but for the planet she loves.

About the Director:

Nicole Betancourt is an Emmy Award-winning filmmaker celebrated for her ability to merge the personal and the political in emotionally impactful stories. [More.](#)

Interview with the director

About **Cinequest Film & Creativity Festival, Brussels** :

Voted the Best Film Festival by USA Today readers, Cinequest Film & Creativity Festival is a celebration of creativity and innovation in the heart of Silicon Valley. [More.](#)

About **Millenium Film Festival, Brussels** :

MFF celebrates the raw, unapologetic voices of independent filmmakers who use their art to speak truth to power and demand change. [More](#)

Full Press Release in text format available [here](#)

Social Media

INSTAGAM	WHO	ROLE
@theunfixing	The film	
@n.b.patterns	Nicole Betancourt	director/protagonist
@adriennemareebrown	Adrienne Maree Brown	protagonist
@horizontalfilmsmedia	Rose Kowalski	producer
@womenmakemovies	Women Make Movies	fiscal sponsor
@antavianavfxpost	Antaviana Films	post-production
@catalanfilms	Catalan Films	regional film board Spain

TIK-TOK	WHO IS	ROLE
@theunfixing	The film	

Assets

[Film stills](#)

[Director stills](#)

[Press Clips](#)

[Trailer](#)

[Poster](#)



Photo: The Unfixing film still

Logline & Synopses

Logline:

A joyful tapestry of life and landscape, THE UNFIXING reveals one mother's path from illness to healing and from climate despair to environmental awakening.

Short synopsis:

A joyful tapestry of life and landscape, THE UNFIXING reveals one mother's path from illness to healing and from climate despair to environmental awakening. As the climate crisis escalates, a debilitating illness threatens the filmmaker's life, then her daughter's life, taking the family to breaking point. Turning the camera on herself and the exquisite patterns in nature around her, Nicole meditates on how destruction, grief, transformation, and ultimately hope, ripple outward, echoing across generations and landscapes. Adrift yet lucid, these waking visions chart a course not only to personal healing, but also a new narrative from which to see the world.

Long synopsis:

In THE UNFIXING, Nicole, a Brooklyn born mother of two, offers an immersive diary of destruction, grief, pain, love, and transformation. Using family archives, vérité, and animation to meticulously weave a pathway of heartwarming scenes, she explores how all these ripple outward, echoing across generations and landscapes.

A surfing accident triggers seemingly disparate symptoms in Nicole, she cannot work and can barely parent her kids. No doctor can identify the cause. As she begins to unravel the mystery of what is wrong with her, she discovers larger and larger questions connecting her journey with her parents, her children, and Mother Earth.

Her youngest child, Blue, expresses their deep anxiety about the climate crisis. >>>

Continues on next page >>>

Logline & Synopses cont.

They tell her that the Earth their generation is inheriting “is like getting a broken present and we’re expected to fix it.” They have lost part of their mother to illness and they are losing parts of the planet - polluted oceans, burnt forests, and dying species - to the global environmental crisis.

Then Nicole’s older child Pilar gets sick with chronic Lyme disease - which is on the rise because of climate change. She has episodes of paralysis and is unable to go to school. Nicole’s survival strategy of learning from her own losses now becomes impossible.

Losing her will to live, Nicole has a vision of her father who died of AIDS when it too was little understood. Seeing him at peace gives her the courage to face the heartbreak, both personal and global, around her. By exploring the visual, scientific, and spiritual threads interconnecting these losses she begins to move her own grief for the years lost to illness out of the shadows.

Nicole and Pilar are in the Rocky Mountains seeking treatment while forest fires fill the air with smoke. The pandemic is in full throttle. Nicole is terrified and losing faith - is the story a tragedy? She is reminded about her lessons in neuroplasticity - that fear blocks learning and leads to the very pathway she doesn’t want. She must release her fear and find a way forward.

Through a series of encounters with wise women, nature, and her own dreams, Nicole discovers that the whole world is not broken, there is beauty and regeneration and change. She hikes alone up a mountain to a stunning alpine lake. Wild Gray Jays approach her and eat out of her hand, filling her with pure joy, renewal, and wonder. Finding comfort that we - all of us - are just a very small part of this planet that created us, she concludes that we can cast a new story in our bodies and in the landscape. One that transforms the uncertainty and loss and sees possibility and hope as we forge a future together.



Photo: The Unfixing film still

The Director

Nicole Betancourt is an Emmy Award-winning filmmaker celebrated for her ability to merge the personal and the political in emotionally impactful stories. Her debut documentary, ***BEFORE YOU GO*** (HBO), about her father's death from AIDS, garnered multiple awards, including an *Emmy for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Documentary* and a *Golden Spire* at the San Francisco International Film Festival. Betancourt has continued to work at the intersection of social issues and personal stories, producing and directing films such as ***90 MILES*** (POV/PBS), ***SING THE WATER SONG***, and shorts that highlight environmental and social justice issues. She is also the former Executive Director of MediaRights, a nonprofit organisation dedicated to media for social change, where she produced the award-winning *Media That Matters Film Festival* and the first online outreach toolkit for filmmakers. She is a Sustainability Leaders Network Fellow, a Kellogg Food and Community Fellow, and served on the Emmy awards jury, New York State Council of the Arts panel, and the New York Women in Film & Television board.

THE UNFIXING Film, feature documentary, Director, Writer, Editor 2024

THE UNFIXING Installation, video installation, Video Artist, 2021

HEALING REBEL, 20-min NFT educational video, Director, Camera, Editor 2019

SING THE WATER SONG, 4-min viral video, Director, Editor 2018

SAVING CARLA, episode (Need to Know/WNET/PBS), Producer, 2012

PARENT EARTH series, 70 shorts, Producer, 2008-2012

PARTES DE AGUA, installation (Studio lloil and Los Danzantes, Oaxaca, Mexico), Video Artist, 2006

90 MILES, documentary (76-min/festivals, 53-min/POV/PBS), Producer, Camera, 1998-2000

BEFORE YOU GO: A DAUGHTER'S DIARY, documentary (55 min - HBO), Director, Producer, Writer, Camera 1996

[Interview with the director](#)



Photo: Nicole Betancourt by Heidi Gutman

Protagonists

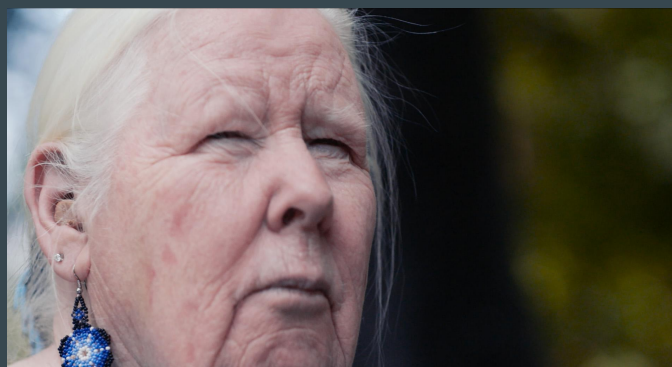
Adrienne Maree Brown

Adrienne Maree Brown is a New York Times-bestselling author, activist, and community organizer known for her visionary work in social justice, healing, and transformative change. Author of “Loving Corrections,” “Emergent Strategy,” and “Pleasure Activism,” Adrienne’s work blends political philosophy with practical guidance on how individuals and communities can transform society. Inspired by nature, science fiction, and the wisdom of ancestors, she advocates for personal and collective healing as central to social movements. Through her writing, facilitation, and organizing, she empowers people to imagine new futures rooted in justice, joy, and sustainability.



Grandmother Nancy Andry

Grandmother Nancy Andry is of Algonquin and French heritage. As an elder, storyteller, and healer she has spent much of her life preserving and practicing ancestral indigenous healing traditions. A Sundancer and a Sacred Pipe carrier, she is acknowledged as an elder and a grandmother in her communities in Canada, where she was given instruction to bring out and share certain teachings. She is a well-known storyteller in schools, health facilities, the pow wow circuit, and served as a facilitator for a Native Women’s Circle in federal prison for 17 years.



Grandmother Margaret Behan

Grandmother Margaret Behan is a Cheyenne-Arapaho elder, healer, and one of the original members of the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers. As a descendant of survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre, Grandmother Margaret has dedicated her life to healing intergenerational trauma within her community. A master in traditional Cheyenne healing practices, she is deeply committed to preserving Native traditions, language, and culture for future generations. She works with youth and women, offering her wisdom to inspire spiritual and cultural regeneration, while advocating for global peace and environmental protection.



Protagonists cont.

Doña Enriqueta Contreras

Doña Enriqueta Contreras is a revered Indigenous elder and traditional healer from the Zapotec people of Mexico. For decades, she has been dedicated to preserving and sharing the wisdom of her ancestors through traditional medicine and spiritual practices. Doña Enriqueta is a practicing midwife known for her deep knowledge of plant medicine, ritual healing, and her role in maintaining the sacred traditions of her people. She is often sought out for her guidance and healing in times of personal and collective crisis, blending ancient wisdom with contemporary resilience.



Jeanne Betancourt

Jeanne Betancourt is an acclaimed author (of over 70 books) and a screenwriter, best known for her popular children's book series *The Pony Pals*, which has captivated young readers worldwide. With a career spanning over four decades, Jeanne has written across multiple genres, including children's literature, young adult fiction, and television scripts. Her writing often focuses on themes of friendship, empathy, and adventure, resonating with audiences of all ages. Jeanne was nominated for an Emmy as a writer for educational and children's programming. She is now focusing on her work as a visual artist - painting and printmaking.



The Betancourt-Poor Family

The Betancourt-Poor family, consisting of filmmaker Nicole Betancourt, and sound designer Bray Poor, and their children Pilar and Blue, are a creative and resilient family navigating the complexities of personal health struggles and the global climate crisis. The children, Pilar and Blue, bring a unique perspective to the family's journey, with Pilar confronting health challenges related to Lyme disease and Blue expressing deep concern for the environment and climate change. Together, the family embarks on a transformative journey of healing and awakening, both personal and planetary, as they explore how grief, resilience, and love can shape a new narrative for the future.



Production

THE UNFIXING is a USA-Spain co-production filmed over eight years by Nicole in locations across the United States, Spain, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Metaphoric, animated scenes were devised and constructed in response to Nicole's recurring dreams using artisanal techniques, each responding to the needs in question. Additional film crews were incorporated for key scenes and included Directors of Photography Anna Molins (*The Odd-Job Men*), and Braulio Jatar (*Where Chaos Reigns*).

The film's moving sound track was composed especially by Tony Award nominee Bray Poor who was also responsible for the meticulous sound design. Antaviana Films in Barcelona, Spain carried out VFX and the entire post-production process.



Production

Rose Kowalski - Producer

Rose began her filmmaking career 25 years ago at Central Saint Martins in London, earning recognition from the Arts Council and Film Council of England for her innovative work. Based in Spain since 2001, she has led the production and post-production of award-winning films, including *Balomania* (2024), *Bancoco* (2023), and *Duo* (2022). In 2023, she founded Horizontal Films Media to focus on rebellious fiction and creative documentaries. In 2024, she was selected for the AccióProducció mentoring program by Dones Visuals & Catalan Films.



Bray Poor - Sound Designer & Composer

Bray Poor is a Tony-nominated sound designer for theater and film. His work has been heard on Broadway, Off-Broadway and in regional theaters all over the United States. Internationally, he has created award winning sound design in Amsterdam, London and Mexico. He has won two Obie awards, including one for Sustained Excellence in Sound Design. He has been nominated for several Lortel and Drama Desk awards. His sound art has been presented in New York City and Mexico.



Production

Sheila Nevins - Consulting Producer

Sheila is one of the most influential figures in documentary filmmaking, with over 1,000 films produced. As the former President of HBO Documentary Films and head of MTV Documentary Films, her work has garnered 35 News and Documentary Emmy Awards, 42 Peabody Awards, and 26 Academy Awards. Nevins has been recognized with a record 31 individual Primetime Emmy Awards and was inducted into the Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame in 2000.



Cynthia Kane - Consulting Producer

Cynthia Kane is the CEO and Founder of the Kane Intentional Communication Institute and a renowned author and communication expert. With degrees from Bard College (BA) and Sarah Lawrence College (MFA), Cynthia has published several acclaimed works, including *How to Communicate like a Buddhist* (2016) and *The Pause Principle* (2025). Recognized as one of the top communication coaches by Yahoo in 2021, Cynthia's expertise has been featured in international publications such as The Washington Post, BBC Travel, and Refinery29. She has also appeared as a mindfulness and meditation expert on Great Day Washington and other national programs.



Antaviana - Post-Production

With over 30 years of experience, Antaviana is a leading post-production studio specializing in films, documentaries and series. Antaviana is a reference in the audiovisual sector, and their expertise spans from pre-production to final delivery, including editing, VFX, sound design and color grading. The company is renowned for their work on acclaimed films including *The Belly of the Sea* (2021), *Las Niñas* (2021), *La Vampira de Barcelona* (2021) and *Yo Adicto* (2022).





Photo: The Unfixing film still

Interview with the director

The Movement Below The Surface: I nterview with Nicole Betancourt

What is the connection between your health and the climate crisis?

THE UNFIXING looks at the human body as part of the earth. The most dominant systems in medicine and industry were not created with a reverence for the interconnection of life. Don't polluted water and air impact our health?

Trying to separate, define, and fix all of these little parts of me didn't really help me heal as much as understanding how interconnected I am with the Earth. Facing chronic illness, like facing the climate crisis, involves ongoing loss and an uncertain future. With the climate crisis and with chronic illness, the losses can feel like they are piling up with no end in sight. This is different from losing a loved one where we are expected to grieve the loss. Climate grief and grief over our lost abilities are not acknowledged by our dominant culture, there is no place for them. How do we heal without first acknowledging what we are losing?

In the film I learn to surrender, grieve, and ultimately heal partly through my relationship with nature. Healing our bodies means healing our relationship with each other and the earth. We gain this perspective in the film with the guidance of the wise women I meet on my journey. THE UNFIXING is a story of motherhood in widening circles, the stories of daughters, mothers, and mother earth.

Why this film now?

So many young people are anxious and in despair, and why wouldn't they be? They are growing up with looming pandemics, social injustice, and climate disasters. As my child Blue said at the age of 12, "I don't really have hope that the world's going to turn around." I want to help transform that fear of an uncertain future into interest in a potentially transformed future. If we don't believe things can change, who will?

We are living in a time of transition, a liminal world. I hope that this film offers another way to face the sickness in our bodies and planet, a path of allowing, listening, receiving - all things I thought were passive. Now I know they are active, courageous, and acts of rebellion.

How is the film helpful for people with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME/CFS) or other chronic conditions like Long Covid and Lyme?

When I was sickest and when my daughter Pilar was sickest, the voice in my head and the response from doctors made me question my own reality. I thought, if doctors don't see something wrong with me, am I not sick? Am I just weak or crazy? This happens a lot to women when visiting doctors. When medical professionals don't understand our conditions, we are often seen as hysterical, over-sensitive, or hypochondriacs. This lack of validation is extremely stressful. THE UNFIXING shows the disconnect between what I was experiencing and what doctors were saying. When I was finally diagnosed with ME/CFS it was liberating, but it was also challenging. There is no cure for ME/CFS, yet I had to believe I could get better in order to heal myself. So my message to those who are sick like me is that your symptoms are real, you have been suffering, and you can get better.

Interview cont.

At times the film has a surreal quality to it. Where did that come from?

Because I couldn't just take a pill and be cured - there is no pill to cure ME/CFS - it forced me on a metaphysical journey that surprisingly helped me heal.

Popular experiences with ayahuasca and psilocybin are now recognized as healing modalities for all kinds of ailments and traumas. For me it was a little different. I wasn't taking hallucinogens. My illness suspended me between sleep and wakefulness for hours a day and I started having visions and lucid dreams. I would see things and have these visions - like feeling the voice of nature. And that made me want to know more. If I couldn't figure out how to craft a scene, I would ask myself about it while falling asleep. Then I would dream about that scene and wake up with the answer. In essence, much of the *THE UNFIXING* was created in my dreams.

What change do you want *THE UNFIXING* to inspire?

It is my hope that this film can be useful as a tool to help heal our relationship with nature and our bodies. Our personal narratives and our individual relationships with nature are fundamental for making concrete changes to the complex systems wreaking havoc on our health and our world. My vision is that when people hear our stories they will feel more comfortable talking about their own stories, allowing people to grieve and ultimately dream together.

But how do you see this film making a difference in the real world?

How can we learn from ancient wisdom and from nature herself? More and more people are asking this question including the study of biomimicry, systems theory, different modalities to heal trauma, neuroplasticity, integrated medicine, and shared indigenous wisdom. It is about finding a way to live in right-relationship with life. As Adrienne Maree Brown says in the film, if, like starling birds flying by the thousands in murmurations, we pay attention to the relationship with the group of birds around us, "We will find ourselves flocking together." And from this internal and external alignment, solutions will emerge that we can't even imagine from where we are standing now. This is the system theory concept of emergence.

What is emerging could be defined as spiritual, cultural, or psychological change - the stories we tell to each other and even to ourselves are fundamental to making a shift in the world. Science shows that stories change our chemistry and the wiring of our brains. But our stories about nature aren't just changing us, they are changing the landscape. Our extractionist relationship with the Earth has created the climate crisis, pollution, and loss of life. Changing our fundamental belief from seeking power over nature to seeking power with nature would change the systems we create, which would shape our behaviors, and ultimately there would be different outcomes. Cultural and political change starts with how we change the narrative. *THE UNFIXING* is my contribution to that narrative.

Artistic & Tech Specs

Writer -Director : Nicole Betancourt

Composer : Bray Poor

Producer : Rose Kowalski

Consulting Producers : Jeanne Betancourt, Cynthia Kane, Sheila Nevins

Directors of Photography: Anna Molins, Andrew DeNatale, Braulio Jatar

Editor : Nicole Betancourt

Sound Designer : Bray Poor

Color Grader : Cristóbal Bolaños

Re-recording Mixer : Dani Zacarias

On-camera Experts (in order of appearance):

Doña Enriqueta Contreras

Grandmother Margaret Behan

Grandmother Nancy Andry

Adrienne Maree Brown

Title:	The Unfixing
Genre:	Documentary Feature
Director:	Nicole Betancourt
Year:	2024
Status:	In festivals
Duration:	87'
Production format:	4K
Projection format:	DCP Resolution: 2K Ratio/Format: 1.85/FLAT Sound: 5.1 Dolby + stereo Speed: 50FPS



WE WILL REMEMBER
GOODBYE WILD CREATURES
THANK YOU FORESTS
REST IN PEACE TREES
WE LOVE YOU