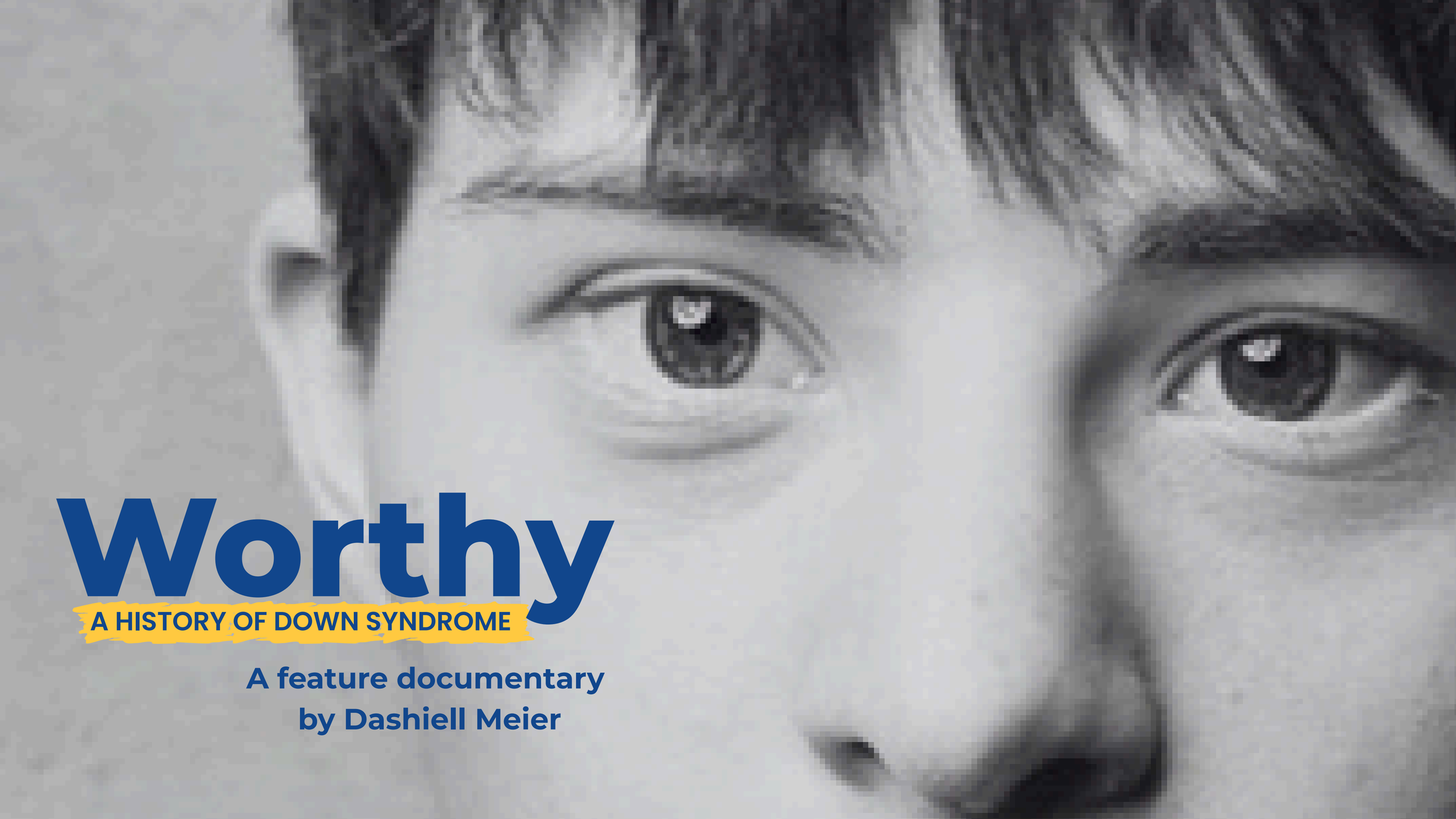

Worthy

A HISTORY OF DOWN SYNDROME

A feature documentary
by Dashiell Meier



We are the canary in the eugenics coal mine.

Frank Stephens,
Down syndrome advocate speaking to Congress

Logline

Emerging filmmaker Dashiell Meier sets out to discover why so many people think Down syndrome is bad. With a crew of disabled filmmakers, he interviews historians, visits doctors, and meets advocates to discover the history of his disability. When he visits an asylum where he might have lived if born a generation earlier, he confronts how racism and eugenics have led to modern science's focus on the elimination of Down syndrome. Because for Dashiell, having Trisomy 21/ Down syndrome is a gift.





Synopsis



Worthy opens with scenes of me working on the documentary -- making phone calls, sketching out ideas, having a meeting, talking about what I wish people knew about Down syndrome/Trisomy 21 -- to show that I am making the film, with help, of course.

Adults with Down syndrome will interview their mothers about what doctors told them when they were born to show what people think about Down syndrome. I will work with a film crew of students with intellectual disabilities while another crew films us making the movie, and the footage will be interwoven in the documentary.

To show the history of Down syndrome, I will interview historians, anthropologists, and people who worked at the asylums. Archival footage and photographs and graphics will help tell the story of the history, mostly focused on the United States 20th century and will include eugenics, Aktion T4, institutionalization, medical testing and lack of education and medical care. I will visit Pennhurst and Agnews where I probably would have lived if I were born in an earlier time.

The next section gives a snapshot of what it's like living with Down syndrome is like now in the US. Even with health and education issues and lacking social services, having a person with Down syndrome in your family brings an unexpected perspective and joy. Infographics will show the results of Harvard/Brian Stotko's surveys showing extremely high happiness and life satisfaction for people with DS, their siblings and parents.

Worthy will return to the adults interviewing their mothers, this time asking their moms what they wish the world knew about them. Worthy will show people with Down syndrome explain how they feel about having this disability and show that our lives are worth living.



Director’s Statement

I love storytelling and I love making movies and I want to showcase that people like me are amazing people and that's the beauty of film making that you can really show that everyone is unique, everyone is special and that we are are amazing community and we look after each other and that is what drives me to continue to make films.



Timeline



PRODUCTION

June 2025 - July 2026

POST-PRODUCTION

July 2026 - February 2027

IMPACT CAMPAIGN

March 2027 - October 2027

Planned release date: World Down Syndrome Day, March 21, 2027

"Life Unworthy of Life" Aktion T4: The First Nazi Genocide

Alexander M. Remington
Gettysburg College



Psychology Today

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amarata Ph.D.
ive Parent

PREGNANCY

Iceland "Cures" Down Syndrome: Should America Do the Same?

Should any society actively eliminate Down Syndrome or any other "abnormality?"

HEALTH

Could Down syndrome be eliminated? Scientists say cutting-edge gene editing tool could cut out extra chromosome

By Reda Wigle
Published June 19, 2025, 10:17 a.m. ET



BBC Sign in

NEWS

Home News Sport Business Innovation

A world without Down's syndrome?

29 September 2016

Key Roles



Dashiell Meier

Director

This Is Me, Day 21



David Thies

Consultant

Peanut Butter Falcon



John E. Low

Composer

Frontline



Tony Gapastione

Producer

CEO BraveMaker



Kristin Meier

Executive Producer

Dashiell's Assistant



Key Interviews



Heather Avis

The Lucky Few Podcast



Brandy Coleman

Down Syndrome Diagnosis



David Wright, Ph.D.

Historian, McGill University

Author, Downs: The History of a Disability



Brian Stotko, M.D.

Massachusetts General Hospital



Thomas W. Pearson, Ph.D.

Anthrologist, U. of Wisconsin

Author, An Ordinary Future

Partners



GLOBAL DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION®

dhm disability history museum

BraveMaker

national down syndrome society ndss®

FWD-Doc

Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance



I am proud to have Down syndrome

We wear it like a badge of honor.

Dashiell Meier, “This Is Me”

Distribution

- Partnerships with National Down syndrome Society, Global Down syndrome Foundation, broader disability groups

- Screenings at Down syndrome conferences
  - World Down Syndrome Congress, Argentina 2027
  - National Down Syndrome Congress -July 2027
  - International conferences — Brazil, UK, Canada, Australia

- Festivals — disability and general documentary

- Streaming

- PBS: POV, Independent Lens

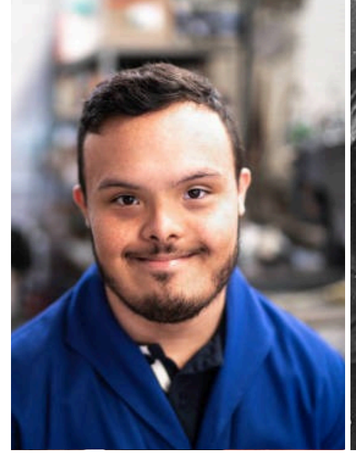
- Screenings at schools, community centers, events



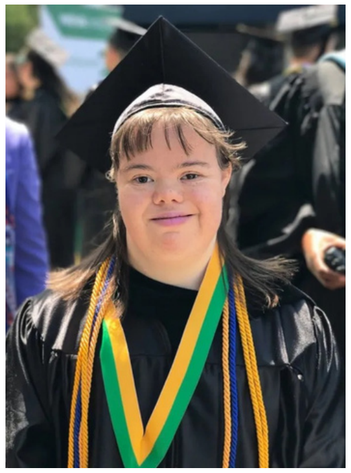


Why do we think Down syndrome is bad?
























Worthy

Dashiell Meier

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