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As Told to G/D Thyself

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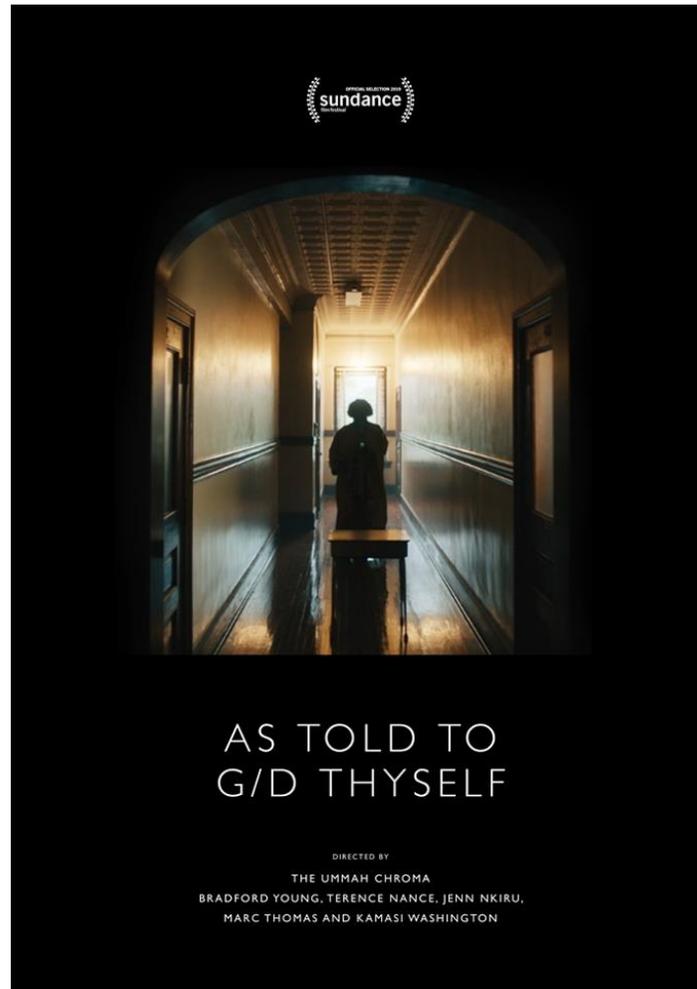
As Told to G/D Thyself

Abstract

This is a review of the Sundance short film, *As Told to G/D Thyself* (2019), directed by Terence Nance, Jenn Nkiru, Marc Thomas, Kamasi Washington, and Bradford Young; collectively known as the Ummah Chroma.

Author Notes

William Blizek is the Founding Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of the Continuum Companion to Religion and Film (2009).



As Told to G/D Thyself (2019), dir. Terence Nance, Jenn Nkiru, Marc Thomas, Kamasi Washington, and Bradford Young; collectively known as the Ummah Chroma

I think it is fair to call this an experimental film. It includes a wide variety of images, both animated and live. The early and late animated images take us into the cosmos, giving the film greater significance and a wider audience that it would otherwise have. The live images keep us grounded. This is a movie for those of us who live on earth.

One of the questions posed by the film is: Who is talking to (telling) G/D? Is it the figures in the film? Is it we the viewers that are talking to G/D? And what are we telling G/D? At one point in the film a character says: “Show them the way.” And again: “Show us the way.” Another figure says: “Our time as victims is over.” And early in the film we see these words on the screen: “Submit to a moment. . . .” Are these the things we are telling G/D? Could they be things we are telling ourselves?

What does the addition of “Thyself” to G/D signify? Does “Thyself,” as opposed to “Himself” or “Herself,” change how we think about God? Or, could we be talking to ourselves when we “tell to” G/D? Is talking to God really talking to ourselves?

This short film is inspired by Kamasi Washington’s most recent album, *Heaven and Hell*.