



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 31, 2024

MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO ANNOUNCES
NO MORE WATER: THE GOSPEL OF JAMES BALDWIN
A STRIKING HOMAGE TO BE RELEASED AUG. 2
ON THE EMINENT WRITER'S CENTENNIAL

[LISTEN TO "TRAVEL" / "RAISE THE ROOF"](#)



PHOTO BY ANDRE WAGNER

Meshell Ndegeocello has announced her second Blue Note album [***No More Water: The Gospel Of James Baldwin***](#), a striking homage to the eminent writer and activist **James Baldwin** to be released on his Centennial: August 2, 2024. The visionary work is at once a musical experience, a church service, a celebration, a testimonial, and a call to action. With *No More Water*, Ndegeocello embarks on a prophetic

musical odyssey that transcends boundaries and genres, delving headfirst into race, sexuality, religion, and other recurring themes explored in Baldwin's canon. Following 2023's *The Omnichord Real Book*, her acclaimed Blue Note debut which won the inaugural GRAMMY Award for Best Alternative Jazz Album, the multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter, and producer renders an immersive and palpable document that is as sagacious, unabashed, and introspective as Baldwin was in life.

Co-produced by Ndegeocello and guitarist **Chris Bruce**, *No More Water* features some of the bassist's frequent collaborators including Bruce, vocalist **Justin Hicks**, saxophonist (and *Omnichord* producer) **Josh Johnson**, keyboardist **Jebin Bruni**, and drummer **Abe Rounds**. Also appearing on various songs are vocalist **Kenita-Miller Hicks**, keyboardists **Jake Sherman** and **Julius Rodriguez**, and Executive Director of the NYCPS Arts Office and trumpeter **Paul Thompson**. The album also showcases powerful spoken word by venerated poet **Staceyann Chin** and Pulitzer Prize-winning author and critic **Hilton Als**.

Nearly a decade in the making, the album's origins began in 2016 during a performance at The Harlem Stage Gatehouse as part of their annual showcase honoring Baldwin. Ndegeocello had delved into Baldwin's work the year before, including the seminal nonfiction work *The Fire Next Time*, which she considers "life-changing" and carries with her as a "spiritual text." Ndegeocello says, "It was just a revelation to me, and it softened my heart in so many ways."

"Inspired by Baldwin's most well-known essay, Ndegeocello's piece—often staged as a church service—employs music, sermon, text, images, and movement, all of which enter into conversation with Baldwin's monumental and delicate essay about how black bodies were perceived not only by white Americans but by blacks themselves," writes Als in the album's liner notes. "The music you hear in *No More Water*, is Jimmy talking to Meshell and his words meeting the language of her sounds and then coming out again through a multitude of voices, a multitude of sounds and thoughts that bring Jimmy back and give him—finally—his whole and true self, that which he offered up, time and again, if only we knew then how to listen."

Thematically, the album moves like a procession in a Black church—baptism, testimony, worship/praise, and ultimately, resurrection. For the album's opening track and lead single, "[Travel](#)," we are brought inside the mind of a man with suicidal thoughts, a recurring motif in much of Baldwin's oeuvre. Setting a dystopian mood, Rodriguez's organ and Chin's echoing incantations help usher in Justin Hicks' ominous vocals: "*I'll stay away with all the work to be done/I'll be bleeding while you bake in the sun.*"

"[Raise The Roof](#)" features Chin sans accompaniment as the intensity of her words captures the stark and harrowing reality of the pervasive racism we cannot seem to escape: "*It must be in the fucking water being force-fed to the police, the prosecutor and the politicians who care nothing for Black bodies falling like leaves in late August...in Ferguson...in Cleveland...in Staten Island, only minutes away from where my own child sits, watching The Muppets take over Manhattan.*"

No More Water marks a significant moment of self-discovery for Ndegeocello. She adds that Baldwin entered her life at precisely the right time. "It came when I was ready to look in the mirror. I've had to play *Plantation Lullabies* at a few shows. Looking back, I had an interesting perspective, but the dialogue was limited. It was more like a cathartic experience for a young person of color, whereas now I'm going, 'How can I get us all to love each other? How can I get us all to see this for what it is?'"



Follow Meshell Ndegeocello:

[Website](#) • [Facebook](#) • [Twitter](#) • [Instagram](#)

Follow Blue Note Records:

[Website](#) • [Facebook](#) • [Instagram](#) • [Threads](#) • [Twitter](#) • [Spotify](#) • [Apple Music](#) • [YouTube](#)

For more information contact Cem Kurosman at Blue Note Records:

(p) 212.786.8634 (e) cem.kurosman@umusic.com