



OUT RUN

A Documentary Film by S. Leo Chiang & Johnny Symons

Duration: 75 minutes

Full Frame Documentary Film Festival (April 2016) – World Premiere

For more info, please visit: www.outrunmovie.com

Contact:

S. Leo Chiang
Walking Iris Films
2263 15th St.
San Francisco, CA 94114
leo@outrunmovie.com
+1 323 899 5556

Johnny Symons
Persistent Visions
877 McKinley Ave.
Oakland, CA, 94610
johnny@outrunmovie.com
+1 510 205 6606

SYNOPSIS

SHORTER (30 Words):

Mobilizing working-class transgender hairdressers and beauty queens, the dynamic leaders of the world's only LGBT political party wage a historic quest to elect a trans woman to the Philippine Congress.

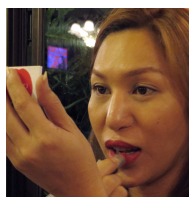
LONGER (166 Words):

As leader of the world's only LGBT political party, Bemz Benedito dreams of being the first transgender woman in the Philippine Congress. But in a predominantly Catholic nation, rallying for LGBT representation in the halls of Congress is not an easy feat. Bemz and her eclectic team of queer political warriors must rethink traditional campaign strategies to amass support from unlikely places. Taking their equality campaign to small-town hair salons and regional beauty pageants, the activists mobilize working-class trans hairdressers and beauty queens to join the fight against their main political opponent, a homophobic evangelical preacher, and prove to the Filipino electorate that it's time to take the rights of LGBT people seriously. But as outsiders trying to get inside the system, will they have to compromise their political ideals in order to win? Culminating on election day, OUT RUN provides a unique look into the challenges LGBT people face as they transition into the mainstream and fight for dignity, legitimacy, and acceptance across the globe.

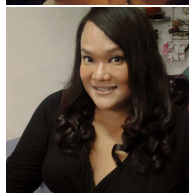
OUR CHARACTERS



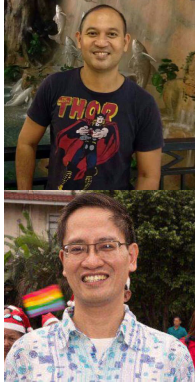
Bemz Benedito runs for Congress as the lead nominee for Ladlad, the only LGBT political party in the world. A longtime activist and a transgender woman, she is known in the community as Sinta Ng Pilipinong LGBT, or “The Beloved of LGBT Filipinos.”



Santy Layno, a former TV producer and sex worker, is one of the key coordinators of Ladlad's campaign. She is passionate about transgender rights and infamous for the impossibly short shorts she wears on the campaign trail.



Bhuta Adelante runs a hair salon and serves as a Kagawad (Ward Councilor) in the massive working-class tenement where she lives in Manila. She leads an LGBT group to support Ladlad and fight against a local homophobic evangelist Congressman, Benny Abante.



Raymond Alikpala spent years in the Catholic seminary before coming out and writing a book about his closeted gay life. Now an attorney, he is a political novice running for a seat in Congress as a part of the Ladlad Party.

Danton Remoto is a respected writer, university professor, and a colorful TV personality. He led the LGBT community in the founding of Ladlad and is also a Ladlad nominee for Congress.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

In the past decade, the LGBT rights movement has become an increasingly international phenomenon. Media outlets have reported extensively on the steady advancement of LGBT rights in Western Europe and North America, where marriage equality and gay adoption have quickly become the norm. Concurrently, there has been increasing attention paid to the rapidly deteriorating situation for LGBTs in Russia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa, where political repression, hate crimes, and state-sanctioned violence are on the rise. But there's been scant coverage of those countries that have historically acknowledged the existence of homosexuality and gender variance but where traditional and religious resistance impedes widespread acceptance of LGBT people, such as the Philippines. We were inspired to create OUT RUN to document the historic emergence of the only LGBT political party in the world, to trace its monumental effort to fight for a political voice and community dignity, and to witness the risks and compromises it must face in the process.

Our approach in OUT RUN was to use observational storytelling to provide a fresh and contemporary take on human rights activism, including a focus on the transgender leaders who are rising up to claim their own futures, unwilling to accept the narrow confines to which they have been traditionally relegated. Each of the film's transgender protagonists embodies and articulates their gender identity differently, complicating pervasive stereotypes and challenging viewers to see beyond their anatomical makeup. Their serious drive for social and political change is countered by their sense of humor, the unique and colorful Filipino LGBT culture, and the pageantry and festivity of the transgender community.

Ultimately, we hope the film reveals the complexities of modern constructions of sexual life in the Philippines, and, by extension, in other countries where indigenous and globalized ideas about gender and sexuality co-exist and compete. By focusing on political transformation in a country where religious beliefs, cultural values, and democratic progress often conflict, we hope to cast light on the emerging future of the LGBT equality movement around the globe.



UPCOMING SCREENINGS

Full Frame Documentary Film Festival (April 2016) – *World Premiere*
 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival (April 2016) – *West Coast Premiere*
 Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film Festival (May/June 2016) – *International Premiere*
 Sheffield Doc/Fest (June 2016) – *European Premiere*
 Frameline San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival (June 2016)

Other festivals confirmed but not yet announced

KEY PERSONNEL



S. LEO CHIANG – Director/Producer/Cinematographer

S. Leo Chiang is a documentarian based in San Francisco and Taipei. His Emmy-nominated film, *A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES*, about the transformation of the Vietnamese American community in post-Katrina New Orleans, picked up eight film festival awards and aired on Independent Lens series in the US. His most recent documentary, *MR. CAO GOES TO WASHINGTON*, won the Inspiration Award at the 2012 Full Frame

Documentary Film Festival. His other films include *TO YOU SWEETHEART*, *ALOHA* (PBS broadcast 2006) and *ONE + ONE* (CINE Golden Eagle Award 2002). Leo received his MFA in film production from University of Southern California. He is currently the co-chair of New Day Films, the American social-issue documentary distribution co-operative.



JOHNNY SYMONS – Director/Producer/Sound

Johnny Symons is a Bay Area documentary filmmaker focusing on LGBT cultural and political issues. His feature documentary *DADDY & PAPA* premiered at Sundance, broadcast on PBS' Independent Lens, and was nominated for a national Emmy® for Best

Documentary. His film BEYOND CONCEPTION premiered at the Florida Film Festival and broadcast on Discovery Channel. ASK NOT won four festival awards, aired on PBS' Independent Lens and screened on Capitol Hill for members of Congress. He co-produced the Academy Award® nominated LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO DAY, which won the Sundance Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary. Johnny graduated with honors from Brown University and has a master's in documentary production from Stanford. He is Assistant Professor in the School of Cinema at San Francisco State University, where he is Coordinator of the Documentary Program and Director of the Queer Cinema Institute. Johnny was a 2013 Fellow in the Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Program.

EVA MOSS – Co-Producer

Eva Moss is a jack of many trades: a freelance director, producer, DP, editor and audience engager for every type of media imaginable, including feature films, web and branding videos, social issue documentaries, and interactive video websites. Her multitasking abilities are currently focused on creating micro-docs for small businesses and non-profits, writing a narrative feature, directing a narrative web series, and editing & engaging audiences with the lighthearted topic of the aftermath of Guantanamo. Feature documentaries include Emmy® Nominated A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES (Associate Producer), STATE OF GRACE (Co-Producer), OUT RUN (Co-Producer), ASK NOT (Associate Producer), and MR. CAO GOES TO WASHINGTON (Associate Producer).

BRITNEY SHEPHERD – Co-Producer

Brittney Shepherd is a newly Texas-based documentary and narrative filmmaker. Her films have screened at festivals around the world, and she has also produced numerous hours of quality programming for public and cable television for outlets such as the Smithsonian Channel, ESPN, CNBC, and PBS's award-winning series INDEPENDENT LENS. She produced the upcoming children's adventure film INTO THE WHO KNOWS!, co-produced the PBS documentary A FRAGILE TRUST, and is the co-creator of the PBS news game DECISIONS ON DEADLINE. Other credits include co-producing OUT RUN, and associate producing A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES and MR. CAO GOES TO WASHINGTON.

RYAN WHITE – Associate Producer

Ryan White's award-winning documentaries have screened around the world. He spent four years in Hanoi, Vietnam working as Film Advisor for the World Wildlife Fund's Greater Mekong Program, then he relocated to Bangkok, Thailand, where he produced and directed two documentary features, CAMP UNITY and MONDO BANANA. Other documentary credits include producing THE ORGANIC LIFE and associate producing OUT RUN. In 2015, he began working as the Documentary and Visual Media Instructor for the American Voices' YES Academy Sudan and New Songs New Sudan projects, funded by the U.S. Department of State. He's currently working on his next documentary feature.

TINA NGUYEN – Editor

Tina Nguyen is a documentary editor recently relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area. Her credits include the feature documentary FED UP which premiered at Sundance and was

theatrically released in 2014. She edited and co-produced SEEKING ASIAN FEMALE which premiered at SXSW in 2012 and was broadcasted by PBS as part of the Independent Lens showcase in 2013. Her recent credits include the documentaries OFF THE MENU: ASIAN AMERICA which aired on PBS in 2015 and BREATHIN': THE EDDY ZHENG STORY.

J. CHRISTIAN JENSEN – Editor

J. Christian Jensen is an Oscar® Nominated filmmaker and educator whose storytelling explores the tensions between political ideology, science, religion, modernization and traditional values. He seeks out intimate, human stories that provide insight into larger social movements and institutions. Jensen is based in the San Francisco Bay Area.

NATHAN HALPERN – Composer

Nathan Halpern is a Brooklyn-based composer, recently named as one of *Indiewire's* "Composers to Watch." His score for RICH HILL, winner of the Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, was praised as "one of the best non-fiction scores we've heard in years" (*Indiewire*). Recent film scores include THE LOVERS AND THE DESPOT and HOOLIGAN SPARROW, both of which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. He composed the score for The Emmy and Peabody Award-winning MARINA ABRAMOVIC: THE ARTIST IS PRESENT Other recent credits include THE WITNESS, the Emmy-nominated POISONER'S HANDBOOK, and the Emmy-nominated ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN REVISITED. Upcoming film scores include Amanda Sharp's STICKY NOTES and Tracy Droz Tragos's ABORTION: STORIES WOMEN TELL, premiering at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival.

CHRIS RUGGIERO – Composer

Chris Ruggiero began his composing career in the late 1990s writing television themes for MTV. His music currently appears in over 100 series including The Voice, Pawn Stars, and American Pickers, and his commercial credits include music for brands such as Coke, HSN, Imodium, Dewars, and Liberty Mutual. Ruggiero has composed music for documentaries including HOOLIGAN SPARROW, which debuted at Sundance 2016 and Ivy Meeropol's INDIAN POINT, which premiered at the 2015 Tribeca Film Festival. Upcoming scores include the documentaries WHAT WAS OURS and CLOSE TO THE FIRE. Ruggiero is a partner in Gold Coast Recorders, a recording studio located in Bridgeport Connecticut, and he lectures on semiotics, film, and sound at the University of Bridgeport.

CREDITS

S. Leo Chiang, Johnny Symons	Director/Producers
Eva Moss, Brittney Shepherd	Co-Producers
Joanna Sokolowski, Daniela Flori Goodfellow	Production Managers
Ryan White	Associate Producer
Tina Nguyen, J. Christian Jensen	Editors
Nathan Halpern, Chris Ruggiero	Composers

FUNDING SUPPORT

Funding for Out Run was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)

Executive Producer for ITVS
Sally Jo Fifer

Supported by Tribeca All Access

This film was supported by a grant from the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program with additional support from the Sundance Institute/Time Warner Foundation, Inc. Fellowship Program.

This film was supported by a grant from the Arcus Foundation Initiative at Sundance Institute.

This project was supported by Office of Research, SFSU. Award #ST638

Additional Funding provided by:
Center for Asian American Media
Documentary Film Institute, SFSU
Lucius & Eva Eastman Fund
Frameline Completion Fund
Sue Levin
Northwestern University
Kenneth Rainin Foundation
San Francisco State University
Randall L. & Margaret Whittington

Out Run is a co-production of Walking Iris Media, Persistent Films LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).
Out Run is produced by Walking Iris Media and Persistent Films LLC, which are solely responsible for its content.
© 2016 Walking Iris Media and Persistent Films LLC, all rights reserved.

PRESS

[Directors Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons Talk Screening LGBT Doc *Out Run* in Boycott State North Carolina](#)

Filmmaker Magazine (April 19, 2016)

[Full Frame '16: Eight highlights from the Durham doc fest](#)

Real Screen (April 6, 2016)

[Four Full Frame Films Highlight the Heteronormative Pressures LGBTQ People Face Around the World](#)

Indy Week (April 6, 2016)

[Ang Llad party brings beauty parlours and gay pageants out to vote in Philippines](#)

The Guardian (May 12, 2013)

[Click here to read our Spring 2016 issue, featuring interviews with *The Fits'* Anna Rose Holmer, Lisa Kjerulff and Saela Davis, *High-Rise's* Ben Wheatley, David Leitner's overview of the year's new cameras and more...](#)

Directors Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons Talk Screening LGBT Doc *Out Run* in Boycott State North Carolina



by [Lauren Wissot](#) in [Directors](#), [Festivals & Events](#), [Interviews](#)
Apr 19, 2016

[documentary](#), [Full Frame](#)
[Documentary Film Festival](#), [Out Run](#)

Ironically launching at the stellar Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in Durham, North Carolina right as the anti-LGBTQ HB2 legislation hit the fan, S. Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons's *Out Run* follows the Ladlad Party in the Philippines — the only LGBT political party in the world — in the run-up to what could be a history-making election. An artistic political doc, *Out Run* is both riveting and familiar, as the leaders (including Bemz Benedito, a trans woman who serves as the face of the party) deftly employ campaign strategies that include everything from transforming beauty parlors into headquarters to forming alliances on the local level — even if it means supporting other candidates in quid pro quo moves. The story becomes even more surreal as the Ladlad party goes up against a rival gay organization put together by none other than anti-LGBT preacher and politician Benny Abante, who anointed his group of supporters with the acronym AIDS. In other words, politics as usual. And not.

Related Articles

Human Highway

by [Alicia Van Covering](#) in [Directors](#), [Features](#), [Interviews](#), [Issues](#)
Apr 21, 2016

In Every Dream Home a Heartache

by [Alix Lambert](#) in [Directors](#), [Features](#), [Interviews](#), [Issues](#)
Apr 21, 2016

Tribeca 2016: Five Questions for *National Bird* Director Sonia Kennebeck

by [Soheil Rezayazdi](#) in [Directors](#), [Festivals & Events](#), [Interviews](#)
Apr 20, 2016

Filmmaker spoke with the co-directors shortly after their Full Frame premiere.

Filmmaker: So how did this project come about? Had you known about the Ladlad Party for some time?

Chiang and Symons: We actually didn't begin *Out Run* in the Philippines but in other parts of the world. We were very interested in the LGBT rights movement taking place outside of North America and Europe, and we became particularly intrigued by out LGBT politicians who were taking the bold step of publicly running for office in traditional and conservative countries where they faced significant social, cultural or religious opposition. Initially, we followed a member of parliament in Nepal, who was the first openly LGBT person elected to national office in Asia. Soon after, we began filming a gay man running for Senate in Kenya. Both of these stories eventually fizzled, but by then we had heard about Ladlad and turned our attention to the Philippines. The story there was particularly interesting because the lead candidate was transgender, there was a dynamic campaign team, and because the entire political party was predicated on LGBT issues.

Filmmaker: It seems to me that one of the main differences between the Philippines' fight for LGBTQ rights and our own is who are in the positions of power. A transgender woman is the face of Ladlad in the Philippines, whereas here in the States white men (of means, especially during the darkest days of the AIDS epidemic) largely pushed the gay rights movement forward into the mainstream. Because of this, our agendas have been different. Ladlad prioritizes a Gender Recognition Law, whereas we've passed same-sex marriage. Were you conscious of any of this during production?

Chiang and Symons: The emergence of a transgender woman as the lead candidate of Ladlad was actually quite controversial. Many members of the LGBT community there felt that a "straight-acting," professional, cisgender gay man would have made a stronger primary nominee, and were not as supportive of Ladlad in the election as they might have otherwise been. Although gender nonconforming people are definitely more prevalent and visible in the Philippines than in the US, Bemz' candidacy was largely viewed by the Filipino LGBT community organizers as innovative and somewhat risky rather than indicative of a cultural preference for trans leaders.

Ladlad's main goal is passage of the anti-discrimination bill to help guarantee equal rights for LGBTs in employment and housing. Although they do hope to pass a gender recognition law, this is an effort to emulate legislation that already exists in parts of Europe and the U.S. As the film reveals, Ladlad's decision to not advocate for same-sex marriage in their platform is controversial and is more a function of the party leaders' fear that it will alienate voters than it is a reflection of the extent to which they hope same-sex marriage will become legal.

Filmmaker: One of the scenes that most stuck with me was your interview with the gay supporters of anti-LGBTQ preacher Benny Abante. I assumed they were paid to rally behind him, but the

look of terror on most of those faces — mouthing pro-Benny lines as if from a hostage video — made me wonder if perhaps they were being threatened. Did you ever fear you might have been putting the lives of any of your subjects in danger simply by your camera being there?

Chiang and Symons: Our experience in filming the AIDS group was fairly straightforward. We made contact with the group's leader, and he and the other members spoke freely and were eager to share their views. Benny Abante was not present during most of the conversation and wasn't aware of what they said on camera. Their facial expressions are likely more a function of a lifetime of internalized homophobia and institutionalized poverty and discrimination, which may have influenced their decision to work for Benny rather than for more progressive candidates. Cellphone cameras in the Philippines are ubiquitous; we didn't have the impression that the AIDS group, or any of our other subjects, would suffer as a result of the presence of our camera.

Filmmaker: It's fitting that you had your world premiere at the Full Frame fest in North Carolina, which recently enacted sweeping anti-LGBTQ legislation. As progressive as we think we are in the States, though, we've had not one female president (while over 20 countries from Germany to Liberia are currently run by women), nor have we ever had a transgender person hold higher office. (Contrast that with New Zealand's Georgina Beyer — a former sex worker! — who started serving as a Member of Parliament over a decade and a half ago.) So I'm wondering if shooting your film in the Philippines gave you any insight into America? Did HB2 even strike you as that much of a surprise?

Chiang and Symons: The HB2, or HB1523 in Mississippi, or the new law just passed in Tennessee, did not really surprise us. It's been a few amazing years in terms of LGBTQ rights in the US — doing away with Don't Ask Don't Tell (Johnny's film *Ask Not* examines that law), passing federal marriage equality law, and just the general positive shift of society's attitude towards LGBT individuals (at least the L and G). We can't be surprised by the anti-LGBTQ laws from these relatively more conservative states as a reaction to this positive shift. We struggled with coming to North Carolina to show *Out Run* because of the call for boycott, but ultimately we decided to come. We felt good about sharing a nuanced portrait about LGBTQ people from a different part of the world to those North Carolinians who were interested in learning more. We also want to support Full Frame, which programmed three films about transgender people in this year's festival.

Each of us has spent significant amounts of time in different parts of the world, and in different parts of the US. The way we see it, the US is progressive in many ways and conservative in many others, just like in the Philippines. As you pointed out, the US hasn't even elected its first female president yet, while the Philippines has already elected two women to its highest office. But in the US, many more policies and laws are in place to protect LGBTQ people, both in the government and the private sector (as evidenced by the reaction of companies like PayPal, American Airlines, NBA, etc. condemning HB2). While in the Philippines, people like Bemz and Santy still need to hold IDs and passports

that indicate their gender as “male.” I guess the takeaway for us is that the US and the Philippines are more similar in the level of progressiveness than some may think. No one will bat an eye at a transgender man walking down the street holding hands with his male or female partner in Manila or New York, but transgender women are just as likely to be assaulted for using women’s restrooms in a provincial Filipino town as they are in some less diverse parts of the U.S. There is still work to do in both countries.

Filmmaker: I briefly met Leo after the #DocsSoWhite? Speakeasy Conversation at Full Frame, where he was seated next to Roger Ross Williams. It struck me that *Out Run* and Roger’s 2013 film *God Loves Uganda* were both crafted by directors of color, yet in a way aren’t you as Americans guilty of doing what white directors who tell Asian-American or African-American stories (O.K., Ken Burns) are doing? You guys are San Franciscans, not Filipinos, while Roger, a New Yorker, is not Ugandan. It seems Americans shoot in developing countries all the time. Is this not a form of colonialist filmmaking? Shouldn’t filmmakers living in these places be telling their own stories?

Chiang: The international documentary community should support indigenous filmmakers around the world to tell their own stories, both with funding and, importantly, with recognition – by programming, broadcasting, and publicizing these films. IDFA (IDFA Bertha Fund) and HotDocs (Blue Ice) are good examples of western organizations that invest in documentarians from the developing world. Sundance has been granting and running a yearly workshop in Beijing for local Chinese filmmakers. I applaud these initiatives and would love to see more of them.

For Johnny and I with *Out Run*, we worked with a number of local Filipino filmmakers as our field producers and crew members because we want to do our part to share the resources we get from the west with Filipino documentary communities. I imagine that Roger did the same thing in Uganda. As gay filmmakers, Johnny and I feel the obligation to tell stories of our queer brothers and sisters all over the world. And as a transnational person/dual citizen who was born and raised in Taiwan, I feel comfortable being the conduit of a story from my part of the world.

The question of “who gets to tell the story” is complex. What we touched upon at the #DocsSoWhite? panel is relatively superficial, and certainly referred to more generalizations than to actual complicated situations. We didn’t touch on class issues — that many doc makers do often come from some amount of financial security that they are able to pursue this type of work. And the class issues are certainly alive and well within the communities of color.

I guess I can speak for myself from the #DocsSoWhite? discussion that I don’t believe you have to be from a specific community to tell a story from that community. How boring would it be if Asians can only tell Asian stories, women can only tell women’s stories, and New Yorkers can only tell New York stories, etc.? So few, if any, Asian-American projects get adequate funding and recognition in the documentary world every year,

and I get frustrated when the institutions that support these one or two projects every few years don't work harder to engage with Asian-American filmmakers in key roles. This perpetuates the status quo and also is a bit lazy.

In an ideal world there should be many films from the developing world that get supported, told by both locals and outsiders with rich, diverse perspectives. And there should be many films about the communities of color in the US, told by both filmmakers of color and white filmmakers with rich, diverse perspectives. I want all of us to work towards that.

1 Comment **Filmmaker Magazine**

1 Login ▾

♥ Recommend [Share](#)

Sort by Best ▾



Join the discussion...



Pavle Stanimirovic · 3 days ago

GREAT , all I want is to make it possible to be part of the film making possess is such a blessing . From Rada 2 PRADA .

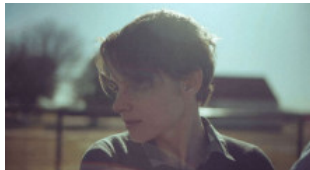
⤴ | ⤵ · Reply · Share ▾

✉ [Subscribe](#)

[Add Disqus to your site](#) [Add Disqus](#) [Add](#)

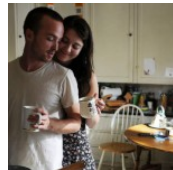
[Privacy](#)

Featured Articles



Amy Seimetz Breaks Through

By [Sarah Salovaara](#) on Apr 3, 2013



James Ponsoldt, *Smashed*

By [Kevin Canfield](#) on Oct 10, 2012



Cannes 2013: Farhadi's *The Past* and Desplechin's *Jimmy P: Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian*

By [Chuck Tryon](#) on May 20, 2013



Unknown Pleasures: Viewing U.S. Indie Cinema From Afar

By [Giovanni Marchini Camia](#) on Jan 17, 2013

Film » Film Spotlight

April 06, 2016

Four Full Frame Films Highlight the Heteronormative Pressures LGBTQ People Face Around the World

By Brian Howe



Photo courtesy of the filmmakers/Full Frame

Out Run

Recently, **Full Frame** released a **statement against House Bill 2**, the discriminatory legislation barring transgender people from using the public restroom that matches their gender identity. "We are proud to be a part of the documentary community, providing a safe space for myriad perspectives in an effort to cultivate empathy," the statement read in part. The claim has substance: Documentaries, as intimate portraits of specific lives, are uniquely powerful tools against bigotry, which thrives on ignorance and generalization. Four of the most interesting films at this year's festival take up LGBTQ issues. Though each has a different cultural perspective, each finds the same heteronormative pressures around the world.

CALL ME MARIANNA (April 7, 4:10 p.m.)—"Please talk to me like a son," says the mother of a Polish transgender woman seeking gender-affirmation surgery. It's one of many heartbreaking, maddening moments in director Karolina Bielawska's moving documentary about Marianna's struggle for self-actualization, as she batters herself against bureaucracy and prejudice. "It's absolute bliss," Marianna enthuses after her surgery, running on the beach in a swimsuit. It's a hard-won, joyous moment with more adversity in store. Intercutting Marianna's journey with scenes of her rehearsing her story with a community theater group, the film aptly uses music by Antony and the Johnsons to soundtrack the difficult, courageous transformation into oneself.

Mów mi Marianna / Call me Marianna (trailer)



OUT RUN (April 8, 7:10 p.m.)—The world premiere of S. Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons's documentary on Bemz Benedito, who wants to be the first transgender woman in the Congress of the Philippines, illuminates the complex cultural status of LGBTQ people in a Catholic nation where paternalistic prejudice jostles with a rich "bakla" culture and Ladlad, the world's only LGBTQ political party. Grassroots activism and unusual alliances lead up to Election Day in Benedito's race against a homophobic preacher.



Out Run Trailer

Posted by **Out Run**

820 Views



KIKI (April 8, 10:10 p.m.)—In the New York City subculture called Kiki—a crucible of art and activism, and a descendent of the Ballroom scene—different "houses" of young LGBTQ people of color compete in Kiki balls filled with voguing and fashion. Sara Jordenö and Twiggy Pucci Garçon, a Kiki insider, followed seven community members for three years, tracking the struggles with poverty and prejudice—and the beautiful self-expression—that make Kiki, which serves as a family for those who have been shunned in their own, so vibrant and vital.

THE BALLAD OF FRED HERSCH (April 9, 4:10 p.m.)—Fred Hersch is widely regarded as one of the finest jazz pianists and composers alive today. That's remarkable enough for a white man from the Midwest, before you factor in that Hersch is openly gay and HIV positive. Still relatively rare in jazz today, it was positively seismic when Hersch came out in the early nineties. Directors Charlotte Lagarde and Carrie Lozano have crafted an intimate portrait of a remarkable life that shows how even acceptance can be seamed with prejudice. Hersch's mother tells the requisite story of him picking out songs on the piano at a preternatural age; she also recalls her shame at his coming out, which she blithely refers to as "dirty laundry." The film also deals with Hersch's medically induced coma and recovery in the late 2000s, but it's not all hardship. It's also a touching love story featuring Hersch's longtime partner, Scott Morgan. "The first time I met him, the adjective I would use would be radiant," Hersch says. Top it off with plenty of Hersch's radiant musicianship, and this is one not to miss.

This article appeared in print with the headline "LGBTQ Rights Reel."

[All Film »](#)

Realscreen News Events ▾ Awards ▾ realXchange



Full Frame '16: Eight highlights from the Durham doc fest

6 days ago by [Kevin Ritchie](#)

Spring is a busy season on the festival circuit for doc makers, with Tribeca, Hot Docs and Cannes drawing industry and press with the prospects of deal-making.

A few weeks after SXSW and just days before Tribeca, the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival takes over Durham, North Carolina, to offer producers and directors a reprieve from the industry craziness over four days in April.

“Full Frame is a filmmaker’s festival. I want to give filmmakers an opportunity to celebrate their work,” says [Sadie Tillery](#), the festival’s director of programming. “We’ve been conscious about making space for the documentary community to relax, come together and see each other’s films without the marketplace dynamic.”

The 19th annual event, which kicks off on Thursday (April 7) and runs until April 10, will host 13 world premieres, six North American premieres and two U.S. premieres, including [Adam Irving’s *Off the Rails*](#), Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons’ *Out Run* (pictured), James Demo’s *The Peacemaker* and Carrie Lozano and Charlotte Lagarde’s [The Ballad of Fred Hersch](#).

The festival does not have premiere requirements, so half the 93 films screening this year have played at other fests. Those titles include [Weiner](#), [Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You](#), [Author: The JT LeRoy Story](#), [Kate Plays Christine](#), [Unlocking the Cage](#), [Gleason](#) and [Sherpa](#).

There is also a thematic program of classic and contemporary political docs curated by *The September Issue* filmmaker R.J. Cutler, works-in-progress screenings of Jonathan Olshefski’s *The Fury and the Sound* and Matt Yoka’s *Whirlybird* – both recipients of the festivals’ Garrett

Realscreen News Events ▾ Awards ▾ realXchange

[Johnson](#), who will receive a Tribute Award.

Festival passes normally sell out before the program is announced and films play only once, meaning screenings are generally well-attended. Without intense pressure to sell tickets, programmers are able to look at a broad array of themes and styles – thus specific thematic threads tend not to emerge in the programming.

“We don’t have to stop ourselves to ask ‘Will this draw an audience?’ We can make a decision based on our response to the film, without having to worry about who the market is or where else the film has been,” says Tillery. “That is liberating.”

Ahead of tomorrow’s kick-off, Tillery highlights eight films to look out for at Full Frame this year:



Sadie Tillery

Off the Rails, directed by Adam Irving (world premiere)

“The premise of this film alone is a remarkable story, and it builds through style and personal interviews to become so much more than that. It follows Darius McCollum, a man with Asperger’s syndrome who has commandeered hundreds of trains and buses over the years. By introducing us to McCollum and hearing from him and from his legal team, the film allows us

to consider the shortcomings of our criminal justice system.”

Out Run, directed by Leo Chiang and Johnny Symons (world premiere)

“*Out Run* introduces us to the only LGBT political party in the world, following three candidates who are running for Filipino congress. The characters are unforgettable, and the film navigates the complicated relationship between this primarily Catholic country and its vibrant LGBT community. It’s especially interesting to view *Out Run* alongside any number of the campaign documentaries screening in this year’s thematic program.”

The Peacemaker, directed by James Demo (world premiere)

“I’m so proud to screen this film about Pdraig O’Malley, who has dedicated his life to negotiations in war-torn regions around the world. It balances a character study with observations of powerful work. We come to understand how O’Malley’s personal experiences shape his work and how his work is deeply tied to his private life.”

Following Seas, directed by Tyler J. Kelley and Araby Williams (world premiere)

“This is a remarkable story of a family that sailed around the world. They captured their travels on hand-cranked Bolex cameras and here their footage comes to life alongside their recollections. Interviews with the family, particularly matriarch Nancy Griffith, are woven through their own recordings. I can’t wait to see these images flicker on the big screen. It’s the type of film that brings the past to life.”

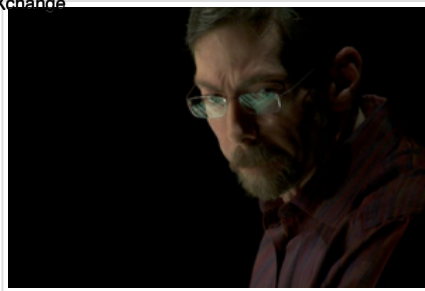
The Ballad of Fred Hersch, directed by Carrie Lozano and [Charlotte Lagarde](#) (world premiere)

“We were deeply moved by this portrait of jazz pianist Fred Hersch. The film looks back at his life and follows him as he composes a piece reflecting on the time he spent in an AIDS-related coma. We witness a renowned artist at work, and have the opportunity to take in his tremendous music.”

Two Trains Runnin’, directed by Sam Pollard (world premiere)

Realscreen News Events ▾ Awards ▾ realXchange

the festival and we're very proud to host the premiere of his latest feature. *Two Trains Runnin'* tells the story of two groups of young men that went looking for blues musicians Son House and Skip James in 1964, travelling south in the middle of Mississippi Freedom Summer. The film weaves musical performances by Lucinda Williams and Gary Clark Jr. with animations, archival footage and interviews, and takes us to a particular moment in time."



The Ballad of Fred Hersch

Raising Bertie, directed by Margaret Byrne (world premiere)

"It's always special when we're able to feature a film born in North Carolina. This longitudinal film follows three teenagers coming of age in Bertie County, just a couple hours east of Durham. In the tradition of *Hoop Dreams*, we follow their lives over years. The filmmakers and many of the individuals featured in the film will be here for the premiere."

Salero, directed by Mike Plunkett (North American premiere)

"Screening work in a theater is very different from seeing it at home on a television, and *Salero* is proof that documentaries need to be seen in this way. With incredible cinematography, the film introduces us to Moises who works in Bolivia on one of the largest salt flats on the planet. His way of life is documented during a time of transition and the vast landscapes featured in the film, along with the incredible texture of the sound design, allow *Salero* to be both a physical and a psychological portrait."

Tags: [Following Seas](#), [Full Frame Documentary Film Festival](#), [Off the Rails](#), [Out Run](#), [Raising Bertie](#), [Sadie Tillery](#), [Salero](#), [The Ballad of Fred Hersch](#), [The Peacemaker](#), [Two Trains Runnin'](#)