

# THE DEATH AND LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON

**A film by David France**

**WORLD PREMIERE – Documentary Competition  
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL 2017**

**105 min // USA // 2017**

**TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL SCREENINGS**

Friday, Apr. 21, 6:00PM - Cinopolis 7

**Saturday, Apr. 22, 9:00AM - Cinopolis 4 (P&I)**

Saturday, Apr. 22, 7:00PM - Cinopolis 9

Sunday, Apr. 23, 9:00 PM - Regal 11-10

**Tuesday, Apr. 25, 12:00PM - Cinopolis 7 (P&I)**

Friday, Apr. 28, 6:30PM - Cinopolis 8

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## Short Synopsis:

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**THE DEATH AND LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON** reexamines the death of a beloved icon of the trans world while celebrating the story of two landmark pioneers of the trans-rights movement, trailblazers who put the T in LGBT.

## Long Synopsis:

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Who killed Marsha P. Johnson? When the beloved, self-described "street queen" of NY's Christopher Street was found floating in the Hudson River in 1992, the NYPD called her death a suicide. Protests erupted but the police remained impassive and refused to investigate. Now, twenty-five years on, Academy Award® nominated director and journalist David France (*HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE*) examines Marsha's death—and her extraordinary life—in his new film. Marsha arrived in the Village in the 1960s where she teamed up with Sylvia Rivera when both claimed their identities as "drag queens," to use the vernacular of the times. Together, the radical duo fought arrests, condemned police brutality, organized street kids, battled the intolerant majority within the gay community, and helped spearhead the Stonewall Riots. In 1970 they formed the world's first trans-rights organization, STAR (Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries). Despite their many challenges over the years—bias, homelessness, illness—Marsha and Sylvia ignited a powerful and lasting civil rights movement for gender nonconforming people. Now, a quarter century later, at a time of unprecedented visibility and escalating violence in the transgender community, a dynamic activist named Victoria Cruz has taken it upon herself to reexamine what happened at the end of Marsha's life. As the film dips in and out of jawdropping archival footage from the 1970s, '80s and '90s, **THE DEATH AND LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON** follows as this champion pursues leads, mobilizes officials, and works to get to the bottom of Marsha's death.

## Interview with director David France

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***What inspired you to make THE DEATH AND LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON now?***

Marsha died twenty-five years ago this July and her fame—and mythology—has only increased over that quarter century. She’s become a very well-known touchstone within the LGBT movement but very little is really known about her. I wanted to fill in the historical record. In addition, I knew that her death was never thoroughly investigated by the police. In fact, as a print journalist I had begun to investigate her case back in 1992, but never did follow through on that work, so I felt a personal obligation to go back to it, and I felt that that offered an opportunity to really put flesh on this mythical character of Marsha P. Johnson.

***Marsha and her compatriot Sylvia Rivera were both incredibly charismatic and powerful people. Can you talk about what it was like to be in their presence?***

I knew both Marsha and Sylvia. I didn’t know Sylvia very well and I knew Marsha the way most people knew her, which was in passing and with great affection. Marsha was a fixture in the West Village, known and adored by everybody. She was sometimes homeless and living on the streets but almost always present for decades. If you walked down Christopher Street, Marsha would receive you in the manner of a gracious host. She dispensed cheer and joy. In a way, what she was doing, I realize now, was modeling a kind of freedom that for LGBT people at the time, in the 1970s and ‘80s, didn’t exist. She was experimenting with it, trying it on, living it, in a way that other people couldn’t. That was her leadership quality.

Sylvia was more of an intellect. Although she never finished sixth grade, she was politically astute and a sharp observer of political strategy and philosophical junctures and opportunities for the movement. Her presence was much more sharp and much more demanding and direct than Marsha’s. Her leadership was an intellectual leadership. Their partnership was a body-and-soul partnership and a love story, as we see in the old archival footage. Together, they created the impetus for the ideological understanding of, and the first bricks in the foundation for, the modern LGBT movement in 1969.

***You have a lot of fantastic footage of Marsha and Sylvia, much of it newly discovered. How did you track it all down and what was it like to watch it when you found it?***

Finding the footage was as complicated and complex as any archival project, especially when the archives that you're mining are not formal archives but rather boxes in people's homes. That's where we found the footage. It was gathered by friends of Marsha's from back in the day. Each one of these rare pieces of video and audio was a thrill to uncover. I was surprised to learn how challenging life was for Sylvia in her middle years—the videotape shows us that. It brings us to her in her place of sometimes despairing hopelessness about the ability of the movement to recognize the transgender community and to incorporate it. She was the original voice demanding that the T be added to the L, the G and the B, and for a great period of time, and at great personal pain and expense. She fought that fight all alone and with little progress. It's there in the footage—we see it, we see the history. Even going back to the early 1970s we have footage of Marsha and Sylvia and the work that they were doing—before there was widespread proliferation of video technology. Who had cameras back then? They were so expensive and bulky that you needed two people to carry them! So we were really lucky to find some real gems to include in the film. We'd hear rumors about some new piece of footage and we'd chase after those rumors and hopefully find those people and hopefully they still had the footage and hopefully it hadn't declined from being so old...there was a lot of hoping and a lot of those hopes came true.

***The person at the center of the contemporary story is Victoria Cruz. How did you come to know her and decide to build the film around her?***

Victoria Cruz is well known in the LGBT community for the work that she has been engaged in over the past couple of decades, working directly with victims of crime at the New York City Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project. I knew that the Anti-Violence Project had been involved in the early investigation around Marsha's death, so when I heard that they had an openness to reexamining their files and reopening the case—in recognition of this important anniversary—I talked to Victoria about following her and whether she would allow me to do that. She's very interested in pursuing the case so she allowed us to use her work as a way to pry open a window onto that past.

***The film documents what a brutal world it was for transgender people in the 1970s and '80s and '90s when so many just went missing. What's your sense about violence and acceptance in the transgender world today?***

One of the reasons I wanted to do this film is to show how much has changed and how much is still the same. We have developed an ability in the lexicon of contemporary culture to talk about and understand the arrival of the transgender community in civic life. But we haven't done nearly enough to address the systemic prejudice against transgendered people, especially transgendered women of color who are at high risk of physical violence, who have trouble finding jobs, who have greater difficulty finding acceptance of any sort. And the ongoing issue, year after year in these last few years, of fatal violence against young trans women of color is something that has not been adequately tracked or adequately addressed. We discovered in going back and telling Marsha P. Johnson's story that hers is just one of many similar stories. Another thing I discovered working with a cast that's almost entirely of color and all LGBT is the difficulty that that community has in finding the strength and power it needs to bring a case like Marsha's to fruition. The LGBT organizations that represent people of color are grossly underfunded and are struggling on a day-to-day basis to try to respond to the systemic social justice problems that the community faces. The injustice for the whole community is startling. It's a battle that Marsha fought from the 1960s forward and it's a battle that still has not been won.

***Do you believe Marsha was murdered?***

Finding an answer to that question is why we went back and reinvestigated the case. We found old evidence, old witnesses, new evidence, new witnesses, and significant archival footage, all to examine the question of what might have happened to Marsha at the end of her life. And that answer is in the film.

***Your previous documentary (and book) HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE looks at people on the margins who are claiming their rights and their dignity in very courageous and creative ways. Do you see parallels between the two films?***

Absolutely. As a filmmaker, I'm trying to tell the stories of people whose stories don't ordinarily get told, of people whose lives embody that central American myth: that anybody, no matter how you're born, can find power and prominence. The people whose stories I've been telling have changed the world, and although we know that we have enjoyed the legacy of the changes they brought about and the revolutions that they spearheaded, we don't know THEM. I want to tell the stories of queer Americans as American stories, as stories that are as central to the culture we've inherited and that future generations will inherit as any activist or any innovator from any other community.

***Do you have a favorite moment in the film?***

I think the most powerful moment in the film comes at a juncture in 1973 when Sylvia and Marsha found themselves pushed out of the LGBT movement, or the Gay Power movement as it was called then, and Sylvia takes to a stage and addresses what appears to be tens of thousands of people in the most angry, extemporaneous, and brilliant speech that I think has ever been recorded on film. I think it's going to surprise people to see it. It surprises me every time I see it.

***What impact do you hope that the film will have?***

I hope that people will see that as historical figures, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera are great American figures whose stories should be taught in school and whose lives should be celebrated. When we started making this film we didn't realize we would be entering a cultural period in which the advances we had come to embrace over the last decades would suddenly be imperiled. I think we've entered a time where stories of visionary activists and heroic figures are necessary and empowering. I think in that regard THE DEATH AND LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON is a timely document for today's political problems.

## **Media Reference Guide**

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[GLAAD Media Reference Guide - In Focus: Covering the Transgender Community](http://www.glaad.org/reference/covering-trans-community)

(<http://www.glaad.org/reference/covering-trans-community>)

## Basics of writing a transgender story

**Language is important.** Using accurate terminology is the first step toward creating a respectful story about transgender people. The Transgender Terminology section of this guide offers definitions of basic terms, along with guidelines on name and pronoun usage and a list of defamatory and offensive terms to avoid. More resources for journalists may be found at [glaad.org/transgender](http://glaad.org/transgender).

**Moving beyond the coming out narrative.** People who have just come out publicly as transgender are considered newsworthy, but they are often not ready for media attention, nor are they ready to speak about larger issues facing a diverse transgender community. Consider interviewing people who have chosen to take leadership roles in the community. Furthermore, the "coming out" or "transition narrative" has been covered thoroughly since Christine Jorgensen came out back from Europe in 1952. Just as coverage of the LGB community now focuses on many different aspects of being gay, lesbian, or bisexual, the media is encouraged to look for stories about transgender people that go beyond "when did you know" and "what surgeries have you had."

**Avoid focusing on medical issues.** It is inappropriate to ask a transgender person questions about their genitals or other surgeries they may or may not have had. Typically, those questions are only asked out of prurient curiosity. They also distract the journalist and the viewer from seeing the whole person, and from focusing on larger issues that affect transgender people like discrimination, poverty, and violence. Do not characterize being transgender as a mental disorder. Neither the American Psychiatric Association nor the American Psychological Association consider being transgender a "mental disorder."

**Describing the fact that someone is transgender.** Transgender should always be used as an adjective. For example, "Susan is a transgender woman." If your audience needs clarification about what that phrase means, you can explain that "Susan was designated male at birth, and began her transition 15 years ago." Avoid "Susan was born a man." People are born babies and a doctor decides the sex based on a quick look at the baby's external anatomy. A transgender person's gender is much more complicated than a simple glance at external anatomy can capture. A person's biology does not "trump" their gender identity, and oversimplifications like "born a man" can invalidate the current, authentic gender of the person you're speaking about.

**Disclosing birth names.** When a transgender person's birth name is used in a story, the implication is almost always that this is the person's "real name." But in fact, a transgender person's chosen name is their real name, whether or not they are able to obtain a court-ordered name change. Many people use names they have chosen for themselves, and the media does not mention their birth name when writing about them, (e.g., Lady Gaga, Demi Moore, Whoopi Goldberg). Transgender people should be accorded the same respect. When writing about a transgender person's chosen name, do not say "she wants to be called," "she calls herself," "she goes by Susan," or other phrases that cast doubt on a transgender person's identity. Do not reveal a

transgender person's birth name without explicit permission from them. If the person is not able to answer questions about their birth name, err on the side of caution and do not reveal it.

**Illustrating your story and headlines.** In almost every instance it is unnecessary to show before and after pictures of the person being profiled. Often these images are simply included to satisfy the invasive curiosity of readers or viewers, and in most cases, they add nothing substantive to the story. Similarly, avoid clichéd images of transgender women putting on make-up, wigs, or panty hose, and shots of transgender men shaving. These types of photos connote that being transgender is simply a superficial, external matter. Being transgender is not about or limited to physical appearance. With headlines, it is often necessary to save space and simplify; however not at the expense of resorting to clichés and offensive language. It is easy to ruin a well-written, nuanced story with a sensationalistic headline. Avoid phrases like "sex change" or "born a man" in headlines.

**Bringing in expert opinion.** Be cautious of inviting non-transgender guests to talk about transgender people – instead of talking to transgender people. Transgender people are the experts to talk about transgender people. You don't always need a medical or psychological "expert" to speak about transgender people, but if you'd like a medical or psychological perspective, there are many transgender doctors and psychologists who can speak with experience and authority.

**Integrating transgender people into non-trans stories.** While it is true that there are many social issues that must be addressed before transgender people are treated equally, it is also true that transgender people live day-to-day lives just like everyone else. When being transgender is just one of the many traits that make someone unique, we will move closer to full acceptance. If you are doing a story about women in tech or Mother's Day, consider including a transgender woman in those stories. Transgender people can also be booked to talk about issues that are not trans-specific.

## **Social issues facing transgender people**

**Transgender people, particularly transgender women of color, are disproportionately affected by hate violence.** In 2015, 67% of LGBTQ homicide victims were transgender women, according to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. The majority were transgender women of color.

**Transgender people face high levels of discrimination and poverty.** According to the largest national survey of transgender people, the community experiences unemployment at twice the rate of the general population, with rates for people of color up to four times the national unemployment rate. Transgender people are also four times more likely to live in poverty. Ninety percent of trans people report experiencing harassment, mistreatment, or discrimination on the job. Forty-one percent of transgender respondents reported attempting suicide, compared to 1.6% of the general population.

**Access to healthcare is extremely limited for transgender people.** The American Medical Association has stated that treatment for gender dysphoria is medically necessary and involves changing the body to align with a person's gender identity (their internal sense of being a man or a woman.) Trying to change a person's gender identity is no more successful than trying to change a person's sexual orientation - it just does not work. However until very recently, private insurance companies have treated transition-related medical care as if it were cosmetic - regularly inserting "transgender exclusion clauses" into health insurance plans making access to care difficult, if not impossible, for most transgender people. In 2016, the Department of Health and Human Services issued a rule stating that under the Affordable Care Act of 2010, individuals are protected from discrimination based on gender identity and sex stereotyping in health care settings that have a connection to federal funds, which includes the vast majority of health insurance companies. This is a huge step forward in improving access to healthcare for the transgender community. However, not all procedures associated with medical transition are covered by this ruling and any policy which does not receive federal funds may still discriminate. Furthermore, even if a transgender person has a health insurance policy which will cover medical transition, it can still be quite difficult to find any health care providers who are knowledgeable about transgender healthcare.

**Covering nondiscrimination bills.** When covering the Equality Act or other nondiscrimination bills that include gender identity, do not accept at face value misperceptions promulgated by anti-LGBTQ activists that nondiscrimination can be reduced to arguments about transgender people using the bathroom consistent with their gender identity. Nondiscrimination bills that are inclusive of gender identity and expression provide important protections for transgender people in housing, employment, and public accommodations. Transgender women are often the targets of violence and harassment when they try to use a public restroom consistent with the gender they live every day.

## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Sex**

The classification of a person as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate.) A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

### **Gender Identity**

A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices (see non-binary and/or genderqueer below.) Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

## **Gender Expression**

External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

## **Sexual Orientation**

Describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a straight woman.

## **Transgender (adj.)**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including *transgender*. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the person. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures.

## **Transsexual (adj.)**

An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions, including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries. Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual* is **not** an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word *transgender*. It is best to ask which term a person prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.

## **Trans**

Used as shorthand to mean *transgender* or *transsexual* - or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella. Because its meaning is not precise or widely understood, be careful when using it with audiences who may not understand what it means. Avoid unless used in a direct quote or in cases where you can clearly explain the term's meaning in the context of your story.

## **Cross-dresser**

While anyone may wear clothes associated with a different sex, the term *crossdresser* is typically used to refer to men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup, and accessories culturally associated with women. Those men typically identify as

heterosexual. This activity is a form of gender expression and not done for entertainment purposes. Cross-dressers do not wish to permanently change their sex or live full-time as women. *Replaces the term "transvestite."*

### **Transition**

Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition can include some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and coworkers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person.

**Avoid the phrase "sex change".**

### **Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)**

Also called Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS). Refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions, and is only one small part of transition (see transition above). Avoid the phrase "sex change operation." Do not refer to someone as being "pre-op" or "post-op." Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries.

**Journalists should avoid overemphasizing the role of surgeries in the transition process.**

### **Gender Identity Disorder (GID)**

*outdated, see Gender Dysphoria*

### **Gender Dysphoria**

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association released the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) which replaced the outdated entry "Gender Identity Disorder" with *Gender Dysphoria*, and changed the criteria for diagnosis. The necessity of a psychiatric diagnosis remains controversial, as both psychiatric and medical authorities recommend individualized medical treatment through hormones and/or surgeries to treat gender dysphoria. Some transgender advocates believe the inclusion of Gender Dysphoria in the DSM is necessary to advocate for health insurance that covers the medically necessary treatment recommended for transgender people.

Transgender women are not cross-dressers or drag queens. Drag queens are men, typically gay men, who dress like women for entertainment. Be aware of the differences between transgender women, cross-dressers, and drag queens. Use the term preferred by the person. Do not use the word "transvestite" at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

### **OTHER TERMS YOU MAY HEAR**

You may hear the following terms when doing research on transgender issues or speaking to an interview subject. As they are not commonly known outside the LGBTQ community, they will require context and definition if used in mainstream media.

## **Cisgender**

A term used by some to describe people who are not transgender. "Cis-" is a Latin prefix meaning "on the same side as," and is therefore an antonym of "trans-." A more widely understood way to describe people who are not transgender is simply to say *non-transgender people*.

## **Gender Non-Conforming**

A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. **Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming.** Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional – that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming. The term is not a synonym or *transgender* or *transsexual* and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender nonconforming.

## **Non-binary and/or genderqueer**

Terms used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for *transgender* or *transsexual* and should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary and/or genderqueer.

## **TRANSGENDER NAMES, PRONOUN USAGE & DESCRIPTIONS**

In 2015, *The Washington Post* updated its style guide to include the singular they to describe people who "identify as neither male nor female." It is increasingly common for people who have a nonbinary gender identity to use they/them as their pronoun.

### **Always use a transgender person's chosen name.**

Many transgender people can obtain a legal name change from a court. However, some transgender people cannot afford a legal name change or are not yet old enough to legally change their name. They should be afforded the same respect for their chosen name as anyone else who uses a name other than their birth name (e.g., celebrities).

### **Use the pronoun that matches the person's authentic gender.**

A person who identifies as a certain gender, whether or not that person has taken hormones or undergone surgery, should be referred to using the pronouns appropriate for that gender. If you are not certain which pronoun to use, ask the person, "What pronouns do you use?"

**If it is not possible to ask a transgender person which pronoun they use, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person's appearance and gender**

**expression or use the singular they.** For example, if a person wears a dress and uses the name Susan, feminine pronouns are usually appropriate. Or it is also acceptable to use the singular *they* to describe someone when you don't wish to assign a gender. For example: "Every individual should be able to express their gender in a way that is comfortable for them."

**Some people use the singular *they* to reflect their non-binary gender identity.**

In 2015, *The Washington Post* updated its style guide to include the singular *they* to describe people who "identify as neither male nor female." It is increasingly common for people who have a non-binary gender identity to use they/them as their pronoun. For example: "Jacob writes eloquently about their non-binary identity. They have also appeared frequently in the media to talk about their family's reaction to their gender expression".

**It is never appropriate to put quotation marks around either a transgender person's chosen name or the pronoun that reflects that person's gender identity.**

## Biographies

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**DAVID FRANCE (Director)** is an Oscar-nominated filmmaker, *New York Times* best-selling author, and award-winning investigative journalist. His directorial debut HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE is hailed as an innovative and influential piece of storytelling that is credited with renewing a conversation about AIDS in the United States. It is regularly screened in university classrooms, and by community groups and AIDS service organizations. Appearing on over 20 "Best of the Year" lists, including *Time* and *Entertainment Weekly*, the documentary earned a GLAAD Award and top honors from the Gotham Awards, the International Documentary Association, the New York Film Critics Circle, the Boston Society of Film Critics, and the Provincetown Film Festival, among many others. After a theatrical run reaching over 30 cities, HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE was aired on PBS's Independent Lens series, reaching an audience of millions and garnering Academy and Emmy nominations and a Peabody Award. In addition, France has seen his journalistic work inspire several films, including the Peabody-winning Showtime film SOLDIER'S GIRL, based on his *New York Times Magazine* story of the trans girlfriend of a soldier killed in an anti-gay attack. His latest book, also called *How to Survive a Plague* made numerous Best-Of-2016 lists, including *The New Yorker*, *The*

*Guardian*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The New York Times*. It is being developed by the producer Scott Rudin as a limited series for the National Geographic Network.

**L.A. TEODOSIO (Producer)** is a New York-based film producer, technologist and software entrepreneur. Recently an executive producer on *LOVE IS STRANGE* (dir. Ira Sachs, Sundance 2014, Sony Pictures Classics), L.A. is currently a producer on *AWOL* (dir. Deb Shoval, Tribeca 2016, The Orchard), Ira Sachs' new film *LITTLE MEN* (Sundance 2016, Magnolia Pictures) and the documentary *PEACE OF MIND* (dir. Cary Cronenwett), now screening at festivals, art galleries, and museums. In development is Silas Howard's *THE LUSTY* which tells the true story of the first erotic dance hall to unionize in the world. *THE LUSTY* won a 2015 San Francisco Film Society Rainin screenwriting grant.

**KIMBERLY REED (Producer)**, the country's leading transgender documentary filmmaker, produced and directed the landmark *PRODIGAL SONS*. The film garnered 14 Audience and Jury awards and landed on numerous "Best of the Year" lists after a successful theatrical run. Reed was recognized as one of *The Advocate's* "Five to Watch," and *OUT Magazine's* "Out 100." She was also the producer/editor/writer for the documentary *PAUL GOODMAN CHANGED MY LIFE*, released theatrically by Zeitgeist Films. *Filmmaker Magazine* named her one of the "25 New Faces of Independent Film." A native of Montana, Reed is a proud member of the board of GLSEN - the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

**MARK BLANE (Co-Writer)** Mark Blane is an Indiana-born, Brooklyn based screenwriter, producer, and actor. *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON* is his first feature length documentary and his Tribeca Film Festival debut. His next project *CUBBY*, produced and written by and starring Blane, was shot in 2016 on Super 16mm film. Supported by Kodak Motion Pictures, Brooklyn Arts Council, and Public Square Films, this coming of age narrative film is now in postproduction and due for a 2018 release.

**TYLER WALK (Editor)** has worked for VH1, ESPN, and Martin Scorsese, and has collaborated with several independent directors including documentary film legend Albert Maysles and director/editor/producer Max Nova. Walk's most recent projects include David France's Oscar nominated film *HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE*, for which he received an Emmy

nomination for editing, and Eric Weinrib's ROSEANNE FOR PRESIDENT! which premiered at the 2015 Tribeca Film Festival. Walk's other film credits include Kate Kunath's WE CAME TO SWEAT, Shalini Kantayya's CATCHING THE SUN, and award-winning director Jeremy Zerechak's CODE 2600.

**TOM BERGMANN & ADAM UHL, Directors of Photography** Tom Bergmann, German-born, is an acclaimed director of photography for documentaries, narrative and experimental films with more than 30 documentary shorts and features to his credit. His recent documentary work includes the Academy Award-nominated LIFE, ANIMATED, directed by Roger Ross Williams. The film also won the 2016 Sundance award for Best Directing. Most recently, Tom worked with director Eugene Jarecki on his forthcoming film PROMISED LAND (working title). The feature length documentary ABACUS: SMALL ENOUGH TO JAIL by director Steve James premiered at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival and will be released in theaters later this year.

**Adam Uhl**, a cinematographer based in New York City, shares an Emmy for best cinematography for an AE special on 9/11. His documentary and narrative credits include MALA MALA (2014), FIVE STAR (2014), NEVER GET TIRED (2015), and HIT IT HARD (2012), part of the ESPN "30 for 30" documentary series. His work on MALA MALA earned him an award for outstanding cinematography from SIMA (Social Impact Media Awards) in 2015. His most recent film, DINA, won the US Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2017.

## Subject Biographies

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### **MARSHA P. JOHNSON**

Asked what her middle initial stood for, Marsha P. Johnson declared defiantly and with her famous smile, "Pay It No Mind!" Marsha was a beloved Greenwich Village fixture, a veteran of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, a model for Andy Warhol, and the co-founder — along with her best friend, Sylvia Rivera — of the first-ever transgender rights organization, Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (aka, STAR).

On a hot July afternoon in 1992, Marsha's body was found in the Hudson River, just off the Christopher Street pier. Only 46 when she died, Marsha's memorial service was part New Orleans-style "second line" procession and

part state funeral, attended by politicians, sex workers, celebrities, movement leaders, the homeless, and friends and family, most of whom doubted the police's decision to attribute her premature death to suicide. Today Marsha is an icon to many, but one who has not been given her proper due. Marsha's story and her contribution should be familiar to all of us, her legacy of resistance should persist, and she should finally get the justice she deserves.

### **SYLVIA RIVERA**

Sylvia Rivera was only 11 years old when she started living on the streets of New York City in 1962. It was Marsha P. Johnson who took Sylvia under her wing and, alongside her, helped launch the modern LGBT movement. Together Sylvia and Marsha founded the first-ever transgender rights organization, Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (aka, STAR), as well as the STAR House, which gave shelter and care to young trans street kids. Along with her work to secure rights for the LGBT community, Sylvia was active in Black and Puerto Rican civil rights, and the feminist and antiwar movements of the 1960's.

Sylvia was also outspoken regarding poverty and the discrimination experienced by all people of color. Despite laboring shoulder to shoulder on the front lines for years, in 1973 gay leaders – desperate for mainstream acceptance – cruelly rejected their trans counterparts in general and Sylvia in particular, charging them with encouraging "stereotypes". Brokenhearted, Sylvia attempted suicide. It was Marsha who saved her life.

Sylvia spent the remainder of her life pushing back against large, mainstream LGBT groups who prioritized assimilation over radical gay liberation. She died in 2002 of liver cancer and was laid to rest wearing the "Justice for Marsha" pin she had worn since Marsha's death 10 years earlier. Like Marsha, Sylvia's story is known by some, but certainly not by enough. In 2015, her portrait was hung in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC – a first for the transgender community. Hopefully more people will seek out her story as a result.

### **VICTORIA CRUZ**

Victoria Cruz is a veteran crime-victim advocate who, on the eve of her retirement at the age of 70, has taken on one final case: the mysterious death of legendary transgender activist Marsha P. Johnson. "Miss Vickie,"

as she is known, has been working with the New York City Anti-Violence Project, the oldest agency working to achieve legal redress for LGBT crime victims. She first joined the staff in 1997, the year she turned to them for support when, as a nursing home employee, she was assaulted by coworkers who were later convicted for their crimes. "I've been victimized in more than one way for being who I am," she has said. But the experience has only made her more tenacious, "We have to fight for our rights." In 2012, US Attorney General Eric Holder awarded Victoria Cruz with the U.S. Department of Justice's National Crime Victim Service Award for her work on behalf of victims of crime.

## **Production Credits**

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*Public Square Films Presents:*

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In Association With Ninety Thousand Words, Faliero House Productions  
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### **Executive Producer**

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