

An ACLU and Little By Little Films production



Verité short documentary series TRANS IN AMERICA, depicting three transgender individuals' battle for their civil rights, to launch exclusively on Conde Nast's 'them.'

Directed by Cary Cronenwett, Daresha Kyi
Produced by Lindsey Dryden and Shaleece Haas
Executive Producers Molly Kaplan and Chase Strangio

Episode 1: 18 minutes
Episode 2: 15 minutes
Episode 3: 10 minutes
In English

Watch the films: <https://www.them.us/story/aclu-film-series-transgender>

Release dates: Ep 1: 10 October, Ep 2: 18 October and Ep 3: 25 October 2018
On <https://www.them.us/>

CONTACT

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Trans In America -- a verité short documentary series, and an intimate portrait of three transgender individuals as they battle for their civil rights in the United States -- will have its world premiere on Conde Nast's LGBTQ+ platform [them.](#) from October 10 2018.

The three films reveal the daily impact of discrimination on three families as they battle with bathroom bills, vulnerability in employment and housing, and the aftermath of incarceration, in Texas, Illinois and Georgia.

One film will be released on them. every week for three weeks, with Episode 1 (Kai in Texas) debuting on 10 October 2018, Episode 2 (Eisha in Chicago) on 18 October and Episode 3 (Jennifer in Georgia) on 24 October 2018.

Each film in the series is directed by an LGBTQ+ filmmaker, produced by an inclusive and majority-LGBTQ+ production team led by Lindsey Dryden at Little By Little Films, and informed by a panel of transgender Advisors.

Says Executive Producer Chase Strangio (ACLU): *"These three short films highlight the discrimination that trans people face at school, at work, and within the criminal legal system. What emerges from these three stories is the painful and relentless fight of the trans community to be seen, held, embraced and understood in our full humanity. We want these films to cut through the dehumanizing rhetoric too often heard by lawmakers and spark conversations about ending the day-to-day indignities and discrimination faced by trans people."*

Says film series Advisor Drian Juarez (Founder, LA LGBT Center's Transgender Economic Empowerment Project): *"Authentic storytelling has never been more important and for far too long the experiences of trans people have been told through the lens of cis-white-hetero filmmakers with privilege and access that have been denied to our community. That is why I was excited and honored to be invited to participate in this film project which centers the voices and experiences of trans filmmakers; films about us by us are vital to the authentic telling of our narratives!"*

Says film series Advisor StormMiguel Florez (Filmmaker, Activist): *"Serving on the Advisory Board was a truly wonderful experience, not only because I had the privilege of reviewing beautiful and truth-telling documentaries that celebrate and respectfully portray real trans lives, but because the feedback that I, as a Latinx trans man, was asked to give was trusted and included in the final edit. The producers consistently demonstrated their commitment to centering traditionally marginalized trans voices and experiences through this process."*

EPIISODE SYNOPSES

- Trans In America: Episode 1

Kai Shappley: A Trans Girl Growing Up In Texas

An intimate portrait of Kimberly and Kai Shappley: a mother has to confront her religious community while her 7-year-old transgender daughter navigates life at school, where she's been banned from the girls' bathroom. TRT: 18 minutes. Directed by Daresha Kyi. Produced by the ACLU & Little By Little Films, with an LGBTQ-led team.

- Trans In America: Episode 2

Eisha Love: A Trans Woman of Color in Chicago

Eisha Love was incarcerated in a men's jail after acting in self-defense. Now, as she rebuilds her life and continues to process the impact of her incarceration, she faces the challenge of trying to get a steady job as an out trans woman with a criminal record. TRT: 15 minutes. Directed by Cary Cronenwett. Produced by the ACLU & Little By Little Films, with an LGBTQ-led team.

- Trans In America: Episode 3

Jennifer Chavez: A Trans Woman Working in a Male-Dominated Industry

When Jennifer Chavez lost her job after transitioning, she sued for discrimination. Years later, having won a national victory in a case that will protect trans people across the nation, she finds herself alienated from her industry, and unable to make a living. TRT: 10 minutes. Produced by the ACLU & Little By Little Films, with an LGBTQ-led team.

LINKS

The film series on Conde Nast's Them.:

<https://www.them.us/story/aclu-film-series-transgender>

Further ACLU information about the series:

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights/trans-america>

Downloadable images from the films and crew: <https://bit.ly/2OjMfyp>

Further resources about Transgender Rights:

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights>

Teen Vogue's trailer for Episode 1

<https://video.teenvogue.com/watch/growing-up-trans>

About the Directors



Daresha Kyi (pronouns She/Her) writes and directs film and television in Spanish and English, and has produced television for FX, WE, AMC, Oxygen, E!, Telemundo, Bravo and FUSE. She is currently a fellow in the Firelight Media Documentary Lab, and graduated with a degree in Film & TV from NYU. Most recently Daresha co-directed and co-produced her first feature-length documentary *Chavela* with Catherine Gund. The film celebrates the wild, rollercoaster life of badass singer Chavela Vargas and was nominated for the Teddy award and won the 2nd Place Panorama Audience Award at the 2017 Berlinale, and Audience Awards at the San Francisco Int'l LGBTQI Film Festival, the Women's Int'l Film Festival (Pamplona), and Mostra FIRE (Barcelona), as well as Best Documentary at New Renaissance Festival.



Cary Cronenwett (pronouns He/Him) investigates tropes of masculinity and homoeroticism in his work, often working with trans/gender non-conforming cast & crew. The San Francisco Guardian granted him the 2009 Bay Area Goldie Award for Local Discovery after the release of his film *Maggots and Men*, an epic collaboration which brought together hundreds of artists from around the US. He has screened work at numerous festivals including Miami International, Outfest Los Angeles, Queer Lisboa, Identities Vienna, Montreal Image + Nation, BFI Flare, and Toronto Inside Out. Cronenwett holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts Program in Film and Video and a BA from Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Originally from Oklahoma, he is currently based in Los Angeles.

About the Producers



Lindsey Dryden (pronouns She/Her) is a Producer and Director whose work has been released theatrically, featured in *Vogue* and *Elle*, broadcast on Netflix, PBS and BBC, won awards worldwide, and screened at 50+ festivals incl. Sundance, SXSW, Tribeca, HotDocs, True/False, Sheffield Doc/Fest and Art Of The Real. She produced Academy Award shortlisted *Unrest* (Sundance, 2017), *Trans In America* (ACLU/them, 2018), and directed short *Jackie Kay: One Person Two Names* (Tate Britain, 2017) and award-winning feature doc *Lost and Sound* (SXSW, 2012).



Shaleece Haas (pronouns She/Her) is the Producer and Director of 2016 documentary *Real Boy*, which earned 20 festival awards, screened in 23 countries, and was broadcast on PBS Independent Lens; co-producer of *The Genius of Marian* (Tribeca, POV). She is a 2015 Film Independent Documentary Lab Fellow, a 2012 Working Films (Reel Aging) Fellow and has received support from ITVS, California Humanities, Berkeley Film Foundation, Fledgling Fund, Film Independent, and IFP.



Executive Producer Chase Strangio (pronouns He/Him) is a Staff Attorney with the ACLU's LGBT & AIDS Project. Chase's work includes impact litigation, as well as legislative and administrative advocacy, on behalf of LGBTQ people and people living with HIV across the United States. Chase has particular expertise on the treatment of transgender and gender non-conforming people in police custody, jails, prisons and other forms of detention.

About the ACLU

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a nonpartisan, non-profit national organization that works daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and the laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country.

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights/trans-america>

About Little By Little Films

Little By Little Films is an independent production company founded by director and producer Lindsey Dryden, and based in south west England and Austin, Texas. Producing acclaimed films including *Unrest* (Sundance 2017, PBS and Netflix 2018), *Little Ones* (nominated Best Producer, Underwire 2013) and *Lost and Sound* (SXSW, 2012) the company specialises in telling intimate and unexpected stories by and about authentic voices. Little By Little Films' work spans short and feature-length films, web series and virtual reality, and prioritises projects led by LGBTQ+ folks, people with disabilities and women.

<http://www.lblfilms.com>

About the Series Advisory Board

Sam Berliner (Pronouns: He/Him)

Filmmaker, Festival Director

Sam Berliner is the Festival Director of Translations: Seattle Transgender Film Festival, the world's largest transgender-themed film festival. He is also a senior programmer at Three Dollar Bill Cinema, Seattle's LGBTQ film org. As a filmmaker and animator, Sam is best known for his engaging and accessible films about gender non-conformity. His award-winning short films, FLOAT, DATING SUCKS: A GENDERQUEER MISADVENTURE, PERCEPTION and GENDERBUSTERS have screened at over 200 film festivals around the world and are distributed by CFMDC and Frameline Voices. His recent credits include animation for the PBS webseries THE F WORD: A FOSTER-TO-ADOPT STORY and he is currently in pre-production on Episode 2 of DATING SUCKS. In addition to programming for Translations and Three Dollar Bill Cinema, Sam is the film programmer at Seattle's Gender Odyssey Conference and an associate programmer for the Pride of the Ocean LGBT Film Festival. Sam earned an MFA in Cinema from San Francisco State University.

Wriply Bennet (Pronouns: She/Her)

Artist & Organizer

Wriply Marie Bennet is an artist, illustrator, actor, writer and singer born and raised in Ohio. She uses her art to uplift her sisters in the black lives/black transgender lives movement. She works in ink, watercolor and other mediums, and her art comes from an untrained perspective. She never aspired to attend college to study art; her talent is proudly self-taught. Her organizing work started with the Trans Women of Color Coalition, and she has been an activist since Ferguson, where she was a freedom rider traveling to stand with the family and community of Mike Brown. Wriply's work expresses the power, strength, and resilience that trans women of color have to persevere, and the grace and beauty of her culture. Her work also uplifts the young black trans women we've lost and continue to lose every year, and sheds light on the fact that there has been no national outcry. Wriply's art has been used in countless social justice flyers, and made its first film debut in *MAJOR!*, a documentary at the 2015 San Francisco Transgender Film Festival. Wriply is much more than a visual artist; she's also a singer/songwriter, actor, screenplay writer, storyteller, cartoonist, and fashion designer. She continues to work and fight for justice! For art will travel.

StormMiguel Florez (Pronouns: He/Him)

Filmmaker, Activist

StormMiguel Florez is a trans Chicanx filmmaker and performing artist based in San Francisco, California. He co-produced and edited the award winning feature documentary, *MAJOR!* (dir. Annalise Ophelian) which chronicles the life and campaigns of Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, a 75 year old Black transgender elder and activist who had been fighting for the rights of trans women of color for over 40 years. He is currently producing and directing *The Whistle*, a documentary that will tell the story of a secret code created by and shared among young lesbians in Albuquerque, New Mexico in the 1970s & 80s as a means of self-identification and finding community. *The Whistle* is also a part of his own lived experiences having grown up in Albuquerque and being a part of the community documented in the film. His filmmaking addresses the histories and current lives of trans and queer people. He is most interested in working with trans and queer communities of color and those who have traditionally had less access to archiving their own lives and telling their own stories. StormMiguel currently serves on the Queer Cultural Center Board, the Transgender, Gender Variant, Intersex Justice Project Leadership Team, the San Francisco Transgender Film Festival Advisory Board, and the Peacock Rebellion Advisory Board.

Debi Jackson (Pronouns: She/Her)

Founder, Gender Inc.

Debi Jackson is a nationally known advocate for transgender rights. She lives with her husband and two children in Kansas City, Missouri. She became an advocate for transgender rights and acceptance because of her daughter. She now speaks openly about her family to provide others with a personal connection to learn about transgender youth, using her story to prove that conservative Southern families can be supportive of LGBT issues. She has worked with several national organizations on advocacy projects and is currently a Family Organizer with the National Center for Transgender Equality. Her involvement with these organizations, as well as her personal connection to several thousand transgender adults and families with transgender children has enhanced her knowledge and understanding of trans-inclusivity needs and solutions. In 2016, Debi was awarded the Role Model Award by the National Education Association's GLBT Caucus for her contributions to education about the LGBTQ+ community. She also offers resources for parents with transgender or gender-diverse children through trans-parenting.com and transgender cultural competency training through genderinc.com.

Janetta Johnson (Pronouns: She/Her)

Executive Director, Transgender, Gender Variant, Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP)

Janetta Johnson is an Afro-American trans woman who was raised in Tampa, Florida. She is a healer through her work at the Transgender Gender Variant and Intersex (TGI) Justice Project and facilitator invested in decolonizing spaces. Since 2006, she has been organizing around the intersections of violence she and her trans and gender non-conforming communities of color face. She has been both politicized and mentored by Miss Major who has been deeply influential in her life, and she is honored to have accepted Miss Major's former position as Executive Director of the TGI Justice Project. The spiritual force that drives her to dismantle the violent systems that black trans people are subjected to and oppressed by is one that awakens her. As a formerly incarcerated trans person, Janetta has faced adversity and this has informed her community work as well as her deep investment in the liberation of all black trans and gender non-conforming people. Janetta works to restore her community's spirit from the confines of the prison industrial complex: she has developed a grassroots reentry program with the focus on recidivism and reentry, she is a member of the Bay Area chapter of Black Lives Matter, and is dedicated to ending capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, and building the organizing capacity of trans and gender non-conforming communities of color as a trans warrior. She enjoys working to shift and reframe the value of black trans lives through media, education, and community building.

Drian Juarez (Pronouns: She/Her)

Program Manager, Grindr for Equality

Founder, LA LGBT Center's Transgender Economic Empowerment Project (TEEP)

Drian Juarez is the first program manager for Grindr's Grindr for Equality program where she promotes health, justice, and equality for the global LGBTQI community. She is the founder and former Program Manager of the LA LGBT Center's Transgender Economic Empowerment Project (TEEP). As a Latina transgender immigrant, Juarez has experienced first-hand the effects of unemployment, discrimination, and violence that many transgender and gender nonconforming people endure. Her work spans various organizations including the Transgender Service Provider Network, the Transgender Law Center's Transgender Economic Development Initiative, and Gender Justice LA. She currently serves on the West Hollywood Transgender Advisory Board. Juarez is a certified trainer for the Los Angeles Police Department, a Latin American Fellow with the University of Colima Mexico, and has assisted local employers and government officials on the development of inclusive policies and laws.

Series Credits

Trans In America (2018) Directed by Cary Cronenwett, Daresha Kyi. Produced by Lindsey Dryden and Shaleece Haas. Executive Producers Molly Kaplan and Chase Strangio. Multimedia Associate Nora Wilkinson. Edited by Jamie Boyle. Additional Editing Carlos Rojas. Advisors Wriply Bennet, Sam Berliner, StormMiguel Florez, Debi Jackson, Janetta Johnson, Drian Juarez. Composer Nikky French. Cinematography by Amy Bench, Shuling Yong. Sound Recording by Jacob Brown, JR Rodriguez, Martin Pedersen. Post-Production Sound by Eric Milano, Love Loft Studio. Grip Louis 'Bolaji' Bailey. Gaffer Nathaniel Kendrick Jr. Production Assistants Qurissy Lopez, Steff Spencer. Legal Services by The Indie Film Clinic of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. With Kimberly Shappley, Kai Shappley, Eisha Love, Jennifer Chavez.

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