



MAJOR!

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Miss Major Griffin-Gracy in MAJOR!, a film by Annalise Ophelian. ©2015 Floating Ophelia Productions LLC

Log line: This is the story of one woman’s journey, a community’s history, and how caring for each other can be a revolutionary act.

Short synopsis: MAJOR! follows the life and campaigns of Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, a 73-year-old Black transgender woman who has been fighting for the rights of trans women of color for over 40 years.

Miss Major’s personal story and activism for transgender civil rights, from mobile outreach and AIDS prevention to fighting the prison industrial complex, intersects LGBT struggles for justice and equality from the 1960s to today. She is a veteran of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion and was incarcerated at Attica months after the 1971 Uprising. Most recently, Miss Major has served as the executive director of the San Francisco-based Transgender Gender Variant Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP), a grassroots organization advocating for trans women of color in and outside of prison that is led by trans women of color.

Miss Major’s extraordinary life and personal story is one of resilience and celebration in a community that has been historically traumatized and marginalized. While mainstream gay rights and marriage equality dominate the headlines, Miss Major’s life is a testament to the fierce survivalism and every day concerns of transgender women of color, who so often live in the margin of the already marginalized.

WINNER OF 20 FESTIVAL AWARDS, INCLUDING:

- **Outfest Los Angeles:** *Audience Award and Jury Special Mention, Best Documentary*
- **Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film Festival:** *Audience Award Best Documentary*
- **Wicked Queer Boston LGBT Film Festival:** *Audience and Jury Prizes, Best Documentary*
- **Queer Screen, Sydney Australia:** *Audience Award Best Documentary*
- **North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival:** *Audience Award Best Trans Feature*
- **Gary International Black Film Festival:** *Audience Award Best Documentary*
- **TRANSlations Transgender Film Festival, Seattle WA:** *Audience Award Best Documentary Feature*
- **Massimadi Afrocaribbean LGBT Film & Arts Festival Montreal:** *Public Choice Award for Best Film in Festival*
- **Kaleidoscope LGBT Film Festival, Little Rock AR:** *Jury Award Best Documentary*
- **Eureka Springs Human Rights Film Festival, Eureka Springs AR:** *Gold Award*
- **QFest New Jersey Digital Film & Media Festival:** *Best Documentary*
- **Queer Hippo International LGBT Film Festival, Houston:** *Best U.S. Documentary*
- **Out Here Now Kansas City LGBT Film Festival:** *Jury Award Best Documentary*

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

Ophelian's film paints a nuanced portrait of a complex figure who doesn't conform to any one simple identity, and it gives voice to a wide range of transgender people who often have no chance to tell their own stories. It is a vivid, thoughtful, and moving film.

– *Wicked Queer 2016 Jury Statement*

This documentary shines a light and shows compassion for so many who would otherwise remain unheard. This is a film that deserves to be seen and celebrated by audiences around the globe. From Stonewall to the fight for trans rights and visibility, Miss Major was and continues to be one of the most important and legendary heroes in the community.

– *Outfest Jury Statement, Documentary Special Mention for Excellence in Filmmaking*

Give[s] us visions of a world to keep moving toward, collectively and with joy.

– *make/shift magazing review, fall 2017*

MAJOR! IN THE PRESS:

Hollywood Reporter
Los Angeles Times
SLUG Magazine review
CBC studio q interview
Truthout interview
She Does the City interview

CURRENT DISTRIBUTION:

NITV/SBS Australia, broadcast and VOD

OUTtv Canada/South Africa, broadcast and VOD

SELECT SCREENINGS:

2016

Stamped Pensacola LGBT Film Festival, Pensacola FL
Sacramento LGBT Film Festival, Sacramento CA
Reel Pride Film Festival, Winnipeg MB (*closing night*)
QFest San Antonio LGBT International Film Festival, San Antonio TX (*closing night*)
TransNation Film Festival, Los Angeles CA (*opening night*)
Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival
New York City Premiere with BCRW
Appalachian Queer Film Festival
OutReels Cincinnati, Cincinnati OH
GenderReel, Boston MA
Rainbow Visions Film Festival, Edmonton AB
International Black Film Festival, Nashville TN
Mix Copenhagen LGBTQ Film Festival, Copenhagen Denmark
Baltimore International Black Film Festival, Baltimore MD
GenderReel, Minneapolis MN (*opening night*)
Reeling Chicago LGBT International Film Festival, Chicago IL
Cinema Diverse Palm Springs LGBTQ Film Festival, Palm Springs CA
Outfest on the Road, Smith College, Northhampton MA
FargoMorehead LGBT Film Festival, Fargo ND
Outflix Film Festival, Memphis TN
Wotever DIY Film Festival, London England (*opening night*)
Atlanta LGBT Film and Music Festival, Atlanta GA (*opening night*)
MICGénero, Mexico City
Vancouver Queer Film Festival, Vancouver Canada
GLITCH Film Festival Summer Season, Glasgow Scotland
Rio Gender & Sexuality Film Festival, Rio de Janeiro Brazil
Damn These Heels LGBT Film Fest, Salt Lake City UT
OutFest Peru, Lima Peru
Twist of Pride Film Festival, Seattle WA
International Black Queer Arts + Film Festival, Oakland CA
OUTEast Queer Film Festival, Halifax Nova Scotia (*opening night*)
ShanghaiPRIDE Film Festival, Shanghai China
Santa Cruz Film Festival, Santa Cruz CA
Kashish Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, Mumbai India
QFest, St. Louis MO
GayCharlotte Film Festival, Charlotte NC
PATOIS Human Rights Film Festival, New Orleans LA
Prisoners Justice Film Festival, London Ontario Canada
Bangalore Queer Film Festival Bangalore, India

2015

San Francisco Transgender Film Festival, Castro Theater *World Premiere*



Production still of Tracie O'Brien taken on set of MAJOR! © 2015 Floating Ophelia Productions LLC

I myself, I've never been to prison, but I've been in jail a few times. People are oblivious to transgender women incarcerated, whether it's prison or jail. And once that door slams, it's open season, you know you're a marked person. People will pass you around, people will buy you and sell you, without you even knowing it. And the prison guards disrespect us, and the prisoners, if other inmates see the prison guards disrespecting us, then they feel like it's carte blanche that they can disrespect us too. – **Billie Cooper, TGIJP member**

I was at a prison where I was the only transgender person, and I can remember a lot of times calling Mammy because I was just having such a difficult time, and sometimes I just needed to hear her voice to give me the strength to move forward from one step to the other. So I often called her and she supported me 100%. Since I've been out she's been there for me 100%, she immediately got me involved in TGIJP. – **Janetta Johnson, current Executive Director, TGIJP**

And I would be so tired, and I would say Mama put my bags in the trunk of your car because I got no place to stay. And Miss Major would take me to the New Pacific and rent a hotel there and say sleep miss thing. From there I knew that someone cared. And whoever this woman was I knew that was my mother, and I asked her to please be my mother. – **Grace Felicia Lawrence, TGIJP Member**

After that, years you heard that *oh someone threw a shoe, someone threw a beer bottle* or whatever have you. I don't know who threw what, and it doesn't matter. All that matters was we were busting the cops' ass, you know what I mean. And you know the girls, we can put up with some stuff, but at that time, we were done, you know. We were just full. Can't take any more, this has got to stop here. And when the community at large got involved, all of a sudden it was white gay guys who had did this, and lesbians, and oh there might have been a drag queen or two there. *Really?* When we frequented that bar, you know what I mean, and hung out there. – **Miss Major Griffin Gracy on the 1969 Stonewall Uprising**



Miss Major & TGIJP members at SF Pride. ©2015 Floating Ophelia Productions LLC

Filmmakers and Crew:

Annalise Ophelian (producer/director) is an award-winning filmmaker, psychologist, and consultant whose work includes *Diagnosing Difference* (2009). She identifies as a white, queer, cis woman, and her work focuses on decolonizing and the documentary filmmaking process.

StormMiguel Florez (co-producer/editor) is a Xicano transgender musician and multi-media artist. He is the owner of Bad Flower Productions, providing services to queer and trans artists of color to help bring their creative projects to life

camera: Avery Hudson, Annalise Ophelian, Michelle Lawler

second camera / gaffers: Gwen Park, Lex Sloane, Conci Althouse, Maria Breaux

location sound mix: Javier Roberto Carlos Briones Menendez, Shannon Deane, Seth Lael Peterson, Laura Dean, Brian Trim, StormMiguel Florez

production assistants: Rebecca Rubenstein, Shawn Demmons, Emily Noll, Dennis Rubin Green, Jonathan McKinley

original illustration: Wriply M. Bennet, Lex Non Scripta, Micah Bazant

animation / titles: AJ Russo

original score: Star Amerasu

sound mix: Dan Olmsted, Berkeley Sound Artists

colorist / consulting editor: Robert Arnold, Lateral Films

poster art: Querido Galdo

trailer: Zach Prewitt, Plot Point Productions

Participants and Process: MAJOR! features interviews with over 20 community members, primarily trans women of color, who share their stories of Miss Major's impact on their lives, as well as their personal stories of survival and resilience. The film was guided by the principle of "nothing about us without us," in cooperation with Miss Major and interview participants, who reviewed the film in the editing stage to ensure that their contributions were represented with accuracy and authenticity.

Community Advisory Board: Our editorial process was guided by feedback from an eight-member community advisory board, who provided feedback on story and community accountability. Our CAB members included: Danielle Castro, Shawn Demmons, Reina Gossett, Janetta Louise Johnson, Janet Mock, Gwen Park, Monica Roberts, and Dr. Kortney Ziegler.

Filmmaker's Statement:

Since production began on MAJOR! in 2013, there has been a tremendous shift in media focus on transgender lives. For a time, the two most famous transgender women in the country, Laverne Cox and Janet Mock, were both Black women who used their platform at every turn to advocate for the most vulnerable in our communities. And yet as Time Magazine informed us that we've reached the "Transgender Tipping Point," and Caitlyn Jenner rivaled Christine Jorgensen for most column inches devoted to a single sensationalized person, trans women of color continued to experience staggering rates of violence, incarceration, seroconversion, poverty, homelessness, joblessness, and voicelessness.

As we were finishing post-production in autumn 2015, the preview for the new Roland Emmerich film "Stonewall" was causing a fury among transgender and queer communities for perpetrating the same sort of whitewashing that has always accompanied the story of the Uprising. Instead of seeing Marsha P. Johnson or Sylvia Rivera or Stormé DeLarverie instigating the event that catalyzed the modern gay rights movement, the film depicted a white cisgender gay man from Kansas throwing the first brick. In the uproar, there has been a call for films that center trans women of color in their own narrative histories. We're incredibly proud to be one of them.

In the next year, at least three films by and about trans women of color will fill movie screens. "Happy Birthday, Marsha," a short film that imagines the day of the Stonewall Uprising from the perspectives of Marsha "Pay It No Mind" Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. "Free CeCe," a documentary following the incarceration and incredible activism of CeCe McDonald, told to producer Laverne Cox. And MAJOR!, our documentary project following the life and campaigns of 75-year-old Black transgender activist Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, who was a contemporary of Marsha and Sylvia, whom Laverne Cox credits with paving the way for her own visibility and success, and who generations of trans women around the United States call "Mama." We couldn't be happier to look down the road and see so much media created by and for our communities.

A consistent theme of the community interviews conducted for MAJOR! has been the importance of visibility and access to the stories and experiences of trans women of color. As an elder, a leader, and an icon, Miss Major has touched countless people and saved lives through her unique capacity to provide one on one care for members of her community. We hope this film project will bring her legacy of inspiration and empowerment and her message of trans brilliance and resilience to audiences around the world.

Yours in community,

Annalise & StormMiguel