



IN TRANSIT AUSTIN UNBOUND

THE FILMED-IN-PORTLAND TRANSGENDER DOCUMENTARY *AUSTIN UNBOUND* PREMIERED LAST NOVEMBER AT PORTLAND'S HOLLYWOOD THEATER. THE FILM DOCUMENTS TRANS MAN AUSTIN RICHEY'S CHOICE TO UNDERGO SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY (SRS) — IN THIS CASE UPPER SURGERY. AUSTIN NOW IDENTIFIES AS A STRAIGHT MALE. HE IS ALSO DEAF, GIVING THE FILM THE STATUS OF ENCOMPASSING TWO DIFFERENT CULTURES.

Since its premiere, *Austin Unbound* has been a hit on the film festival and college lecture circuit. Both Austin and the filmmaker, Eliza Greenwood, were able to attend a number of these showings. I recently caught up with Eliza and fired off these questions:

Courtney O'Donnell: In your role as a doc filmmaker, what things did you learn about trans people that you hadn't known prior to starting the project?

Eliza Greenwood: Before I met Austin I came from a place of judgment, assuming that people should own and accept the bodies they were born with. You see, body image and ownership of my gender and sexuality had come so easily to me. Austin's insistence that he is a straight male totally challenged my beliefs, but it resonated with me. I was inspired to ask if we could make this documentary because I wanted others to be able to meet him, too.



Austin Richey and Eliza Greenwood.
Photo courtesy of Eliza Greenwood.

In Transit is written by Courtney O'Donnell for *Just Out*. Courtney is a Transgender actress, advocate, and writer, including being a regular contributor to The Huffington Post. She is also the star of the film 'Lexie Cannes'. Reach her at Courtney@JustOut.com.

CO'D: Are there aspects of trans people (or being trans) that ought to be more widely known about in the LGBTQ community?

EG: The community should be aware that there is an inclination in the media to tell surgery stories about trans people, and that leads to harmful assumptions that, "all people who are trans want surgery." I admit *Austin Unbound* is a "surgery" film.

CO'D: Did you face any resistance from the LGB or T communities in trying to get the film made?

EG: Our community really embraced this project as many people already knew and were inspired by Austin's story. We were pleased to realize that the LGBTQ community had more sources for grants and private donors than our deaf community offered. We were awarded grants from the Pride Foundation, the Equity Foundation, and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence to help get the film made, for example.

CO'D: Did the filmmaking-friendly, LGBT-friendly town of Portland work to your advantage?

EG: Portland not only has a strong LGBTQ culture, but also a thriving film community. I've found both to be helpful and engaging.

Eliza tells me that on October 18 there will be another screening of *Austin Unbound* at Portland's Clinton Street Theatre (2522 SE Clinton). It will be a fundraiser to help provide SRS for a community member.

It has been a long journey for *Austin Unbound*. The years spent in post-production are now paying off handsomely for the filmmakers. My congrats to them. As for Austin, he continues to live in Portland, still the quite cool guy we met in the film. ■

austinunbound.org