
THERE'S NO STOPPING CHERYL GREEN



COURTESY PHOTO BY ESTHER JUDD

Cheryl Green is the producer and co-director of the documentary "Who Am I to Stop It."

AND WHO AM I TO STOP HER ANYWAY?

Disability-justice advocate produced a documentary about isolation and art after brain injury

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Cheryl Green is a media artist, activist and owner of StoryMinders, an organization set on changing the public's perception about people experiencing traumatic brain injury.

She holds two master's degrees, one in performance as public practice and another in speech-language pathology. Green makes films and media that combine personal narrative and self-advocacy to create

dynamic, artistic tools for disability justice.

I met her when she emailed me in early August in regard to a Street Roots interview I did with Frances Fagan, a woman who had suffered a brain tumor, spent a lot of time healing and rebuilding her life, and was granted a full scholarship to Yale University. Green told me, "You didn't attempt to downplay her health because the public would be too scared by it, nor did you use it as a prop to lure people into a voyeuristic look at someone with a messed-up brain."

This sparked my interest in Green's work. She is the producer and co-director of the documentary "Who Am I To Stop It," working in tandem with producer and co-director Cynthia J. Lopez. The film explores isolation, art and transformation after brain injury and addresses the difficult questions around loneliness, stigma, poverty and how people find their way in the world.

Green identifies as a peer to the artists featured in the film. In 2010, she sustained a traumatic brain injury herself and reached out to the disability arts community to better understand her own brain and recovery after injury. Today, Green works as a fierce social justice advocate.

"Who Am I to Stop It" will be released in 2016, and Green hopes to premiere the film in Portland in the spring. She told me about the impetus to make the film.

Cheryl Green: In the brain injury world, there is this sense that your life is so drastically changed that sometimes we still talk about needing to have your life saved long after your physical life may be threatened.

For me, in 2010, I ended up having to go on medical leave and then eventually resigning from my job – which I hadn't even

started. That really threatened my identity. I had just spent several years going to school to study. It really threw all of my plans for a loop.

When I could, I engaged with disability arts and got involved in disability culture and community through developing an artistic practice. I felt like that part of my life was saved.

I had lost most of my friends, which is very common with TBI (traumatic brain injury). And I reignited a whole friendship circle. I had a sense of community. I had places to go, things to do. The artistic practice gave me a sense of purpose and involvement again. I wanted to know if anybody else would describe the arts as having saved their life after a brain injury as well.

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