



PHOTO BY TALILO MARFIL

Program alumnus and current board member Talilo Marfil on the set of a music video for Swiggle Mandela.

A streetwise production

Outside the Frame celebrates the work of local homeless filmmakers with its premiere June 7

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Jake Averi was 18 when he became homeless and on his own. He moved out of his foster home a month after aging out of the system and, despite his best efforts at getting and keeping his own apartment, within six months he was in a shelter.

"In foster care you're not prepared for anything with life at all," Averi said. "And once you age out of the system, that's it. You're out. You are on your own. You don't have anywhere to go; you can't do anything."

It was not long before Averi found himself at Outside In, an agency serving homeless and low-income youths in Portland.

Soon after, in 2012, he was encouraged to participate in an intensive filmmaking workshop called Guerrilla Theater with Israeli-American filmmaker Nili Yosha. There he learned to operate a digital camera, lighting and sound recording equipment and compose camera shots and angles.

Best of all, though, Averi was able to explore his lifelong love of writing by helping produce the film's script.

His skin is decorated with stick-and-poke text tattoos, but most of his writing, he said, is kept in the hundreds of journals he has managed to fill over his short lifetime. The film workshops at Outside In were his first opportunity to present some of his writing to a wider audience as well as distract himself from the many stressors of being young and on his own.

"When your entire livelihood is condensed into 'I'm 19 years old and I'm homeless, what am I doing with my life?', it's hard to

be creative," Averi said. "It's hard to be anything besides in the mindset of 'Where am I going to go, what am I going to do, how am I going to eat?'" Guerrilla Theater at Outside In gave him an escape from that, allowing him to explore an artistic outlet he may have never been exposed to otherwise in a safe and supportive environment.

Guerrilla Theater has become own full-fledged organization called Outside the Frame, and the film Averi worked on, "The Lost Boys of Portlandia," is set to premiere at the organization's June 7 gala at Revolution Hall, alongside other short films produced by Outside the Frame participants.

Based on the classic story of Peter Pan, "The Lost Boys of Portlandia" tells the tale of young people experiencing homelessness deciding whether to leave the "Neverland" of life on Portland's streets to return to the mainstream society that judges and ostracizes them.

Averi and other filmmakers will be in attendance to present their projects and answer questions from audience members.

"A lot of people speak on behalf of homeless youth," said Yosha, Outside the Frame's executive director. "This is an opportunity for people to hear directly from the source."

A partner organization to Outside In, Outside the Frame engages youth experiencing homelessness in hands-on filmmaking workshops, giving them the opportunity to focus on a creative outlet, learn technical filmmaking skills and share their stories and perspectives with the wider Portland community. Yosha first planted the seeds of the organization in 2009 when she was hired by Outside In to run a peer education program funded by a three-year federal grant. That initial program, called Guerrilla Theater, is the one Averi participated in.

"I was like, how do I engage a group of transient youth who have a lot of creativity and a lot of energy and no tolerance for exercises in futility? Well, I'll make movies. There's something for everyone to do, and

most importantly then you can get it out there for the public to see and hear," Yosha said.

The daughter of acclaimed Israeli independent filmmakers, Yosha grew up understanding the power of film to change minds and wanted to harness that power to challenge stigmas against young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability held by film audiences and the participants alike.

"People internalize all that stuff that people say about them," Yosha said. "I've been told by the participants that it's like a therapeutic intervention because you tell your story, and then you realize what your story is, and then you can kind of move on. It's good all around."

Yosha amicably left Outside In and ended the Guerrilla Theater program after the federal grant ran out, but her experience making films with the youth at Outside In always stuck with her, and she worked to bring her program back.

In June 2015, Yosha did just that when Outside the Frame became its own nonprofit. Now the organization relies on individual donations and money earned through contracting youth film workshops at Outside In led by Yosha and a team of professional filmmakers, and making media content for local businesses and organizations. So far, participants in the program have made short films and music videos exploring, in their own words, issues such as domestic violence, addiction, sexual health and daily life navigating homelessness as a young person.

What: Outside the Frame, in collaboration with Outside In, presents "The Lost Boys of Portlandia," a new documentary featuring the real lost children of Portland. In a riff on Peter Pan, homeless youth debate if and how to return to mainstream society while creating their own film version of the iconic story. The evening will include original film shorts by homeless youth and a Q&A with the filmmakers.

When: 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 7. Doors 6 p.m.

Where: Revolution Hall, 1300 SE Stark St, Portland, OR

Tickets: Free, all ages event. Tickets available at tfpd.brownpapertickets.org/ -- Donations welcomed.

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