



Press release

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BFI and British Council announce new LGBTQ+ short film commissions selected for #MOREFilms4Freedom

Three new short films have been commissioned by BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival, the British Council, and BFI NETWORK as part of the #MOREFilms4Freedom programme. The selected films - all cross-cultural collaborations exploring LGBTQ+ stories - build on the success of the original #FiveFilms4Freedom digital campaign, which originated in 2015 as a partnership between BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival and the British Council.

This year's pilot #MOREFilms4Freedom programme supports urgent, creative collaborations exploring LGBTQ+ themes. The three selected projects will showcase a breadth of distinctive filmmaking voices and explore diverse themes including sexuality and conflict; intergenerational gay culture; and migration and family ties. They include two documentaries and one fiction project, with collaborations between UK filmmakers and Syrian, Palestinian and South African filmmakers currently based in Lebanon, Israel, and South Africa.

The three selected projects have each been awarded a grant from the British Council of £10,500 to cover all stages of production. Each team has been working with Executive Producer Loran Dunn (former Screen Star of Tomorrow, BFI Vision Awardee, and producer, *A Deal With the Universe*) whose support has been provided alongside their funding, to mentor both team and project from script through to edit. The projects are due for delivery in February 2020, with the possibility of screening at next year's BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival in March, as well as appearing alongside the 2020 #FiveFilms4Freedom campaign.

The selected projects and teams are:

The Men Who Speak Gayle (Director Andrew Brukman, writer/storyteller Nathan Kennedy, producers Thembisa Cochrane and Georgie Paget). *Young drag performer Nathan is one of the last people to speak Gayle - a secret language the gay community were forced to invent during Apartheid. He finds out about Louis, an original Gayle speaker living in a conservative desert town in South Africa and wants to put on a performance with him. These men, two generations apart and from different cultural and racial backgrounds have never met - and have no idea how the town will react.*



Let My Body Speak (Director Madonna Adib, producer Noe Mendelle). *Our bodies store memories. The body does not forget. A childhood in Damascus, OCD, the revolution, falling in love with a woman. My body remembers, it keeps the trauma. And after all the losses, I had to start listening to my body.*



Nowhere (Writer-director Christopher Manning, producer Garry Paton, co-producers Laura Samara Hawa and Baher Agbariya). *A young Palestinian woman crosses the Israeli border illegally to find her long-lost brother, who she hopes will be her ticket to a new life far from the West Bank. When she discovers the truth behind his exiled existence, her dreams of a happy reunion are shattered, and she must face her next steps alone.*



The [#FiveFilms4Freedom](#) digital campaign has generated views from nearly 14 million people in 202 countries and principalities since 2015. In previous editions of the campaign, a gap was found in projects and stories originating in countries within the African continent and the Middle East. In response, this year's [#MOREFilms4Freedom](#) is supporting three collaborations between filmmakers in the UK and countries in those regions.

Briony Hanson, Director of Film at the British Council, says:

“One of the unexpected pleasures of our [#FiveFilms4Freedom](#) programme so far has been witnessing just how universal LGBTQ+ experience is wherever you are in the world. I am delighted that these first [#MOREFilms4Freedom](#) commissions will give voice to more international stories, and that three groups of UK filmmakers will have the chance to create new global connections as a result.”

Tricia Tuttle, BFI Festivals Director, said:

“[#FiveFilms4Freedom](#) has brought moving, provocative, beautiful stories with global LGBTQ+ perspectives to audiences worldwide. With [#MOREFilms4Freedom](#), British Council, BFI Network and BFI Flare London LGBTQ+ Film Festival wanted to offer UK filmmakers the opportunity to collaborate creatively with filmmakers from other parts of the world. It's an important project which enables talented filmmakers to learn from each other and explore the similarities and differences of LGBTQ+ experiences and stories across cultures”

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Press images can be downloaded from:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fwid0rv5x1o8zkr/AACSSjeZW49gEbKjkehKrS4ha?dl=0>

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About #FiveFilms4Freedom

#FiveFilms4Freedom is the world's widest-reaching LGBTQ+ online film campaign. The campaign is run by the British Council in partnership with BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival, and has been running since 2015 www.britishcouncil.org/fivefilms4freedom

About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 80 million people directly and 791 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive a 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. britishcouncil.org

About BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival

BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival is the UK's longest running LGBTQ+ film event. It began in 1986 as Gay's Own Pictures. By its 3rd edition it was tagged the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and since then has grown to become the largest LGBTQ+ film event in the UK, and its most anticipated. The Festival changed its name to BFI Flare in 2014 to reflect the increasing diversity of its films, filmmakers and audience. The festival is programmed by Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Zorian Clayton, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Festivals Director, Tricia Tuttle. The full programme of BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival includes feature films, an industry programme, selected films on BFI Player VOD service, a series of special events and archive screenings.

About BFI NETWORK:

BFI NETWORK is the BFI's UK-wide talent development programme, supporting new filmmakers to make short films, develop first features and advance in their careers. <https://network.bfi.org.uk/>

About the BFI

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and Industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE www.bfi.org.uk/