

Press Release

For Immediate Release

New York, November 9, 2017

LOVE IS A HUMAN RIGHT: #FiveFilms4Freedom in New York for LGBTQ Rights

On November 16 at 6 pm, the British Council and Barclays will present #FiveFilms4Freedom at Barclays' New York headquarters at 745 Seventh Avenue. Following the five short films will be a post-screening panel and reception advocating LGBTQ human rights with a digital platform for creative response participation. Together with two of the filmmakers, Rosie Westhoff and Jonny Ruff, the British Council is thrilled to share these thought-provoking films to the public. You can get tickets [here](#).

[#FiveFilms4Freedom](#) is the world's first global digital LGBT short-film program, created in collaboration between the British Council and the British Film Institute (BFI).

The short films selected for #FiveFilms4Freedom 2017 include both drama and documentaries and tell stories of LGBTQ experiences. They range from the tentative steps of first love, through an intimate portrait of an extraordinary family, to an exuberant picture of underground cultural expression.

Throughout the month of November, #FiveFilms4Freedom will be screened in four major cities throughout the US – Los Angeles, Orlando, Washington DC and New York.

In New York, the discussion promises to be particularly interesting. **Andrew Gilmour**, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations will moderate the post-screening discussion with **Sterling Herr**, SAGE Chief Engagement Officer and **Amazin LeThi**, Founder of the Amazin LeThi Foundation and Global Ambassador for Athlete Ally and Vietnam Relief Services. They will be joined by **Rosie Westhoff**, Director of *Crush* and **Jonny Ruff**, Director of *Heavy Weight*. The event is free to the public. You can participate by registering [here](#).

In March 2017, audiences in London enjoyed these films as part of BFI Flare, the BFI's LGBT film festival. At the same time, people from all over the world watched five films from the festival for free online. The program built to a single campaign day – Tuesday, 21 March 2017 – when people everywhere were encouraged to watch and share the films in solidarity with LGBT communities in countries where freedom and equal rights are limited.

In 2016, people in 179 countries worldwide watched the films, with 1.57 million views on websites and social media.

Filmmaker Jonny Ruff, who directed one of the five films, *Heavy Weight* states "It's all thanks to the work the British Council does, supporting LGBTQ communities. I'm extremely proud to continue sharing this story (along with the others). Most importantly, it will continue to open up conversations that need to be had. I was inundated with messages when the campaign was online, many of which were people wanting US screenings and now they have them. I hope they get to see it!"

Rosie Westhoff, Director of *Crush* shares “I got the news *Crush* was selected for BFI flare while I was in the States in February 2016, so it feels quite special and full circle to be back in the States promoting the campaign. I’m really proud to be working with the British Council, who is doing great work supporting LGBTQ stories. They, like me, believe love is a human right.”

In previous years, the selection of 2017 films was international. This year, for one year only, all five films are UK productions. This is the British Council’s way of marking the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in the UK – a landmark moment for human rights.

Notes to editors:

Communicating #FiveFilms4Freedom

The full program name is #FiveFilms4Freedom. Please ensure that this name is used with the British Council logo or name with hashtag and proper capitalization, not shortened or used as an acronym.

British Council USA tour information

Throughout November 2017 in the United States, the British Council is introducing these digital screenings to live audiences in four cities – Los Angeles, Washington DC, New York and Orlando.

- Wednesday, November 1 – Washington, DC
- Thursday, November 9 – Orlando, FL
- Monday, November 13 – Los Angeles, CA
- Thursday, November 16 – New York, NY

#LovelsGREAT

All US tour events are supported by [VisitBritain](#) and the [GREAT campaign](#), using the hashtag #LovelsGREAT. The GREAT campaign is currently running a sweepstakes to send a couple to Britain, which can be promoted alongside our #FiveFilms4Freedom events. More information is available [here](#).

About the British Council:

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

About Love is GREAT:

VisitBritain’s Love is GREAT Britain campaign reinforces the fact that Britain is an all embracing choice for LGBT visitors. As part of the campaign, in 2017 the UK government is participating in local Pride events in 18 cities around the US, Canada and Mexico to highlight the UK as a champion of LGBT equality and a global leader in human rights across policy, business, arts

and culture, and tourism. Come and discover Britain, where a warm welcome awaits. Enter to win a trip for two to Britain at [visitbritain.com/loveisgreat](https://www.visitbritain.com/loveisgreat). #LoveIsGreat

About Barclays' LGBT Agenda:

As a transatlantic consumer and wholesale bank, Barclays supports customers, clients, and colleagues across the broad spectrum of sexuality and gender identity. We partner with leading LGBT organizations around the world; in New York City, our partners include SAGE and the Ali Forney Center. With leadership from LGBT and ally colleagues in our Spectrum network, we not only implement policies that lead our industry, but also visibly champion the LGBT community through initiatives like displaying a 225-foot-wide digital Pride flag on our Times Square office tower for NYC Pride and serving as the headline sponsor for London Pride.