

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TORONTO THEATRICAL PREMIERES

LOCAL TRANS\* STORIES ON THE BIG SCREEN

PREDOMINANTLY QUEER AND TRANS\* CREATIVE TEAMS

FILMMAKERS, SUBJECTS AND ACTORS AT POST-SCREENING Q&A  
AND AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3 DOUBLE BILL

Toronto filmmakers Polina Teif, Mihaly Szabados, and  
Hanlon Uafás-Álainn celebrate trans\* joy in  
**Bittersweet Becoming** and **RE:GEN(D)ERATION**

Toronto, Ontario, June 17, 2024 - Don't miss the theatrical premieres of **Bittersweet Becoming** and **RE:GEN(D)ERATION**, two made-in-Toronto films celebrating chosen family in Toronto's trans\* community on **Wednesday, July 3** at **Innis Town Hall**.

At a time when trans and reproductive rights are under attack, feature-length documentary **Bittersweet Becoming** and mid-length feature **RE:GEN(D)ERATION** are intersectional, heartfelt love letters to the importance of trans\* joy.

Both films were made with predominantly queer and trans\* cast, crew, and creative teams, telling stories authentically from lived experience.

Pride doesn't end on June 30; this special double bill and post-screening discussion on July 3 brings two urgent and beautiful trans\* stories to the big screen in their hometown, for the first time.

This double feature will include a post-screening panel with guests including:

- Moderator: Sedina Fiati
- Hanlon Uafás-Álainn: Filmmaker, **RE:GEN(D)ERATION**
- Thorne Brown: Actor, **RE:GEN(D)ERATION**
- Kiara-Kumail: Actor, **RE:GEN(D)ERATION**
- Polina Teif: Filmmaker, **Bittersweet Becoming**
- Karla Rae James: Co-writer and actor, **RE:GEN(D)ERATION**; co-writer and subject, **Bittersweet Becoming**

## **Bittersweet Becoming | D: Polina Teif | Canada | 2023 | 89 mins**

In **Bittersweet Becoming**, director **Polina Teif** chronicles the life of **Karla Rae James**, a vivacious trans woman in her 60s. While most people her age are planning their retirement, Karla is in a race against time. After taking care of her ailing mother, Karla returns to Toronto with an inheritance and her mother's blessing to finally complete her decade-long late-life transition on her own terms.

“My name is Karla Rae James. I am a late transitioning non-op trans woman and at 64 years of age I am in my 10th year of transition. Originally from the east coast (Cape Breton Island) I moved to Toronto in 2012 so as to access proper support services and be among my own (trans)people. It was a difficult and somewhat traumatic time as I left behind a wife and family and all the trappings that go along with that,” says **Bittersweet Becoming** subject **Karla Rae James**.

“The early years in Toronto were very awkward and uncomfortable and involved a lot of counseling. Accessing hormones took about two years, though once on estrogen things began to improve very quickly, particularly my mental health. Dysphoria was never really a serious issue for me and though I was on the waitlist for SRS and went right to the brink twice I never did have reassignment surgery. I simply couldn't justify it as I did not, and do not, have an aversion to my boy bits.”

“But still the most dramatic effect of all was on my mental health. The difference was essentially that of night and day. All the craziness slowly dissipated to be replaced by a lovely sense of calm, relief and a new sense of purpose. At present my life is full of wonderful projects, fabulous people and a powerful and positive energy. Truth be told I never felt more alive and I've never felt more my true authentic self. I can say definitively that transition has saved my life.”

Festivals/awards for **Bittersweet Becoming**:

- Vancouver Queer Film Festival. Official Selection. Canada. 2023
- RIFFA - Regina International Film Festival, Canadian Documentary - Long Form winner. Canada. 2023
- Lovers Film Festival. Official Selection. Torino, Italy. 2023
- LGBT+ Film Festival Poland. Official Selection: Docs. 2023

## **RE:GEN(D)ERATION | D: Mihály Szabados, Hanlon Uafás-Álainn | Canada | 2023 | 33 mins**

In **Under the Bus Productions'** narrative film **RE:GEN(D)ERATION**, **Tyler**, a young black trans man and emerging artist learns he is pregnant. With his life thrown into disarray and unsure of what to do, he leans on the support of his chosen trans family and the help of a magical phoenix—the guardian of trans people everywhere.

“RE:GEN(D)ERATION is the untold story of Tyler (played by Thorne Brown) a young black trans man contending with a surprise pregnancy with his white boyfriend – and this feels like an

important take at a time when reproductive and abortion rights are being challenged here and rolled back in the US. We often hear the more usual perspective of women birthing and accessing abortion, but I was interested in showing that there are other people in need of supports, such as midwives, and who are also in danger from the attacks on reproductive rights,” says director **Hanlon Uafás-Álainn**.

“Tyler’s intergenerational friend group – or chosen family – is a beautiful phenomenon that is not new to queer and trans people but is much rarer in the greater culture; I wanted to show the importance of those bonds, especially for Tyler, who has lost the support of his family of origin. Tyler’s friend Dan (played by me) is a divorced trans dad, twice Tyler’s age, with all the normal pressures of supporting his kids after leaving a marriage with no financial cushion. His friend Gillian, a trans woman in her 60s, is working a day job at a surplus store with wacky clientele, while at the same time using sex work to save for her next surgery. We wanted to show ‘a day in the life’ of these trans people with a little bit of magical realism in the form of the Phoenix (Kiara-Kumail) who protects and guides them on their paths.

“It was important to me and the rest of the team of trans\* writers (Karla Rae James, Brandubh Stephen Uafás-Álainn, Thorne Brown, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Mihály Szabados) to neither glamourize nor lean into pathos or “trauma porn” as it were – so we made sure that trans people were in the majority on set as well as in the decision-making roles on the creative team.”

Festival awards for RE:GEN(D)ERATION:

- Semi-Finalist, Dublin International Film Awards, 2024
- Best Independent Film, Vancouver International ShortFest, Winter 2024
- Best Feature East London LGBTQ+ Film Festival, England, 2023
- World Premiere Fabulous Independent Film Festival, Sarasota, Florida, 2023

## **MATERIALS:**

Screeners available upon request.

Bittersweet Becoming trailer: <https://vimeo.com/teif/bittersweet>

Available for interview:

- **Hanlon Uafás-Álainn**: Filmmaker, RE:GEN(D)ERATION
- **Karla Rae James**: Co-writer and actor, RE:GEN(D)ERATION; co-writer and subject, Bittersweet Becoming
- **Polina Teif**: Filmmaker, Bittersweet Becoming

Images:

- <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/1fnc0m6os2sou9rdxz82b/AARC0dpZSAzc-1SRqzWfCyl?rlkey=k97jjm5exza4jqsx748vt80ut&st=vl11nin9&dl=0>

Tickets and event information:

<https://plainstage.com/events/bittersweet-becoming-and-regeneration>

### **About Understatement Pictures**

Understatement Pictures is an award-winning boutique film production company renowned for its commitment to compelling storytelling with a social conscience. We specialize in impactful cinematic storytelling, believing deeply in the power of thought-provoking documentary film to inspire change.

### **About Under the Bus Productions**

Under the Bus exists to create empathy for trans people and youth in their communities and to provide hope through representation for trans people who are struggling with the anti-trans sentiments that are all over the media and include bills being brought in both in the US and Canada (as well as around the world) that limit resources for Trans people seeking medical support. We create award-winning live theatre and films that are shown at festivals - with a focus on LGBTQ+ audiences- and are online to be accessible to queer and trans people the world over. Along with our LGBTQ+ mandate, Under the Bus employs trans and queer actors, creatives, and crew, and seeks to uplift and employ others who are traditionally left out of the conversation and the rooms of power including black, indigenous, female, immigrant, and disabled people.

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