



**Be Peace. Choose Peace. Create Peace.**

## PEACE THROUGH ACTION EVENT INFORMATION SHEET

<b>Event Title</b>	<b>2023 Transgender Short Film Festival</b>
<b>Date, Time, Location</b>	06/29/2023, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm ET
<b>Event Webpage</b>	Here
<b>Event Description</b>	

Peace Through Action USA's 2023 *Transgender Short Film Festival* celebrated Pride Month with a free one-night-only virtual film festival screening of three short films that increased public knowledge, challenged stereotypes, and promoted the visibility of the queer and trans community. Viewers explored a range of short films that seek to remedy the absence of authentic representations of transgender people's lives and experiences in the mainstream commercial media. Enriched by reflections from transgender community leaders, this event sought to sharpen public awareness and engage our audience in cross-community dialogue. After attending this event, participants gained insight into the nuanced lived experiences of queer and trans people and learned methods to promote peace in their communities. Punctuated by opportunities for questions and discussion, this free virtual film festival broadened public awareness with an emphasis on personal reflection, community empowerment, and actionable strategies to increase peace and social cohesion.

### Presenter Biographies

**Mackenzie Beninati** is a poet, ultramarathon runner, and professional live voice transcriptionist from Park City, Utah by way of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

As a performing poet, presenter, and speaker, Mackenzie integrates her lived experience as a transgender athlete and former blue collar worker in a style informed by Ferlinghetti, Andrea Gibson, and the "Slam Poetry" movement. Mackenzie has two self published chap books, has appeared in "We Grow Anyway", Deep Overstock literary journal, and has performed in the Moab Pride Slam, Grand Junction Slamming Bricks, DC Capturing Fire Slam, NPS National Poetry Slam, among others.

She's proud to spend her day to day working in the accessibility field, providing closed captions for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

When she's not writing captions or poetry, Mackenzie is out trail running in the Wahsatch Mountains of Utah.

She hopes her insights shed light on the trans experience and help foster greater empathy and allyship.

**Nico Wilkinson** is a poet, organizer, and artist based out of Colorado Springs, CO. They are the organizer of "Keep Colorado Springs Queer," an award-winning open mic by and for the queer community of Colorado Springs, started in 2016. In January 2017 they released "Inauguration," winner of the Pikes Peak Arts Council 2017 award for Best Publication, a collaborative book with Idris Goodwin which celebrated resilience in the midst of the hostile political climate. They are

the 2017 champion of Capturing Fire, the national queer poetry competition and summit. They are the founder of The Quail (Queer Artists in the League of Love) Club, a collaborative living space and farm that operated from 2017-2023.

Their poetry is a celebration of that which lies beyond resilience in the face of adversity: audacity. Writing from Colorado Springs amidst a time of anti-trans violence, they examine the relationship of trans people to this world through the lens of nature's relationship to humans. Their poetry - much like the local flora and trans people who live there - is rooted in the experience of queering the inhospitable landscape that is Colorado Springs.

They're excited to contribute their work to the Transgender Short Film Festival, as they believe in the importance of trans media representation. They are honored to bear witness to the work of other trans creatives working in mediums different from their own and excited to connect with other artists.

**Chris Walonski**, of Saint Petersburg, Florida, is the director of programs and partnerships development and delivery with [Peace Through Action USA](#). Chris is responsible for designing instruction in civic engagement and social engagement concepts and practices; writing and editing educational and promotional materials; planning and delivering educational activities; implementing performance management procedures; and engaging with organizations and networks aligned with Peace Through Action's mission. Chris's programmatic work has engaged a broad range of community intervention strategies and performance-based teaching methods. Prior to joining Peace Through Action USA, Chris served as a program researcher and professor of public speaking at East Tennessee State University. In this capacity, Chris married his passion for project development with the power of personal narrative to help produce a campus-wide sexual consent training program. Chris' love for crafting educational experiences has taken him from public schools in Thailand to the Amazon rainforest of Peru. Upon returning to the United States as a program manager for the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Chris designed and delivered a bilingual training program that incorporated an array of community partnerships serving multicultural and multilingual youth. Chris has served as an AmeriCorps member through Teach For America's Colorado Corps. Chris holds a Master of Arts in communication and storytelling studies from East Tennessee State University. As an avid learner, Chris has completed training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) and holds a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) certification from Cambridge University. Chris is a grateful recipient of the Hemera Foundation's Fellowship for Contemplative Education and is an eager student of Buddhist meditation. In his personal time, Chris has toured the U.S. as a spoken word artist and National Poetry Slam champion.

## Learning Resources

- [Event Webpage](#)
- [Event Presentation](#)
- [Event Recording](#)
- Watch our [first film of the event titled "Miller & Son."](#) Winner of a 2019 Student Academy Award: A transwoman mechanic lives between running her family's auto shop during the day and expressing her femininity at night, until an unforeseen event threatens the balance of her compartmentalized life. (21 minutes)

- Watch our [second film of the event titled “Nasir.”](#) This documentary follows Nasir, a transgender musician, who comes out to several family members over the phone, as he recounts the steps towards his decision to transition, and composes a song to himself. (17 minutes)
- Watch our [third film of the event titled “Pink Boy.”](#) This documentary is an intimate portrait of a gender-creative boy growing up in conservative rural Florida. Butch lesbian BJ successfully avoided dress her entire life until she adopted Jeffrey, who to her shock, starts to dance in gowns and perform for his parents. (15 minutes)
- Event Webpage
- Event Presentation
- Event Recording
- Explore Peace Through Action USA’s [Peaceful Leaders Youth Program](#) including year-round clubs, community arts projects, and a weeklong youth leadership summer intensive.
- Review the [Lemkin Institute’s Statement on the Genocidal Nature of the Gender Critical Movement’s Ideology and Practice.](#)
- Survey this study’s findings surrounding the [Impacts of Strong Parental Support for Trans Youth.](#)
- Learn more about the health implications of transgender-related discrimination in the following study: [Experiences of Transgender-Related Discrimination and Implications for Health: Results from the Virginia Transgender Health Initiative Study.](#)
- Explore this study’s findings related to [School Restroom and Locker Room Restrictions and Sexual Assault Risk Among Transgender Youth.](#)
- Watch this documentary titled [“Growing Up Trans”](#) from PBS (1:23:18).

## Resources and Services in Calvert County, Maryland

- Connect with the [Calvert Rainbow Alliance](#), which focuses on helping make Calvert County a better, happier place for LGBTQIA+ people.
- Explore the [Pride Center of Maryland’s](#) events, resources, and community initiatives.
- Find commission and meeting information, resources, and more at the [Governor’s Offices of Community Initiatives’ Commission on LGBTQ Affairs.](#)