

Cabin Films
presents

THE OTHER CITY



Directed by
Susan Koch

Produced by
Sheila C. Johnson

Co-Producer/Writer
Jose Antonio Vargas

Executive Producers
Sheila C. Johnson
Michelle D. Freeman

For more information: www.theothercity.com

Running Time: 90 minutes

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SYNOPSIS

In every city, there's another city that visitors rarely see. But this other city isn't just anywhere—it's in Washington, D.C. The very city that is home to the capitol of the most powerful country in the world has an HIV/AIDS rate that is not only the nation's highest, but rivals some African countries.

"The Other City" introduces us to the people who live in the shadow of the Capitol but remain almost invisible to the lawmakers and lobbyists who live there. It's about politics and ideology, corruption and bureaucracy, and an epidemic that grew out of control while few people paid attention or cared.

HIV/AIDS is wrapped in a thicket of American prejudices and discomfort about homosexuality, race, class, and drugs—all of which fuel opposition to life-saving programs like needle exchange. Federal denial of funding for programs has created both a higher incidence of the disease and helped shift its demographic to one that is increasingly poor, black and Hispanic. And as the only city in the nation with no state government, Washington D.C. has suffered in a particularly cruel way from this lack of federal government support.

"The Other City" tells the stories of people who haven't let lack of government assistance stop them – people who have taken matters into their own hands. After contracting HIV from a boyfriend who didn't disclose he was infected, Jose Ramirez devotes his life to promoting HIV awareness among Hispanic teens. While living with AIDS and fighting desperately to keep herself and her three young children from being thrown out of their home, J'Mia Edwards realizes she can play a role in helping others. A one-time addict now living with AIDS, Ron Daniels saves lives by providing clean needles and helping drug users receive treatment. And finally, the staff of the AIDS hospice Joseph's House struggles to provide solace to terminal patients' last days, to deal with their own sense of loss, and their constantly declining funding.

For these activists, remedies can't be found within the confines of an office or a regular schedule: for some the work encompasses round-the-clock care-giving, and for others a never-ending trek through the squalid drug dens and clandestine park trails where people engage in risky behavior. Informal HIV/AIDS organizations are set up wherever people can congregate to share experiences and offer mutual support. Still, without financial support, large-scale progress is beyond the scope of these endeavors. In this environment, forward movement means providing comfort for the afflicted and saving as many lives as possible.

"The Other City" is a tribute to ordinary people struggling to live their lives in dignity, to the compassionate ones who lessen their pain, and to those who stand up to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS every day.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I've lived in the Washington, D.C. area most of my life. I love this city. Its glistening marble monuments still stir something inside me whenever I see them. But I'm also very aware that our nation's capital is a divided city. And it's this dichotomy of the "two Washingtons" that I wanted to explore in a film about my hometown. Reading through the Washington Post archives, I became intrigued by the writings of Jose Antonio Vargas, especially his reporting on D.C.'s HIV/AIDS epidemic. How could I have missed the fact that Washington, D.C. had the highest rate of any city in the nation. When I mentioned this fact to friends, they were shocked.

I decided to get in touch with Jose to learn more. I emailed him and he wrote me back from the campaign trail where he was covering the 2008 presidential race. When he finally had a day back home, we met for a cup of coffee. By the end of that first conversation, we had decided to work together to tell the story of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a way of looking at "the other city." Sheila Johnson, an executive producer on my last feature doc, *Kicking It*, immediately understood why this was a story that needed to be told. She offered her full support and came on board as producer. Without Sheila or Jose, this film would not have been possible. Over the course of the next year, we documented the stories of individuals whose families have lived in D.C. for generations. I came to understand how HIV/AIDS intersects and reflects many of the injustices and inequities that plague our capital and our nation—from poverty and race and homophobia, to health care, incarceration rates and education.

I hope this film will not only spark much needed dialogue about AIDS in America, but also make us aware of "the other city" that is part of every city in America.

—Susan Koch

FEATURED CHARACTERS

J'MIA EDWARDS was infected by her boyfriend who never told her he had AIDS. A single mother of three young children, she's unexpectedly given notice that she's being evicted from her apartment when the city's AIDS office changes providers.

Determined to keep her family from becoming homeless, she discovers that the waiting list for subsidized housing for those living with HIV/AIDS is two to three years. J'Mia, an African American woman, has other reasons to worry—AIDS is the leading cause of death for black women ages 25 to 34.

Rejected by his father when he "came out of the closet," **JOSE RAMIREZ** found companionship with an older man, who died of AIDS and left him infected at 17. Jose now spends his days as an outreach worker at La Clinica del Pueblo, educating young Latino immigrants about HIV/AIDS. At night, he can often be found handing out condoms in the clandestine places where people are most likely to engage in

unprotected sex. Young people 13 to 29 account for more than a third of new HIV infections every year.

RON DANIELS runs the needle exchange van and can be found five (sometimes seven) days a week exchanging dirty (used) needles for clean ones to help keep drug addicts safe from HIV/AIDS. It's estimated that a third of HIV cases in D.C. can be traced to dirty needles. Ron got AIDS when he was a heroin addict. As a straight African American man, Ron never thought he would get HIV/AIDS, believing it to be a disease that only infected white gay men. For ten years, Washington was the only city in the country not allowed to use its own city funds on needle exchange. The D.C. ban ended in December 2007, and the federal ban was recently lifted

JOSEPH'S HOUSE provides a final home, nursing services, and community for formerly homeless men and women, most of whom are dying from AIDS. Over the course of six months, we follow the stories of two residents as well as the people who care for them. For many of the residents, it's the first time they've been accepted for who they are, and not judged by their past. Joseph's House is a reminder that nearly 30 years after the epidemic began, people are still dying. For Jimmy, a 35-year-old white gay male, the life-saving medications simply stopped working.

THE COURAGE TO CHANGE GROUP is a weekly support group for formerly incarcerated African American men living with HIV/AIDS. Wounded from many years on the streets and behind bars, they speak openly for the first time about their shame and guilt, fears about their illness and dying, and struggles to find the courage to change. Some of the men live in shelters that push them out at daybreak, forcing them to fend for themselves on the streets until evening—a daily assault on their dignity as well as their fragile health. Through the course of putting on a public performance based on their own stories and words, they once again are “part of society.”

FACT SHEET

Every nine and a half minutes, someone in the U.S. is infected with HIV. Every year approximately 56,000 Americans are infected with HIV. (Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The CDC estimates that approximately 1.1 million adults and adolescents are living with HIV in the U.S.

New York accounts for almost a fifth of all cases (214,870), followed by Los Angeles (66,005) and Miami (62,414) (Source: Avert, an international AIDS charity.) Nationally, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death for African-American women ages 25-34.

Young people, ages 13 to 19 years old, account for more than a third of new HIV infections each year in the U.S.

The rate of HIV among U.S. prison inmates is five to seven times that of the general population.

One third of all AIDS cases can be traced directly back to a re-used syringe, and worldwide programs have used needle exchange to keep the epidemic under control. Congress's twenty-one year federal funding ban on needle exchange denied a vital source of financing until it was ended in December 2009.

HIV/AIDS and Washington, D.C.

At least 3% of Washington, D.C. residents are living with HIV or AIDS, including figures as high as 7.2% for 40-49 year olds, and 6.5% for black males.

To put this fact in perspective, at the height of the AIDS epidemic in 1992, 4% of the people in San Francisco were HIV positive.

The CDC and UNAIDS designate 1% as a "generalized and severe epidemic."

Shannon L. Hader, the former director of Washington, D.C.'s HIV/AIDS administration, made world headlines when she reported that the city's HIV/AIDS rate is "on par with Uganda and some parts of Kenya."

The number of reported HIV/AIDS cases in Washington, D.C. increased 22% between 2006 and 2007.

A recent study of 500 gay men in Washington, D.C. found that 14% are HIV-positive.

FILMMAKER BIOS

SUSAN KOCH (Director), an Emmy- and Peabody-winning filmmaker, directs and produces documentaries and non-fiction programming for worldwide distribution. Her feature documentary, *Kicking It*, about homeless soccer players who compete in an international tournament, premiered at the 2008 Sundance and Tribeca Film Festivals, was released theatrically and on DVD. It was broadcast on ESPN. Koch co-directed and produced *Mario's Story*, about a young Latino, Mario Rocha, who was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison on the basis of one eyewitness and no physical evidence. *Mario's Story* received the Audience Award for Best Documentary Feature at the Los Angeles Film Festival and was broadcast on Showtime in 2009. Koch received a prestigious Soros Justice Media Fellowship for her work with this film. Koch directed the critically-acclaimed documentary, *City at Peace*, featured at film festivals throughout the world and broadcast on HBO. Her work has appeared on ABC, NBC, PBS, HBO, Showtime, MTV, ESPN, The Discovery Channel, National Geographic, Turner Broadcasting, American Movie Classics, The Learning Channel and the Travel Channel.

SHEILA C. JOHNSON (Producer) is an entrepreneur and philanthropist whose accomplishments span the areas of sports, television/film, hospitality, the arts,

education and humanitarian causes. As Vice Chairman and Owner of Monumental Sports & Entertainment, and Managing Partner of the WNBA's Washington Mystics, Johnson is the first African American woman to have a stake in three professional sports teams, also including the Washington Wizards (NBA) and the Washington Capitals (NHL). She is a TV pioneer, having been a founding partner of BET (Black Entertainment Television) and the creator of the award-winning program "Teen Summit." In addition to *The Other City*, Johnson produces films with humanitarian messages, including *Kicking It*, *A Powerful Noise* and *Ella Es el Matador (She Is the Matador)*. As CEO of Salamander Hospitality, LLC, a company she founded in 2005, she oversees a growing portfolio of luxury properties, including: Woodlands Inn, in Summerville, SC; Innisbrook, a 72-hole Golf & Resort Spa in Innisbrook, FL; and the much-anticipated Salamander Resort & Spa, currently being constructed in Middleburg, VA.

In 2006, Johnson was named global ambassador for CARE, a leading aid organization fighting global poverty by empowering women. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and serves as Chair of the Board of Governors of Parsons, The New School for Design in New York. A fervent supporter of the arts and education, President Obama appointed her to the President's Committee of the Arts and the Humanities, and she sits on the boards of Americans for the Arts, the Jackie Robinson Foundation, the University of Virginia Board of Visitors, Howard University and the University of Illinois Foundation. An accomplished violinist, Johnson received a Bachelor of Arts in music from the University of Illinois, as well as honorary degrees from numerous other institutions. She lives in Middleburg, VA, is married to the Honorable William T. Newman, Jr. and has two children.

JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS (Co-Producer/Writer) is an award-winning multimedia journalist. He's a senior contributing editor at *The Huffington Post*, where he launched the Technology and College sections, and was previously a feature writer and national political reporter for *The Washington Post*, where he covered technology culture, HIV/AIDS in Washington, D.C. and the 2008 presidential campaign, among other topics. He won a Pulitzer Prize as a part of a team that covered the 2007 massacre at Virginia Tech.

The media's evolution—and the breaking down of barriers between print and broadcast journalism—has guided his nearly 12-year reporting career. Vargas has written for daily newspapers (*Philadelphia Daily News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*) and national magazines (*New York* and *Rolling Stone*). He has also appeared on several television broadcasts, including CNN, MSNBC, and PBS NewsHour. He serves on the advisory board of the Knight Batten Award for Innovations in Journalism, housed at American University in D.C., and is a graduate of San Francisco State University. Vargas currently lives in New York City.

JEFF WERNER (Editor) is an award-winning editor and director of documentaries, feature films and motion picture advertising. Most recently, Werner co-produced and edited *The Woodmans*, a documentary about the famed family of artists. He's also just finished editing the independent feature *Peep World*, starring Michael C. Hall, Sarah Silverman and Teraji Henson. Werner has worked with Koch on numerous films—

including in 2008, when Werner co-directed and edited the documentary feature *Kicking It*, and in 2006, when he co-directed and edited *Mario's Story*. Werner co-produced and edited the documentary feature *Second Chance Season*, the Nick Young story, which premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival in 2007 and aired on ESPN in the fall of 2008. He edited *The Year of the Yao*, a feature length documentary on Chinese basketball star Yao Ming's first year of living and playing in the U.S. The film was selected by the Toronto International Film Festival and acquired for world-wide distribution by Fine Line. He also edited the Lionsgate release of *Beyond the Mat*, a behind the scenes look at professional wrestling. The film was nominated by the Directors Guild of America for Best Documentary. His editorial work on *The Mirror Has Two Faces* marked the fifth film in which Werner collaborated with Barbra Streisand, with projects dating back to *A Star Is Born* and including *Nuts* and *Yentl*. Werner has also directed two documentaries for HBO: *The Godfather Family* and *Bloodlines*, the latter having been nominated for a Cable Ace Award. He is the winner of several Hollywood Key Art Awards for his work in motion picture advertising.

NEIL BARRETT (Director of Photography) is a British director of photography who has worked on more than 30 broadcast documentary films for National Geographic, the BBC, PBS, The Discovery Channel, The History Channel, NBC, ABC and CNN. With a special interest in international journalism and feature-length documentaries, Barrett has filmed in over 40 countries worldwide. His work has won several awards—a Columbia Dupont award for excellence in journalism, the Edward R. Murrow award for a documentary on the recent war in Liberia, and 3 Cine Golden Eagle Awards. His films have been shown at the Sundance, Toronto, Tribeca, Full Frame, SilverDocs and Los Angeles Film Festivals.

CREDITS

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Producer	SHEILA C. JOHNSON
Co-Producer/Writer	JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS
Executive Producers	SHEILA C. JOHNSON MICHELLE D. FREEMAN
Editor	JEFF WERNER
Director of Photography	NEIL BARRETT
Additional Photography	HORACIO MARQUINEZ
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Sound Design	KENNEDY WRIGHT
Associate Producer	GIARDY RITZ