

16-year-old filmmaker tackles legacy story of Vancouver's early HIV epidemic

Film festival program aims to bridge knowledge and storytelling gaps between generations

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Filmmaker Moé Yang has been alive for 16 years, the same amount of time John Dub has survived beyond the 40th birthday he was told he'd never see.

Dub is the focus of Yang's short film which is screening as part of the Troublemakers series at the [Vancouver Queer Film Festival](#) this week. The project paired 10 members of the LGBT community — who are over 55 — with young filmmakers.

Dub was diagnosed with HIV at the age of 29, shortly before the HIV/AIDS crisis peaked in British Columbia. At the time, there was a shortage of hospital beds and an average of one person dying each day.

"I had lots of friends around me that all of sudden were there and a week later, they weren't," he told Stephen Quinn, guest host of CBC's [The Early Edition](#).

"There wasn't much out there for us to take medication-wise, and they were all very toxic," he recalled.

Hard won victories

The Troublemakers project paired young LGBT filmmakers with older, "troublemakers" like John, with the hopes of building cross-generational connections in the gay community while producing short documentaries.

"They called me a troublemaker because I've been around the community for a good amount of time, doing lots of volunteer work and sticking up for queer rights," said Dub.

Capturing the various battles Dub has fought, his accomplishments and his leadership in Vancouver's community was Yang's goal.

"I want people to take away that HIV is just a part of John's life and the things he's done throughout it are so much more important and define the person who he is," said Yang.

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Yang said she didn't know much about the realities of the HIV/AIDS crisis because it wasn't taught in school and she had few opportunities to meet older gay people.

Working with John, she said, helped her understand just how much has changed and how hard-won some of those changes have been.

For John, the opportunity to preserve the legacy of the community, while mentoring and teaching young gay people about the community's roots, was important.

"There was a very trying time before we got to where we are now," he said. "I'm so happy we are where we are now. Is there some work to do? Of course. There always is."

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