

Documentary proposal on the lives of transgender individuals in a New Delhi shelter home.

Title: Sisterhoods of violence and resilience: a look through a shelter home for transgender people.

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Statement of Purpose

This proposal seeks a Calcutta Research Group (CRG) and Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna (IWM) Short-Term Media Fellowship to explore the underreported realities of transgender individuals residing in a designated shelter home. “Garima Greh,” in New Delhi. The project aligns with the fellowship's theme of "Urban Fault Lines and Violence" by investigating the social exclusion faced by the transgender community and the bonds of resilience and friendship that emerge because of it. The documentary will explore the lives of residents of a shelter home designated for the transgender community in the outskirts of New Delhi, and their journey of belonging within the city. It aims to create a nuanced and humanizing narrative that dismantles stereotypes and sheds light on the challenges and resilience of this marginalized community within the urban landscape.

Rationale

Transgender people in India face significant social and economic hardships. Often ostracized by families and communities, they struggle with finding safe and secure housing. The Garima Greh project established by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment offers them a fresh start in life. Garima Grehs, though offering basic necessities, can become restrictive environments. Other shelter homes, government-run or privately-funded are often inaccessible for people from the transgender community. Their rights to privacy and safety are at risk at other shelter homes. Even in the geographical space, the Garima Greh is situated in a low-income neighbourhood of

Dabri Mor, on the outskirts of New Delhi. The shelter home stands tall and resilient amidst an environment that is transphobic and prejudiced – much like the resilience of its residents. The Garima Greh has not only been a site for friendships, but also love, desire, longing, healing and rest. Little is known about the daily realities, aspirations, and struggles of trans individuals within these shelters. This shelter home is also a respite from the cycle of limitless and systemic violence transgender people go through. Amidst the chipping walls of this shelter home, it offers a chance at friendship, sisterhoods, and community formed through lived experiences of hate crimes and inequity. A documentary film can uniquely capture their experiences and emotions, fostering empathy and understanding.

Research Questions

- How does the shelter environment function, and what are the daily challenges faced by trans residents?
- What narratives of self and community emerge from within the shelter?
- How do trans residents navigate their identities within the shelter space and the broader urban context of New Delhi?
- What are their aspirations for the future, and how do they envision achieving them?

Methodology

This project will employ a multi-pronged approach:

- **Immersive Ethnography:** Building trust and rapport with shelter residents, conducting in-depth interviews that delve into their experiences. These interviews will form the core content for the documentary.
- **Participatory Photography (Optional):** While the primary focus is the documentary, you can consider incorporating participatory photography workshops as a way to empower residents and potentially capture visuals for the documentary with their consent.

- **Archival Research:** Examining government policies, shelter regulations, and local media coverage to understand the broader social and political context.

Deliverables

- **Short documentary film (up to 30 minutes):** The central focus of the project, capturing the residents' stories, struggles, and aspirations in a compelling and humanizing way.

Dissemination

- The documentary will be submitted to CRG for publication and presented at the media workshop in Kolkata.
- Film festival submissions and screenings at relevant community events will be the primary way to share the work.
- The documentary will be uploaded to online platforms like YouTube or Vimeo for wider accessibility.

Why This Project Matters

This documentary transcends mere reporting. It aims to amplify unheard voices and give agency to a marginalized community. By capturing their stories in a compelling way, it seeks to challenge prevailing prejudices and advocate for more inclusive housing and support systems for trans individuals within Delhi and beyond. It aligns perfectly with the fellowship's focus on "city fault lines" by exposing the fault lines of social exclusion and fostering critical reflection on urban spaces as sites of both marginalization and resilience.

Ethical Considerations

- We will obtain informed consent from all participants before filming any interviews or footage within the shelter home.

- We will ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants throughout the filmmaking process.
- We will collaborate with the shelter administration to ensure the project is respectful and beneficial to the residents.

Conclusion

This media fellowship project offers a unique opportunity to shed light on the uncovered lives of trans people within a shelter home. By creating an immersive documentary, it aims to contribute to a more inclusive urban imaginary and advocate for change within the social fabric of New Delhi. CRG and IWM's support through their team of mentors, educators and filmmakers would provide us better guidance to work through this project within the stipulated timeline.