



STEVEN M. FULOP
MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

CITY OF JERSEY CITY
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY HALL | 280 GROVE STREET | JERSEY CITY, NJ 07302
P: 201 547 5500 | F: 201 547 5442



STEVEN M. FULOP
MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2023

Contact: Kimberly Scalcione
Press Secretary

***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**Jersey City Feature Film 2 Decades in the Making Debuts at
Garden State Film Festival**

PREMIERING
Strength Through Visibility: 20 Years of PRIDE in Jersey City

A Story Highlighting the Local LGBTQ+ Fight for Fair Treatment and the Fragility of Progress

To view the film’s trailer, please visit [here](#).

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop and **City officials** will be in the audience for the premiere showing of a film created by municipal employees that highlights the early struggles of local gay, lesbian, and queer residents for acceptance in their community and by local government.

“Strength Through Visibility” chronicles the 20-plus year saga of how a group of local gay and lesbian residents refused to take “no” for an answer when former elected officials rebuked their requests for equal treatment and funding in hosting a LGBT festival, similar to events already taking place in the 1980-90’s hosted by various ethnic and culturally-based groups.

“This is a story that needs to be told. The people featured in the documentary are community leaders who have played significant roles in Jersey City’s history surrounding LGBTQ+ rights. Special thanks to the City workers who created such a compelling film that brings to life the 20 years of plight, resilience, and an unwillingness to give up despite the times. We have made a complete 180-degree change since those times, and I’m proud to say that today we are consistently named one of the most LGBTQ+ friendly cities in the nation,” said **Mayor Steven Fulop**, a strong proponent of LGBTQ+ rights who created numerous policies in support of LGTQ+ issues that guarantee equitable treatment in the workplace and all aspects of life.



In 2014, Fulop restructured the Mayor’s LGBTQ+ Task Force to focus on issues impacting the LGBTQ+ community to provide equal opportunity to all of our diverse employees, residents, and businesses. The group of City workers requested a video tribute be created by the Communications Division in honor of the 20th anniversary of the first “Pride Festival”, which took place in 2001. That video tribute was thoughtfully developed into the 40-minute feature.

“I am very proud and grateful to the Jersey City LGBTQ+ pioneers and prominent leaders who demonstrated strength and bravery in facing so many challenges. Their aspirations, contributions and achievements are truly something to be recognized, respected and celebrated,” said **Jeanna Abuan, Task Force Chief Coordinator**.

The 40-minute film features commentary from **Mayor Fulop, former Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy, State Senator Sandra Cunningham, and representatives of the LGBTQ+ community**. Like the local origins of the Jersey City Pride cause, **Writer and Director Chris Englese** worked with nearly every member of the City’s Communication team who took part in the filming, editing, and creating all the necessary elements for the film.

“This film depicts the sheer tenacity and dedication of the local LGBTQ+ community and proves that a small number of residents can implement real and lasting change,” Englese said. “In writing and directing this film, my goal is to provide unique insight into how it took decades of perseverance to get to where we are today, and hopefully, it will inspire others.”

Communication Division Director, Greg Corrado, a creator of multiple feature films, took special interest in the project and co-produced the film with **Deputy Director Stan Eason**.

“Similar to how this project touched each office in our Communications Division, this is a story that impacts our entire community,” Corrado said, an Assistant Business Administrator for the City whose movie credits include the writing and directing of “A Dangerous Place.” “When you juxtapose the challenges the local LGBTQ+ community had to overcome against the threats to the Constitutional Rights of people being overturned by this current Supreme Court in Washington, it’s clear that progress is fragile and this film completely captures that sentiment.”

To view the film’s trailer, click [here](#). For further information regarding the March 26 film premier at the Garden State Film Festival in Asbury Park, you can reach the Task Force at 201-547-4538 and at mayorslgbtqtaskforce@jcnj.org or go to the [film festival link here](#).

“This compelling story needs to be shared with the world. Once we saw the concept, we knew we had to have the documentary in our Film Festival, and it is closing out the entire show,” concluded **Lauren Concar Sheehy, Executive Director of the Garden State Film Festival**.

All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Scalcione at KScalcione@jcnj.org.