

10/04/16

POSITIVE HELL - SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL OF OUR FILM FROM THE LONDON INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

By Joan Shenton

I was very excited when I heard that our half hour documentary *Positive Hell* had been selected for screening on April 17th at the London Independent Film Festival (LIFF).

We prepared a press release <http://bit.ly/poshell-LIFF> and were looking forward to a lively debate after the screening.

Our film tells the story of five individuals in the north of Spain who had been either intravenous drug users or alcoholics in their teens. They were treated in rehab units and overcame their addictions but they had tested “HIV” antibody positive. Thirty years on they are fit and well having refused to take antiviral medication. One of them, Dr Ramon Garrido, has never taken any antiviral medication. Another, Manoel Penin took antivirals for short periods of time but gave them up. Raquel Sanz stopped taking antivirals because they made her feel so ill. She married and had two daughters. Both daughters inherited their mother’s “HIV” antibodies but (as is common) lost them after eighteen months. Raquel’s eldest daughter has had six children and the younger one has followed a successful career. They are both immensely grateful to have been kept out of the “AIDS zone”.

Positive Hell has already been nominated for best documentary at the Marbella International Film Festival, and selected for LACinefest, Digital Griffix online festival, and the Indie Festival 01.

To our dismay, on the day our press release was sent out about the LIFF screening (Friday, 8th April), the festival director, Erich Schultz, wrote to tell us that he had “pulled” our film. He said he had received warnings from four HIV/AIDS charities urging him not to screen our film. They threatened protests at the screening venue and at the festival sponsors premises “if we [LIFF] don’t comply”. Schultz continued saying he had received twenty protest letters including one from the LGBT society at the university where he teaches and where all of his selection committee comes from.

He writes, “And now, my selection committee (all students where I teach) are unanimous in wanting to step away from screening *Positive Hell*.”

It seems very odd that the committee that selected our film is suddenly unanimous in wanting the film withdrawn.

They had obviously been 'got at'. It is not unusual for HIV/AIDS charities to receive funds from the pharmaceutical industry, whose henchmen and women are always on the lookout for any challenges to their medical policies and their profits.

It is not the first time this unacceptable interference has taken place.

Only last January (2015) before the screening of *Positive Hell* at the Frontline Club in Paddington, the club received complaints from several groups objecting to the screening. Happily, the club ignored the complaints and we went ahead with a peaceful screening to a full house with a lively debate afterwards.

Two years ago I was to be on the panel after the screening at SOAS of Anne Sono's film "I Won't go Quietly". The film highlights the views of several "HIV" positive women who challenged the science behind the HIV/AIDS hypothesis. On the day of the screening the Students Union which was linked with an AIDS charity banned the film. We protested and called the deputy pinciple down. He said he could do nothing because the venue had been booked by a student group.

I am flabberghasted at the banning of our film by the London Independent Film Festival. We have been given no reason for this blatant censorship. I have written to Erich Schultz asking him whether he knows if those who are protesting are right. Does he know who funds these HIV/AIDS charities? What's wrong with a bit of disagreement at an 'independent' film festival? Isn't that what Q&As sessions are for?

I am also very concerned about the lack of freedom of speech on student campuses. Some Students Unions are displaying fascist attitudes. We have been penalised with no redress and no chance to air our views, let alone the science behind the debate this film highlights.

Ends

Below is the Press Release sent out the morning of the day the film was withdrawn

Published online with high quality images at <http://bit.ly/poshell-LIFF>

April 08, 2016
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTROVERSIAL HIV/AIDS FILM SCREENS AT LONDON INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

- * 2016 festival selects contentious HIV/AIDS documentary, risking stormy debate
- * Positive Hell shows lives of five people diagnosed as HIV-positive, questioning global orthodoxy on diagnosis and treatment
- * Screening on April 17, 2016

London, UK. The 2016 London International Film Festival (LIFF) is to screen a controversial 30 minute documentary that questions the world's orthodox views of HIV and AIDS. Positive Hell, written and narrated by journalist Joan Shenton and directed by Andi Reiss of Yellow Entertainment, will be shown on Sunday April 17 at the Shortwave Cinema, Bermondsey, in a double bill with Sillhouette Secrets, also directed by Andi Reiss.

Positive Hell - made to complement last year's re-publication of Shenton's equally controversial 1998 HIV and AIDS book, Positively False - tells the personal stories of five people who lived their lives in fear of their HIV-positive diagnoses but who did not receive the standard HIV treatments. All went on to live entirely normally for decades, not least having children - the outcome of unprotected sex which has always been the ultimate taboo - who themselves are now healthy adults and HIV negative.

Joan Shenton said: "Positively False and Positive Hell together present a damning indictment of the orthodox approach to HIV and AIDS, in which a relatively quick, questionable diagnosis can lead to a lifetime of mental and physical anguish. Had people not taken that test, so many would have gone on to live utterly normal lives.

"We have been saying this for 18 years and science has still not produced any vaccine or other cure, nor proven that a retrovirus called HIV is the cause of the various old, known diseases lumped together under the name AIDS."

Shenton's book has attracted much criticism - from polite challenge to vilification - not least among those who act as community spokespeople for people affected by HIV and AIDS. To some, Shenton is an "AIDS denier". Shenton calls herself an AIDS dissident.

The film Positive Hell is exposed to the same backlash.

Shenton continues: "As our film now shows, many who were diagnosed and who rejected the orthodoxy and the treatment, went on to experience decades of normal life. An HIV-positive test result can be caused by many factors, from recreational drugs to pregnancy, leading to so much inappropriate treatment.

"Billions of dollars and millions of lives have been wasted. And who has benefitted?"

Positive Hell and Sillhouette Secrets will be screened at 9pm on Sunday April 17, at the Shortwave Cinema, 10 Bermondsey Square, London SE1 3UN. Screening tickets must be pre-booked. A small number of press tickets are reserved for accredited journalists, and film or arts reviewers. To request a ticket please promptly email joanshenton@clara.co.uk or call [07957 585515](tel:07957585515).

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Joan Shenton has extensive experience of producing and presenting television and radio programmes, including many peak time network documentaries for the BBC, Channel 4, Central TV, and Thames TV.

Shenton's independent production company Meditel Productions has won seven television awards and was the first independent company ever to win a Royal Television Society Award for an episode of Channel 4's Dispatches. It has produced eight network documentaries for Channel 4, Sky News and M-Net, South Africa on the AIDS debate. AIDS - The Unheard Voices won the Royal Television Society Award for Current Affairs.

Her book Positively False - Exposing the Myths around HIV and AIDS was originally published by I.B. Tauris in 1998 and was revised and republished in 2015, updated to include contributions from 20 leading dissident scientists and journalists, plus Peter Duesberg et al's withdrawn 2009 paper for Medical Hypothesis and the script of the film Positively False. It is available in soft back, Kindle or EPUB formats.

Positively False - Birth of a Heresy was a 90 minute documentary co-produced with director Andi Reiss. It was nominated for best documentary at Lucerne and Marbella international film festivals.

Positive Hell is a 30 minute documentary written and narrated by Joan

Shenton and co-produced in 2015 with director Andi Reiss of Yellow Entertainment.

* Nominated for best documentary at Marbella International Film Festival

* Selected for Los Angeles CineFest

* Selected for 2016 London International Film Festival

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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