

## Pigeonhole Episode 04

### Introduction

[bright ambient music]

CHORUS OF VOICES: Pigeonholed, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole.

CHERYL GREEN: Today you're gonna hear the audio from a super-short film I made in March of 2017 for the [Free Our People Film Contest](#) at the Center for Disability Rights New York State. [I wrote a post about it on the blog](#) where you can check out more about the contest and why I entered it. The film is "In My Home," and it took first prize.

There's some audio description during the film. But let me give you a wee bit of pre-show to set it up. It's about six minutes long, and everything takes place inside or just outside the homes of three people: Erik, Yulia, and Kiersi. All three are power wheelchair users, and they're all sitting in their wheelchairs the whole time except for one dance sequence that Erik does. It's spring in Portland, so everyone's basically dressed for winter.

Erik and Yulia's house is spacious, decorated with very vibrant, eclectic art and books, and the walls are painted bright colors. Their backyard is a giant expanse with a range of types of trees, new grass, and mud. Near a metal fence at the back of the yard is a plain metal bed frame with a thin mattress and purple bedspread on it. During an improvised movement piece, Erik is on his back on that bed, exploring the shapes of the trees around him with his hands and examining the cold metal of the bedframe. Kiersi's apartment is a wide-open studio with plain white walls and a few scattered pieces of art. She goes to the city bus shelter right outside her apartment building and also sits in the sunshine in the building's courtyard.

I don't want the pre-show Audio Description to last as long as the film, so I'll wrap up with two last bits: At about a minute and a half in, I mention that Erik and Yulia's hands dance on a table top. What I didn't squeeze in there is that they're both wearing wedding bands, and they both refer to those rings. Also, there is one animal in almost every indoor shot in the film, and Yulia's wearing a leopard print shirt. It would be a shame to not know about that shirt.

You can view the film on Vimeo with Closed Captions. And there's a version the [with the Audio Description](#), or you can watch [without Audio Description](#).

### The film: In My Home

[music]

YULIA: I've never lived in an institution, but I have many close friends that have.

ERIK: I've lived my entire life in fear of institutionalization.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Text: "Government policies and funding should not perpetuate the forced segregation, isolation, or institutionalization of people with disabilities of any age." Delegates at World Institute on Disability, July 1999.

KIERSI: Our liberation is tied to others', right?

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Title: *In My Home*. Colored bars and circles shift across the screen.

Now, thick clouds slowly pass by.

Then, Yulia, a white woman sits in a power chair with a tuxedo cat on her lap.

YULIA: I love this house.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Drawings hang on bright green walls.

YULIA: I don't want anything white. I want color, lots of color.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Animal figurines in potted plants.

YULIA: This house makes me feel calm, creative.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Sculptures of human torsos made of wire on the wall.

YULIA: It's very accessible.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Yulia passes chalk drawings on the wall of people riding wheels.

[cat purring]

YULIA: It makes me feel happy to be able to offer it to friends in need as well.

ERIK: People should live where they want to live and have informed choices about where they want to live.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Erik holds the cat.

KIERSI: I like to be out. Having your own space, you can make your own rules.

At the adult foster care home, I could only be out for a certain amount of time. I've just started dating and going out and being social.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Erik and Yulia's hands dance on a table top.

ERIK: I don't think people expect people with disabilities to have relationships all the time. I like people being able to see that I'm actually in a relationship. It's engraved on the inside, "With Love, Yulia."

YULIA: "With Love, Yulia."

ERIK: And Yulia's says,

BOTH: "With Love, Erik."

ERIK: One of the things about moving into an institution that's really scary is potentially not being able to live with my partner.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: The breeze blows apart a dandelion puff.

[music]

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Kiersi, a South Indian American woman who experiences CP and her gray tuxedo cat.

KIERSI: Rowena. She's a ball of energy.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: The cat chews on a pineapple.

KIERSI: One of the nicest, social cats. A little sasshole, and I love her.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Knocks the pineapple to the ground, then plays with an orange.

KIERSI: I could never even think about having a pet in the adult foster care home, 'cause so many other needs weren't being taken care of. I was in survivor mode all the time.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Kiersi waves a cat toy for Rowena.

ERIK: He's the best dog in the whole world. He's my emotional support.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: A small black dog steps onto the wheelchair footplates.

YULIA: If we were stuck in a nursing home or institution, we wouldn't be able to have our animals with us.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: The cat walks across Yulia.

YULIA: Onyx: 10-year-old.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: The dog stares up.

YULIA: Gender neutral, up for anything, loves people, loves to chase balls.

[tennis ball bounces, dog claws skitter across the floor]

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Trots off with a ball in his mouth. The cat, asleep.

YULIA: Lefty's ready to party. She always has her tuxedo on. Her favorite activity is looking at squirrels. They're part of our family.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Printed curtains. A tree with leaves in the shape of hearts, love birds nuzzling.

YULIA: I can do anything in this house. I can choose to leave or not, when to go to bed or not.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Erik, Yulia, and another pass slices of pie back and forth.

KIERSI: I still make my own choices about when I go out and where I go out to, how long, and who comes over.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Forks held high, they inch their forks toward the pie in slow motion...then eat.

Sun peeks through pink blossoms. A metal bed on display in a muddy yard. Erik, a male-identified short stature individual lies on the bed.

[distorted noise, birds chirping]

ERIK: It's about curves instead of straight lines. It's about color versus grayness. Freedom and confinement. It's about love and expression, expression of love and expression of self. It's this interplay of an institutional bed, the confinement of that.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: He dances with slightly hyper extended fingers.

ERIK: Also, the freedom of nature and being outside.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Gently touches the headboard bars.

ERIK: I think it's shame. I think it's they sort of put the person where you can't see them anymore. I think it's literally like shame and embarrassment that puts people in institutions.

YULIA: No freedom of choice at all. Makes me feel being stuck: Stuck in bed, stuck inside, no choice of where I wanna go, how I want things done.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: A painting: "all you need is love and a cat."

KIERSI: I'm happy to be here because I'm still recovering from the suffering that I experienced while in the adult foster care home and the hardship I had to go through.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Grabs a drink from the fridge. The cat flicks her tail. Kiersi types on her laptop.

KIERSI: What I value about having my own space is just to have space to live.

[music]

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Outside, she smiles and laughs as the camera sweeps past her in the courtyard.

Credits roll:

Filmmaker: Cheryl Green

Featuring: Yulia Arakelyan, Kiersi Coleman, Erik Ferguson

Animation: Foxdie

Music: *Gentle Wind*, *Cell*, *Sorrow the Sun*, and *No Need to Sleep* by Ketsa.

Video assets: Phil Fried

Audio assets: DamianMinnie

Thank you: Coverage Defense Committee, Julian Morris, Thea Berns-Janousek

Copyright 2017 Cheryl Green

## Wrap-up

Every episode is transcribed. Links, guest info, and transcripts are all at [WhoAmIToStopIt.com](http://WhoAmIToStopIt.com), my disability arts blog. I'm Cheryl, and...

TWO VOICES: this is Pigeonhole.

CHERYL: Pigeonhole: Don't sit where society puts you.

[bright ambient music]