

Istanbul, with its current boom of drastic, neoliberal urban renewal, displays in rare clarity how gender minorities are casualties of gentrification.

Love You”? Rae’s Bandcamp page (raespoon.bandcamp.com) features covers of both, along with all of the tracks featured in this film, available to stream or download.

**TRANS X ISTANBUL**  
**Director: Maria Binder**  
 {MARIA BENDOR-CORNIX FILM}

“I live in a world built on the penis-and-vagina system,” says Ebru K. with half a laugh, kicking off *Trans X Istanbul*, a documentary by German filmmaker Maria Binder.

Binder follows a dynamic community of trans women divided across two neighborhoods in Istanbul, where rapid developments, and the accompanying rent hikes, have driven the city’s sexual and ethnic minorities from one neighborhood to another, and another. The women, who have already abandoned the city center, congregate largely in a single apartment complex. Other residents of the complex begin staging protests against their new

neighbors, eventually leading police to seal the apartments of the 10 trans residents to investigate allegations of prostitution. Ebru’s social circle operates as a family, supporting each other through evictions, attacks, and death, as they work toward setting up a “trans retirement home” where they can find stability and grow old.

LGBTQ rights have been slow to take hold in Turkey, and trans women suffer significant injury because of entrenched intolerance. Often discriminated against by employers, many trans women resort to sex work. *Trans X Istanbul* follows Ebru as she seeks out information about a friend murdered in her apartment, and coordinates a citywide search for a young trans woman whose throat was slashed. Yet Ebru and her friends have not let tragedy and injustice rob them of their agency, and they fight with protests and campaigns for the rights to their homes and their safety.

Istanbul, with its current boom of drastic, neoliberal urban renewal, displays in rare clarity how gender minorities are casualties of gentrification—a trend that occurs more subtly in cities around the world, including in the United States. Against this canvas, Binder succeeds in showing the juncture where gradual ejection of “undesirable” urban populations results in real and sometimes fatal violence. Though Ebru is navigating the streets of Istanbul, her story is representative not just of gender minorities, but of other minority populations contending with “out of sight, out of mind” policies in urban areas.

— ELIZABETH HEWITT

**FOLLOW UP WITH:** A visit to transxistanbul.com, where Binder will be collecting short videos made by transgender women throughout Turkey.

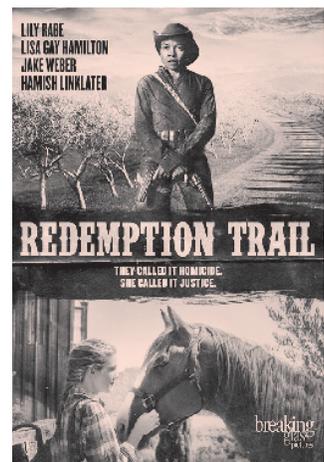
**REDEMPTION TRAIL**

**Director: Britta Sjogren**  
 {BREAKING GLASS PICTURES}

Saddle up, lovers of horses and emotional thrill rides. *Redemption Trail* is a contemporary Western that tells the story of two women, Tess (Lisa Gay Hamilton) and Anna (Lily Rabe), who have escaped personal trauma and seek liberation in their shared reclusion. In the heart of sunny California, Anna grieves the loss of a family member while Tess recovers from the violence she suffered from her involvement with the Oakland Black Panthers. Though the two women are an unlikely pair, they become close when Tess saves Anna’s life after a suicide attempt.

Not wanting to return home, Anna moves into Tess’s house and the women shun the responsibilities of relationships in favor of spending quiet time together. Tess is pursued by the owner of the ranch she tends to, and Anna’s husband David implores her to come home so they can deal with her grief together—but both women refuse to make commitments to the men. Instead, they have meaningful, soul-baring, and Bechdel test-passing conversations about their turbulent pasts. Along with the drama of Tess’s and Anna’s personal lives, the film also follows a local woman named Lilia, who shows up sporadically throughout the film but whose story is never fully developed. However, the titular redemption seems to come from this storyline, as Tess and Anna eventually avenge a great injustice done to Lilia and her family.

Still, *Redemption Trail* lacks a sense of resolution. Director Britta Sjogren seems intensely focused on the beauty of the piece, with gorgeous cinematography of Sonoma County and the California plains and skies.



But watching the women mount and dismount horses and walk romantically through fields of grain while never really resolving their personal strife grows a bit tiresome. While there are many deeply emotional one-line exchanges set to a background of vineyards and sunsets, *Redemption Trail* ultimately fails to redeem. — ANNA MILLER

**WATCH THIS WITH:** Your favorite horse-patterned hankie.

**OUT IN THE NIGHT**

**Director: Blair Dorosh-Walther**  
 {THE FIRE THIS TIME THE FILM}

Feeling safe at night can mean many different things, and the threats we face can vary greatly. For the group of queer black women who would come to be known as the New Jersey Four, danger materialized in a place they expected to feel safe—Manhattan’s West Village. One night in 2007, a man on the street harassed them with gendered and sexualized threats and epithets as they walked by him. When they responded, he initiated a physical altercation with them that culminated in one of the women stabbing him with a penknife.