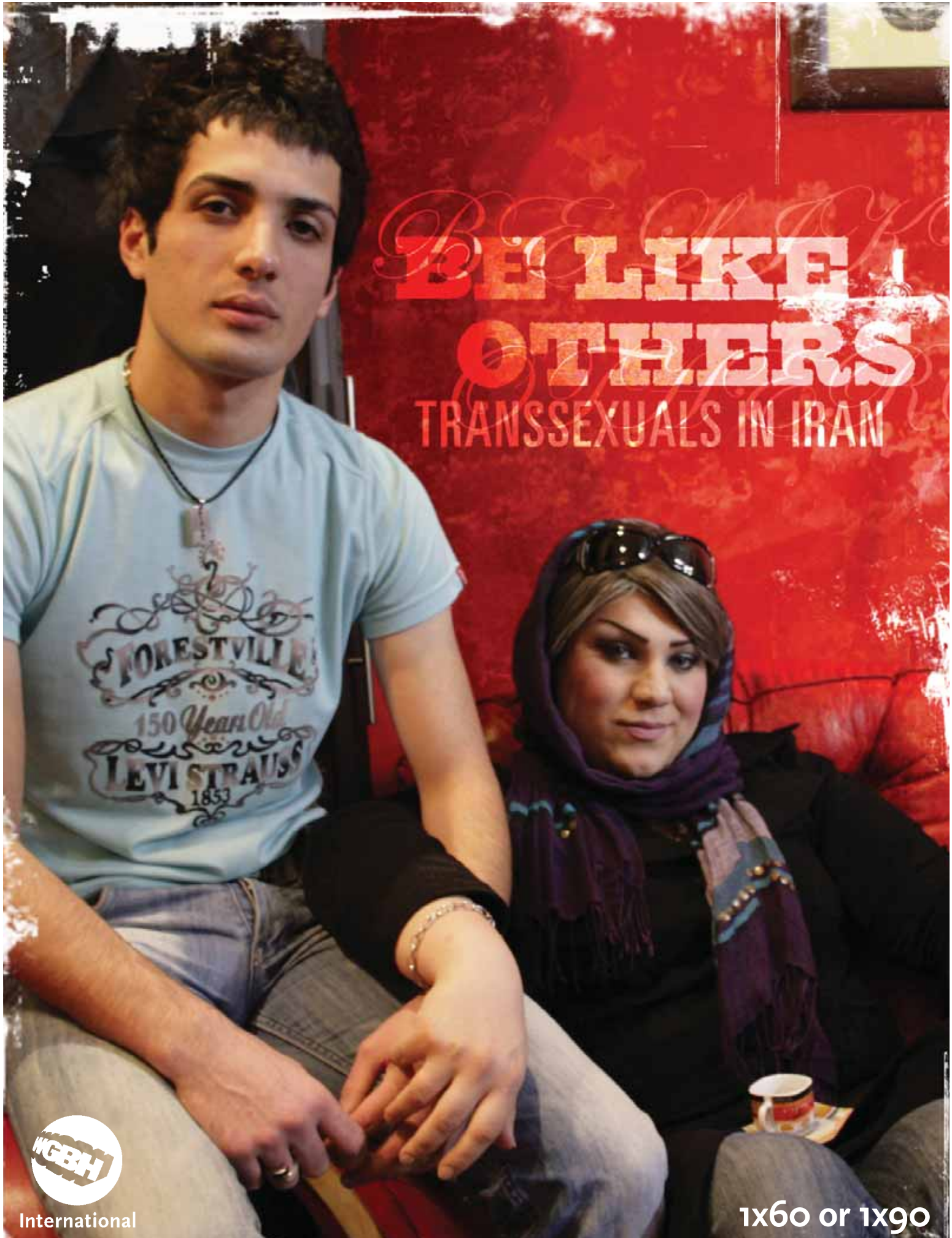


BE LIKE
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OTHERS
OTHERS
TRANSSEXUALS IN IRAN



International

1x60 or 1x90

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In the Islamic Republic of Iran, a country with strict social mores and traditional values, sex-change operations are legal. Over twenty years ago, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa to make sex change permissible for “diagnosed transsexuals.” Yet homosexuality is punishable by death.

While Iran’s international arms negotiations dominate news headlines worldwide, a very private kind of drama is unfolding behind the scenes. A young generation of Iranian men and women is compelled to make an agonizing choice. Attracted to members of the same sex and forced to live in the shadows for fear of retribution, they adopt the only identity legally allowed for them— that of a transsexual. Then, in pursuit of what one man calls simply “a decent life,” they pursue a drastic goal: gender reassignment surgery.

Be Like Others tells the story of several young men who are grappling to find themselves in a setting that, paradoxically, deems only one outcome acceptable. Shamed, silenced, or socially conditioned into denying their sexuality, these men subscribe, seemingly willingly, to the ideology of the Islamic state. They are unfortunate victims of “God’s mistake,” and for them, a gender switch will be no more a sin than, as one religious cleric explains, “changing wheat to flour to bread.”

It is through the film’s protagonists that the human implications of the issues emerge, and urging them forward is their unofficial mentor and advocate, Vida—a 24-year old who says she was “reborn” ten months previously when she became a “woman.” Eloquent and sharp-eyed, she counsels the boys on how to “fit in” before surgery and warns them of the dangers that await them afterwards. Without family support, she says, many post-op transsexuals fall by the wayside, ending up on the streets, in the sex industry, or even murdered.

Accompanying the characters as they prepare for surgery, then following them into the operating room and back into their everyday lives, *Be Like Others* unleashes some powerful ethical questions. Are these young men capable of understanding the irrevocable nature of their decision? Are they ready to shed their natural-born rights to first-class citizenry, in order to assume the second-class role of women? And is Vida a true example of fulfillment found through surgery or a lonely pioneer desperate for compatriots?

In a moment when the need for cross-cultural understanding is most urgent, *Be Like Others* offers a poignant and very personal look at life in the world’s first modern theocracy, through the lens of the real people who are living at its fringes.

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CREDITS

Executive Producer: Christoph Jorg
Writer, Director: Tanaz Eshaghian

A production of Forties B, LLC

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