

RIVER GALLO

b. 1990

INTERSEX FILMMAKER & ACTIVIST

They are an award-winning Salvadorian American filmmaker, actor, and intersex rights activist.

“Being a misfit can be one’s greatest gift.”

River Gallo (they/them) is an award-winning Salvadorian American filmmaker, model, actor, and intersex rights activist, best known for the pioneering intersex crime drama “Ponyboi.”

A New Jersey native raised as a boy, Gallo was born without testicles. At the age of 12, Gallo underwent hormone therapy and testicular implant surgery without their consent. Doctors recommended the procedure so Gallo would present as an anatomically “complete” cisgender male.

After high school, Gallo studied experimental theater at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. They subsequently earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in film and TV production from the University of Southern California (USC) School of Cinematic Arts.

At USC Gallo wrote and starred in the groundbreaking short film, “Ponyboi,” co-directed with a close friend and classmate, Sadé Clacken Joseph, and executive produced by the English actors Stephen Fry and Emma Thompson. A narrative drama about an intersex character, played by an intersex actor, it was the first film of its kind.

After years of hiding their identity, Gallo discovered the term “intersex” in graduate school. Recognizing and owning it, Gallo used “Ponyboi” as vehicle to come out. “Ponyboi” debuted at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival and appeared internationally. The project served as a career catalyst for Gallo.

In 2021 Gallo participated in the Sundance Institute’s first Trans Possibilities Intensive. Gallo reworked “Ponyboi,” and with the help of a Sundance grant, produced it as a feature-length film. It premiered in 2024 at the Sundance Film Festival. Gallo starred again in the title role, supported by a talented cast.

Gallo is the founder of GapToof Entertainment, an LGBT/POC production company. In addition to their personal film projects, Gallo was featured in the 2023 Focus Films documentary “Every Body.” Gallo has also performed on Broadway and appeared in a 2020 episode of the Hulu original series “Love, Victor,” a spinoff of the 2018 film “Love, Simon.” Gallo has partnered with and modeled for Abercrombie & Fitch and Crocs and walked the runway for Chromat during New York Fashion Week.

Gallo is an outspoken intersex advocate, passionate about ending unnecessary surgeries performed on children with atypical genitalia.

Among other accolades for entertainment and advocacy work, Gallo received a GLAAD Rising Star Media Award, was recognized on the OUT 100 list, and was named as one of Out magazine’s “Most Exciting Queers to Follow on Instagram.” In 2023 Indiewire named Gallo one of 10 LGBTQIA+ Film and TV Creators on the Rise.

Gallo identifies as nonbinary and trans fem.

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