

Catholic *student* Jewish *engineer* Hindu *actor*
ceo African American *technician* Cherokee Indian
Anyone & Everyone
Puerto Rican *supervisor* Mormon *homemaker*
rabbi Japanese *graphic* artist Southern Baptist
Malaysian *sales* manager Asian Indian *tec*
manager Italian *artist* Presbyterian *docto*
Protestant *investment banker* Christian *lawyer*

A film by Susan Polis Schutz

DISCUSSION GUIDE



IronZeal FilmsTM

Anyone and Everyone is an Iron Zeal Films production.

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Anyone and Everyone is available for purchase from anyoneandeveryone.com.

FORWARD

Making *Anyone and Everyone* was an extremely moving experience for me. The process took two years, but the path to making it started over 10 years ago, when my own son Jared revealed to his father and me that he is gay.

I watched Jared suffer greatly because he felt alone and confused, and as the mother of this wonderful boy, I suffered with him. It was at this time that I decided to try to make a film that would show that anyone and everyone can have a gay child. I hoped to tell the stories of the conflict, fear and anguish felt by families – from all walks of life – and their gay children, when their children came out to them.

Unfortunately, many families don't have as happy an ending as my story has. Gay children still have a high risk of suicide. Some communities, churches and families, as noted in my film, completely ostracize gay people.

I hope that this documentary accomplishes its mission of making it easier for gay people and their families to live lives that are respected by everyone. I hope, too, that this discussion guide gives you the tools to add your own voice to this important conversation.

Susan Polis Schutz
Filmmaker, Poet, Author and Activist

ABOUT THE FILM

In *Anyone and Everyone*, parents across the United States discuss their reactions to having a son or daughter reveal they are gay. Despite the diversity of the families' ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, geographic and religious backgrounds, there is a thread connecting these stories. The bond between parent and child provides the strength and inspiration to work through the challenges – and the challenges are significant.

The heartfelt accounts of responses to children's revelations personalize issues that are often de-personalized in political rhetoric. Beyond questions of gay rights, parents wrestle with their faiths, rejection by other relatives, the pain of their own lost dreams, and the fears born of their own and their communities' prejudices or ignorance.

These deeply personal reflections make *Anyone and Everyone* an excellent tool for outreach. The love between parents and children is a powerful springboard for discussions about family, community and the hard work of pluralism and accepting differences.

FEATURED FAMILIES
in order of appearance

- Robert Kerry Graves Jr., sales manager
Mother: Lanette Graves
Father: Robert Graves
Mormons from Salt Lake City, Utah
- Anonymous South Asian, Hindu parents and son
- Antonio Locus, 17-year-old student
Mother: Tonya Locus, technician
Christian African Americans from Durham, N.C.
- Jimmy Rock, lawyer
Mother: Joyce Rock, teacher
Father: Calvin Rock, factory supervisor
Southern Baptists members of the Cherokee Nation from Muskogee, Okla.
- Valerie Kameya, cable network producer
Mother: Ellen Kameya, teacher
Father: Harold (Hal) Kameya, engineer
Presbyterian Japanese Americans from Granada Hills, Calif.
- Dakota (Cody) Friedman, 18-year-old student
Mother: Tirzah Firestone, rabbi
Father: David Friedman, philanthropist
Jews from Boulder, Colo.
- Greg Bonetti, student
Mother: Ann Bonetti
Father: Ed Bonetti, newspaper marketing executive
Roman Catholics from Providence, R.I.
- Trevor Sanford, 19-year-old fireworks store employee
Mother: Patty Page, unemployed
Caucasians from Cheyenne, Wyo.
- Maria Juliana, physical therapist
Aunt: Nila Marrone, PFLAG leader
Bolivians from New York, N.Y.
- Luis Garay, student
Mother: Carmen Robello, graphic artist
Puerto Rican Americans from New York, N.Y.
- Carlos Rosario, 19
Estranged from mother, who kicked him out
Puerto Rican American from New York, N.Y.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An estimated 3 to 10 percent of all people are gay.

– The Gay Library

There are an estimated 2.5 million gay students under the age of 18 in the United States.

– Gay Straight Alliance

Twenty-six percent of gay teens who come out to their parents or guardians are told they must leave home.

– National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Of the approximately 1.6 million homeless American youth, 20 to 40 percent identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

– National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2007

Nearly 40 percent of LGBT students report being physically harassed. Additionally, more than 90 percent of LGBT students regularly hear anti-LGBT comments at school. Nearly 85 percent of LGBT students report that faculty or staff never intervened or intervened only some of the time when present and homophobic remarks were made.

– Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, 2004

Nearly one of three LGBT youth skipped school in the past month because they were too afraid to go.

– Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network
National School Climate Survey, 2003

In a 2001 Department of Health study of youth in Massachusetts, about 40 percent of gay and bisexual students attempted suicide, compared to about 10 percent of their heterosexual peers.

In 2005, approximately 14 percent of all hate crimes were directed at gay people or those perceived to be gay.

– Federal Bureau of Investigation

Seventy-five percent of Asian and Pacific Islander respondents to a national survey reported experiencing harassment or discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

– National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2007

In 31 states, it is legal to fire someone because they are gay.

– Human Rights Campaign, 2007

Since 1993, over 9,000 soldiers have been discharged based on their sexual orientation at an estimated cost to U.S. taxpayers of a quarter billion dollars.

– Servicemembers Legal Defense Network

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed “homosexuality” from its official list of mental disorders. In support of that action, the American Psychological Association resolved that: “homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social and vocational capabilities: Further, the American Psychological Association urges all mental health professionals to take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with homosexual orientations.”

OUTREACH

Topics

Anyone and Everyone provides an opportunity for outreach to people who have an interest in learning about:

Civil rights
Coming out
Discrimination
Family
Homophobia
Human rights
Identity
Inclusion
LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) issues
Parenting
Prejudice
Religion
Sexuality

Event Ideas

Offer a screening of *Anyone and Everyone* to:

- Observe National Coming Out Day (October 11) or Gay Pride Month (June).
- Convene a task force to ensure shelter for LGBT children who have been kicked out of their homes.
- Help combat bullying and gay bashing by featuring it at a school assembly or through an after-school program.
- Publicize a local PFLAG chapter and invite new participants.
- Complement a community anti-bias education initiative or prejudice reduction campaign.
- Create safe space for parent-child reconciliation.
- Provide content for a study group that's looking at religious teachings regarding love, parenting responsibilities and/or sexual orientation.

Finding Event Partners

Anyone and Everyone can be used in a variety of settings and with a wide range of audiences and groups, including:

- Groups focused on LGBT rights or support (see Resources on page 13.);
- Academic departments or student groups at colleges, universities, community colleges and high schools;
- Faith-based organizations and institutions;
- Community organizations that promote education and learning, such as libraries;
- Formal and informal study circles;
- Staff and clients of agencies, organizations or institutions that provide social service or counseling services

FACILITATING A DISCUSSION

Controversial topics often make for excellent discussions. But by their nature, those same subjects also give rise to deep emotions and strong beliefs. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere where people feel safe, encouraged and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share their ideas openly and honestly.

Note: If you are bringing together different segments of your community, or groups with predictably conflicting points of view, we strongly recommend hiring an experienced facilitator.

Before the event—

Identify your own hot-button issues.

View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you won't be dealing with raw emotions while you're trying to facilitate a discussion. If you are particularly invested in this topic, consider asking someone who is neutral to it to guide or co-facilitate.

Be clear about your role.

You may find yourself taking on several roles for an event, including host, organizer and/or projectionist. If you are also planning to serve as facilitator, be sure that you can focus on that responsibility and avoid distractions during the discussion. Also, keep in mind that being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping to move the discussion along without imposing his or her views on the dialogue.

Together with your partners, set realistic goals.

Being clear about your goals will make it easier to structure the event, target publicity and evaluate results.

Involve all stakeholders.

It's important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If your group is planning to take action that affects people other than those present, plan how you will give voice to those not in the room. Choose an event site that's accessible to people with disabilities and easy to reach by various kinds of transportation. If you're bringing together individuals with varying perspectives, choose a site that provides neutral territory.

FACILITATING A DISCUSSION - Continued

During the event—

Remind everyone that they are engaged in dialogue, not debate.

In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

Agree to ground rules around language.

Involve the group in establishing some basic rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically such rules include prohibiting the use of slurs, as well as asking people to speak in the first person (e.g., “I think”), rather than generalizing for others (e.g., “Everyone knows that”).

Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.

Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion. Keep in mind that factors like geography, age, race, religion and socioeconomic class can influence comfort levels, speaking styles and prior knowledge. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view.

Encourage active listening.

Ask your group to think of the event as being about listening, as well as discussing. Suggest that they listen for remarks that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. Propose to your guests that they practice formal “active listening,” where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then rephrase what was said to make sure they have heard correctly.

Take care of yourself and group members.

If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. Or, if the mood seems tense, try posing a question and giving people some quiet time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before continuing the discussion. If you anticipate that your topic may upset people, be prepared to later refer them to local support agencies, or have local professionals present. Think carefully about what you ask people to share in front of others, and explain things like confidentiality and whether or not press will be present.

Leave time to plan for action.

Consider concluding the event by brainstorming possible actions and then asking participants to commit to one or more of the items. Planning for action can help people leave your event feeling optimistic and empowered rather than discouraged or cynical.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The questions provided here are categorized and designed to help diverse audiences think more deeply about the issues in *Anyone and Everyone*. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet the needs and interests of your group.

General

- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, who would you ask and what would you ask them?
- Describe anything in this film that surprised you. How about something that “spoke truth” to you?
- What insights did this film offer you? What did you learn about its topic and/or about yourself?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS - Continued

Parent-Child Relationships

- List the reasons that parents in the film give for why it was hard to acknowledge a gay child (e.g., gay people don't exist in our community, our religion is against same sex relationships, my parents object, it didn't fulfill my dreams, etc.). What helped these parents establish healthy relationships with their children in spite of the difficulties? What were the sources of their strength?
- Many people recognize “coming out” as a process. What is similar and different about that process for an LGBT person and for their parents? What might LGBT children do to assist their parents in the coming out process? What might parents do to assist their children?
- Valerie recalls coming out to her parents saying, “I sort of came out quite angrily ... and in your face, like, ‘well this is me and if you don’t like it then that’s your problem’ ...” In your view, is acceptance an all-or-nothing proposition or is there room for a gray area? What does acceptance look like?
- From what you see and hear in the film, what’s the effect of remaining closeted on an LGBT person? What is the effect of coming out on the individual and on their parents? Given that coming out effects not only the individual, but also their family, is it reasonable for family members to ask their LGBT children to remain closeted (e.g., “Don’t tell Grandma” or “Don’t write about your life in any way that would identify who you/we are.”)? Does an LGBT person have the right to “out” their family? Why or why not?
- Trevor says, “They’re your children. You should love them for who they are.” What does loving a child “for who they are” look like?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS - Continued

Stereotyping

- Prior to viewing the film, what adjectives would you have used to describe a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender person? What image first came to mind when someone said the word gay? What things in the film either affirmed or challenged that image?
- Nila says, “Having heard all these awful things and what being gay was and then having a member of your family, a person that you have seen, a child that you have seen since the child was born, a person that was absolutely wholesome, good, kind, gentle and that put together with the word lesbian didn’t add up.” Where did Nila get the idea that a person could not be both good and gay? Besides the film, what sources have you relied on for information about LGBT people? Are they credible sources? What makes a source credible or not credible on what being gay means?
- When their children came out to them, many of the parents believed that being gay was wrong or destructive. Robert acknowledges that he had to “unlearn some things that [he] had been taught about being gay.” What did the parents have to unlearn? What do you see or hear in the film that changed their minds?
- Antonio says he didn’t feel that his mother loved him “because she put me in psychotherapy, like psycho, crazy. That was very hard for me to have to go through these meetings and just feel stupid for saying that I was gay.” On the other hand, his mother Tonya says that counseling was critical to her coming to accept that Antonio was gay. In your view, given that the psychiatric community does not see homosexuality as a disease or as something to be “cured,” what might be the appropriate role for therapy in relation to gender identity and families accepting children who come out?
- According to Calvin, in Native society, gay individuals “were kind of honored because they were different from the others. And some of them were medicine men. Some of them were people that would give names to the children. But they didn’t, the thing that actually turned the tribes nowadays, there’s a lot of people, was actually the early churches that [came] in and said that’s wrong. And one of the things I basically said was that I was a Native American who appreciated my son for who he was because it’s a just another voice in the village to talk.” What does your ethnic, cultural or religious tradition say about LGBT people? What are the sources of these ideas or beliefs? What would your “village” lose if the voices of LGBT people remained hidden?
- Lanette tells about an epiphany she had at the funeral of a gay man who had committed suicide. “I looked around at the distraught people sitting in the church, people who have loved him so well, and it occurred to me these people have unknowingly contributed to his despair. They did not even know that the ignorance that comes over the pulpits are destroying our people, our young people.” How does silence contribute to oppression or discrimination?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS - Continued

Politics and Public Policy

- Several parents in *Anyone and Everyone* have come to believe that it is important to speak out about gay rights. They march in parades and challenge exclusionary policies in their churches. Why do they think that speaking up is important? How might they respond to someone who believes that issues around sexuality are better kept to oneself or that speaking out is “flaunting” it?
- Robert parallels the struggle for gay rights to the struggles of the civil rights movement in the 1960s saying, “People have rights and they’re entitled to them and they must be protected. And if someone else’s rights are not protected then all of our rights are in jeopardy.” Is Robert’s comparison valid? Why or why not? In what ways might your rights be jeopardized if courts rule that discrimination against LGBT people is legal?
- Lanette says that when people are learning about what it means to be gay, “They get so caught up on the sex part that they forget the love part. We need to just get over that and recognize whatever people do in their bedrooms is their own business. What matters is how people love each other.” Should consenting adults be permitted to do whatever they want in their own bedrooms? Do we have a constitutional right to privacy? What is the state’s interest in prohibiting or permitting same sex relationships?
- Antonio responds to people who declare that being gay is a choice by asking, “Why would anyone want to choose to go through what I went through?” Who benefits by the assertion that being gay is a choice? Who is harmed by it? Who benefits from and who is challenged by the belief that people are born gay?
- Ellen says of her daughter, “I consider her a gift. She still is a gift and I don’t want people batting my gift around and telling me my gift is not a gift because it is.” Imagine that you were writing education policy based on the premise that all children are gifts. How would the rules, practices, and/or curriculum in your school district have to change to reflect your premise?
- According to Lanette, her church gave her the impression that being gay “was so evil and so bad that we almost couldn’t talk about it ...You just had the idea it was so terrible that it was unspeakable.” What kinds of things are unspeakable in your community? Who has the power to render something unspeakable? What happens to people who speak the unspeakable? Are you comfortable with issues relating to being gay remaining unspeakable? Why or why not?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS - Continued

Religion

- Lanette says, “We all realize life is short, life is precious. We need to not let doctrine or dogma divide us.” What role does religion play in parents’ ability to establish close, healthy relationships with their LGBT children?
- Ann laments her church’s doctrine that condemns the sin, not the sinner (i.e., it is acceptable to be gay as long as a person doesn’t act on it). Responding to a similar doctrine in Lanette’s own church, Lanette says, “to me, the immorality is to expect that someone should live their entire life without the opportunity to find loveWhat ought to be most holy of all are the issues of the heart.” What does your belief system teach about the importance of love? What does it say about how to appropriately express love? How might a person of faith reconcile believing that same-sex relationships are wrong and also believing that it is wrong to ask a person to live life without love or integrity?
- Robert says that in Mormon communities, “Young boys are being taught to hate themselves instead of to accept themselves for who they are” and he asks, “Why should they try to live a moral life if they’re immoral by definition?” How would you answer him? How would you reconcile religious intolerance of gays with the biblical assertion that every person is created in God’s image?
- As Rabbi Tirzah Firestone points out, some religious communities welcome LGBT people. What are the differences between religious communities that accept LGBT people and those that do not?

RESOURCES

Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network **glsen.org**

GLSEN provides anti-bias resources for schools with a focus on ensuring safety for all students, including LGBT students.

GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) **glaad.org**

As part of its work to ensure accurate depictions, GLAAD offers reports and critiques of media portrayals of LGBT people, events and issues.

Gay Straight Alliance **gaystraighthalliance.org**

This umbrella site of GSA student clubs across the globe includes links to local clubs, as well as information on student rights and combating school-based discrimination.

Human Rights Campaign **hrc.org**

A lobbying organization, HRC includes background information on a wide range of legal and political issues related to rights for LGBT people.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force **thetaskforce.org**

This political advocacy organization provides Web links to a variety of religious and political groups that deal with LGBT issues.

PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) **pflag.org**

Featured in the film, this nationwide group works toward keeping families united and creating an inclusive society that accepts people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

Soulforce **soulforce.org**

This interfaith group challenges religious policies and teachings that disapprove same-sex relationships. Among its resources is a downloadable pamphlet called “What the Bible Says – and Doesn’t Say – About Homosexuality” by openly gay Soulforce co-founder the Rev. Mel White.

The Trevor Project **thetrevorproject.org**

The Trevor Project operates a 24/7 suicide and crisis prevention helpline for gay, lesbian, transgender and questioning youth.

True Colors **ourtruecolors.org**

This Connecticut-based non-profit organization offering sexual minority youth and family services works to combat homophobia, gender bias, and racism by providing support, education and advocacy to those responsible for the health, education and well-being of LGBT and intersex youths and families.



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