

THE MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRESENTS
A FILM BY KATHERINE SENDER

Further off the Straight & Narrow

New Gay Visibility on Television, 1998-2006

"A nuanced assessment of the portrayal of sexual minorities on television...Further off the Straight and Narrow is an essential part of my courses."

- Jack Banks, Associate Professor of Communication, University of Hartford

Running Time: 61 Minutes

For further information, please contact:

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SYNOPSIS

This important new documentary picks up where *Off the Straight & Narrow: Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals & Television (1998)* left off. Since that video's release in the late 90s, which coincided with the last episode of the popular program *Ellen*, there has been a marked increase in the presence of GLBT characters on television. Against the backdrop of political and social issues affecting the GLBT community, such as gay marriage and AIDS, *Further Off the Straight & Narrow* takes a close look at sitcoms, reality shows, and premium cable programming as it explores how representations of GLBT characters have become more complex and varied in recent years. The film acknowledges the expansion of GLBT representation on television and the resulting possibilities for inclusion and recognition opened up for today's gay youth. However, the program also raises questions about how this queer presence on television is shaped by the imperatives of the commercial media system. *Further Off the Straight & Narrow* argues that the evolution in GLBT representation, like many transformations in a commercially-driven media system, may be best explained less by a sudden commitment to social justice on the part of big media than by advertisers' recognition of the potential of directly targeting GLBT consumers with programming specifically designed to attract their attention.

FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH

Howard Buford Founder & CEO, Prime Access, Inc.

Joshua Gamson University of San Francisco and author, *Freaks Talk Back*

Larry Gross Director of Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern CA

Lisa Henderson Professor of Communication, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Katherine Sender Assistant Professor of Communication, University of Pennsylvania

Suzanna Walters Professor of Gender Studies, Indiana University

DVD SECTIONS

Introduction | Going Mainstream: Network Narratives | Mighty Real: Gays and Lesbians in Non-Fiction T.V. | A Piece of the Pie: Segmenting Audiences | glbT: New Transgender Visibility | Here & Queer: Gay Television in Context

PRAISE FOR THE FILM

"A nuanced assessment of the portrayal of sexual minorities on television...Further off the Straight and Narrow is an essential part of my courses."

- Jack Banks, Associate Professor of Communication, University of Hartford

"...does an entertaining job of calculating the impact of gay images on television since Will & Grace made its debut."

- Seattle Times

"Further Off the Straight & Narrow makes an invaluable contribution to queer media studies, and is a superb documentary companion to Epstein and Friedman's groundbreaking The Celluloid Closet."

- Montreal International LGBT Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION AT THE FOLLOWING FILM FESTIVALS

Mezipatra: Czech Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, 2008

DIVERSA Festival de Cine Gay Lesbico Trans de Argentina, 2008

Queer Lisboa - Lisbon Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, 2008

Hungary LGBT Film Festival Torino GLBT Film Festival, April 2008

Montreal International LGBT Film Festival, November 18, 2007

Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, October 2007

Outfest - Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, July 2007

Annenberg School for Communication, November 2006

St. Joseph's University, November 2006

Northampton Independent Film Festival, November 2006

Honig Guenter Women and Film Festival, New Britain, CT, October 2006

ABOUT MEF

The non-profit Media Education Foundation (MEF) is the nation's leading producer of educational videos designed to inspire students and others to reflect critically on the structure of the media industries and the content they produce. Founded in 1991, MEF's mission is to answer the challenge posed by the radical and accelerating corporate threat to democracy.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SUT JHALLY MEF Executive Director
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KATHERINE SENDER Director, Producer & Editor
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| MEF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

CREDITS

Director KATHERINE SENDER
Producer KATHERINE SENDER
Executive Producer SUT JHALLY
Editor KATHERINE SENDER
Editing Assistants PAUL FALZONE, CHRISTOPHER FINLAY, LINDSAY GROW, NICOLE RODGERS, AND NICK WALSH
Narrator RENAI ELLISON
Audio Editor ZEKE FIDDLER
Audio Producer RODNEY WHITTENBERG/MELODYVISION
Camera MELVIN EPPS/THIRD EYE PRODUCTIONS
Commercials Courtesy Of MIKE WILKE/COMMERCIALCLOSET.ORG
Titles MIKE ENRIGHT

UNITED STATES | 2006 | 61 mins | Shot in Mini-DV | Color | BETA/DVD/DVCAM | NTSC
| Aspect Ratio 4:3 | Stereo | In English/English subtitles

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BIOGRAPHIES

Katherine Sender | Producer, Director, Editor

Katherine Sender is an assistant professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. She is author of *Business, not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market*, which was nominated for 2006 International Communication Association Best Book Award. She has also published numerous articles, including the forthcoming *Dualcasting: Bravo's Gay Programming and the Quest for Women Audiences* and *Professional Homosexuals: The Politics of Sexual Identification in Gay and Lesbian Media and Marketing*. She was a 2006 recipient of the Trustees' Council of Penn Women's Summer Research Award. Katherine is also the producer of MEF films *Off the Straight & Narrow: Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals & Television, 1946-1998* (1998) and *Recovering Bodies: Overcoming Eating Disorders* (1997).

Sut Jhally | Executive Producer

Sut Jhally is a professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and founder and executive director of the Media Education Foundation (MEF). He is one of the most popular teachers at the University of Massachusetts and is nationally known among college students for his videotape *Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Music Video*, which he created to present his critique of representations of women in popular culture and commercial images. The national attention, sparked by the threat of a lawsuit by MTV, and numerous requests for copies of the video led to the founding of the Media Education Foundation in 1991. Over the past eighteen years, Sut Jhally has been the executive producer of more than thirty videos produced and distributed by the Media Education Foundation.

He is the author of *The Codes of Advertising* and *The Spectacle of Accumulation: Essays in Cultural Politics*, and co-author of *Social Communication in Advertising* and *Enlightened Racism*. He is also co-editor of *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* and *Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire*. He has written broadly on issues of popular representation and is regarded as one of the world's leading cultural studies scholar in the area of advertising, media, and consumption.

FEATURED INTERVIEWS

Howard Buford is the founder and CEO of Prime Access, a full-service advertising agency, specializing in providing marketing communications services that target LGBT, African American, and Hispanic consumers. Howard's experience in advertising and marketing communications entails twenty-five years working with major corporations including Procter & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, and Eastman Kodak. He served on the board of directors of Gay Games IV, held in New York City in 1994. Additionally, he served six years on the board of directors of GLAAD, including three years on GLAAD's Executive Committee. For his community service and business leadership, Howard received the 2004 Angel Award from Gay Men of African Descent. Most recently, he has served as an advisor in the founding of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C. Howard has twice been named in the OUT 100, OUT magazine's annual listing of the most influential Gay & Lesbian people in America. Howard is a graduate of Harvard College, magna cum laude, with a B.A. degree in linguistics, psychology and social relations. He earned his M.B.A. degree from Harvard Business School.

"We're dealing in a country where our popular culture really rules. It's a country where you don't exist unless you're on TV. And the very fact that we're present on TV, in advertising or in content in the programming, makes us real."

Joshua Gamson is Professor of Sociology at the University of San Francisco. He is the author of *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (California, 1994); *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity* (Chicago, 1998), winner of the Kovacs Book Award from the Speech Communication Association and the American Sociological Association Culture Section Book Award; and *The Fabulous Sylvester: The Legend, The Music, The Seventies in San Francisco* (Henry Holt/Picador, 2005), winner of the Stonewall Book Award and finalist for a Lambda Literary Award. His research and teaching focus on the sociology of culture; social movements; on participant-observation methodology and techniques, particularly as applied in urban settings; and on the history, theory, and sociology of sexuality. His published work also includes studies of sex scandals, popular culture and gay and lesbian people, sexualities and qualitative research, the political pitfalls in the pursuit of media visibility, exclusion processes in sex/gender movements, organizational aspects of collective identity construction, the impact of media concentration on media content, and dilemmas in identity-based movements. He has also written for magazines such as *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, and *The American Prospect*.

"I think there is a problem created for [queer] culture as the mainstreaming takes hold. And that problem is, how do you tell the difference between gay and straight? And if you can't tell the difference, what happens to straight privilege?"

Larry Gross is the Director of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. From 1968 to 2003, he was on the faculty of the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, where he was Sol Worth Professor of Communications and Deputy Dean. His publications (as either author or editor) include: *Contested Closets: The Politics and Ethics of Outing* (1993); *The Columbia Reader on Lesbians and Gay Men in Media, Society, and Politics* (1998); *Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Media in America* (2002); and *Image Ethics in the Digital Age* (2003). Additionally, he was the editor of the Columbia University Press book series *Between Men - Between Women: Lesbian and Gay Studies*. He was the founding Chair of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Studies Interest Group of the International Communication Association; Chair of The Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists of the American Anthropological Association (1981-84); and Co-Chair of the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force (1980-2000).

“Transgendered people are in many ways in the position of the next group that is beginning to be acknowledged. The T in the GLBT is starting to speak up, is starting to be seen. And as often happens, it is first emerging onto the stage as a victim or villain.”

Lisa Henderson is Associate Professor of Communication and Faculty Affiliate in American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is also director of CISA, the Five College Center for Crossroads in the Study of the Americas, a faculty and curriculum development project at Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke and Hampshire Colleges and the University of Massachusetts. She is a former member of the National Research Advisory Board of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and of the Advisory Board of the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force. Henderson is the author of essays in sexual representation, cultural production, feminist media studies, and cultural studies of social class in a number of collections and such journals as *Signs*, *Journal of Communication*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Screen*, and *Journal of Homosexuality*. Her current book project is titled *Love and Money: Sex, Class and Cultural Production*.

“When I see the Fab Five convening at the end of the program to watch the social success of the makeover guy they have helped, on the one hand I think they’re judges, sort of dishy, bitchy people who are going to adjudicate how well he performs. On the other hand, I am reminded of these histories of exclusion where gay people get to produce stylish environments for a party to which, frankly, they’re not invited.”

Suzanna Danuta Walters is Professor and Chair of the Department of Gender Studies at Indiana University, where she also holds appointments in the departments of Sociology and Communications and Culture. Previously, she was a Professor of Sociology and Director of Women's Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Her work is centered on questions of gender, sexuality, family, and popular culture and she is a frequent commentator on these issues for the media. Her most recent work – *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2001) -- examined the explosion of gay visibility in culture and politics over the past 15 years and raised pressing questions concerning the politics of visibility around sexual identity. The book was a finalist for numerous literary awards (including the Lambda Literary Award) and was the subject of radio and television interviews and discussions, culminating in a 15-city book tour in the Fall of 2001 and Spring 2002. She is currently engaged with several research projects, including an extension of the analysis of gay visibility that asks about the construction of sexual communities and identities in a "post-visibility" age.

“There can be a tendency for us in the gay community to say, ‘we’re here, we’re queer, we’re on TV, we’re even on reality TV, we’re fixing up the straight boys, we’ve got our L Word, we’ve got our glam shows. Let’s pack up our tutus and go home.’ One important point to make is that today’s Queer Eye can be tomorrow’s Queer Gone.”