

All God's Children

A Discussion Guide

written by
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INTENDED AUDIENCE 12 years old and up

ESTIMATED TIME

Pre-view Discussion, 5-10 minutes

Setup and video screening, 30 minutes

Post-viewing discussion, 20-40 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

All God's Children videocassette and Discussion Guide, TV and VCR, optional handouts

What they're saying about *All God's Children*

“An historic contribution to the movement for civil rights and equality across line of race, religion and sexual orientation.” –*From the 1997 Lambda Liberty Awards Program Book*

“Frankly, I have not been able to stop thinking about your film since I viewed it at the premier...The eagerness with which people respond to the topic alone affirms my belief that in this film you have done what many people have tried to do and failed. That is, I believe *All God's Children* understands the importance, fragility and necessity of bridging an intersection between ‘minority’ communities”. –*Robin Lewis, M.T.S., Harvard Divinity School*

“It puts a human face on sexuality and how it impacts on us as Black people... All my friends who have actually sat down, even those who are very homophobic, when they looked at it.. they say it doesn't make them totally change their opinion but it made them think about it. This film does touch them.” –*Roberta McLeod, Howard University*

This is a hard-hitting, velvet-cloaked documentary...*All God's Children* challenges us to embrace and debate, rather than alienate and devastate. We are challenged to see diversity as strength rather than weakness.” –*Cecil Murray, Senior Minister, First A.M.E. Church of Los Angeles*

“This film has inspired bridge-building and consciousness-raising across the country.” –*Torie Osborn, from her book “Coming Home to America”*

“This film is a fantastic vehicle for raising issues of minority harassment.” –*Keith Pickering, teacher, Livermore High School*

“A great film to show young UBE (Union of Black Episcopalian) members!” –*Connie Reid-Jones*

“*All God's Children* is one of the best videos available, and I've seen almost every one...I showed it to my 16-year old granddaughter because children can be so judgmental at that age. They need some real answers—some ammunition to counteract the negative comments—and they learn some in this.” –*Wanda Steffans, retired schoolteacher & grandmother*

“I can't imagine a better tool for addressing homophobia and for surfacing issues related to sexuality and HIV/AIDS in the African-American community...An important and provocative resource for students of all colors.” –*Joseph Stokes, Professor of Psychology, University of Illinois at Chicago*

A fantastic film that shows, in moving and personal testimony, the importance of accepting all of God's children. This is a very useful tool for fostering discussions of diversity issues in the classroom.” --*Walter L. Williams, Professor of Anthropology & Gender Studies, University of Southern California (USC)*

“The film takes the high road by assuming a moderate tone, ensuring its effective appeal to one of its primary audiences—mainstream African Americans.” –*Out on Film, Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Film Festival*

“A classical documentary.” – *Black International Cinema Competition*

“People are willing to talk about diversity regarding gays and lesbians or regarding Blacks, but not the two together. They don’t associate with cross-diversity. We need a program like *All God’s Children* because people don’t think of Blacks as being homosexuals.” – *Carrie Bartlet, Mills College*

“One of the most difficult contemporary issues for our denomination is the role of gay/lesbian/bisexual people in society and our church...One of the points of conflict in our church is in the perceived competing claims between issues of race and sexual orientation. *All God’s Children* bridges these issues in a supportive, uncompromising manner...This is crucial in our world where well-meaning Christians are complicit, through their passivity, in the violence and hatred against gay/lesbian/bisexual people. *All God’s Children* helps these Christians move beyond culturally defined bigotry to Christian advocacy for justice.” *Ann Craig, Executive Secretary for Spiritual and Theological Development, Global Ministries General Board, United Methodist Church*

All God’s Children is an insightful look into the spirituality of African-American lesbians and gay men and their supporters. *All God’s Children* is the best thing I have seen in terms of addressing wedge issues among Black people” – *Walter Davis, Executive Director, Southern Empowerment Project*

All God’s Children brings a voice and a song to the work of civil rights that has before been unheard and unsung...We have been taught well to divide, separate and hate, but the greatest message of this film is love.” – *Cheryl Deaner, Executive Director, All Our Families Coalition*

“What is so effective about this particular film is how it artfully weaves images, music and text into a tapestry of compassion and tolerance. While critics always find fault, I wish to provide a chord of sustained praise and admiration for this film...I know that it will make a difference in the world.” – *Ayofami Folayan, Artist-in-Residence, LA Gay and Lesbian Center*

“I’ve watched it seven times already...It is just plain sweet. It nourishes us.” – *Margaret Gaffney, healthcare professional & housewife*

“I’m a social worker who has had gay clients that needed a spiritual home and couldn’t find one. It was just heartbreaking. Thank you for making *All God’s Children*. It’s just wonderful” – *Pam Hoffer, social worker*

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Introduction

All God's Children is an award-winning documentary short that vividly illustrates the human toll exacted upon our society because of the unspoken stigmatization and alienation of lesbians and gay men. In the film, prominent religious, political and community leaders join activists and family members in a call for spiritual reconciliation, and a commitment to equal rights and social justice for all people. The film's many voices provide a political, religious and social analysis of sexual orientation within the context of our traditional values of freedom, inclusion, and the Christian love ethic. *All God's Children* was produced to open hearts and minds to the benefit of diversity, "Which is after all," Senator Carol Moseley-Braun states in *All God's Children*, "a strength and not a weakness."

All God's Children was produced to facilitate discussions on sexual orientation; inclusion and marginalization; tolerance and intolerance; and the impact of religious or spiritual beliefs on these issues. It is appropriate for classroom usage in Black/Lesbian-Gay/Multicultural Studies, American Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Ethnomusicology, Psychology, Human Sexuality, Theology and Religion Studies, as well as in Residence Life Programs, Student Programs and Teacher/Staff/Administration Diversity training. It was designed to facilitate discussions on topics such as:

- homophobia and heterosexism
- race equity
- AIDS and the role of the church
- social justice
- lesbian, gay and bisexual people in history
- constructs of heterosexism and heterosexual privilege
- sexual orientation
- cultural diversity
- familial and community ties spiritual issues among gay people

This viewing or discussion guide is intended to facilitate exercises and discussions that, in conjunction with the video screening, offer lessons in diversity and in gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. This discussion guide provides a framework upon which to base discussions, but is by no means a complete guide for discussion and teaching about lesbian/gay issues. In the Appendix we have provided a list of recommended resources for those who wish to delve further into the issues touched upon in *All God's Children*.

All God's Children was produced to foster greater tolerance for and understanding of the issues that gay men and lesbians of African descent face in this society. After watching and discussing *All God's Children*, the audience should have a deeper understanding of the following issues:

- the existence and visibility of gay and lesbian people
- understandings of terms like "gay", "lesbian", "homosexual", heterosexual" and "straight"
- the suffering afflicted by and associated with name-calling, rejection and all prejudicial treatment

- the stigma associated with having a gay or lesbian child or being labeled gay or lesbian
- the inter-relatedness of all forms of discrimination and bigotry
- the depths of support for lesbians and gay men within African American families and communities, and among African American clergy, intellectuals, and political leaders

Note: For the purpose of this discussion guide, the word “gay” is often used in the collective sense to mean gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals, rights and issues.

PERTINENT ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Homosexuality is not just a *White issue*. The movement for homosexual or les/gay/bi rights is a movement for the betterment of our whole society. People of all colors need to recognize this and fight for these rights.
- Homophobia is not just a personal issue. It is a form of oppression, just like racism, sexism, classism and anti-Semitism. This means that it is a social justice issue and it is no less important than any other social justice issue.
- It is important to break the silence about gays and lesbians in the Black Church.
- It is important to break the silence about the real lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.
- It is important for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people to come out of the closet. President Clinton recently said that personally knowing a gay man or lesbian is paramount to eradicating homophobia in America. Homophobia will not be lessened in America if the presence of homosexuals in society remains hidden.
- It is important to build stronger communities based on the principles of love, cooperation and inclusion. We can’t accomplish this by scapegoating and doing violence to each other.
- Reactionary right-wingers are the historical oppressors of African Americans.
- The collusion of oppressions and the collusion with oppressors must end.
- The unholy alliance between the racist, reactionary “religious” right-wingers and their outreach to Black churches must be challenged.
- It is important to know that “no credible case against homosexuality or homosexuals can be made from the Bible.” (Rev. Peter Gomes, *The Good Book*.)

The Importance of the Church in African American Life

The Black Church is the strongest institution in African American communities. The Church continues to function as the social cornerstone and provider of the spiritual ballast that many seek. It has a role of resonance and influence even for those who do not attend. It is the place of history and immediate succor. The fact that **there are homosexuals in the church** is a deafening secret. “The Closet” is a ‘vertical coffin’ that shreds spirits and denies humanity. It is important for the Black Church to embrace its gay and lesbian constituents and address the issue of gay rights because:

- The exclusion, derision, oppression, and marginalization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered church members has led to suicide, addiction, mental illness, fictionalized lives, and spiritual deaths.

- Gays and lesbians are in the pews and the pulpits every Sunday (and Saturday). If all of the lesbian, gay and bisexual people walked out of the Church-the music would stop, the preaching would be pauperized, and the creativity and vibrancy of the Church would expire.
- Inclusion of gay men and lesbians as full members leads to an authenticity and integrity of worship.

The consequences of race-based bigotries are readily apparent in our society, and so are the affects of people being forced to lie and hide “who they really are.” These same consequences are evident in the Church. The Church is being called upon to recognize and include *all of God’s children*. It is being called to reunite the family, to reconcile, to create a Beloved Community.

Persecution, Stereotypes & the Civil Rights Movement

GAYS & LESBIANS AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Many lesbians and gay men of all colors worked in the Civil Rights Movement during the 50’s and 60’s. They marched, picketed, sang, and resisted the virulent racial injustices and legal discriminations that were rampant throughout the South. Some Civil Rights activists like James Baldwin and Bayard Rustin were openly gay. James Baldwin was a literary giant who was called “the Conscience of America”. He challenged Americans to live up to its creed of equality and equal rights under the law. Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph were the architects of the 1963 March on Washington. (Gay historians report that Randolph was bisexual.)

In June 1969, Black drag queens were on the front lines of a major historical event. Along with other gay men and lesbians, they rebelled against police harassment at the Stonewall Inn, a bar in Greenwich Village. The rebellion, or “riot” at the Stonewall marked the official beginning of the Gay and Lesbian movement for Civil Rights in America.

CONNECTING THE DOTS: OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION

Racism is based on *white supremacy* and *white skin privilege*. Sexism is based on male *male supremacy* and *male privilege*. Heterosexism is based on *heterosexual supremacy* and *heterosexual privilege*. These systems of oppression are all cut from the same cloth of dominance and power over others. Look at the similarities in stereotypes placed on African Americans and homosexuals. African American gays and lesbians get a double dose of the following:

African Americans

Sexually promiscuous
Sexually dangerous
Carriers of sexual disease can contaminate by touch
Socially marginal
Cannot control their sexuality
Seek special rights (i.e. affirmative action)

Homosexuals

Sexually promiscuous
Sexually dangerous
Carriers of sexual disease can contaminate by touch
Socially marginal
Cannot control their sexuality
Seek special rights (i.e. gay marriage)

African Americans

Condemned by God (Genesis)

Interracial marriage illegal until 1967

Inordinately talented: singing, dancing, athletics

Have agenda in opposition to white, male dominant culture

Criminal element in society

Wants to have sex with your sister

Important to keep Blacks out of history books

Feared & hated by dominant culture

Love/Hate relationship with Hollywood

White people seek out African Americans for sex and furtive sexual favors

Armed forces segregated until 1947 due to fear of sharing bathing facilities

Blacks are labeled detriments to morale

Anti-black jokes common

Anti-black violence common

Ridiculed and despised by talk radio

Taunted, hounded beaten & murdered for being Black

Did not choose to be Black but deserving of discrimination anyway

Simply need to act more white to make in mainstream culture

Destined to spend eternity in a segregated heaven

Homosexuals

Condemned by God (Leviticus) - Sodomy laws still on the books

Gay marriage unlawful

Inordinately talented: art, fashion, pop culture

Have agenda in opposition to white, male dominant culture

Criminal element in society

Wants to have sex with YOU

Important to keep gays out of history books

Feared & hated by dominant culture

Love/Hate relationship with Hollywood

Heterosexuals seek out homosexuals for clandestine clandestine sex and furtive sexual favors

Armed forces ban openly gay personnel due to fear of sharing bathing facilities

Gays are labeled detriments to morale

Anti-gay jokes common

Anti-gay violence common

Ridiculed and despised by talk radio

Taunted, hounded beaten & murdered for being gay

Deliberately chose to be gay and therefore deserving of discrimination

Simply need to act more straight to make it in it mainstream culture

Destined to spend eternity in a segregated hell

Other Topics of Interest

PROOF-TEXTING: HOMOSEXUALITY & RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The reactionary and “Christian” right uses Biblical interpretations to condemn gays and support “family values.” In *Straight from the Heart*, Mitsi Henderson, the mother of a gay man, says that “Growing up I had never heard any of the passages that are now cited about homosexuality. It was never a major factor in Christian education.” She goes on to state that when her son told her that he was gay, “I then had to look at those six or seven passages, and I found that I felt that they were being misused. They were being abused in a form that we in the church call proof-texting. They were being pulled out of context. They were being pulled out to support an already formed opinion rather than used within the context of God’s revelation of love and his reconciling redemption for all people and his call to relationship.”

While we do not intend to delve into religious issues within this discussion guide, it is important to put the issue of proof-texting into some perspective. With that intent in mind, here are some facts:

- There are 105 different versions of the Bible printed in English alone.

- There are over 350 Protestant denominations in America. Each one has its own set of beliefs, and the 105 different bibles reflect different and often contradictory translations.
- The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years by various authors. Nothing was written as it happened, but was passed down by word of mouth over the years.
- Out of the 31,176 verses in the Bible, less than .0002% refers to same sex behavior.
- The word “homosexual” is not in the Bible. It was not invented until 1869.
- Jesus Christ never said anything about or alluded to homosexuals or homosexuality.

Editor’s Note: If you wish to explore the issue of biblical interpretations of homosexuality in greater depth, please do contact us. In addition to printed information, Dr. Sylvia Rhue, co-producer of the film *All God’s Children*, is available for speaking engagements on multicultural issues, gender inequities, biblical interpretations and on sex and sexual orientation. She is a licensed clinical social worker, writer and educator, bible scholar/student, and the first African American to earn a Doctorate in Human Sexuality. Her presentations offer concrete and accurate information, and address these often-difficult issues with taste and humor.

HIV/AIDS PREVENTION & SELF-ESTEEM

HIV/AIDS education is important for all sectors of this society: men and women, gay and straight, young and old. In a study entitled “Homophobia, Self-Esteem and Risk for HIV among African American Men Who Have Sex with Men,” Professor Joseph P. Stokes, Department of Psychology at University of Illinois at Chicago, and John L. Peterson wrote that “there are a number of possible reasons why people who are psychologically distressed might engage in behaviors that put them at risk for HIV. Feeling valued and valuable might be necessary preconditions to behaviors that protect from HIV. People who feel depressed and hopeless might lack the motivation to decrease their risk for HIV. Individuals with low self-esteem may be especially likely to try to hide their same-sex attraction from others.” Some of the African American men in the Stokes-Peterson study reported that they saw “a clear and relatively simple progression from self-acceptance of homosexuality to increased self-esteem to decreased behaviors that put one at risk for HIV.”

Films like *Straight from the Heart* and *All God’s Children* are important tools for helping at risk people, particularly at risk youth, build the self-esteem that is so necessary to reducing risky behaviors. Many organizations and institutions are using our films in their HIV/AIDS prevention work with youth, prisoners, in minority communities, counseling programs, health education programs and in other educational settings across the country. Among these organizations are: AID Atlanta, American Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR), Gay Men’s Health Crisis, Long Island Minority AIDS Coalition, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), and Southwest Family Practice & Counseling Center.

WHY ARE GAY RIGHTS NECESSARY?

Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people continue to face a great deal of animosity due to ignorance, fear and bigotry. This is homophobia—the irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals.

Beyond the issue of equality in the public sphere, many homosexuals face other, more personal forms of homophobia, like gay-bashing, the snail's pace response to the global AIDS pandemic, and perhaps most devastating of all, internalized hatred.

In the workplace, homophobia can take the form of verbal or physical harassment, being fired or laid-off, or simply not receiving deserved promotions because of sexual orientation or *perceived* sexual orientation. Often people who are *perceived* to be gay or lesbian are passed over in the hiring process. Gay men and lesbians also suffer in their personal lives. Things that heterosexual couples take for granted, gay couples must fight to obtain. Gay couples receive neither tax breaks nor joint property rights, they face insurance discrimination, have no inheritance rights, and are not recognized by immigration law. The lack of recognition given to gay couples creates a great deal of stress in their romantic relationships, and thereby increases the difficulties lesbian and gay couple face in maintaining healthy, loving intimate relationships.

For your information--

- In 1990, Congress passed the Hate Crimes Statistics Act in which the FBI was mandated to collect statistical information on hate crimes reported by local area police. Anti-gay violence was one of the categories stipulated in this Act. One of this Act's most significant limitations is that it only tracks the number of reported acts of violence recorded by the local police agencies. Of the 7,600 hate crimes reported to the FBI (June 1994), roughly 912 or 12% are gay-related. Conversely, national statistics gathered by gay anti-violence organizations indicate a much higher incidence of violence against *perceived* lesbians and gay men. In 1993, they reported 2,031 incidents of gay-related hate crimes and 2,064 cases in 1994. These figures are significantly higher than the number of cases reported by local police agencies.
- Unlike the majority of crimes, a high percentage of hate crimes against gay people are perpetuated by two or more assailants. This means that injuries suffered are often very serious in nature.
- According to a recent Seattle study, for every gay or lesbian youth being harassed, another four heterosexual kids were being beaten up or tormented because they were *perceived* to be gay.
- A 1989 study commissioned by the US Department of Health and Human Services found that gay and lesbian youth are in one of the highest risk categories for attempting suicide. "Gay youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people. They may comprise up to 30% of completed youth suicides annually." (Remafedi, *Death by Denial: Studies of Suicide in Gay & Lesbian Teenagers*, p. 15)
- Gay men and lesbians have been found to be at higher risk for alcohol addiction than their heterosexual counterparts.
- Perhaps one of the most frightening aspects of homophobia is the marked increase in anti-gay legislative attempts throughout the United States. According to the *Washington Blade*, the numbers of anti-gay measures have increased substantially from five in 1984 to 24 in 1994. More than 40 anti-gay ballot measures have passed since 1991.

WHY ARE GAY RIGHTS IMPORTANT TO HETEROSEXUAL AMERICANS?

Gay rights are central to the continuing defense of individual liberty in the United States.

An excellent book on this subject is attorney Michael Nava and history professor Robert Dawidoff's *Created Equal: Why Gay Rights Matter to America*. In the book, Nava and Dawidoff argue that American citizens who happen to be gay are first and foremost citizens of this country. And as such, they are entitled to the same rights afforded to every individual American citizen under the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. To abridge the citizenship rights of gay people will not only affect the fate of gays, but the future of the constitutional principal and the rights of free individuals in American society. The basic arguments that Nava and Dawidoff make in the book are:

1. The purpose of the US constitutional government is the protection of individual rights.
2. Gays and lesbians, as American citizens, are entitled to the exercise of these rights.
3. Demonstrably, gays and lesbians are denied free exercise of these rights.
4. The grounds for denying gay rights are rooted in ignorance.
5. The organized opponents of gay rights, who exploit ignorance and bias, would substitute sectarian religious morality in place of constitutional guarantees that allow individuals to determine how best to live their lives.
6. The anti-gay rights forces are using the issue of rights for gay people as a test case to promote a broader agenda, the purpose of which is to limit individual liberties in the country.

Ask yourself: Does legislation that effects lesbian parental rights have legal ramifications for the parental rights of heterosexual women as well? Does the right of gay men and lesbians to adopt children or become foster parents, either a single adults or as a couple, have an impact on heterosexual rights in these areas? Does hate crimes legislation that includes protections for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people also protect heterosexual people? Does legislation that protects gay people from discrimination in the workplace and in housing protect non-gays, too? Do legal prohibitions against sodomy have consequences for heterosexuals? Does gay marriage or domestic partnership legislation have legal ramifications for heterosexual people? These are among the issues we must consider when trying to understand how failure to extend equal rights and protections to homosexual people will effect the civil and political rights of all Americans, homosexual or heterosexual

ATTACKS ON GAY RIGHTS

When gays began to “come out” after the Stonewall Rebellion, their new openness was met with both opposition and hatred. This animosity was nothing new to the gay people who had already faced years of police harassment, arrests, vice squad intimidation, and personal affronts—and nobody talked about it. The ferocity of the hatred that has galvanized the reactionary right into a political movement over the last three decades is the significant change.

The 1970's was a turbulent time for gays. Just as gays began to enjoy being out, and gain political and social power and acceptance, gay organizations and institutions were attacked. Arson was one of the first methods used to attack gay centers—mostly gay churches associated with the Metropolitan Community Church. Just as new laws were being passed to protect

homosexuals from discrimination in counties and cities across the country, a backlash movement began developing.

The most publicized anti-gay campaign of the 1970's was led by Anita Bryant, a Miss America runner-up and Florida orange juice spokesperson. In 1977, her crusade to repeal a Dade County, FL anti-discrimination law used myths and stereotypes about lesbians and gay men to manufacture voter anxiety. Gay men and lesbians came together and started the first campaign to defeat a ballot measure that targeted homosexuals. Since then, there has been a marked increase in numbers of these anti-gay ballot measures. In the last few years, two of the most watched statewide anti-gay campaigns were Oregon's Measure 9, and Colorado's Amendment 2. The Supreme Court recently found Amendment 2 to be unconstitutional; Oregon's Measure 9 was narrowly defeated. Subsequently, the Oregon Citizen's Alliance (OCA), sponsor of Measure 9, has been able to enact similar legislation in local municipal areas throughout the state. The OCA is now adding attacks on a woman's right to choose to their repertoire of hate campaigns.

EQUAL RIGHTS VS. SPECIAL RIGHTS

African Americans were accused of seeking "special rights" during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. Now, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people are accused of seeing "special rights". Both populations are simply seeking equal justice under the law.

Unfortunately, gay rights have become the lightning rod in the rise of the reactionary right's "Christian" or "family values" campaigns. Current and proposed legislation does not provide for any unusual or special treatment of gay people. *Gay rights* are NOT *special rights* and do not provide for either quotas in hiring or affirmative action. (A recent decision by the University of California Board of Regents used similar language and rationale when ending affirmative action in the university by calling equal access a "special right".)

It is important to understand that gay rights laws only state that discrimination based on sexual orientation is illegal.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

All God's Children can stir up strong feelings. Try to create a safe and open space for people to express their emotions. This includes discussing issues of confidentiality with the group ahead of time. It is important for people to know that their experiences, feelings, and reactions are not necessarily for public consumption. Discuss these issues before viewing the video.

Before screening the video, explain to the group that the purpose of this screening and discussion is to explore homophobia and heterosexism and how they affect all of us. Define homophobia and heterosexism, and provide examples of each.

When viewing the film, ask people to be thinking about:

- Their general reaction to the film
- What they learned
- What they might disagree with or be skeptical about
- The questions it raised

Before beginning any discussion, ask the group to agree on some guidelines for that discussion. Some suggested guidelines for discussion include:

- Share the discussion time, avoid dialogues
- No put downs
- Speak from own experience, avoid generalizing
- Listen respectfully, no interrupting
- Everyone has the right to listen without being expected to participate in the discussion
- Expect different perspectives
- Respect confidentiality
- Be open to learning something new

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO EXPLORE

About the Film

- What have you learned about homosexuals and homosexuality from the video *All God's Children*?
- Has your opinion about lesbians and gays changed after seeing this film?
- Is homosexuality just a *White Issue*?
- Are there gay men and lesbians in the Black Church?
- Why is the Black Church such an important institution for African Americans?

General Questions

- Was homosexuality a part of society before the term “homosexuality” was coined?
- Do any of you know any homosexual people? If yes, are these people significantly different from the heterosexual people you know?
- Why are people homosexual? Have you ever asked yourself: Why am I heterosexual? When does the awareness that one is heterosexual occur?
- Is it important to know why someone is homosexual? If yes, why is this?

Living in the World

- Do you think that a person's sexual orientation is always obvious?
- What kind of jobs do gay people hold?
- Does someone's sexual orientation affect his or her job performance or potential in the workplace? If yes, how so?
- Do you take your personal life to your workplace? Classroom? Church? Everywhere? Do you chat about your spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, and/or your children with co-workers and friends?

Name Calling

- Have you ever experienced discrimination? Are you left-handed in a right-handed world? Have you been called Fatso or Ugly? Dummy or Retard? Spic or Wetback? Chink or Gook? Fag, Faggot, Sissy or Girl? Dyke? Nigger? Queer? Jap? Crip? An Abomination? Unclean? White trash? Hillbilly? How does being on the receiving end of any of these epithets make you feel?

- Why do you think people participate in name calling? What is their purpose? Is name calling a positive or a negative behavior?

Discrimination

- Is discrimination based on appearance, level of ability or disability, ethnic or racial origin, class sexual orientation, gender, skin color, nationality, handed-ness, or any other category either fair or democratic?
- Can these types of prejudice be justified either legally or personally? If yes, how? If no, what can you do to help end discrimination on a personal level? On a political level? In a social situation?
- Are all forms of discrimination or bigotry related? If no, how are they different? If yes, how are they related?
- Are some forms of bigotry or prejudice more “important” or “primary” than others? If yes, which are more important and why? And is this level of importance universal or situational?
- Is it fair to deny a group of people the ability to earn a living, live where they want, raise children or attend the church of their choice simply because of their sexual orientation? Are these *special rights*?
- In the United States, we fight for civil rights and political rights on a piecemeal basis. Is this sensible? Fair? Cost-effective?
- Do you think lesbians and gays face a great deal of discrimination?

How would you feel...

- If you were gay or lesbian, how would you cope with your fear of bodily injury, of losing your family or home, or of losing your job?
- How would you react if our government ignored violations of your civil protections?

Anti-gay Prejudice and Violence: Who Are the Victims?

- Do you think that heterosexual people are harassed and seriously hurt because they are *perceived* to be gay?
- Do you think that some heterosexual people are discriminated against in jobs or housing because they are *perceived* to be gay?

Anti-gay Legislation: Who Loses

- Do you think that the scope of legislation passed to sanction discrimination against gay people effects only gay people? If yes, why do you think this? If no, please give some examples as to how heterosexual people might be also adversely effected by anti-gay legislation.
- Aside from anti-gay legislation, what other types of legislation are promoted by the organizations and people who are opposed to equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

Appendix

DEFINITION OF TERMS

HOMOSEXUALITY and HETEROSEXUALITY These are relatively new words or terms. The word “Homosexuality”: combines the Greek work *Homo* meaning *same* with the Latin word *sexual* meaning *sex*; the word “Heterosexuality” combines the Greek word *Hetero* meaning *different* with the Latin word *sexual* meaning *sex*. Both of these words were invented or coined by an Austro-Hungarian writer named Karl Maria Kertbeny in 1868. Usage of these terms began in the United States about 100 years ago. Although the terms “heterosexual”, “bisexual”, and “homosexual” are relatively new to the English lexicon, the sexual attractions they refer to have been around since the beginning of time.

HOMOSEXUALITY may be defined as the erotic, emotional, social and spiritual attraction of men towards men, and women towards women.

HETEROSEXUALITY may be defined as the erotic, emotional, social and spiritual attraction of men towards women, and women towards men.

HETEROSEXISM is the cultural, institutional and individual practices and beliefs based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation. For example: Traditional beliefs about acceptable gender role behavior and the lack of information about sexual orientation leads some people to assume that all women in athletics are lesbians.

HOMOPHOBIA is the irrational fear or hatred of lesbians, gay men, bisexual or transgendered people.

LESBIAN / GAY / BISEXUAL / TRANSGENDER The word **LESBIAN** is used to describe a homosexual woman, and the word **GAY** is used to describe a homosexual man. Some homosexual women prefer the term “gay woman”. **BISEXUALS** have erotic/emotional attractions to both genders. **TRANSGENDER** is a term used to refer to people who have had their genders surgically reassigned, or are in some stage of that process.

QUEER is a word that was reclaimed by a younger generation of homosexuals in the late 1980’s. It can be used as an inclusive term for both men and women. **QUESTIONING** is another term that has been claimed by the younger generation.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION is the gender to which a specific individual is sexually attracted. Sexual Orientation can be primarily “homosexual”, primarily “heterosexual” or “bisexual.”

SEXOLOGIST is a person who studies human and animal sexual behavior. Anthropology, biology, anatomy, world cultures, history, religion, and animal behavior are among the fields that sexologists study to obtain information on sexuality.

WHAT SEXOLOGISTS KNOW ABOUT
SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- Sex and sexuality are naturally occurring phenomena. They are universal, existing in other cultures at all times.
- Sex and sexuality have been venerated in some cultures, and repressed and punished in others.
- Human beings are orgasm seekers; orgasms are achieved in a variety of ways.
- Sexuality is both wired into the brain and “elastic” (referring to a range of sexual behaviors).
- Humans and other beings use sex for reproductive purposes; they also use sex and sexuality for pleasure.
- Although reproduction of the species is obtained through sex, sex and reproduction are separable. In fact, a great deal of sexual behavior is not geared towards reproduction.
- Masturbation is a universal, healthy form of sexual expression.
- The brain is the largest sex organ.
- Homosexuality is evident throughout nature, has existed in all times, and is as natural for homosexuals as heterosexuality is for heterosexuals.
- The range of human sexual behaviors is as varied as the range of human sexual beings.
- Homosexuality, heterosexuality, and bisexuality are orientations, not choices.
- Sex and love can be combined or separated; sex and reproduction can be combined or separated.
- The human sexual response cycle—excitement, plateau, orgasm, resolution—is the same in every human regardless of sexual orientation.

PROMINENT LESBIAN, GAY & BISEXUAL PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

ALVIN AILEY, *Dancer & Choreographer*

JOSEPHINE BAKER, *Entertainer*

JAMES BALDWIN, *Writer, Activist*

ALICIA BANKS, *Radio Producer*

BENJAMIN BANNEKER, *Farmer, Scientist, Gazetteer (appointed to the commission that surveyed and designed DC)*

DEBORAH BATTIS, *Judge*

BISHOP CARL BEAN, *Clergyman, Activist (Founder, Unity Fellowship Church)*

JOSEPH BEAM, *Poet, Singer, Composer*

ALAN BELL, *Publisher*

GEORGE BELLINGER, *AIDS Activist*

GLADYS BENTLEY, *Harlem Renaissance-Pianist, Composer, Male Impersonator*
BECKY BIRTHA, *Writer*
BLACKBERRI, *Musician, Actor & Activist*
KEITH BOYKIN, *Attorney & Writer*
GLEN BURGE, *Athlete (LA Dodgers 1976-78, originated the "high 5")*
MANDY CARTER, *Activist*
GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER, *Scientist, Inventor ("The Wizard of Tuskegee")*
Rainey Cheeks, *Clergyman, (Unity Fellowship Church of Washington, DC)*
CHERYL CLARK
JAMES CLEVELAND, *theologian, Founder, Gospel Music Workshop)*
MICHELLE CLIFF, *Jamaican Writer*
COUNTEE CULLEN, *Harlem Renaissance Writer & Poet*
JAYE DAVIDSON, *Actor*
ANGELA DAVIS, *Activist, Scholar, Visionary*
GARY DELOATCH, *Dancer*
LARRY DEPLECHAN, *Novelist*
ALICE DUNBAR-NELSON, *Writer*
HERBERT EVANS, *Clergyman*
ELIAS FARAJAJE-JONES, *Theologian*
JUSTIN FASHANU, *Athlete (Nigerian-born British soccer player)*
WARREN FRECHETTE, *Journalist*
DARLENE GARNER, *Clergy (First Elder, the UFMCC Church)*
GILBERTO GERALD, *Activist*
PETER GOMES, *Theologian (Minister, Memorial church at Harvard University)*
JEWELLE GOMEZ, *Writer*
ANNIE LEE GRANT, *Passed as a man for 20 years to get higher-paying jobs*
ANGELINA WELD GRIMKE, *Teacher, Writer (related to the abolitionist Grimke sisters)*
MABEL HAMPTON, *Activist*
LORRAINE HANSBERRY, *Playwright ("A Raisin in the Sun")*
JAMES E. HARDY, *Writer*
E. LYNN HARRIS, *Writer*
SHERRIE HARRIS, *POLITICIAN (first openly-lesbian African American elected official)*
DONNIE HATHAWAY, *Entertainer*
HATSHEPSUT, *Queen of Egypt (d. 1482, BC)*
ESSEX HEMPHILL, *Poet*
NONA HENDRYX, *Entertainer (Former member, LaBelle)*
BILLIE HOLIDAY, *Blues Singer*
(aka Lady Day)

LANGSTON HUGHES, *Harlem*

Renaissance-era writer

ALBERTA HUNTER, *Blues Singer*

PAT HUSSEIN, *Activist (Led efforts ban '96 Olympic Games from Cobb County, GA. Organizer, 1993 March on Washington)*

TONY JACKSON, *Composer (Wrote "Pretty Baby")*

DEBORAH JOHNSON, *Theologian, Activist*

MICHELLE JOHNSON, *Journalist*

BILL T. JONES, *Choreographer*

BARBARA JORDAN, *Attorney, Stateswoman, Educator*

JUNE JORDON, *Writer, Educator*

PATRICK KELLEY, *Fashion Designer*

RUPERT KINNARD, *Cartoonist*

EDMONIA LEWIS, *Sculptor*

LARRY LEVAN, *Legendary NYC DJ (Paradise Garage. The speakers he helped design were named "Levans" after him.)*

DEREK CHARLES LIVINGSTON, *Activist (Co-Chair, 1993 March on Washington)*

ALAIN LOCKE, *Philosopher (First African American Rhodes Scholar)*

AUDRE LORDE, *Writer (Poet Laureate, New York State)*

FRANKIE LYMAN, *Singer*

JACKIE MOMS MABLEY, *Comedian*

HATTIE MACDANIEL, *Actor (First African American woman to receive an Oscar)*

CLEO MANAGO, *Activist, Writer, Instructor & Social Architect*

JOHNNIE MATHIS, *Entertainer, Athlete*

CLAUDE MCKAY, *Harlem Renaissance-era Writer*

ME SHELL NDGGEOCELLO, *Singer*

SIMON NKOLI, *South African Freedom Fighter*

BRUCE NUGENT, *Writer*

PAT PARKER, *Writer, Educator*

MICHELLE PARKINSON, *Filmmaker, Activist*

MICHAEL PETERS, *Choreographer*

RICHARD PENNIMAN, *Entertainer aka*

LITTLE RICHARD *(the original King of Rock'n'Roll)*

AFRO HOMOS POMO, *Theater Troupe*

MA RAINEY, *Blues Singer ("Mother of the Blues")*

KENNETH REEVES, *Politician (first openly-gay mayor)*

SYLVIA F. RHUE, *Writer, Sexologist, Filmmaker (first African American to receive a Doctorate in Human Sexuality)*

MARLON RIGGS, *Filmmaker (Tongues Untied, Ethnic Notions, Color Adjustment, Black Is...Black Ain't)*

SANDRA L. ROBINSON, *Clergy (President & CEO, Samaritan College, UFMCC)*

HOWARD E. ROLLINS JR., *Actor (Ragtime, Soldier's Story, In the Heat of the Night)*

RU PAUL, *Entertainer*

BAYARD RUSTIN, *Civil Rights Activist & Political Strategist (Chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington)*

ASSOTO SAINT, *Writer, Publisher, Activist*

KEITH ST. JOHN, *Politician (First openly-gay African American elected official)*

FRANKLYN SEALES, *Actor (Dexter Steffins on Silver Spoons)*

STEPHEN SEMIEN, *Performer*

BARBARA SMITH, *Editor & Publisher*

BESSIE SMITH, *Singer (aka "The Empress of the Blues")*

NADINE SMITH, *Activist*

VENGERFLUTTA C. SMITH, *Educator*

WILLI SMITH, *Fashion Designer*

SABRINA SOJOURNER, *Activist (Aide to Maxine Waters)*

BILLY STRYHORN, *Composer*

SYLVESTER, *Entertainer*

WILLA TAYLOR, *Cultural Activist*

JEWEL THAIS-WILLIAMS, *Businesswoman*

HARRIET TUBMAN, *Freedom Fighter*

VARL VAN VECHTEN, *Music Critic, Photographer, Writer*

LINDA VILLAROSA, *Journalist*

VALLERIE WAGNER, *Activist*

ALICE WALKER, *Pulitzer Prize-winning Writer*

ETHEL WATERS, *Actor*

RUTH WATERS, *Activist*

PERRY WATKINS, *Soldier*

EVELYN C. WHITE, *Journalist, Writer*

PHILL WILSON, *Founder, National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum*

GEORGE C. WOLFE, *Playwright, Producer (NY Shakespeare Festival); Director*

SUGGESTED READING MATERIALS

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- Katz, Jonathan. *The Invention of Heterosexuality*. New York: Penguin Group, 1995.
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- Sears, James T., *Growing Up Gay in the South*. NY: Harrington Park Press, 1991.
- Shilts, Randy. *And the Band Played On: Politics, People and the AIDS Epidemic*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.
- Shilts, Randy. *Conduct Unbecoming: Gays & Lesbians in the U.S. Military*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

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- Sjoo, Monica and Barbara Mor. *The Great Cosmic Mother—Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987.
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- Witt, Lynn, Sherry Thomas and Eric Marcus. *Out in All Directions—The Almanac of Gay and Lesbian America*. NY: Warner Books, 1995.

SOME OTHER VIDEO RESOURCES

Camp Lavender Hill

Hybrid Productions (1997/28 min/VHS/Color) is a sensitive portrayal of the issues faced by the children of gay and lesbian parents. **Screening Honoree**, Mill Valley Film Festival's Children's Video Fest & Pacific Film Archives; **National Educational Media Award**.

To Order: 888-999-0490

Gay Youth

Pam Walton Productions (1992/40min/VHS/Color) is the documentary short that broke the silence about adolescent homosexuality, including young gays' coming out, family and school experiences. **Cine Golden Eagle; Blue Ribbon** American Film/Video Festival

To Order: 1-800-Get Wolfe; www.wolfevideo.com

Out for a Change: Addressing Homophobia in Women's Sports

Woman Vision (1995/28 min/VHS/Color) is a look at the devastating emotional impact of homophobia on all women athletes. *Out for a Change* makes the case that homophobia—like sexism and racism—is a wedge issue used to inhibit equal access for all women.

National Educational Media Award; Screening Honoree, NCAA Women's National

Basketball Coached Conference & NAGWS Symposium "Transcending Boundaries...The New Agenda in Sport"

To Order: 1-800-343-5540

Email: womanvsn@aol.com; www.Woman-Vision.org

Straight From the Heart

Woman Vision(1994/24 min/VHS/Color) deals with the issues parents face when coming to terms with having a gay or lesbian child. It presents simple stories about real people: a police chief who talks about how proud he is of his lesbian daughter; a Mormon couple whose son is believed to be the first gay man in Idaho to die of AIDS. *Straight from the Heart* was the first pro-gay film to be screened for the U.S. Congress. **1995 Academy Award™ Nominee**, Documentary Short Subject Category, **Finalist**, USA Film Festival National Short Film Competition.

To Order: 1-800-343-5540

Email: womanvsn@aol.com; www.Woman-Vision.org

Note: There are discussion guides available for all these videos.

SOME ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Note: Many of the organizations listed below have offices throughout the country. We are providing contact information for their national headquarters only.

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)

248 West 35th Street, 8th Floor

New York, NY 10001

(212) 629.3322

www.glaad.org

Hetrick Martin Institute

2 Astor Place

New York, NY 10003

(212) 674.2400

www.hmi.org

Institute for First Amendment Studies
P.O. Box 589,
Great Barrington, MA 01230
(413) 528-3800
<http://www.ifas.org>

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund
120 Wall Street, Suite 1500
New York, NY 10005-3904
(212)809-8585 phone
(212)809-0055 fax
www.lambdalegal.org

National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum
1436 U Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 483-6786
www.blackstripe.org

National Center for Lesbian Rights
870 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 392-6527
www.nclrights.org

National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGO)
420 K Street, NW , Ste 200
Washington, DC 20005
202) 408.5380
www.llego.org

Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment
(888) 214-9218
www.nwb.net/nwc/

Parents, Families and Friends for Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
1726 M Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 467-8180
www.pflag.org

People for the American Way
2000 M Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 467-4999
(800) 326-7329
pfaw@pfaw.org

*United Federation of Metropolitan
Community Churches (UFMCC)*
8704 Santa Monica Blvd. 2nd Fl. West Hollywood, CA 90069
(310) 360-8640
www.ufmcc.org

Unity Fellowship Church
5149 W. Jefferson Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90036
(213) 936-4948
www.unityfellowshipchurch.org