

# ONE OF THEM



Freedom from bullying, name-calling and violence motivates the high school seniors in this school-based drama.

Jamie is shocked when she and her best friend become victims of homophobic name-calling. But she must face up to her own reactions as she realizes that her friend is "one of them" and needs her support. And Jamie's boyfriend must decide if he will support Jamie.

Set firmly in the context of human rights and freedom from discrimination, **One of Them** raises the questions that high school students talk about in school halls and washrooms. With a focus on homophobia and discrimination, not sexual behaviour, the dramatization prompts viewers to examine their own responses and promote a safe school environment for all students.

Background information and classroom activities on video liner.

**Ages 13 and up**


**25 minutes, 24 seconds**

**Order Number: C9199 229**

**Director: Elise Swerhone**

**Writer: Nancy Trites Botkin**

**Producer: Jennifer Torrance**

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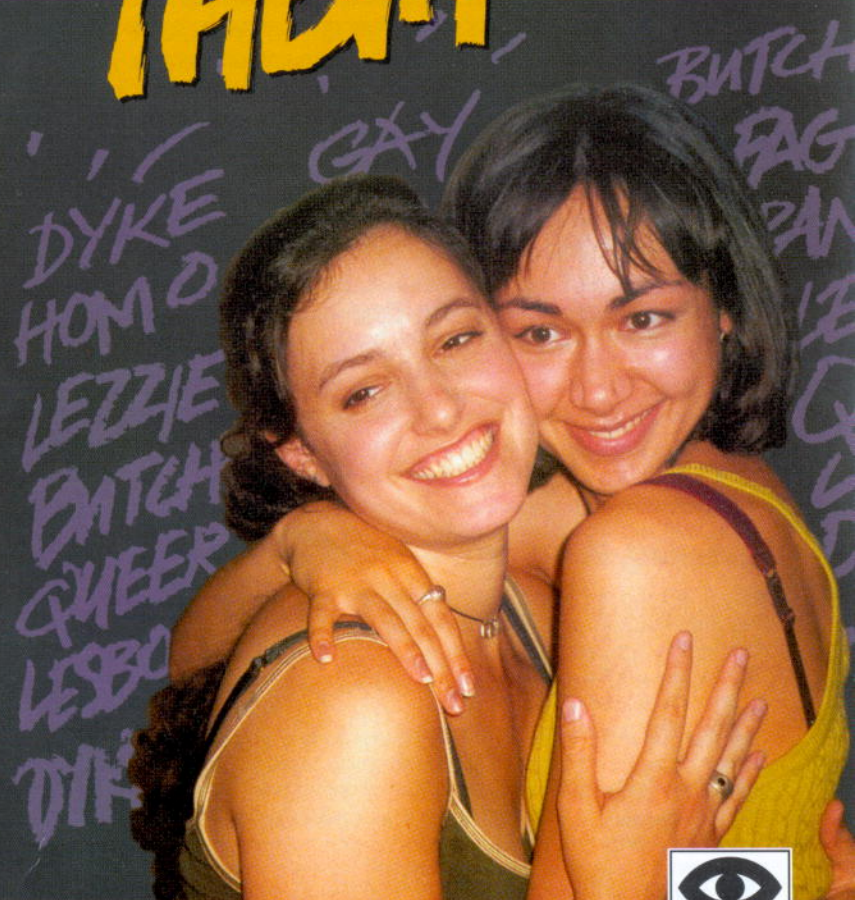
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**VHS**

**C9199 229**



**A National Film Board of Canada Production**

# INTRODUCTION

## Why talk about homophobia in school?

- Homophobia exists in most every school in Canada – and it harms students. (For examples, see inside.) Schools must provide a safe learning environment, and to do so, teachers must respond to homophobia.
- Homophobia affects the whole school by fostering discrimination, name-calling and violence. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students are a minority but many students have friends, parents or other family members who are members of sexual minorities. Opposing homophobia is opposing discrimination, not endorsing sexual activity.

## The law and anti-discrimination policy

- Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination, and the Supreme Court of Canada says the Charter prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.
- Federal and provincial Human Rights Acts also protect sexual minorities from discrimination.
- Many provincial education departments and school districts have policies that protect students against discrimination based on their sexual orientation.
- Many teacher associations impose professional responsibilities on teachers to keep their students safe from violence and discrimination.

## Guidelines for discussing homophobia

To ensure safe classroom discussion establish guidelines:

- Show respect for other participants, listen to others and speak calmly.
- Speak for yourselves, not for others.
- Opt in or out of the discussion, but remain in class.

It's important to respond immediately to inappropriate comments by correcting stereotypes and offensive language and preventing personal attacks.

Talking about homophobia does not mean talking about sex. Students are interested in sex, but teachers can focus discussion on acceptance and the dignity of all students.

## Homophobia harms students

Homophobia affects all students, but it can be devastating for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) youth. They may be the target of verbal and physical abuse, and may feel isolated because the reality of their lives is trivialized. According to a recent study, LGBT youth may face life-threatening problems:

- Many avoid school, cannot focus on school work and drop out.
- Over half report physical or sexual abuse.
- Over one-quarter report attempting suicide.
- Most have low self-esteem and are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours and substance abuse.

An atmosphere that permits homophobia undermines respect for the dignity of all students and condones bullying and violence. A weak response to bullying behaviour serves to:

- Target unpopular students and those who do not fit the popular ideals, whether or not they are LGBT.
- Reinforce cliques and hierarchies of in-groups.
- Emphasize disparities between the laws and the reality of discrimination.

## Facts, myths and stereotypes

- Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people make up a significant proportion of all populations, including school populations. In a 1996 Calgary survey of young men, 15% reported homosexual activity or identification.
- LGBTs are not harmful role models or pedophiles. (Pedophiles are 20 times more likely to be heterosexual than homosexual.) Studies consistently show that sexual orientation is not determined by role models, but that lack of role models makes life harder for young gay men and lesbians.
- Sexual preference is formed early and is not learned or caused by talking about sexuality. Studies point to genetic, social, hormonal and psychological links. Research indicates that homosexuality ranges from 7 to 10% of most populations.
- Students live in all types of families, from extended families to single-parent ones. Some students live with same-sex parents, and they can face harassment or hide their family status to avoid it.
- LGBTs may be single, dating, involved in a long-term relationship or married. These roles and behaviours have all the complexity and diversity of heterosexual relationships.

See *Web site (nfb.ca/oneofthem)* for bibliography.

## Pre-video activities

Preview the video and select activities that are appropriate for your class.

- **The “isms”** Have students list various types of discrimination (prejudice against teens, sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.). Discuss what these “isms” have in common, and how it feels to be the target of discrimination. Discuss which ones are prohibited by laws or policies and which ones are tolerated.
- **Appreciating diversity** Have students form a series of groups based on given criteria (hair colour, family structure, gender, place of origin, students who know LGBTs, etc.). Point out the range of diversity among the students and discuss why diversity is important, e.g., it brings different ideas and experiences to the group.
- **Feelings of discrimination** Choose an arbitrary sub-group (e.g., students wearing T-shirts) and have the class act for an hour as if the group is a target of discrimination. Have the group wear headbands, refuse them the right to speak and other classroom privileges. At the end of the hour, ask the group to describe how they felt during the exercise. Imagine if the restrictions were permanent. Have the rest of the class describe how they felt. How might they have supported the group?
- **Fighting words** Explain that students will be asked to examine language they do not normally use in class, and have them brainstorm derogatory (racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.) names they have heard. In small groups, have them discuss how people feel hearing the words, either as targets of the words or as observers. Have reporters describe to the class what students told the groups. Discuss how the targets of derogatory words might have felt if someone had offered them support.

## Screening the video

As you screen the video, you may wish to stop the tape and have students react to what they have seen:

- 1) after the first committee meeting
- 2) after the graffiti appears
- 3) after Carla comes out to Jamie
- 4) after Mick says Jamie is a lesbian.

Ask students to:

- jot down notes or make a sketch about the characters' reactions
- describe what they think will happen next
- describe what they would do in one of the characters' places.



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Order number:  
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## Post-video activities

### • Discussion

- Why does Carla's relationship with Jamie change?
- What does Carla want when she comes out to Jamie?
- Why does Mick say Reggie is gay?
- Why can't Mick deal with the idea that Carla and Jamie might be lesbians?
- Why did Carla cancel the Circle of Care?
- What will Mick do after the time shown in the video?
- What would happen if your school formed a Circle of Care?

• **Q & A** Have students anonymously write comments or questions arising from the video or from their personal experience on slips of paper. Answer the questions that you can, or invite a school counsellor or resource person to class.

• **Myth mischief** Brainstorm myths and stereotypes about lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people. Ask what's wrong with the myths, or research the true facts. Discuss how the myths affect heterosexuals as well as LGBTs, e.g., They lead people to make embarrassing mistakes, to misjudge their friends, to tolerate bullying and offensive language, etc.

• **Talking back** Ask students what they can do when they hear homophobic or other offensive language in the school. Select scenes from the video and have students role play how the characters and other students could have reacted to support the targets of discrimination. Discuss what responses work best, and have students modify the role play to show how they could offer more support.

• **Looking at the law** Have students research the laws and policies that apply in their school, district or province about homophobia and other forms of discrimination.

## Ideas for further action

- Use creative media to describe a time when you felt you were suffering from discrimination.
- Organize a human rights day in school.
- Organize a human rights club or gay/straight alliance in school.
- Research and publicize anti-discrimination resources in the community, including information sources and support organizations.

For information about related Internet sites, books and other NFB videos on homophobia, visit  
**[www.nfb.ca/oneofthem](http://www.nfb.ca/oneofthem)**