School’s OUT!

Featuring:
Writer and activist Jane Rule and TEACH (Teens Educating And Confronting Homophobia) members Suzanne Anderson, Elmer Bagares, Melanie Cameron, Alison Dover and Emmanuelle Pantin.

Washroom graffiti, protest buttons and music by popular alternative band The Breeders punctuate often funny, always intelligent and honest observations about sexuality and sexual orientation by acclaimed writer Jane Rule and five Canadian youth active in confronting homophobia in high schools. TEACH members talk about their lives and their classroom visits, provoking discussion about homophobia and heterosexism in today’s school yards. Against a backdrop of newspaper headlines that reflect society’s changing attitudes toward homosexuality since the 1950s, Jane Rule contributes her wisdom and insight about sexuality, and situates the lives and activism of today’s youth in an historical context.

School’s OUT! is intended to provoke discussion about sexuality, sexual orientation, homophobia and heterosexism amongst high school and college students.

Director: Lynne Fernie  Producer: Rina Fraticelli
Produced by Great Jane Productions. Distributed by the National Film Board of Canada.
24 minutes 32 seconds Order number: 9196 128
Closed captioned. A decoder is required.

NFB VIDEO SALES 1-800-267-7710

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Confronting homophobia in high schools

"TEACH means having a positive attitude about your sexuality, be it lesbian, gay, bi, straight or queer. It means there is nothing wrong with having a same-sex relationship and nothing wrong if you decide not to." — TEACH members

Featuring Jane Rule

VHS 9196 128

Pull out for User’s Guide.

Printed in Canada
School's OUT!
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USER'S GUIDE

School's OUT! is meant to provoke discussion about sexual orientation, examine some of the stereotypes about lesbian and gay youth and look at the reasons why youth often use homophobic terms to put down their peers. It will help students to analyze the connections between sexism, racism, heterosexism and homophobia. Some viewers may respond with personal experiences of sexual, racial or homophobic harassment. Before screening the video, check with your school or workplace for policies and guidelines in order to provide appropriate advice and/or further resources.

SETTING GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION

Talking about sexual orientation can be difficult for youth who are in the process of learning about their sexuality. Setting some ground rules will help create a safe environment so students may express their feelings, examine their fears and learn from other students.

Respect each other. Think about ways to disagree that will allow the other person to understand your point rather than feel attacked. Don't use demeaning language to describe others' ideas or actions. Group members should respect one another's need to take time out if they need to examine feelings of fear or anger. Ask people to suggest other ground rules. Agreements about confidentiality, no interrupting and - while humour can facilitate discussion about sexuality - no laughing at others' beliefs can encourage participants to speak. Depending on the group and its context, you may also suggest that participants not ask other members about their personal sexual orientation during the discussion.

Don't make assumptions. There may be gay, lesbian or bisexual people in your group, youth who are not sure about their sexual orientation and people with gay brothers, sisters or parents. Think about how they might feel about your comments before you speak.

RELATED NFB VIDEOS

OUT: Stories of Lesbian and Gay Youth Classroom version. An extensive User's Guide is included. Order number: 9193 125 (39:00)

Taking Charge (Part of the Teens Against Violence collection) Teenagers address issues of violence against women, racism and homophobia. Includes a pull-out User's Guide. Order number: 9196 020 (26:00)

Fiction and Other Truths: A Film About Jane Rule The life and work of the acclaimed author and social activist. Order number: 9194 132 (57:00)

Jane Rule...writing Writer and activist Jane Rule talks about her work, with analysis by feminist literary professor Marilyn Schuster. Order number: 9196 129 (26:00)

WHY YOU SHOULD USE THIS VIDEO

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight youth have the right to a safe environment in their schools.
- 28% of lesbian and gay youth drop out of high school.
- Homophobic words are used as weapons to attack youth.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for lesbian and gay youth.
- A discussion about sexual orientation will help students who are struggling with these issues.

For further resources about sexual orientation and rights issues, check your telephone book to see if your city has a lesbian, gay and bisexual organization, or contact local health and education boards.
BEFORE THE SCREENING

Introduce this video as one in which well-known Canadian novelist Jane Rule, and youth who visit high schools, talk about sexual orientation and the impact of homophobia on their lives. A brief explanation of sexual orientation and some of the terms given in the glossary, and positioning the struggle for lesbian and gay rights in relationship to other struggles for equal rights, will help participants to consider their contribution to later discussion. Ask viewers to make a note of statements or issues in the video that they'd like to talk about with the group.

AFTER THE SCREENING

Questions:

1. When someone calls another person a “faggot” or “dyke,” what are they trying to do? Have you ever seen or overheard someone being called homophobic names? How did that make you/them feel? How do you think homophobia is similar to sexism, racism and other prejudices?

2. Elmer says that he thinks that boys sometimes act homophobic because they’re afraid of being seen as gay. Why? Are boys afraid of being seen as gay because it is considered feminine? How do these feelings relate to sexism?

3. Can you think of any gay or lesbian characters on television or in the movies? What kind of characters are they and how are they portrayed? What are the responses of heterosexual characters to them?

Projects:

1. Jane says that “addressing fears is addressing barriers to people’s creativity, to their love, to their courage to change society.” Have students think of ways to make their schools and communities safe and comfortable for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

2. Ask students to contribute to a code of behaviour or ethics which respects people’s differences and is based on how people treat one another instead of on stereotypes of gender, race or sexual orientation.

A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF TERMS

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: The physical and emotional attraction of someone to persons of the opposite sex, same sex, or both. Three forms of sexual orientation are labelled: heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual.

COMING OUT: The process through which lesbian, gay and bisexual people recognize their sexual preference and integrate this knowledge into their personal and social lives. It may also mean disclosure, as in, “I just came out to my parents.”

HOMOPHOBIA: Fear and hatred of homosexuality, often exhibited as prejudice, discrimination, name-calling, harassment and acts of violence against those presumed to be homosexual.

INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA: The fear and hatred of homosexuality that gays, lesbians and bisexuals may absorb into their self-images from the way they are treated in society.

SEXISM: Discriminatory practices and beliefs directed against people because of their gender.

HETEROSEXISM or COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY: The assumption that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation. The pressure to be heterosexual and the harassment of gays, lesbians and bisexuals is often used to try and enforce heterosexual behaviour.

RACISM: Discriminatory practices and beliefs directed against people because of their skin colour, culture and/or religion.

FAG/DYKE/QUEER: Terms used by participants in the video. Although used as insults by homophobic people, the terms are being reclaimed by many gays and lesbians who feel that by using them positively, the expressions will lose the ability to cause harm.