

RECONCILING IMAGES VIDEO STUDY - SESSION 3, "The Matthew Shepard Story"

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GOALS: To consider how LGBTQ people have been presented in television and movies, how this has impacted American popular culture, and how Christians act or react.

EXPECTATIONS: Respectful, thoughtful conversation. You can attend one or all sessions, as these are independent. Kids are welcome but parents should use discretion as some of the movies/TV shows deal with adult themes. Bring a snack to share - each week we'll ask one person to bring a more substantial main dish.

SESSIONS	MOVIE/EPISODES (rating, hh:mm)	MAIN DISH
Sunday, July 28, noon	Philadelphia (PG-13, 2:05)	_____
Sunday, August 4, noon	Queer Eye: God Bless Gay (TV-14, 0:51)	_____
Sunday, August 11, noon	The Matthew Shepard Story (TV-14, 1:34)	_____
Sunday, August 18, noon	One Day at a Time (TV-PG, 1:30)	_____
Sunday, August 25, noon	Hannah Gadsby: Nanette (unrated, 1:09)	_____

THE MATTHEW SHEPARD STORY (TV-14, stream for free on FilmRise service)

Emmy-winning documentary about Matthew Shepard, the gay teenager who was beaten and murdered in 1998. Shepard's death inspired a wave of anti-hate crime legislation in the US.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (before show)

- Introductions - who we are, main dish volunteers
- Thoughts? Follow-up from previous week?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (after show)

- Describe Matthew's life journey as portrayed in the movie. What do you recognize about his coming of age? What is hard to understand?
- At one point Matthew tells his parents, "You're not trying to help, you're trying to make it safe." How is that different? What choices do we make for safety or helping? Who are we trying to keep safe, or help?
- Compare the images of Christians outside the funeral to the Christians inside Matthew's funeral. Compare the images of Christians outside the trial to "Matthew's Angels." How do these people read or interpret the bible differently to arrive at their actions?
- One of the defenses for McKinney mentioned is "Gay Panic." Talk about what this means.
- As they consider asking for the death penalty, Matthew's father says: "It's the only justice we're going to get. It's an eye for an eye." He is quoting the Law of Talion in Leviticus 24:19-20. Does this feel like justice? How might the death penalty be attractive?
- Jesus reinterprets the Law of Talion in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-39). Consider the larger context of the Sermon on the Mount, and the Shepard family's final sentencing choice. Does this feel like justice? How does it honor Matthew's memory?

PARK'S NOTES ON THE MATTHEW SHEPARD STORY

Beast noises(?) during Matthew's beating

Christian protesters outside Matthew's funeral and trial versus those gathered inside

"The Bible says..." "...it is an abomination"

"Thank God for AIDS"

"Fags burn in hell"

"God hates fags"

"No special laws for fags."

Defense of murderer

Gay panic

Robbery

Sympathy

Wife - "As long as people continue to hate, these crimes will keep on happening"

Father - "Just promise me we'll get a death penalty"

Role of press? Exploiting family?

Wife - "I don't know what makes one life more valuable than another."

How do Matthew's parents feel as they become aware of his sexuality?

Juxtaposition of signs: "Death penalty for McKinney" & "Hate is not a Wyoming value"

Matthew and Pable

Do we want to hide for the rest of our lives?

I don't want to be judged.

That's not the way the world works.

Matthew attacked and abused in Morocco

When Matthew comes out to mom, she already knows.

Matthew - "You're not trying to help, you're trying to make it safe." How is that different?

Matthew uses the gay nicknames for himself; "The fag from Wyoming" ... "Everything I have to do, I do it on my own."

Father - "It's not just a joke. It's a little piece of hate shot straight at you like an arrow. How did he do it every day?"

Father - "It's the only justice we're going to get. It's an eye for an eye." (Leviticus 24:19-20 / Matthew 5:38-39)

Matthew's gay friends in Laramie, decision to move to Denver to be with community

Romaine "The key to staying in the game is to keep your dignity."

Pills, drinking, drugs?

Romaine - "He went to a really dark place and came out the other side knowing what he wanted to do."

Matthew left glass agnel for neighbor - "Matthew had the last word, and it was a good one."

Matthew back at college - "You're going to think the whole world hates you, but you'll be surprised who's standing in your corner." (after he gets the lucky hat from his dad)

Mother - "This is the last thing he saw. It's beautiful. I didn't expect that."

Mother - "The tribute to Matthew's life shouldn't be McKinney's death. He was beautiful."

Matthew's angels counter-protest, screening courthouse from protesters

Father - "He wasn't alone... he had his old friends the night sky, the scent of pines... and he had God." / "Matthew was not my gay son, he was my son who I loved that happened to be gay." / "I believe in the death

penalty. I want to see you die. However, this is a time for healing. This is a time to show mercy to one who showed no mercy.”

Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Shepard)

Matthew Wayne Shepard (December 1, 1976 – October 12, 1998) was a [gay American](#) student at the [University of Wyoming](#) who was beaten, tortured, and left to die near [Laramie](#) on the night of October 6, 1998.^[1] He was taken by rescuers to [Poudre Valley Hospital](#) in [Fort Collins, Colorado](#), where he died six days later from severe head injuries.

Suspects Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson were arrested shortly after the attack and charged with [first-degree murder](#) following Shepard's death. Significant media coverage was given to the killing and to what role Shepard's sexual orientation played as a motive in the commission of the crime. The prosecutor argued that McKinney's murder of Shepard was premeditated and driven by greed. McKinney's defense counsel countered that he had intended only to rob Shepard but had killed him in a rage when Shepard made a sexual advance toward him. McKinney's girlfriend told police that he had been motivated by anti-gay sentiment but later recanted her statement, saying that she had lied because she thought it would help him. Both McKinney and Henderson were convicted of the murder, and each received two consecutive life sentences.

Shepard's murder brought national and international attention to [hate crime](#) legislation at the state and federal levels.^[2] In October 2009, the United States Congress passed the [Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act](#) (commonly the "Matthew Shepard Act" or "Shepard/Byrd Act" for short), and on October 28, 2009, President [Barack Obama](#) signed the legislation into law.^[3] Following her son's murder, [Judy Shepard](#) became a prominent [LGBT rights](#) activist and established the [Matthew Shepard Foundation](#). Shepard's death inspired films, novels, plays, songs, and other works.

Wikipedia

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Shepard_and_James_Byrd_Jr._Hate_Crimes_Prevention_Act)

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, also known as the Matthew Shepard Act, is an American [Act of Congress](#), passed on October 22, 2009,^[1] and signed into law by [President Barack Obama](#) on October 28, 2009,^[2] as a [rider](#) to the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010 (H.R. 2647). Conceived as a response to the murders of [Matthew Shepard](#) and [James Byrd Jr.](#), both in 1998, the measure expands the [1969 United States federal hate-crime law](#) to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived [gender, sexual orientation, gender identity](#), or [disability](#).^[3]

Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_panic_defense)

The gay panic defense^[notes 1] is a legal defense that is sometimes employed, usually against charges of [assault](#) or [murder](#). Typically, a defendant using the defense claims they acted in a state of violent [temporary insanity](#) because of unwanted same-sex sexual advances.^[1] Broadly, a defendant may allege to have found the same-sex sexual advances so offensive or frightening that they were [provoked](#) into reacting, were acting in [self-defense](#), were of [diminished capacity](#), or were temporarily insane, and that this circumstance is [exculpatory](#) or [mitigating](#).^[2]