



LoveStories.com

13LoveStories.com is a unique multimedia advocacy project that profiles the moving stories of thirteen couples whose lives were profoundly affected by Proposition 8, the recent California ballot initiative that eliminated the right of same sex couples to marry.

Why 13 Love Stories?

In the media campaign leading up to the hotly contested November 2008 vote, something essential was missing: images of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer couples whose relationships hung in the balance. 13LoveStories.com presents a series of short films that redress the absence of such images. Featuring real voices and personal photographs, the films provide direct access to a diverse cross-section of committed couples in and around Los Angeles.

About the Project

The project began in late January 2009. London-based photographer **Gideon Mendel** made portraits of each couple along with still life pictures from their homes. **UCLA students** worked with the couples to unearth an array of snapshots from their personal archives. Creative editor **Derrick Shore** interviewed the couples and created short videos from the plethora of assembled materials. The videos were completed in mid-February, just in time to go live on youtube on Valentine's Day.

An outdoor exhibition version of 13LoveStories.com was launched in UCLA's Bruin Plaza on the UCLA campus, March 5, 2009, the day oral arguments in the case were presented to the California Supreme Court.

Who was Involved?

The project was directed by Gideon Mendel in collaboration with co-curators David Gere and Janna Shaddock Hernandez, professors at UCLA (University of California - Los Angeles), and it was produced by Bobby Gordon.

We would like to thank the team of UCLA students for their engagement and phenomenal commitment to this project.

All the members of the 13LoveStories.com team pay tribute to the courage of the participating couples, who allowed us into their lives with such generosity and openness. They have chosen to expose their private relationships to a wide public audience, hoping that their tales of love can help change attitudes and combat the injustice that they have all experienced through the passing of Proposition 8.

Gideon Mendel - Photographer, Project Director
David Gere - co-curator
Janna Shadduck Hernández - co-curator
Derrick Shore - creative editor and music
Bobby Gordon - producer
Brittany Maxwell - digital image coordinator, graphic designer
Michael Tank - website design
Robert Een - music
Yolanda Arzate - music
Sami Freeman - additional music
Cathryn Dhanatya - director of finance, UCLA Art | Global Health Center
Ariel Stevenson - strategic planning/AGHC
Margaux Permutt - assistant/AGHC
Jeremy Peretz - assistant/AGHC
Brenda Freiberg - chair of advisory board
Noel Alumit - community organizer/advisory board
Jenna Delgado - graduate student researcher
Marjan Vayghan - photo album consultant
Cari Ann ShimSham* - video consultant
Eder Cetina/Olson Visual - exhibition production
Couples / Student Collaborators:
Steven and Glenn / Amanda Demetrus and Victor Leclere
Jean and Maribeth / Molly Temple
Raymond and Byron / Sahra Nguyen and Shamime Shaw
Kalil and Karin / Nadia Guizar
Leona and Grace / Aubree Stark and Kaitlan Cressman
Travis / Aja Gomez
Lilia and Kelley / Jenna Delgado
Lawrence and Julian / Marjan Vayghan
Tom and Davidson / Julia Pate
Leticia and Yolanda / Maia D'anna
Travis and Greg / Abe Miller
Patricia and Evelyn / Alexis Wilkinson
Cas and Ricky / Ali Geering-Kline
UCLA Art | Global Health Center
UCLA LGBT Campus Resource Center
UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education
UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures
UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture
UCLA Student Coalition for Marriage Equality

The Couples



Tom & Davidson

“We’re a gay family. We’re artists and activists. We’re out in front.”

Tom and Davidson have been a couple for 31 years and are the proud parents of daughter Connor who is ten years old. They have been campaigners for gay rights for many years, starting from their activist theater work in the 1970s. Their first marriage only a couple months after they meet was small and kept from everyone. The second time around in 89’ their marriage was in the presence of all their family and friends. They recently took part in a marriage action at UCLA April of 08’, while July 3, 2008 their love was legalized with the courts of California and they were finally legally married.



Kalil & Karin

“I want every transgender person out there to know that you too can be madly in love.”

Kalil (26) and Karin (27) are a married couple with access to the federal and state benefits of marriage because Kalil recently transitioned and is now legally male. Kalil identifies himself as a genderqueer Jewish transman and Karin identifies herself as a bisexual Chicana high femme. They plan to foster transgendered individuals in their late teens.



Leona and Grace

“We both skydived from 10,000 feet. That was one of the many things that brought us together—our love of adventure.”

African Americans Leona and Grace have been together for 21 years. They were married in October 2008. Leona has three grown children, three grandchildren, and one great grandchild. They have had successful careers and a rich life together travelling the world.



Travis & Olivier

“I want nothing more than to wake up next to him everyday. Unfortunately, we can’t do that because discriminatory immigration laws don’t recognize us as a family.”

Travis who is 31 is separated from his long-time committed partner due to U.S. marriage and immigration laws, which do not recognize the legality of same-sex marriage. Travis met his partner Feb. 10th 1998 when he was only 20 years old. His partner, Olivier, is French, and is living in Paris despite years of trying to immigrate to the States. Family reunification provisions in immigration law do not consider his union a family, keeping Travis and his partner apart. Travis and Olivier have been legal domestic partners in France since 03’.



Raymond & Byron

“He brought the girls to see me every day in the hospital, when I was being treated for myeloma. I believe that’s the reason I’m still here.”

Raymond and Byron are a Latino couple living in the Riverside area and have been together for over 6 years. Together they are raising adopted twin girls, Jasmine and Jacqueline who are 2 years old. The pair are a loving couple, extremely committed as parents. Raymond is a cancer survivor and worked in the labor movement before going on disability.



Lilia & Kelley

“I’m married to a wonderful woman who has totally rocked my world.”

Lilia and Kelley were married on Oct 28, 2008. The interracial couple (Chicana/Dutch-Irish American) live in Northeast Los Angeles and met in Long Beach. Kelley has a 15-year-old son named Sam who is a significant part of both of their lives. Lilia works in the labor movement throughout California and Kelley is a psychiatric nurse in Orange County.



Steven & Glenn

“He is not my boyfriend, that’s how you call someone when you’re under thirty. He is not my partner, because partners tend to agree on things. He is my spouse.”

Steven and Glenn met at UCLA in 1984 and have been together as a couple for 25 years. They were married in their backyard in Claremont in August 2008. The pair became foster parents to three boys eleven years ago and adopted all of them two years later. The boys are Alex and Aaron, who are twins (18), and Eric (16). Glen who is 46 was born and raised in southern California and is a physician and Steven who is 49 is a teacher.



Patricia & Evelyn

“Our garage is stocked with our kids stuff and that’s ok with us. We wanna always be available for our children.”

Patricia (HIV-positive for 20 years) and Evelyn (HIV-negative) were married on Nov 1, 2008. On their wedding day their 3 children passed around buttons of the ‘No on Prop 8 (Equality for all)’ campaign in a poetic showing of their love and support. Patricia and Evelyn have been together for 16 years and have raised three children who all support their union. They live in East Los Angeles and consider themselves married-in their hearts and in the eyes of God.



Leticia and Yolanda

“Not everyone who’s religious is a bigot. We know pastors who are wonderful people who accept us for who we are, and they’re our friends.”

Leticia and Yolanda hope to get married soon and Yolanda actually proposed to Leticia during the interview process of the project. Leticia lovingly said, “YES”. Leticia was born in Mexico and Yolanda was born in Long Beach to strict Catholic parents and is the youngest of 11 children. She identifies as Native American/Mexican. The pair have been together for four years and live with Yolanda’s teenage daughter.



Lawrence & Julian

“The day our son’s adoption became finalized was the greatest day of our lives together.”

Lawrence and Julian are a couple who have given a home to 15 teenagers in their years as foster parents, and have recently celebrated the fourth birthday of their adopted son, Jonathan. They met at church 16 years ago and now live in Whittier. Lawrence’s parents died of AIDS-related causes more than twenty years ago, inspiring his activism and involvement in the community.



Maribeth & Jean

“I was proud that her mom was like, ‘No on Prop 8!’ She doesn't really speak English but you know having that support from her parents actually meant a lot to me.”

Maribeth and Jean were born in the Philippines and Beijing respectively, and both emigrated to the U.S. as children where they later met and fell in love. They were recently married on the fourth anniversary of their first meeting October 5th of 2004. They now live with Jean’s family.



Travis & Greg

“My husband cannot access my benefits but my ex-wife can. It seems a little odd in a country that says we are all created equal—I guess, except us.”

Travis and Greg are a committed couple who are both HIV-positive and were married in November last year. Travis is a mortician and Greg is a hairdresser. Greg was diagnosed HIV-positive more than twenty years ago and is a long-term survivor. He was retired from the Airforce after serving for 10 years because of his HIV status. Travis grew up in southern Idaho in a Mormon family and Greg comes from a Baptist background.



Cas & Ricky

“We're not some scary, sexually deviant, octopus-like monster coming to destroy your family. We're our own damn family living our own damn lives.”

Cas (African-American from Brooklyn) and Ricky (born in Jamaica) are a gay couple living in West Hollywood who have been together for six years. Both Cas and Ricky knew they wanted to have a child even before they meet and now they have a beautiful daughter named Jamaya. With Ricky not being a U.S. citizen, the non-recognition of gay marriage at the federal level has large implications for his future status in the country.

Facilitator Guide to Compliment Video

Terms & Definitions (Appendix A)

Documentary (45 Minutes)

Discussion (Appendix B & C)

Appendix A

Suggested Terms & Definitions

Sexual Orientation – An individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex.

Homosexual – A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

Heterosexual – A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex.

Gay – An umbrella term for homosexual persons, although it is a term used to identify males whose primary physical and emotional attraction is to other males.

Lesbian – Term used to describe women whose primary physical and emotional attraction is to other women

Bisexual – term used to describe an individual who is emotionally and physically attracted to members of their same sex and of their opposite sex.

Coming Out – Also referred to as “coming out of the closet”. May refer to the process by which one acknowledges, accepts and in many cases appreciates one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersexed person. Also refers to the process by which one shares this information with others.

Transgender- Describes a number of groups of people: transsexuals, intersex, gender queer, or those who do not fit into the gender stereotypes.

Transsexual – A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

Transphobia – The irrational fear or hatred of those who are gender variant and or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

Homophobia – The irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes.

Heterosexism- The assumption that everyone is heterosexual. This belief and its accompanying behaviors communicate that people with heterosexual orientation are inherently better than those of other orientations.

Ally – Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in themselves and others; a concern for the well-being of LGBT people and the belief that the above isms and phobias are social justice issues.

Queer- is used as an all-inclusive, unifying sociopolitical umbrella term for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexual, genderqueer, or of any other non-heterosexual sexuality, sexual anatomy, or gender identity.

GenderQueer- is a catchall term for gender identities that do not fit neatly into the social category of man and woman. People who identify as genderqueer may think of themselves as either both or neither man or woman. Some wish not to be associated with either gender binary and see these categories as constraining to their identity.

Discussion Questions Specific to the 13 Couples

Tom & Davidson:

- 1) How do you think Tom & Davidson's commitment to their daughter makes them a stronger union?
- 2) How important do you think Tom & Davidson's commitment to their daughter is? They talk about being together for 31 years yet some people are married for only a couple of days, how can you imagine that their commitment to each other, to their daughter and to art and activism make their relationship stronger?

Kalil & Karin:

- 1) What are some of the stereotypes that you have heard about LGBTQ people and their relationships?
(For facilitators: not having children, not being able to find a stable relationship, only wanting sex and never being able to commit, the LGBTQ community is heavily into drugs and sex and could never find love, women need a man in their life and another woman could never "take care" of another woman, if you are LGBTQ you will catch HIV, etc. Explain that all these are stereotypes and show how the couples in the 13 stories challenge these stereotypes)
- 2) How does Kalil's and Karin's relationship reflect or nor reflect those preconceived notions?
- 3) How does identifying as transgender influence the social and legal parameters of Kalil's & Karins relationship? *(For Facilitator: Positive: Because Kalil has transitioned to male under the law, he now has the same rights of a heterosexual couple. Negative: A transgendered individual will be more likely to be discriminated against because of their gender identity than a person who identifies as gay due to their sexual orientation.)*

Leona & Grace:

- 1) What are some of the values that Leona and Grace say that they feel are important to them?
(For facilitator: love of life, family, and adventure)

Travis & Olivier:

- 1) Immigration is a large factor in Travis and Oliver's story. Federal policy is based on family reunification. However, LGBTQ families are overlooked in this priority. What correlations do you see with current immigration policies toward other groups? *(For facilitator: U.S. federal immigration policy today is based on the concept of family reunification. This means that residents of the U.S. may petition their foreign-born family members and fiancés to become U.S residents. In the case of same-sex partners, federal immigration policy does not recognize*

the foreign-born partner as “family” therefore these couples are ineligible to apply for immigration relief as heterosexual couples are. Prior to 1965, U.S. federal immigration policy was based on a racial quota system that allowed only a certain number of pre-determined groups visas to enter the country. These quotas for the foreign-born were frequently based on race, ethnicity gender, national origin, religion, political affiliation, and economic status.)

2) How could a change in the laws toward marriage equality in California impact the federal laws on immigration and family reunification?

Raymond & Bryon:

1) How does Raymond & Bryon's family reflect some of the same struggles that heterosexual families struggle with? (For facilitator: sickness, bills, bringing up twin daughters.)

Lilia & Kelley:

1) Lilia and Kelley are strongly connected to their families, each from very different backgrounds. How does their story compare with your own connections to family?

Steven & Glen:

- 1) Steven talks about the exclusion of gay marriages as the last frontier, do you believe this is true? Why or why not?**
- 2) Do you think what Steven says about straight people fearing that they could become the same as gay people true? If you were compared to a gay person, how would you feel?**

Pat & Evelyn:

- 1) How do Pat and Evelyn exemplify sticking together through the good and bad times? (For facilitator: together for 17 years, both recovered as alcoholics, Pat is HIV positive, both raising 3 children together.)**

Yolanda & Leti:

1) For Yolanda & and Leti their pastors and their families have come to accept them as individual people who happen to be in love and not as labels, like lesbian. To their social network they are just Leti and Yolanda. What are some of the labels that can be attached to who you are? What is the difference between knowing someone as a set of labels and knowing the individual?

Lawrence & Jullian:

1) This couple has fought to keep Jonathan, their adopted child, within their family. In the U.S. there are many children who do not have homes, much less loving homes. How are same sex couples held to different standards than heterosexual couples?

Jean and Maribeth:

1) Jean and Maribeth mention that in U.S. history there was a time when Asian Americans and whites were not allowed to marry. How is this similar or different to the type of marriage equality that is being requested in this video?

(For facilitator: Laws prohibiting interracial marriage were a deeply embedded part of U.S. history. Some considered this as America's longest-lasting form of legal race discrimination. These racialized laws were in effect longer than either slavery or school segregation, lasting nearly 3 centuries, from 1664 until 1967.

2) Do you believe similar biases that were influential factors in denying interracial marriage also influence the same sex marriage debate today? Why or why not?

Travis & Greg:

1) Both Travis and Greg come from religious families. What are the repercussions of one family accepting them and the other not?

2) What are the consequences for long-term married couples not getting access to the same legal rights as heterosexual couples?

(For facilitators: 1)immigration status, 2)property rights 3)benefits 4)taxation 5)spousal and survivor Social Security benefits)

Cas and Ricky:

1) How do issues of immigration status, race, and sexuality affect the family that Cas and Ricky have created? (For facilitator: Does the group have their own experiences regarding different oppressive factors combining together? For example, gender and sexuality, or immigration status and sexuality? How does a dual or even triple identity influence your life experiences?)

2) Cas mentions that in the time of slavery, people were sold away from their children, because they were seen as irrelevant. How do you think the issue of slavery and marriage equality are or are not related?

General Discussion Questions

- 1) **What are your initial feelings/reactions to the definitions of marriage and family that are presented in the video?**
- 2) **How do these stories compare to your own definitions/experience of marriage and family?**
- 3) **Where do your values about family and marriage come from?**
- 4) **What values represented in the film seem similar to your own?**
- 5) **Where do you believe the idea that the traditional value about marriage and the idea of marriage and family represented in the film have to be in competition with one another? Why do you think there is an opposition to legalizing marriage between same-sex couples?**
- 6) **What about how these particular relationships in the video surprised you?**
- 7) **Why do you think Proposition 8 Passed in California? (Do you know what Proposition 8 is?)**
- 8) **What can you do to support marriage equality?**
 - For facilitator -talking to friends and family about LGBTQ inequalities*
 - joining a LGBT friendly organization*
 - you are doing it right now by raising awareness of LGBT issues*
 - might want to make 2 sheets for the values that the group has and the value that they see the couples has and compare and contrast.*