

JEREMY WALKER + ASSOCIATES, INC.

FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO

A Documentary Film by
Daniel Karlake

PRESS NOTES

FILM FESTIVALS:

Sundance Film Festival 2007
Full Frame Documentary Film Festival 2007 -
The Kathleen Bryan Edwards Award for Human Rights
Seattle International Film Festival 2007 - Audience Award
Provincetown International Film Festival 2007 - Audience Award

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FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO

features

Imogene & Victor Robinson
Bishop Gene Robinson
Isabella “Boo” McDaniel
Brenda & David Poteat
Tonia Poteat
Randi & Phil Reitan
Jake Reitan
Britta Reitan
Jane & Dick Gephardt
Chrissy Gephardt
Mary Lou Wallner
Cathie Talbert
Judith Esmay & Robert Strauss
Nora Demenus
Reverend Dr. Mel White
Reverend Dr. Laurence C. Keene
Reverend Peter Gomes
Reverend Steve Kindle
Rabbi Brian Zachary Mayer
Reverend Susan Sparks
Right Reverend Richard Holloway
Reverend Irene Monroe
Reverend Dr. Joan Brown Campbell
Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Rabbi Steven Greenberg
Dr. Richard J. Mouw
Reverend Jimmy Creech
Reverend Steven Baines
Paula J. Caplan, Ph. D.
Jorge Valencia

FILMMAKERS

Produced and Directed by Daniel Karlake
Co-Produced and Edited by Nancy Kennedy
Co-Produced by Helen Mendoza
Music..... Scott Anderson
..... Mark Suozzo
Executive Producers..... Michael Huffington
..... Bruce Bastian
..... Robin Voss
..... Robert Greenbaum
..... Keith Lewis
Co-Executive Producers..... Sandra Hartness
..... Karen Ellis
Music Supervisor Susan Jacobs
Researcher Lewanne Jones
Production Consultant..... Susan Franks
Camera Kevin Bond
..... Leonard Chamblee
..... Tyrone Edwards
..... Tom Fahey
..... Mark Falstad
..... Bob Gunter
..... Guy Hernandez
..... Greg Hoerdemann
..... Brian Knappenberger
..... Bruce Liffiton
..... Jared Manders
..... Jim Mathers
..... Kat Patterson
..... Dave Roberson
..... Mike Simon
..... Rob Van Praag
..... Brad Waigt
..... Ian Young
Production Sound..... Tom Alford
..... Gerard Bonnette
..... Carl Franson
..... David Hand
..... Heidi Hesse
..... Derek Johnston
..... Mark Maloof
..... David Poole
..... Simon Woodward

Additional credits begin on page 22

FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO

Can the love between two people ever be an abomination? Is the chasm separating homosexuals and Christianity too wide to cross? How can the Bible be used to justify hate? These are the questions at the heart of Daniel Karlake's **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO**.

A World Premiere in competition at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** was also honored with Audience Awards at the 2007 Seattle and Provincetown International Film Festivals and The Kathleen Bryan Edwards Award for Human Rights at the 2007 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. This provocative, entertaining film concisely reconciles homosexuality and a literal interpretation of Biblical scripture.

Through the experiences of five very normal, very Christian, very American families -- including those of former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson -- we discover how people of faith handle, or sometimes tragically fail to handle, having a gay child. Informed by such respected voices as Bishop Desmond Tutu, Harvard's Peter Gomes, Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg and Reverend Jimmy Creech, **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** offers healing, clarity and understanding to anyone caught in the crosshairs of scripture and sexual identity.

SOME OF WHAT WE HEAR FROM THE THEOLOGIANS

Reverend Dr. Laurence Keene, Disciples of Christ:

“When people ask questions about homosexuality, almost always they follow with, ‘and what does the Bible really say about it?’”

“When the term ‘abomination’ is used in the Hebrew Bible, it is always used to address a *ritual wrong* – it *never* is used to refer to something *innately immoral*. Eating pork was not *innately immoral* for a Jew, but it was an abomination because it was a *violation of a ritual requirement*.”

“I have a soft spot in my heart for literalists because I used to be one. However, when someone says to me ‘this is what the Bible says,’ my response to them is, ‘No, that’s what the Bible *reads*.’ It is the struggle to understand context and language and culture and customs that helps us to understand the reading, or what it is saying.”

“There’s nothing wrong with a fifth grade understanding of God, as long as you’re in the fifth grade.”

“There is no ability to procreate when you engage in homosexual behavior, so it was a violation of a cultural norm. [This was] the sin of Onan in the Old Testament, where Onan is sentenced to death because he ejaculates out of the woman’s body, so his partner doesn’t get pregnant. As the King James Version says, ‘Onan spills his seed upon the ground, and God strikes him dead.’ It was *ritually* impure. It was an abomination.”

Reverend Peter Gomes, Harvard:

“There are about 6 or 7 verses in all of Scripture that speak to even remotely what we might call homosexual activity or homosexual conduct.”

“[Literalists] are failing to read the Bible within the context of its authors and of its original culture.”

Reverend Steven Kindel, Clergy United:

“In this particular one, it’s Leviticus Chapter 20, Verse 13, it says if a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination, they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them – if you read the Bible on a face value level, that reading disregards several very important things: the first one is just a few verses before that Moses teaches in Leviticus that it is an abomination to eat shrimp....It is an abomination to eat a rabbit.”

Rabbi Brian Zachary Mayer:

“A few verses above and below it says you shouldn’t plant two different seeds in the same hole, you shouldn’t commingle your crops... There is other text that says you shouldn’t wear linen and wool together. To just pick out, this is the one that we’re going to follow...the Bible doesn’t come that way – it’s selective reading...Those Biblical laws, they’re known as the Holiness Code. They were laws that were supposed to help people at that time find holiness in their lives.”

Reverend Susan Sparks, American Baptist Church:

“To me that’s the important thing to recognize: the historical context in which this was written. That particular section on a man not lying with a man goes to *procreation*. It is about a nation trying to grow. At the time, the Hebrew people understood that male seed was actually *all* of nascent life contained right there – women had nothing to do with actually the birth except for just incubation, so that particular section was about saving seed, saving seed only to procreate so the nation could grow.”

Revered Mel White, Soulforce:

“When I was on Larry King Live, somebody called in and said, ‘What do you guys do in bed?’ Larry hung up on him and said, ‘that’s none of your business.’ And I said, ‘We’ve been together in the same bed for 24 years – we’re like everybody else, we *sleep* in bed. And King said: ‘Once they find out you’re as boring as we are, it’s all over.’”

“Now it (the Bible) is being used, misused, to condemn gay people – it’s an old trick. Fundamentalist Christians have been using it throughout the ages, and now they’re doing it again.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate:

“The Bible is the word of God through the word of human beings, speaking in the idiom of their time, and the richness of the Bible comes from the fact that we don’t take it as literally so that it was dictated by God.”

SOME OF WHAT WE HEAR FROM THE FAMILIES

Chrissy Gephardt

“Growing up in the Catholic Church, it was never something that I heard explicitly, but I definitely knew that that was part of the Bible and in fact, there were two things that I remember were an abomination: homosexuality and suicide. And I’ll never forget thinking that ‘Oh my gosh, you can never commit suicide because you’re going to go to hell and you can never be gay because you’re going to go to hell.’”

Dick Gephardt: We thought she was...

Jane Gephardt: She was always a jock.

DG: She was athletic

JG: She was good, too. She was a good athlete.

DG: She was a good athlete – she also wore pants more than skirts and dresses

JG: But that was because she was trying to be like Matt, like her older brother

DG: We thought that, but...

JG: Well that’s what we thought, and I still think that...

Isabella “Boo” McDaniel (Bishop Gene Robinson’s ex-wife):

“I was just glad to be there for the consecration, because I thought by my presence I could really show that I was supportive. I mean, there was just huge security, Gene had a bullet proof vest under his vestments and I realized how scary it must have been for him.”

Bishop Gene Robinson:

“My parents are probably the two best Christians I know and they don’t do it because they ought to do it, they just do it because it’s who they are. So to have them presenting this [the consecration vestments] to me – it’s just kind of a coming out for them as well. They’re all of a sudden just completely light hearted and relieved about this and are able to be proud.”

Jake Reitan, activist:

“I remember very distinctly when I was a kid when I first learned that so much of the world wasn’t Christian – and that just kind of blew my mind – because I was of the perspective that *everyone* is Christian because everyone wanted to go to Heaven, you know, and then I learned that only one third of the world was Christian and I thought to myself: are that many people going to Hell?”

“I remember one Sunday where my pastor preached on homosexuality and it wasn’t in the best of light, but I didn’t want to question because I knew that the answers wouldn’t be good.”

David Poteat:

“I had good kids. We had one of each sex – when my kids were growing up, I said ‘God, please don’t let my son grow up to be a faggot and my daughter a slut.’ And he did not. He did not do that. He reversed it.”

Brenda Poteat:

“I can’t say where in the scheme of things that I saw this talk show [the Phil Donahue show] and I realized that what I was embarrassed about was that I was thinking totally of how she was having sex and not about her as a person. When I saw the talk show with two guys -- buff, good looking guys -- and they were asked the question ‘which one of you guys takes on the female role in the relationship’ and they said ‘neither one of us, we are attracted to men, if we were attracted to women, we’d be with women.’

“I’m sitting there thinking, but what about the ones that twist their butts and act like women, what are they attracted to? Who are they? And I’m thinking ‘but that’s all you’ve ever seen.’ That’s what comes to mind when you hear ‘homosexual’: you think of the girlfriend-acting fellow, the butch dykey-acting woman. You don’t think about everyday people, and there *are* ‘everyday people’ who are gay, and you’re thinking about how they’re having sex.

“I had to realize that she was my daughter: she had the same personality, she enjoyed the same things that she did before I knew she was gay. Then I had to stop thinking about Tonia that way. Although I still do not approve of the lifestyle, it was a big burden off me, that I could relate to her better and I stopped trying to push her.”

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

In many ways, Robin and Bruce Voss represent the audience for which **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** was made.

An Orange County, CA couple who go to church every Sunday, the Voss' almost didn't marry ten years ago because, as Robin recently told the Orange County *Register*, "their politics became an issue. [I] had gay friends, and Bruce was uncomfortable with that."

Robin told Bruce that he would have to accept her gay friends or she couldn't be with him. And Bruce, so intolerant of gays for so long, learned to accept them. "If he could do it," Robin told the *Register*, "then other people can."

Robin Voss is just about as mainstream American Christian as you can get. She sold Mary Kay cosmetics for 18 years and earned a fleet of the company's signature pink Cadillacs in the process. She was a vice president in the Helen Grace chocolate chain. Family is really important to Robin; she has three children and as many grandchildren.

One day at St. Mark's Presbyterian, her home parish, Robin picked up a brochure about a seminar to be held there on "What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality." She was new to St. Mark's and imagined the tenor of the seminar would tell her all she needed to know about whether or not it was the right place for her to worship. She even made what she now calls a "sarcastic" phone call to a friend, a Los Angeles talent agent named Keith Lewis, inviting him to come along for the ride. Expecting that good old 'fire and brimstone' intolerance, Voss and Lewis instead heard something quite different from the literalist interpretation with which they were so familiar.

"I could tell right away that the people participating were there because they were very conflicted about their faith and what it meant to them on a very personal level," Voss recalled recently. "These were people of great faith who had a gay friend or relative and they were experiencing profound spiritual turmoil. They were there because they had only heard one perspective."

As the five hour seminar unfolded, and people began to participate and break into groups, the conversations "had a profoundly healing, transformative effect," Voss says. "It opened hearts, opened minds. It got straight people like me to be open to hearing something different from what they'd been taught their entire life. That experience was so overwhelming that I believed in my heart that I had to do something, like make a movie, to perpetuate the ideas and the healing I'd experienced that day. If people in Orange County, California, were seeking this kind of message, then people everywhere would soon be ready to stop struggling and start understanding what the Bible really says about being gay."

Adds Keith Lewis: "If you look at the evolution of gay awareness in this country, the whole idea of gay identity is really brand new. Only in the last fifty or so years have people in all walks of life started to realize that they have gay friends and relatives. Our country is so faith-oriented that this seminar made me realize that a lot of straight people really needed these kinds of tools to grapple with a whole new social era. Robin and I left that seminar convinced that the time for such a tool is now."

“I truly believe **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** was driven by a divine presence,” Voss concludes, and that Daniel Karlake was exactly the right guy to make the movie. The day we talked with Daniel, we recognized that as a man, and as an artist, Daniel had exactly the right understanding of spirituality and religion the project required. He has made a brilliant film that speaks directly to a mainstream audience. It’s time has come. Our country is in great need of healing, in great need of anything that spreads the message of tolerance, understanding, and inclusiveness.”

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"Last week I bought the gun. Yesterday I wrote the note. But last night I happened to turn on your show and just knowing that someday I might be able to go back into my church, I threw the gun in the river. My mom never has to know."

This is the email a novice television producer named Daniel Karlake received from a boy in Iowa the day after the PBS series “In the Life” aired a segment Karlake produced about Reverend Irene Monroe, an out lesbian theologian at Harvard University. It was 1998.

Karlake had been interning at “In the Life” for about six months, learning everything he could about television journalism. A Christian whose day job was as a fundraiser for New York’s Riverside Church, Karlake had often wondered why “In the Life,” an excellent newsmagazine show made for a national gay and lesbian audience, had never done a story about religion. The show’s executive producer explained that “In the Life” was a PBS show and that the topic of religion, particularly the nexus between religion and sexuality, would surely be too controversial for too many people.

But when Karlake met Reverend Monroe through his work at Riverside Church, he knew she would make a great subject for an “In the Life” profile, and got the green light. The segment not only saved at least one life, it was honored with the first Emmy award nomination the show every received, and Karlake became the “go to” producer at the show for stories on spiritual issues and the gay community.

“That email from the young man in Iowa was the first of hundreds of emails I got from gay and lesbian people from across the country who felt so rejected and condemned by their own churches that they had considered or were still considering taking their own lives,” Karlake recalled recently.

“Ironically gay kids, especially guys -- I think because of how we’re made and who we are -- many gay kids grow up really involved in their church and tend to be very much a part of that church family. So when the condemnation happens and the rejection, it’s like another family rejection. It’s very strong. So when that first piece aired, it sort of became what I was all about.”

Karlake went on to produce more stories for “In the Life,” mostly about religion but occasionally on other topics. But he began to feel frustrated. “In the Life” may have been the best gay news show on television, but it was hard to find on the dial and, Karlake increasingly felt, was “preaching to the choir.”

This was a time, Karlake said recently, in which “Almost everyone was meeting a gay person for the first time – either at work, in school, in their families, even on TV. But these same people

had been given no tools to fight against the intrinsic intolerance and misconceptions perpetuated by literalist interpretations of scripture.

“Then,” Karlake says with a smile, “I saw BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE.”

Karlake saw Michael Moore’s 2002 documentary about the gun lobby in a movie theatre near his home on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, and stayed for the next show.

“It became clear to me that I could make a movie,” he recalled, “that reconciled homosexuality and scripture, by bringing the argument to a level that normal lay people could understand. BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE had managed to say some very difficult things about who we are as a country, but in a way that was actually going to be heard by a wide spectrum of people. The movie used all different devices to try to break people’s defenses down – funny stories, touching stories, music, video, animation -- and I remember I couldn’t get out of my seat.”

Some time later, Karlake produced an “In the Life” story about how drug companies were spending huge amounts to market AIDS-fighting drugs to the community, yet the models they were using in the ads were being attacked for looking too “healthy.” A Los Angeles talent agent named Keith Lewis, way back in 1994, had launched an initiative he called “Proof Positive,” using HIV-positive talent for pharmaceutical advertising for which Lewis and his company, The Morgan Agency, were honored with the prestigious Humanitarian Award from Samaritan Village. “In the Life” assigned Karlake to go to LA to interview Lewis.

After the story aired, Lewis, who had no knowledge of Karlake’s specialty at “In the Life,” called Karlake to say he loved the segment and also to pick his brain. A friend, Lewis said, wanted to make a movie of a church seminar they’d recently attended about homosexuality and the bible, and did Karlake know of anyone who might be right to direct it.

“It was just so strange,” Karlake said recently. “It was as if a divine force had brought me together with Keith and Robin.”

Voss and Lewis really wanted Karlake to meet the preacher who’d delivered the seminar at St. Mark Presbyterian, Reverend Steven Kindle. So Karlake flew to Los Angeles and heard Kindle give his seminar in a room at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

“As you can see from the film, Kindle is a smart, persuasive, articulate and warm preacher,” Karlake says. “I immediately saw why his seminar so appealed to Robin and Keith.”

Kindle reminded Karlake of another Disciples of Christ minister he knew, the Reverend Dr. Laurence Keene, a professor at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California who had performed the commitment ceremony between Karlake and his partner years before. Like Kindle and the first person Karlake ever interviewed, Harvard’s Reverend Irene Monroe, Keene would be a great source for this project that was starting to look like it might actually happen.

But if Karlake had learned one thing from BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE, it was that if people in what he called “the movable middle” of America were to be at all persuaded by the film’s argument, they would have to see themselves in it.

“To change hearts and minds,” Karslake said recently, “people need to see themselves on screen. I wanted to focus on straight, Christian parents of gay kids – not so much the kids themselves, but on the families, so that people could see the film and say, ‘Oh, I totally relate to that.’”

Convinced of Karslake’s approach – to view the issues through the prism of the American Christian family – Voss and Lewis agreed to move forward with him. They would help Karslake create the initial financial infrastructure for the production, while Voss brought in another producer, Robert Greenbaum, who along with Voss would put up the initial money for the film.

Karslake met Kindle just before New Hampshire’s Episcopal Diocese had elected a beloved and openly gay minister named Gene Robinson at its convention in June, 2003. Robinson was on the front page of every newspaper and all over the TV news. “I was watching that closely,” Karslake remembers. “I’d always been obsessed with how the media covered religious topics, so I recorded everything I could about Robinson’s election and read everything I could find. I saw all the inconsistencies and misreporting on it and it drove me insane.”

“I decided to go after interviews with clergy first, because that was where I had my relationships,” Karslake explained recently. Karslake interviewed the Reverend Dr. Laurence Keene and Brian Zachary Mayer, the Reform Rabbi, in the summer of 2003.

As the summer wore on, the story about New Hampshire’s openly gay, Bishop-elect Gene Robinson continued to build as his consecration, scheduled for November 3, grew near.

“The more I followed the story, the more convinced I was that Gene was the key to the movie,” Karslake says. “I knew if I could somehow get to him and get him to agree to participate, then everything else would fall into place. He was a huge deal, but also the most threatened public figure in the world, with layers of security around him. I did a lot of research on him – I knew what he seemed to care about in his ministry.”

Karslake got a meeting with Robinson in his New Hampshire office in September.

“So who are you and what do you want?” Karslake remembers Robinson asking.

Karslake remembers feeling the adrenalin pumping while he tried to remain calm. He told Robinson he had been a TV producer for “In the Life,” and about the email he’d received from the young Iowa viewer after his profile of Irene Monroe had aired. Robinson had seen the segment and had loved it. Then Karslake told Robinson he had to ask three things of him, in ascending order of obnoxiousness, and to please not answer until he’d asked all three, otherwise he didn’t think he’d be able to go through with it.

The first thing Karslake asked for was an email relationship. He was looking for stories of how Christian families had dealt with discovering a gay child and he imagined Robinson’s email would be a great source. The second thing was to ask Robinson to travel to LA a month after his consecration to participate in a fundraiser for the film. The third was to ask Robinson to participate in the film, to give Karslake access to his ex-wife and his parents, whom Karslake had referred to as “amazing Christians.” As Karslake rattled off these requests, he felt Robinson bristle with what he perceived to be anger.

“Let me get this straight. You want me to share confidential email with you, email I get because I am a priest. You want me to go to LA – with my schedule! – and help you raise money. Then

you want me to risk my relationship with my partner, my daughters and my parents so you can make your movie?"

Yes, Karslake said, that's what he was asking of Robinson.

"Let me just answer with a blanket 'Yes,'" Robinson said, and then he laughed. "You thought I was going to say 'No!' I *should* be saying no," Karslake relates, "but I am overtaken by your passion."

"Gene Robinson is," Karslake explained recently, "the single most significant person who made the film happen."

Robinson did indeed travel to Los Angeles in December of 2003, a month after his consecration, and participated in the first fundraising event that Voss, Lewis and Greenbaum put on for **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO**. The evening was a "Converse and Contribute" salon-type dinner held in Lewis' home. The conversation was between Robinson and Rabbi Steve Greenberg, the first openly gay Orthodox Rabbi, whom Greenbaum had met years before and had helped Greenbaum through his own coming out process.

"It was a predominantly straight crowd," Greenbaum recalls. "All these dots started to connect. The talk offered a lot of insight to the people in attendance. I am very happy that Steve and Gene's friendship has grown since that night and have since given talks together outside of the movie."

The Salon-type evening brought both financial donations and attention to **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** after Robinson and Greenberg's conversation was written up in the Los Angeles *Times*. The producers would hold similarly intimate fundraising salons in such cities as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Phoenix, Palm Springs and Laguna Beach over the next two years. "In the process, we have built a very strong base of interested, motivated and influential supporters for the film," Lewis notes.

The need for a populist articulation of the argument was underscored to Karslake as he watched a February 24, 2004 edition of CNN's "Larry King Live," which had booked four people to talk about the news that President Bush had backed a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage: San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom, who had brought the issue center stage earlier that month when he ordered the city and county to issue same-sex marriage licenses; nationally syndicated Christian broadcaster Pastor John MacArthur of California's Grace Community Church; Chad Allen, the actor and producer who starred in TV hits like "My Two Dads" and "Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman," who became an activist after he was outed by the tabloids in 1996; and Representative Marilyn Musgrave, Republican of Colorado, who introduced the anti-gay marriage legislation in the House.

"All MacArthur had to do was invoke the Bible," Karslake recalled, "and the whole discussion seemed to shut down."

"It's in the word of God, it's unmistakably clear in the Bible," the show's transcript reports MacArthur saying about whether or not gay people choose to be that way, and why it's a sin.

"I knew my film would not only have to move people," Karslake explains, "but it would have to give them tools to counter this interpretation when it comes up with family or at a dinner party.

People get so shut down when anyone mentions the Bible because people either know it, or they think they know it, or they don't. And if you don't know the Scripture, then how can you talk intelligently about the issues?"

By way of illustrating his point, Karslake notes that while it's very hard to find any clergy who will say the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is about homosexuality, "if you stop people on the street, nine out of ten think the story is *only* about homosexuality."

As much as current events underscored the need for a film like **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO**, its producers began to realize that a number of challenges stood in their way. They were literally raising money to finance the film in a piecemeal fashion, fundraising and shooting and then fundraising a little more.

"We found that some would-be supporters had trouble getting over the idea that Daniel was a first-time director, and that others had a hard time understanding why a gay filmmaker and gay-friendly producers would want to have anything to do with the Bible in the first place," Voss explains.

Karslake was frustrated too. Even though he had a commitment from Gene Robinson, and an idea that telling the story through the eyes of American Christian families was the key to his narrative, Karslake still felt the project was little more than a seemingly insurmountable ambition until he attended the Sundance Independent Producers Conference in July of that year.

"The world of independent filmmaking is a mysterious place for an outsider, but the conference demythologized it for me. Indeed, it was my time at the Institute that summer when I learned exactly what I needed to do to make this film a reality."

One thing Karslake learned at the Sundance Conference was "how important it is to be able to communicate the essence of your project effectively in the least number of words possible," he recalled recently. "There was one marathon session when each attendee pitched their project to a panel of executives, and I found that both fascinating and extremely educational -- even though my own personal pitch was pretty awful."

The other thing Karslake learned at Sundance was that an effective sample reel could be an extremely useful fund-raising tool, something he "hadn't really thought about before. I spoke with a number of film-makers and distributors about what they looked for in a sample reel, and I left the conference very clear about what I needed to do."

With thanks to co-producer Helen Mendoza, who knew the president of a Los Angeles post house, Karslake was able to create his sample reel that featured respected clergy refuting literalist interpretation of the Bible; a TODAY show segment on Robinson; and ended with an interview with Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

A major turning point for **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** was at the Human Rights Campaign's National Convention in October of 2006 in Washington, DC. Boasting a membership of over 600,000 people, both Greenbaum and Karslake knew HRC board members who helped arrange for the reel to be shown during the proceedings.

"The response was overwhelming," Greenbaum recalled recently. "Dozens of people wanted to talk with us and support the movie. Even though it was only six minutes long, the reel made a

huge impact on the big screen. They immediately saw the film as a tool that they could give their straight friends and families as a pragmatic way to help their situation. They saw it as a tool that could make a difference in their own lives.”

That winter, the group PFLAG showed the trailer at their national convention, motivating support for the film from some members of its 200,000 strong base.

Support also came from Hollywood. The actress Judith Light, whom Karlake met when he was at “In the Life,” helped Karlake and his producers seek both advice and financial backing from some of the most prominent gay people in Hollywood, people like “Will & Grace” creator Max Mutchnick; “Frasier” writer/director/producer David Lee; AMERICAN BEAUTY producers Bruce Cohen and Dan Jinks; and “Six Feet Under” producer Alan Poul. They were impressed not only by Gene Robinson’s participation in the project, but also by the film’s thesis, supported by the clergy on Karlake’s reel, that scripture does not condemn homosexuality.

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Of the five families we meet in **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO**, some were easier to get to than others. Gene Robinson encouraged his parents to participate, and they did so happily.

Jake Reitan had seen Karlake’s six minute reel at the Human Rights Campaign meeting months before he and his family would be arrested in Colorado Springs as they tried to deliver a letter to Reverend Jim Dobson’s Focus on the Family headquarters there. The protest had been organized by the Reverend Mel White, whom Karlake had interviewed the day before. White had also arranged for Karlake to interview Mary Lou Wallner in Colorado Springs on the same trip.

At the HRC meeting Jake Reitan had been passionate about the film; but it was only after Karlake met the whole family – “they were so Midwest, so Betty Crocker” – that he went to Minnesota to interview them as a group. “They get arrested all the time now!” Karlake enthuses.

Karlake had read the *People* magazine story about Chrissy Gephardt’s coming out to her family and her subsequent participation in her father’s campaign for the Presidency that year. Judith Light was also a friend and supporter of the Gephardts, and helped Karlake get a ten minute meeting with Chrissy as the campaign came through New York City. Chrissy was impressed that Karlake knew that her father was a Baptist and that her mother was Catholic. “They never talk about that!” she said. A couple of days later, Chrissy got back to Karlake with the news that her parents would participate in the film, and she offered the filmmaker about forty hours of home movies.

Karlake’s biggest challenge was finding a family of color to interview. “I did not want every family in the film to be white,” he said recently.

Karlake had heard about an organization called the Point Foundation, which helped gay kids who had been kicked out of their family unit secure funds for college. He saw Tonia Poteat’s picture in a Point Foundation brochure, and then went through a Point Foundation supporter, Michael Huffington, who would become an executive producer of **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO**, to contact her.

“Tonia was clearly bright and articulate, and her parents were both preachers, so I knew they were exactly the kind of family I was looking for,” Karslake recalled recently. “Tonia was very dubious about her parents’ participation, but she said she’d work on it.”

A few months later, Tonia made good on her promise, but explained that her parents would have to meet Karslake in person. She said she would be visiting them on Mother’s Day, and that she really liked the idea of them participating in the movie because it would make the family “deal with it.”

Though they were initially wary of having their family story told on screen, Tonia’s parents felt comfortable with Karslake and agreed to be a part of the movie.

“I’ve fallen in love with all of the families in the film,” Karslake reports, “but I have a huge amount of respect for how honest and forthright the Poteats were with me. When Brenda Poteat shares that she was hung up on the sex, I really think she speaks for 80% of Americans and what being gay first means to them. Coming from her, that’s a huge breakthrough.”

#

As Karslake shot interviews, he and his producers Voss, Greenbaum and Lewis continued to raise funds, and **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** collected more and more friends. Karslake started to look ahead towards shaping his countless hours of footage into a cogent feature.

He attended the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, where he saw that year’s documentary Grand Prize winner, **WHY WE FIGHT**. The film was directed by Eugene Jarecki who, along with editor Nancy Kennedy, pulled together archival footage and interviews with history and military experts and ordinary people with very personal stories about the current war into a very smart, very convincing argument about why the war with Iraq was not only the President’s ideological imperative, but was also an economic and institutional *inevitability*.

“After seeing **WHY WE FIGHT**, I knew Nancy Kennedy had to edit **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO**,” Karslake said recently. “Although **WHY WE FIGHT** has a distinct point of view, it was in no way one-sided, and I really admired that. Like our film, **WHY WE FIGHT** was made to persuade people who thought they already knew where they stood. I knew Nancy had the mind to make the argument, so I really wanted her to edit our film.”

But the courtship wasn’t easy.

“Nancy kept saying, ‘but Scripture and homosexuality isn’t my issue,’” Karslake laughs. “And I kept saying, ‘yeah, I know, but that’s *exactly* why I need your help!’”

Eventually, Kennedy asked Karslake to show her some footage. After she looked at it, she said her schedule would free up in January, 2006. Karslake and Kennedy would end up working together for the next 11 months.

One part of **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** that Karslake and Kennedy, and his producers, friends and colleagues hotly debated about whether or not to keep in the film is the short cartoon that gives viewers an up-to-the-minute “homosexual biology 101” course. On the one hand, Karslake offers, **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** is a sober theological discussion framed by heartfelt personal stories. The cartoon, he admits, might strike some as tonally out of place.

“On the other hand, the entire argument teeters on this idea of choice, a concept I saw the Poteat family and Mary Lou Wallner in particular wrestle with,” Karslake says.

The cartoon was initially inspired by the popular Jib-Jab short of Jim Kerry and George Bush that was set to the song “This Land is Your Land” that burned up the Internet during the 2004 presidential campaign. Though he made initial contact with the folks at Jib-Jab, and they were enthusiastic about the job, they were too busy fielding offers from major studios to meet Karslake’s deadlines. Instead, he found an Austin company, Powerhouse Animation, to produce the short, and tapped Don LaFontaine, a famous Hollywood voiceover artist who “has voiced just about every trailer ever made,” Karslake says, to narrate.

Karslake became convinced of the cartoon’s efficacy when he had the opportunity to screen **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** for three heterosexual Christian couples – one from Georgia, one from Kentucky and one from Tennessee – at Manhattan’s General Theological Seminary. At least one half of each of the couples was studying to be a minister at the school, so these were very religious people. Although he had decided to leave the cartoon on the cutting room floor, Karslake dropped it into the film at the last minute, because he felt these couples – young, devout, conservative Christians from the south – represented the “moveable middle” he was trying to reach.

“The first thing they all mentioned was how much they loved the cartoon, how it gave the film some much needed comic relief, and how much they learned from it,” Karslake says.

#

His work as a fundraiser for organizations like City of Hope and Manhattan’s Riverside Church, and as a TV producer for “In the Life,” have kept Karslake very much in touch with his spiritual side, and although he goes to church every Sunday, the filmmaker doesn’t think of himself as a particularly devout Christian.

“It’s more social for me,” he said recently when asked about his religious background.

Growing up in rural Pennsylvania, Karslake’s family moved about every two years. Because they moved so much, Karslake’s parents would seek out just about any Protestant church in the next new home town. As a result, Karslake worshiped with Presbyterian, United Methodist and Episcopal congregations.

“Spirituality is a very personal thing,” Karslake concludes, “and can be a very challenging thing too. I seem to be trying to make it easier for people to embrace their beliefs and reconcile them with the reality of contemporary life.”

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Producer/Director/Writer - Daniel Karslake

For six years, Daniel Karslake has been an award-winning producer for the highly acclaimed newsmagazine, "In the Life," which airs nationally on PBS in over 120 markets. Recognition for his outstanding work for the show, which has centered primarily on issues regarding religion and homosexuality, includes an Emmy nomination from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, as well as praise from GLAAD and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

From 2001 to mid-2002, Mr. Karslake served as Supervising Producer for ITL, overseeing all aspects of production for the news magazine. In the fall of 2002, Mr. Karslake partnered with WNET in New York to produce the pilot for "What's Next With Andrew Shapiro" for PBS.

Mr. Karslake is also founding partner of The Atticus Group, Inc., a New York-based production company dedicated to reinventing traditional art forms and promoting discussion across a wide range of contemporary issues. The Atticus Group was represented on Broadway in 2003 by Baz Luhrmann's Tony Award-winning production of Puccini's LA BOHEME. Atticus also co-produced the innovative revival of BIG RIVER with the Roundabout Theatre Company last season.

Prior to his producing career, Mr. Karslake was a fundraising and development executive, raising money for organizations such as The Riverside Church in New York, City of Hope National Medical Center and Beckman Research Institute in Los Angeles, and the library system for University of Southern California where he attended the USC School of Cinema-Television. He graduated cum laude from Duke University with a B.A. in Public Policy Studies.

Co-Producer/Editor Nancy Kennedy

Nancy Kennedy is a New York based filmmaker/editor who has edited a number of award-winning films including Sundance Grand Jury Winner WHY WE FIGHT (2005) and Sundance winners THANK YOU AND GOODNIGHT and RIDING THE RAILS. She has also co-directed and edited several independent documentaries, most recently, WHO'S ON FIRST (baseball lands in Greece), and BLUEGRASS JOURNEY (chronicles of the bluegrass music explosion). Her many editing credits include work at all the major networks on series such as American Experience, Great Performances, Frontline, American Masters, National Geographic, Discovery Specials, and more. She is currently directing a film about feminism, SHE'S BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE'S ANGRY.

Co-Producer Helen R. Mendoza

Ms. Mendoza has broad experience writing and producing. She has worked in a variety of media including film and television, theater, music and the internet. Ms. Mendoza began her career as a commercial producer supervising commercial and corporate video productions for clients such as AT&T, Gillette, and Parker Brothers. The entertainment industry brought Ms. Mendoza to Los Angeles, where she worked on TV and feature productions for 20th Century Fox, and Turner Studios, NBC and Lifetime Networks. In 1995, Ms. Mendoza developed, wrote and produced Gay Daze, the first gay and lesbian soap opera on the internet. She went on to create

Outbox.com, a gay and lesbian-specific search engine and community portal website. Ms. Mendoza also trained at Walt Disney Pictures/Hollywood Pictures as an assistant to a Vice-President of Production where she had the opportunity to gain experience in feature film development. Ms. Mendoza is a founding member and producer of Vox Femina Los Angeles, an acclaimed women's choir based in Los Angeles. She has written and produced their concerts and also produced the choir's first Compact Disc, entitled Taking Shape. Ms. Mendoza graduated from Boston University with a degree in Film and Television.

Executive Producer Bruce Bastian

Bruce Wayne Bastian was born in Twin Falls, Idaho, on March 23, 1948. He was the fifth of six children in a conservative, Mormon family, and lived in Twin Falls until moving to Provo, Utah in 1966 to attend *Brigham Young University*. He received a BA in Music Education and a MA in Computer Science from BYU. After leaving BYU in 1978, Mr. Bastian and his faculty advisor, Alan Ashton, decided to take a chance and started a small software company offering word processing software on mini computers. In 1983, soon after the IBM Personal Computer was announced, Mr. Ashton and Mr. Bastian rewrote their word processing product to run in the PC world. That product was named *WordPerfect*.

Until the mid 90's, Mr. Bastian served as Chairman of *WordPerfect Corporation* and also directly led all international operations of the company. *WordPerfect* became the best-selling word processor in several regions of the world as well as the USA.

Since the merger of *WordPerfect* and NOVELL Corporation in 1994, Bastian has spent an increasing amount of time devoted to charitable causes and philanthropy. Bastian's foresight and generosity have provided more personal and financial support to local Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender community organizations than any other single individual. He is also a major donor for several national GLBT organizations.

His foundation, the B.W. Bastian Foundation has adopted a policy of only supporting organizations that wholeheartedly embrace the principle of equality. Bastian funding places a strong commitment on programs and organizations that benefit, encourage, and preserve the rights of individuals, and promote equality for the GLBT community.

Bastian puts much of his energy into politics and promoting equality. Bruce has four sons, of whom he is very proud and protective, and he resides at his primary residence in Orem where he lives with his schnauzers, Lucas and Max.

Executive Producer - Michael Huffington

Michael Huffington has a distinguished career as a dedicated public servant, successful business executive and philanthropist whose charitable activities span the globe. As a public servant, he was at the forefront of efforts to improve educational and healthcare opportunities for children. In 1998, he was the co-chairman of a successful California ballot initiative to raise the price of cigarettes by 50 cents a pack, providing hundreds of millions dollars of tax revenue to be used every year to improve healthcare for children under the age of six. He served as a member of the U. S. House of Representatives from 1993 to 1995. And prior to that was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Negotiations Policy by President Reagan. He is the recipient of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service.

From 1991 to 2000 he was the co-owner of Crest Films Limited, a full-service film production company known for its Emmy-Award winning commercials, documentaries, adventure films and work on behalf of non-profit organizations. Prior to that he was Vice Chairman of the Huffington Corporation, a family-owned international energy company, where he oversaw the computer, finance, real estate and tax departments. He was co-founder of the international merchant bank Simmons & Huffington, Inc., and is currently a partner of the Gerson International Law Group.

Mr. Huffington's philanthropic activities and commitments are varied. A partial list of those organizations that he has supported financially, and on which he has served on the Board of Directors, include: the Aspen Institute, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the Culver Educational Foundation, Georgetown University, the Greek Orthodox Archdioceses of America, the Music Center of Los Angeles, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Salzburg Seminar in Salzburg, Austria and the University of California at Santa Barbara.

He graduated from Harvard Business School in 1972 with an MBA in Finance, and he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Engineering from Stanford University in 1970. He currently lives in Boston.

Executive Producer - Robin Voss

Robin Voss has a varied background as an executive in such industries as personal care/cosmetics, fund-raising, e-commerce, and entertainment. Her expertise in management, marketing, sales and human resource motivation, has culminated into a new focus, the making of FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO.

Motivated by the divisiveness, and discrimination that religion and scripture often propagate (not only worldwide but in her own back yard), this wife, mother, and grandmother of three from Orange County, California, is producing this project to encourage a more informed kind of faith and new understanding, dispelling the many myths surrounding homosexuality, and promoting an ideology of inclusiveness.

Executive Producer - Robert Greenbaum

Robert Greenbaum is a community leader in the Southern California desert and is firmly committed to the Jewish concept of tikkun olam, meaning to help to repair the world. Prior to Robert's entry into the film production, he owned a corporate team development company that focused on helping individuals draw on their own potential to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. In addition to team building work, he has been actively involved in selling real estate in the Palm Springs area. Divorced for four years with three children, Robert realizes the importance of helping to break down the barriers of stereotypes and judgments. In coming out himself, he has seen first hand how religion continues to keep so many in "the Closet." His commitment to this film is another example of how Robert continues his work in helping to repair the world and in encouraging all people to realize the gift each brings to humanity.

Executive Producer - Keith Lewis

Keith Lewis is founder and President of both The Morgan Agency and K2 Productions. For the past 15 years, Morgan has serviced the growing *Real People* commercial market for both television and print. The agency has been profiled in The Wall Street Journal, The New York

Times, the Los Angeles Times and CNN. Using his corporate success to enable philanthropic outreach, The Morgan Agency has raised over \$3 million dollars and increased awareness for people living with HIV/AIDS through their Proof Positive Division. This work earned Mr. Lewis the Humanitarian of the Year Award from Samaritan Village. Other recipients of the award include the late Princess Diana and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. K2 Productions is the independent producer of MISS CALIFORNIA USA® and MISS CALIFORNIA TEEN USA®. As the executive director, Mr. Lewis is responsible for the titleholders and their preparation for MISS USA® and MISS TEEN USA®. Both pageants are owned by the MISS UNIVERSE Organization, a Donald Trump and NBC partnership. He is a series regular, co-starring opposite Mo'Nique, in the upcoming VH1 series "Charm School" due to air sometime in the spring of 2007. Mr. Lewis attended the State University of New York Albany and Lynchburg College for Business Administration. He also completed the Executive Management program at USC. A life long Baptist, Mr. Lewis is the also the father of two children.

Co-Executive Producer – Karen A. Ellis

Karen Ellis was born to devout Southern Baptist and Episcopalian parents in a small town in West Virginia. She was brought up in both religions and, as a result, didn't know what to believe. Upon graduating from high school, she moved to Washington, D. C., to earn a living and find her way in life. Along the way, she decided to get more education and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from George Mason University and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Virginia. Still trying to find her niche, she decided to pursue a law degree from the Columbus School of Law while working as a research analyst at a Washington law firm. Graduating in 1979, she stayed with that firm for five years before accepting a position with a Newport Beach law firm as a public law attorney. She retired from that firm as a partner at the end of 2000. In 2006 Karen came out of retirement and went to work with her life partner, Sandra Hartness, in Sandra's tax-deferred exchange business and real estate related practice.

While pursuing her various career objectives, Karen has also been supportive of charitable activities, both financially and as a volunteer. Most notably, she has served on the Board of Directors of the AIDS Services Foundation of Orange County since 1988 where she has seen first-hand the discrimination faced by AIDS patients in Orange County and their struggle to obtain basic medical services to combat this disease.

Karen has become associated with **FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO** because she believes the film can and will open the hearts and minds of people whose beliefs are founded in the Bible and provide them with an alternative to a literal interpretation of the Bible.

Co-Executive Producer – Sandra Hartness

Sandra Hartness was born in Jacksonville, FL into a Southern Baptist family who always seemed to be on the move during most of her childhood. While the frequent moves seemed disruptive, it exposed her to different cultures and religions. While she hails from Georgia, since her family spent more time there than anywhere else, she has vivid memories of the contrasting cultures from times spent in Florida, Texas and New Orleans. The exposure to the cultural and religious differences has had lasting impact. "It certainly became quite clear to me that different cultures and religions have different interpretations of the Bible and the underlying cultures seem to drive the manner in which the Bible is interpreted."

Sandra has spent most of her professional career in the field of real estate development and real estate related businesses. She received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Georgia Southern University and her Masters in Taxation from Golden Gate University. In 1966, at the age of 26, she was named the Director of the Mission Inn, a national historic monument and hotel in Riverside, CA. While she views this as her first “fixer upper”, she has developed and invested in numerous real estate projects including Western Neuro Care Center, a coma hospital, in Tustin, CA. She is currently President of several real estate related businesses.

Sandra, and her life partner, Karen Ellis, devote a large portion of their time as donors and volunteers to charitable and educational activities. Sandra currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Human Rights Campaign, a national political and educational organization striving for equal rights and non-discrimination for the LGBT community. She believes the issues raised in this movie are extremely pertinent not only to the LGBT community, but to everyone. She is a strong advocate that education is the best way to fight inequality and discrimination. Her life experiences have led her to conclude that discrimination, in any form and against anyone, is the result of fear and ignorance and always diminish society, while inclusiveness and acceptance break through fear, leading to an expanding and flourishing society.

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Additional Camera Dana Duke
..... K2 Productions/Kevin Eller
..... Peter Haas
..... Hank Holton
..... Hailstone Creek Productions
..... Helen Mendoza
..... Gil Nografa
..... Kevin Baullerson
Visual Effects Supervisor Yorgo Alexopoulos
Assistant Editor/After Effects Design..... Dave Rivello
Assistant Editors Kate Itzkowitz
..... Peter Haas



IS IT A CHOICE?
Written by Jonathan Tolins
Inspired by HARD WIRED By Doug Nave
as presented to the Covenant Network of Presbyterians

Animation produced by
Powerhouse Animation Studios, Inc.
Austin, TX

Animation Directors
Frank Gabriel
Brad Graeber
Bruce Tinnin

Supervising Animator
Jason Williams

Animation
Jennifer Borrell Anderson
Doug Beck
Cindy Crowell
Samuel Deats
Frank Gabriel
Brad Graeber
Louie Granda
Krishna Jain
Bruce Tinnin
Jason Williams

Voices

Narrator Don LaFontaine
Christian Frank Gabriel
George Samuel Deats
Martha Cindy Crowell
Sigmund Freud Frank Gabriel
Dad Jason Williams
Mom/Woman In Line Jennifer Borrell Anderson
Angry Mob Doug Beck, Frank Gabriel

Editing

Jason Williams

Character Design

Brad Graeber

Backgrounds

Samuel Deats

Additional Voice Talent

Brennan Brown

Jenna Stern

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Chris Dobbs

On-line Editor

Chuck Crews

Re-recording mixer

Jim Cushinery

Post-production Graphics Supervisor

Joe Kornbrodt

Title Design/Post-production Graphics

Andrew Bell

Jordan Mena

Steve Villano

Production Still Photography

Gary Wise
Donald Ainslie

Score recording
Ted Spencer at TSR Studio, NYC

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ABOUT FIRST RUN FEATURES

First Run Features was founded in 1979 by a group of filmmakers to advance the distribution of independent film. Under the leadership of the late independent film pioneer, Fran Spielman, First Run Features quickly gained a reputation for its controversial catalog of daring independent fiction and non-fiction films. Today First Run remains one of the largest independent theatrical and home video distributors in the United States; its legacy includes films by such notable directors as Spike Lee, Michael Apted, Jane Campion, Ross McElwee, Michael Winterbottom, Sven Nykvist, Peter Jackson, Dariush Mehrjui, David O. Russell, Lizzie Borden, Claude Chabrol, Jan Svankmajer, Peter Watkins, Radley Metzger, Victor Nunez, the Quay Brothers, Kim Ki-Duk and Satyajit Ray.