VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM

THE LEGACY OF VITO RUSSO

Curriculum & Action Guide

youth in motion

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ABOUT THE FILM

Frameline's Youth in Motion DVD *Visibility through Activism: The Legacy of Vito Russo* features Jeffrey Schwarz's full length feature documentary *Vito*, along with professionally developed educational curriculum designed for use in Gay-Straight Alliance meetings and classrooms for instruction in U.S. history, government, and civics courses, media studies, and health.

Emmy® Award-winning documentary *Vito* paints a touching portrait of groundbreaking activist Vito Russo, and his historic struggle for equal rights for the LGBTQ community. In the aftermath of the Stonewall riots of 1969, a newly politicized Russo found his voice as a gay activist and critic of LGBTQ representation in the media. Russo went on to write *The Celluloid Closet*, the first book to critique Hollywood's portrayals of LGBTQ characters on screen. During the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, Russo became a passionate advocate for justice via the newly formed ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). Using archival footage and interviews with Russo's beloved friends and family, *Vito* chronicles Russo's bold and unapologetic activism, which continues to impact the LGBTQ movement of the 21st century.
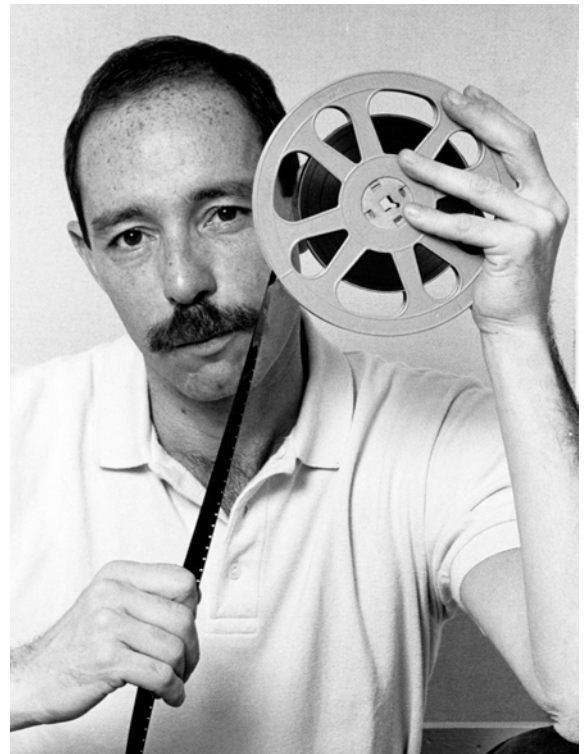
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FIRST RUN FRF FEATURES

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
How to Use this Guide

Why is LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum Important and Necessary?

Incorporating LGBTQ history and culture encourages all students to think more critically about the world, helps to create safe and affirming communities for LGBTQ students and families, and has the power to transform lives. Consider downloading **GSA Network's Implementing Lessons that Matter: The Impact of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum on Student Safety, Well-Being, and Achievement**[1] and **GLSEN's Teaching Respect: LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum and School Climate.**[2] These documents provide hard data and contextualize curricula as part of efforts for improved school safety, decreased bullying, and higher achievement across various schools and amongst all students, not only LGBTQ students.

How to Use this Guide in Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)

By watching these films in GSAs, students can delve further into the materials and contextualize them more directly within their lives and current affairs. There are even tips on how to take further actions after seeing the films. We know each GSA is different, so adapt the activities however you want!

How to Use this Guide in Classrooms

Because we've designed these guides to link with Common Core State Standards (CCSS), teachers can use these materials as part of their regular curriculum. Whether teaching middle school, high school, or even college-level courses, the resources in this packet can help to contextualize LGBTQ history and activism through a modern lens. See page 40 for information on how this curriculum fits into CCSS.

Approaching the Material

Addressing LGBTQ-related topics at school, whether in the course of classroom instruction or during a club meeting, can raise controversy. Before screening these films, it is important that you know your rights and responsibilities. In California, teaching about sexual orientation and gender identity is not only protected but is mandated by legislation. However, laws vary from state to state. Please refer to our resources page for more information.

It is highly recommended that teachers/advisors view this film prior to introducing it into the classroom. Some language and subjects in *Vito* can be challenging for students, parents, and community members. Teachers/advisors should consider the age and maturity of students, the support of administrators at their school, as well as the screening setting, before showing *Vito,* or clips from the film.

1. www.gsanetwork.org/news/blog/how-you-can-implement-lessons-matter/01/09/13
2. www.glsen.org/learn/research/national/teaching-respect

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Key Terms

For students, teachers, and parents, it can be intimidating to jump into conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity without knowing the correct terminology. Use the **Key Terms** below to learn more about the terms used throughout this guide, and in the film *Vito*.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to males and females.

Cisgender: Refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity.

Coming Out: The process of recognizing and acknowledging non-heterosexual and/or transgender identity to oneself and then sharing it with others. This process usually occurs in stages and can be a life-long process.

Gay: Refers to any person who is attracted to members of the same gender. However, it is usually used to describe men (e.g., "gay men").

Gender: An individual and social understanding of someone (or something) being masculine, feminine, or some combination of the two. Gender is distinct from biological sex (male and female) and covers a wide range of issues that affect everyone.

Gender Binary System: A social system that requires that everyone be raised as either a boy or girl (dependent on the sex one is assigned at birth) which in turn forms the basis for education, job expectations, behavior norms, fashion choices, gender presentation, and who one should be attracted to/love/marry, etc.

Gender Expression: The way a person expresses his or her gender through gestures, movement, dress, and grooming, regardless of biological sex (also sometimes referred to as "gender presentation").

Gender Identity: A person's understanding, definition, or experience of their own gender, regardless of biological sex.

Gender Nonconformity: Not expressing gender or not having gender characteristics or gender identity that conform to the expectations of society and culture.

Gender Normative: Refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity and expression.

Gender Role: Culturally accepted and expected gendered behavior associated with biological sex (i.e., acting "masculine" or "feminine"). These expectations are often stereotypical, such as "Boys like blue and girls like pink."

Heterosexism: The belief or assumption that heterosexuality is the only normal or acceptable sexual orientation. Heterosexism is also the systematic devaluing of homosexual/bisexual/queer identities and relationships, through numerous laws, cultural norms, and social expectations.

Heterosexual: Refers to cisgender men who are attracted to cisgender women, and cisgender women who are attracted to cisgender men. The word "straight" is used as a synonym.

Homophobia: A term often used generally to describe a strong negative bias toward LGBTQ people, but the term "anti-LGBTQ bias" is more inclusive.

Homosexual: Refers to a person who is attracted to members of the same sex. Typically, however, the synonymous term "gay" is used. (When referring to people today, the term homosexual is considered derogatory. When used to describe behavior, the term "same-sex" is preferable.)

Intersex: A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. The term "hermaphrodite" is considered derogatory.

Queer: Originally used as an insult for being different, the word has more recently been reclaimed as positive by many LGBT people. It is currently being used by many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons to describe their pride in being different, and also serves as a broader term to define those who are not heterosexual or cisgender, but may not easily fall into a "L", "G", "B" or "T" category.

Sex: One's biological assignment as male, female, or intersex.

Transgender: People whose gender identity is different from their birth or biological sex. Sometimes they may hormonally and/or surgically change their bodies to more fully match their gender identity. The term "transgender" is often used politically as an umbrella term for all gender non-conforming people.

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Tips on Facilitating Conversations

• Agree upon ground rules for discussion. Rules may include an agreement to maintain confidentiality, to speak one at a time, and to refrain from using slurs or making personal attacks.

• Work to establish a forum for a free and respectful exchange of ideas. Do not attempt to change anyone's point of view.

• Be aware that although you may not have an openly LGBTQ student in your class, you may have students who are questioning their identities, are gender non-conforming, or who have LGBTQ family or friends. Likewise, students may be affected by negative or hurtful comments whether or not these comments are directed specifically at them.

• Model the use of inclusive language during classroom discussions. For example, when mentioning families, use terms such as "caregiver" or "parent" to create space for all types of family structures.

• Resist the urge to put LGBTQ students, those perceived to be LGBTQ, or those with LGBTQ family or friends, in the spotlight as "experts." Allow each person in the room to speak only for themselves and on their own terms and avoid inadvertently "outing" someone to their peers.

• Establish as comfortable an environment as possible. Arrange seats in a circle. Intervene when conversations become one-sided, and pose questions to keep the conversation on track.

• Be honest about what you do and don't know. Use phrases such as, "I don't know," "That's a good question," or "Let me do some research and get back to you on that." Refer to the resources section to encourage further exploration of a topic.

What to Do if You Encounter Anti-LGBTQ or Hurtful Responses

• Stop the behavior. Interrupt the comment or harassment. Do not pull a student aside unless absolutely necessary.

• Identify the harassment and broaden the response. Make clear why this behavior is not accepted by the community: "That was a stereotype. Stereotypes are a kind of lie, and they hurt people's feelings." "Our community does not appreciate hurtful behavior or language that puts people down. That word is a slur and can also be hurtful to others who overhear it." Make sure all the students in the area hear your comments. Allow this to be a teachable moment.

• Ask for change in future behavior. You may want to personalize the response: "Chris, please pause and think before you act." Or you may wish to address the whole class: "Let's all remember to treat one another with respect."

• Redirect the class to the activity at hand. Rather than shutting the conversation down completely, redirect the class's attention to the goals of the lesson: "Today we're looking at this topic in order to broaden our perspectives."

• Always address the behavior. Ignoring the name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue, and possibly get worse. If other students do not see action, they get the message that there is nothing wrong with it.

• Follow up privately, if necessary. Check in with the student who was called a name to make sure that the student is okay. Likewise, follow up with the student who used the hurtful language. Often times, students who bully others are in need of support, too.

For more tips on how to respond to anti-LGBTQ language and harassment, see GLSEN's *Safe Space Kit,*[3] *Safe Schools Coalition's An Educator's Guide To Intervening In Anti-Gay Harassment,*[4] and *Project 10's How to Handle Harassment in the Hallways in 3 Minutes or Less!*[5]

3. **www.glsen.org/safespace**
4. **www.safeschoolscoalition.org/rg-bullying_harassment_schoolbasedviolence.html**
5. **www.project10.org/Resources/harassment.html**

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Curriculum Overview

This curriculum will delve into three major themes of Vito Russo's work: LGBTQ Activism, LGBTQ People and Media, and The AIDS Epidemic of the 1980s. Some activities correspond to particular clips of the film, some are based on students having viewed the whole film, and some include the use of external sources. Curriculum is intended for use in classrooms, in Gay-Straight Alliance meetings, with teachers, parents, and administrators, and with community groups.

Theme 1: LGBTQ Activism, Historical and Present Day

Activity 1: Valuing Who You Are

Activity 2: History of Intolerance of LGBTQ People in the U.S.

Activity 3: LGBTQ Activism in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Activity 4: National and International Vestiges of Oppression

Theme 2: LGBTQ Representations in Media

Activity 5: Historical Context and Who Controls the Screen

Activity 6: GLAAD's Vito Russo Test & Beyond

Activity 7: Big Media and Big Personalities, Changing Hearts and Minds

Theme 3: AIDS, In the 1980s and Today

Activity 8: A Decade of HIV/AIDS

Activity 9: Where Are We Today with HIV/AIDS?

NOTE: *In the course of this curriculum, terminology is used that could be considered outdated (such as "homosexual"). The film* Vito *takes place entirely in the 20th century, and in the case of historical facts, we have chosen to keep the terms of that particular era. Teachers, students, parents, and administrators should reference the Key Terms (page 5) to learn more about LGBTQ terminology today.*

THEME 1

LGBTQ ACTIVISM, HISTORICAL AND PRESENT DAY

The film *Vito* delves into the life of the iconic figure, beginning with his early self-acceptance and family support, and uses his personal narrative to contextualize the fight for LGBTQ rights from the 1960s through the 1980s. For this theme, we will look at how both the personal and the political have affected the fight for LGBTQ rights in the past and the present.

VITO RUSSO AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

One of the more prevalent themes running through the film is that of self-acceptance. Vito found a way to be true to himself, embracing his identity as a gay man in an era when few found the courage to be public about their sexual orientation. His self-acceptance was perhaps the first step in his ability to stand up for others like him, and his activism is now legendary. Though the circumstances are different today, many young LGBTQ people still struggle to accept their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the constraints of a heterosexual/cisgender-dominant society.

In these exercises we will look at Vito's path to self-acceptance, how self-acceptance might look for LGBTQ people today, and how valuing who you are can affect one's ability to be an effective activist.

ACTIVITY:

Think about Vito's neighborhood, about his family and community and write about one of the quotes from the film listed below:

QUOTE 1: NEIGHBORHOOD

"In terms of knowing I was gay I think that that happened very early. By the time I was ten or eleven. I mean I was a faggot. You know, I was queer. I always had this instinct of knowing that I was gay. And when I became like 12 or 13 years old I learned how to leave the neighborhood which nobody else in my family or anybody I knew did. I learned how to use the subway. I went to matinees. I saw *The Rose Tattoo* with Maureen Stapleton. I went all over the city by myself. And when I couldn't afford it I would put on roller skates and I would hold on to the back of the bus. It was always like a great luxurious sense of freedom of being on my own." — Vito Russo

Why do you think Vito felt the need to leave his hometown neighborhood as an adolescent travelling to New York, and as an adult, when he moved there? Do you think this was necessary for his path to self-acceptance?

QUOTE 2: FAMILY

"And then of course you know our parents kind of came to terms with Vito being gay. My father was so accepting and gentle and my mom just, she was pretty wonderful. Here's mom and dad so supportive of Vito. He knew that they had unconditional love for him. I think it gave him a little power and strength that others might not have had." — Charles Russo

Charles Russo thinks that his brother Vito was able to gain power and strength through the love and support of his family. Do you think this support helped in his path to self-acceptance?

Now that you have thought about these issues as they relate to Vito, consider the way your neighborhood and your family/community affect LGBTQ students at your school, and their paths to self-acceptance today:

1. How supportive is your community toward the advancement of the personal development of young LGBTQ people? How might families, friends, neighbors, teachers, religious leaders, and schools create more supportive environments for young LGBTQ people? Do you think students still feel the need to "escape" to other geographic locations the way Vito did?

2. Does your school, family, religious center, community group, or group of friends presume everyone to be straight/cisgender unless someone comes out as LGBTQ?

3. If someone is attracted to a person of the same gender, do they feel pressure to be called "gay" or "lesbian" without the room for queer/bisexual identity?

SELF-ACTUALIZED INDIVIDUALS AS ACTIVISTS

"The bottom line is that I've always been an activist. I was a gay activist twenty years ago and I'm an AIDS activist now. I was always gonna be an activist. I mean if it wasn't gay rights it was gonna be something else because there are just too many things wrong." — Vito Russo

ACTIVITY:

Based on the quote above, Vito sees himself as a born activist. As a group, determine 10-20 qualities that you think make someone a good activist.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How might having a positive attitude about one's own identity enable one to become a stronger advocate for LGBTQ rights? Can you be an advocate for LGBTQ rights without identifying as LGBTQ?

2. How might it be argued that Vito Russo's work led to an improved attitude and self-image among many LGBTQ people? How do leaders like Russo enhance the self-worth of others?

3. Is self-actualization enough? Can you be entirely at ease with your own identity while still struggling to support others within your community? In the film, some of those at rallies who are excited about gay rights had a negative reaction to activists who are lesbians, or drag queens. Are there still people being left behind today in the LGBTQ rights movement?

"The bottom line is that I've always been an activist. I was a gay activist twenty years ago and I'm an AIDS activist now. I was always gonna be an activist. I mean if it wasn't gay rights it was gonna be something else because there are just too many things wrong." — Vito Russo

When it comes to the treatment and perceptions of LGBTQ people, there was enough wrong that Vito Russo didn't have to search for other activist opportunities. If he were alive today, Vito might be leading the fight for immigrant rights or exposing corporate corruption. Or, he might see that there are still plenty of things wrong with the way in which powerful institutions perpetuate injustice toward LGBTQ people.

Let's explore some of the progress that has been made as a result of the tireless efforts and bravery of activists like Vito. At the same time, let's uncover some of what's still wrong.

ACTIVITY: EXAMINE AND DISCUSS THE TIMELINES

Choose any one or more of the timelines on pages 12–17. If your group is large enough, you can split up and summarize your discussion for the whole group. Read the quote from the film *Vito* and the explanation of how this sector or institution perpetuated negative attitudes toward and mistreatment of LGBTQ people. On each page is a timeline of a few events that highlight both the "wrongs" and the progress made since Vito's time. Following the timeline are questions, which you can use to lead a discussion. Later, we will look at the activist groups that helped move society forward.

ACTIVITY: ENVISION THE CHANGE

Vito Russo had an idea of the world he hoped to shape. As we can see by the progress made in a few traditionally homophobic and transphobic institutions in American society, much of Vito's vision has been realized. However, there is still work to be done. Choose any one or more of the timelines on pages 12–17, and add three events in chronological order that you'd like to see occur over the next ten years.
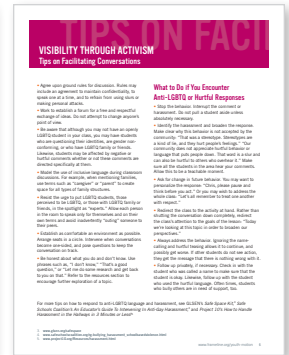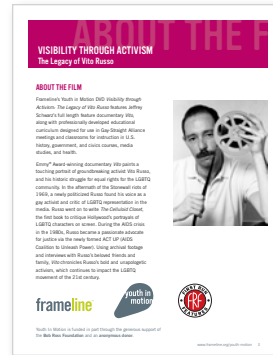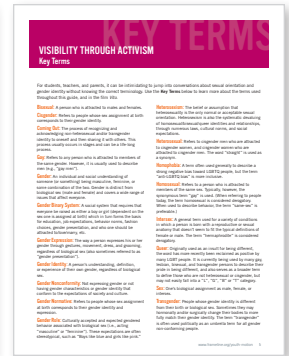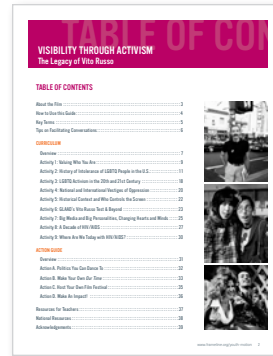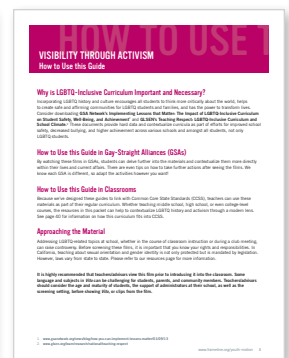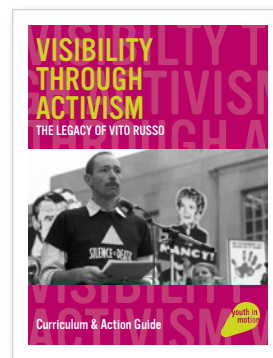
MEDICAL COMMUNITY

Though treatment of LGBTQ people varied over the course of history, attitudes of most Americans toward same-gender attraction in the mid-twentieth century ranged from hostile to mildly curious. Even though there was some groundbreaking scientific research that should have shifted these attitudes, medical, and mental health institutions continued to label same-gender attraction as something that needed to be fixed. Below is a brief timeline of just a few of the important events that shaped American's perceptions of LGBTQ people.

1948 — Alfred Kinsey, a scientist and sex researcher, published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male.* His research found that 37% of men have had at least one sexual encounter with another male, and that 10% of American males are "more or less exclusively homosexual" for a period of their lives.

1952 — The American Psychiatric Association includes Homosexuality on its list of sociopathic personality disturbances in its publication *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.* This meant that it should be treated like a mental illness and led to efforts by the medical community to cure people of homosexuality.

1956 — An American psychologist named Evelyn Hooker presents her research to the American Psychological Association. Her research concludes that homosexual and heterosexual males are far more similar than they are different.

1960s — Aversion therapy (sometimes referred to as conversion therapy) was used to "cure" homosexuality. Experimental treatment included hooking electrodes to the genitals and administering electric shocks as subjects were shown pornographic images of members of the same sex. The shocks were not administered when shown similar images of members of the opposite sex.

1973 — The American Psychological Association no longer includes homosexuality on its list of mental disorders.

1976 — Exodus International was established. This organization provided "reparative therapy" to men and women with same-gender attractions to "cure them" of their attractions.

2012 — California bans all forms of aversion/conversion therapy for patients under the age of 18.

2013 — Exodus International closes down. Its leader acknowledges his ongoing struggle with same-gender attraction and apologizes for the pain he may have caused others.

"Psychologists, shrinks, all the mental health professionals considered homosexuality a disease."
— Tommi Avicolli Mecca

"Homosexuality is in fact a mental illness which has reached epidemiological proportions."
— A news report clip in the film *Vito*

FOR DISCUSSION:

Why do you think being attracted to members of the same gender was still seen as something that needed to be fixed even in light of scientific research that suggested otherwise?

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM

EDUCATION

"Vito hated (high school) from the moment he went. Lodi High School like practically every high school in American then and now is a jock bastion. So if you were a skinny, smart, effeminate boy like Vito was, you took abuse." — Michael Schiavi, author of *Celluloid Activist*

Schools during much of the twentieth century did little to validate or protect LGBTQ students. Bullying was common and not something in which school officials needed to interfere. "Boys will be boys" — teasing was just part of growing up. Students might be asked to play "Smear the Queer" in gym class – a hybrid of tag and dodge ball. Students read novels and plays by gay authors but rarely was their sexual orientation acknowledged. Few if any attempts were made to support children of LGBTQ parents. Let's examine some of the events over the last 25 years that have shaped the institution's efforts to support LGBTQ students.

1989 — First Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is formed in Massachusetts.

1990 — GLSEN is formed.[1]

1996 — Jamie Nabozny sues his Wisconsin school district for failing to protect him from years of bullying and harassment because he is gay. He repeatedly reported mental and physical violence, including a beating that required surgery. The schools' response to this bullying amounted to "Boys will be Boys." After initially losing his case, the U.S. Court of Appeals found that his rights had been violated, and that public schools and their officials are legally responsible for failing to address anti-gay harassment and bullying.[2]

2000 — California lawmakers pass the *Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act,* which states that schools must protect students and staff from discrimination and or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

2008 — Junior high school student Lawrence King is murdered by fellow student Brandon McInerney while in school in Oxnard, CA. The murder and subsequent trial renewed public debates about gun violence within schools, and the protection of transgender and gender non-conforming students.

2010 — The state of New York's "Dignity for All Students Act" is signed into law. This law combats bias-based bullying, harassment, and discrimination in public schools.[3]

2011 — California state legislature requires that contributions of gay and lesbians must be included in social studies curriculum in California public schools.

2013 — California law requires that children in public schools be accommodated based on their gender identity. This means that they can use the locker room or bathrooms of their self-perceived gender.

2014 — Federal Title IX law requires that students be treated according to their gender identity when it comes to single-sex classes within a school.

FOR DISCUSSION:

How has protection for LGBTQ young people in school evolved in the last three decades?
(Consider reviewing GLSEN's 2013 *National School Climate Survey* for information about current school climates.[4])

Though much progress has been made, the tragic murder of Lawrence King suggests that laws alone may not be enough. What are some of the ways in which schools continue to make it unsafe for LGBTQ students? Are there institutionalized events, rules, or traditions that may perpetuate feelings of fear and otherness for LGBTQ students, such as homecoming courts with kings and queens?

1. www.glsen.org
2. www.nassp.org/Portals/0/Content/46789.pdf
3. www.capsli.org/dignity-for-all-students-act-dasa/
4. www.glsen.org/nscs

MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

Vito Russo's groundbreaking *The Celluloid Closet* raised awareness of the negative portrayals of LGBTQ people in film. Both his lecture series and bestselling book angered and excited people as they considered the impact these portrayals have had on their thinking. Television portrayals of LGBTQ characters were also negative or sporadic. Prior to Vito Russo's work, gay actors in Hollywood did not come out of the closet for fear that their careers would be ruined. Straight actors did not want to play gay roles. However, since that time, significant progress has occurred. Let's examine a few events from the entertainment industry since Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet.*

1985 — GLAAD (formerly known as The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) was formed in response to the media's sensationalized coverage of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Vito Russo was a founding member.

1989 — The ABC television series *Thirtysomething* aired an episode, which showed two shirtless men in bed together. There was no physical touching in the scene. Advertisers pulled their commercials from the episode and ABC decided not to rerun the episode.

1993 — Grammy-award winner Melissa Etheridge publicly announces that she is gay at an inaugural ball for President Clinton.

1993 — Actor Tom Hanks stars in *Philadelphia*, a film about a gay lawyer with AIDS who is fired by his law firm because of his HIV status. Other than one scene depicting a slow dance, there is little physical affection between Tom Hanks and Antonio Banderas, the actor portraying his partner.

1997 — Ellen DeGeneres came out on her popular, prime time TV series titled *Ellen*. 42 million viewers watched the episode, which included guest celebrities like Oprah Winfrey. The show ran from 1994-1998.

1998 — The TV sitcom *Will & Grace* began airing on NBC. Will was a gay character and Grace was his best friend and roommate. The popular series ran until 2006.

2006 — The movie *Brokeback Mountain* wins three Oscar® awards. The film starred actors Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger as two closeted, gay cowboys who fall in love during the summer of 1963 while herding sheep in Wyoming. The film depicts the main characters having sex.

2009 — *Glee* premieres on FOX, featuring gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender high school characters

2014 — Laverne Cox is the first transgender person to be nominated for an Emmy in an acting category for her role on *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix).

2015 — *Transparent* (Amazon) wins two Golden Globe Awards, including Best TV Series, musical or comedy.

2007-2014 OSCAR®-NOMINATED FILMS DEPICTING GAY CHARACTERS INCLUDE:
(WARNING: SPOILER ALERTS!)

Milk (2008): Sean Penn plays gay activist and politician Harvey Milk who is assassinated by a former colleague.

A Single Man (2009): Colin Firth plays suicidal gay English professor George Falconer. The film is set in 1962 Los Angeles. In the end, Falconer does not commit suicide.

The Kids are All Right (2010): Julianne Moore plays a lesbian mother who has an affair with the biological father (sperm donor) of her two children. In the end, she reconciles with her partner played by Oscar-winning actress Annette Bening.

The Beginners (2011): Actor Christopher Plummer plays Hal Fields, an elderly man who comes out as a gay man after the death of his wife. He becomes active in the gay community, finds love, and becomes closer with his straight son.

Philomena (2013): Oscar-winner Judi Dench plays a woman searching for the four-year old son that was given away to adoptive parents by the nuns who she was working for. Philomena learns that her son had died of AIDS years earlier. He was an accomplished political leader and had desperately tried to find out what happened to his mother.

Dallas Buyers Club (2013): Oscar-winner Matthew McConaughey plays straight-identified Ron Woodruff who, when faced with poor access to medical treatment for AIDS, devises a plan to import and distribute medicine in Dallas. His business partner, the transgender and drug-addicted Rayon, is played by Oscar-winner Jared Leto. Rayon's death is portrayed during the film and Woodruff's death is included as a post-script to the film.

Note: None of these actors from this list identify as LGBTQ.

FOR DISCUSSION:

Using these events and other information that you may know about depiction of LGBTQ characters in the entertainment industry, what positive trends do you see? What might Vito Russo say is still "wrong?"

Many people predicted that the success of *Brokeback Mountain* in 2006 was going to increase the demand for gay-themed, blockbuster movies. Based on the information from this list and your own experience, has this prediction come true?

Events such as Frameline's annual San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival present more than 200 films each year and attract as many as 65,000 audience members during its 11-day Festival. Some people may argue that the need for festivals has diminished due to the number of mainstream films depicting LGBTQ themes and characters. Others argue that events such as Frameline are as important now as they were in the 1970s and 1980s. What do you think? Use evidence from the list and from your own experience.

Note: We will delve further into LGBTQ people and media representation in activities 5, 6, and 7.

SPORTS

Many LGBTQ people play and are interested in sports, but have not found locker rooms or the fields to be free of homophobic and transphobic behavior. The discomfort that many LGBTQ people experience around sports may contribute to a negative association with sporting events. Fortunately, queer activists have organized sporting events that have changed this narrative.[1]

While Americans are increasingly accepting of LGBTQ people in other sectors, many continue to identify athletes with straight/cisgender America. Let's examine a few events over the last 40 years to see what trends we can identify.

1976 — The United States Tennis Association denies player Renee Richards entry into the US Open because she is transgender. She sues for the right to play women's professional tennis. She wins the right to play in women's tournaments in 1977.

1977 — The North American Gay Amateur Athletic alliance was formed to promote amateur athletics for the LGBTQ community.

1981 — Tennis great Martina Navratilova comes out as a lesbian

1982 — The first "Gay Games" occurs in San Francisco. The event was originally called the "Gay Olympics" but a lawsuit filed by both International and U.S. Olympics Committees forced organizers to remove *Olympics* from the event's name. Today, the Gay Games currently offers competition in 33 sports with more than 9,000 participants from around the world.

1995 — Olympic diver and gold-medalist Greg Louganis comes out as gay and HIV-positive.

2005 — WNBA star Sheryl Swoopes comes out.

2013 — Openly gay WNBA player Brittney Griner becomes first openly gay athlete to be signed by Nike. A year later she is engaged to openly gay WNBA player Glory Johnson.

2013 — Mixed Martial Artist (MMA) Fallon Fox comes out as transgender in an interview with *Outsports*.

2013 — NBA player Jason Collins of the Washington Wizards comes out in a *Sports Illustrated* cover story. After coming out, he plays for another year before retiring in 2014.

2014 — Openly gay football player Michael Sam is a seventh-round draft pick by the St. Louis Rams. A film crew recorded him kissing his boyfriend when he got the news. He was cut from the team after the preseason.

> "The gay people in Middle America are certainly ready for it, and if the straight people aren't then they should get to know who their neighbors are."
> — Vito Russo

FOR DISCUSSION:

Though there are several gay male athletes who have come out since retiring from professional sports, as of early 2015 there were no openly gay male athletes currently playing in the NBA, NFL, or MLB. Do you think there are no gay, bisexual, or queer men currently playing professional basketball, football, or baseball? What impact do you think it would have if male players would come out? Why do you think these athletes choose to not be open about their sexuality?

When female professional athletes come out, there is less news coverage. Why do you think it is?

Consider Vito Russo's quote about "Middle America" needing to get to know their gay neighbors. How might openly gay professional athletes address this?

1. **www.glsen.org/learn/research/athletics-brief**

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM

MILITARY SERVICE/GOVERNMENT WORKERS

"There's one story that when Vito was working at Mama's Chicken and Rib
he kissed a friend goodbye and he lost his job for doing that.
So even in Greenwich Village it still wasn't safe to act gay."
— Arnie Kantrowitz, friend of Vito Russo

For most of the 20th century, LGBTQ people were excluded from openly serving in the military. Recruits were asked if they were gay or lesbian and were denied admission if they answered truthfully. Those who were admitted to the military were discharged if discovered to be gay or lesbian, regardless of their commitment or value to their country. Queer activists were calling for an end to this practice. Government defended this exclusion from the military by saying that having openly LGBTQ people among the troops would harm morale and jeopardize the safety of our service men and women. Activists believed that there was no merit to this argument and that the practice perpetuated homophobia and transphobia. Let's examine a few events over the last 60 years that shows the roots of this homophobia and transphobia in the U.S. government and the changes brought on by effective activism.

1950 — A Federal Government report titled "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government" is circulated at the beginning of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. The report says that homosexuality is a mental illness and that employing homosexuals in the military or government may put the nation's security at risk. The "Lavender Scare" resulted in thousands of gay men and women losing their jobs.

1953 — President Eisenhower signs an Executive Order that bans homosexuals from working for the federal government or any of the private companies that have contracts with the government. Alcoholics are also included in this ban.

1993 — President Clinton enacts the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that prevented the military from asking recruits if they were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer while at the same time forbidding gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer military personnel from engaging in same-sex acts or coming out. Some estimates say that 13,000 members of the armed forces were discharged under this law.

2007 — A report indicated at least 58 Arabic-speaking military translators were discharged from service for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer as under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Arabic is the main language spoken in Iraq.[1]

2010 — Congress repeals "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer members of the military can openly serve in the armed forces. Studies have shown that there has been no negative impact on troop morale since the repeal.[2]

2015 — Transgender individuals are still banned from openly participating in the military.

FOR DISCUSSION:

Why was it important for activists to fight for an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation in the military? Were you surprised to learn that transgender individuals are still not allowed to openly serve in the U.S. military?

For many LGBTQ activists, serving in the military was not a personal goal. Access to health care, marriage equality, and fair hiring practices were more personally pressing issues. Yet activists continued to fight for the end to the ban regardless of their personal military aspirations. Why is it important that LGBTQ activists continue to fight for causes such as openly serving in the military, even when it may not be personally applicable to them?

1. www.nytimes.com/2007/06/08/opinion/08benjamin.html?_r=0
2. www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2012/09/study_of_don_t_ask_don_t_tell_repeal_helped_the_military_.html

ACTIVITY 2 TIMELINE

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Activists like Vito Russo had to first "wake up" LGBTQ people in order to see the injustices that were occurring all around them. Then, this growing number of activists worked to get the attention of the people in power—politicians, corporate leaders, entertainers—anyone who could have some influence on changing the attitudes of straight/cisgender America toward LGBTQ people. At the same time, out people needed to place themselves in a position of power in the political arena.

Here are a few important events over the last 40 years as LGBTQ leaders gained access to political power.

1974 — Kathy Kozachenko is the first openly LGBTQ American elected to a public office when she wins a seat on the Ann Arbor (Michigan) City Council.

1975 — Openly lesbian Elaine Noble is elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives and serves until 1979.

1977 — Harvey Milk, an early gay rights activist, is elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

1978 — Harvey Milk is assassinated by a fellow San Francisco Supervisor, Dan White.

1980 — The Democratic Party endorses a gay rights platform at its National Convention.

1987 — Congressman Barney Frank of Massachusetts comes out and serves as an openly gay member of the U.S. House of Representatives until his retirement in 2013.

1999 — James Hormel is the first openly LGBTQ person to serve as a U.S. Ambassador

2006 — Kim Coco Iwamoto is elected to the Hawaii Board of Education making her, at the time, the highest ranking openly transgender elected official in the United States.

2007 — Six Democrats participate in a cable channel presidential forum on LGBTQ issues, including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

2015 — Seven openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual members currently serve in the U.S. Congress. Maine also elected the nation's first openly gay governor.

"These people are debating whether or not you have the right to live and you're not part of the discussion."
— Vito Russo

FOR DISCUSSION:

Though progress has been made, there are still relatively few out members of Congress and only one openly gay Governor. Do you think it's important that LGBTQ activists work to increase this number? Do you think it's noteworthy that there are few transgender elected officials?

Up until the early 1960s, every state in the U.S. had a law against sex between members of the same gender. These laws aimed to protect society from "Crimes Against Nature" and "lewd and lascivious" sex acts. Eventually, most states repealed their laws or at least amended them to allow for "consensual" same gender activity. However in 2003, ten states still banned consensual sex between same-gender couples.

In 1998, two Texas gay men, John Lawrence and Tyron Garner, were arrested in Lawrence's home during an altercation with the police. They were both arrested and charged with having "deviate sex" under a Texas law. Attorneys from Lambda Legal, a queer rights activist group, represented Lawrence and Garner. Their goal was to see that this Texas law, as well as similar laws in 12 other states, would be found unconstitutional. In 2003, the Texas law was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. This resulted in overturning laws across the U.S.

This means that during the lifetimes of people you know, it was illegal in many parts of the country for two men or two women to engage in consensual sex. Though frequently not enforced, these laws contributed to the case for continued discrimination against LGBTQ people. Over the last ten years, much progress has been made in this country to change these laws.

But how did we get there?

The People Behind the Progress

FORMING COMMUNITY

> "I think Middle America is gay as well as straight and you know and, you know, this famous public that we're always talking about is gay as well as straight. And people forget that."
> — Vito Russo

As Vito Russo said, the full landscape of America includes straight, cisgender, and LGBTQ people. Yet until about 60 years ago, there were few opportunities for LGBTQ people to gather to form a collective identity. Most people hid from or denied their sexual orientation because they felt that there was something wrong with them. During the 1950s, two important groups contributed to the formation of an LGBTQ community.

1950 – The Mattachine Society formed in Los Angeles. This group organized meetings that brought LGBTQ people together to share their experience and stories with one another. These meetings helped to create a sense of community and belonging, and soon groups were beginning to meet in several cities throughout the U.S. In addition to providing emotional support, the Mattachine Society – named after famed masked performers in medieval France who often criticized the ruling monarch – developed an activist agenda that included protecting gay men from police entrapment. Their political agenda resulted in scrutiny during the anti-communist era and the group's membership declined.

1955 – Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) was founded in San Francisco. This was the first national lesbian organization, founded by pioneers Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin. Like the *Mattachine Society,* DOB was a place where lesbians safely gathered to share their stories and discuss issues related to the social and political climate for LGBTQ people at the time. They also assured secrecy and privacy to their members. In addition to providing a place to build community, the DOB's mission included educating the public about homosexuality and encouraging participation in reputable research projects that would advance society's understanding of LGBTQ issues. The Daughter's of Bilitis published a newsletter called *The Ladder*, which included lesbian-themed poetry and fiction, as well as personal essays.

> "The sex act itself is neither male nor female: it is a human being reaching out for the ultimate in communication with another human being."
> — Del Martin & Phyllis Lyon, founders of Daughters of Bilitis

THE STONEWALL RIOTS

On June 28th, 1969 a police raid at a popular gay bar in New York City resulted in three days of riots. Nearly 100 men were arrested each week in New York City due to police raids of gay bars and entrapment by police decoys. Patrons of the Stonewall Inn — including lesbians, gay men, drag queens, transgender women, and homeless youth who lived in the park across the street — fought back against the police who eventually had to barricade themselves inside the bar. For the next two nights, thousands of LGBTQ people and their straight allies came back to the streets surrounding the bar. This event was empowering for many LGBTQ people as they witnessed a united community confront the law enforcement community whose tactics kept them fearful and closeted.

As a result, more activist groups emerged, building off of the work of groups like the *Mattachine Society* and the *Daughters of Bilitis.* Here are just a few of the organizations that formed after the Stonewall Riot and led efforts to end the criminalization of homosexuality.

1969 – Gay Liberation Front (GLF)

1969 – Gay Activist Alliance (GAA)
(Vito Russo, founding member)

1970 – Radicallesbians

1973 – The National Gay Task Force
(now called the National LGBTQ Task Force)

1973 – Lambda Legal

1973 – PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).
Founded by Jeanne and Jules Manford, parents of Morty Manford who was an original member of the GAA with Vito Russo. PFLAG provides support for families of LGBTQ people, as well as advocacy for their rights and protection.

1974 – Salsa Soul Sisters, Third World Wimmin, Inc.

> **"There was no arguing with us. We were angry people. We had just discovered this injustice that society had perpetrated on us. Our place in the scheme of things didn't have to be what it was. We were entitled to full recognition as citizens."**
> **— Arnie Kantrowitz, co-founder of GLAAD**

ACTIVITY:

Conduct research on any one or more of these groups. What was the group's mission statement? What tactics did they use to raise awareness of problematic perceptions of LGBTQ people?

"We were angry people."

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Activity 4: National and International Vestiges of Oppression

Now that we have studied the history of LGBTQ rights, we will now examine the differences between Vito Russo's time with the GAA and other organizations, and the world today, taking into account the social climate, and, particularly, governmental laws.

ACTIVITY:

Choose a **right** from the list below, and research whether LGBTQ people have access to this right in four **geographic locations**. Consider how different it is to be a LGBTQ person in one of these locations versus others. Also, consider whether the rules differ for LGB versus transgender people? Once you have conducted the research, write a paragraph on what you were surprised to learn.

Teachers and Advisors, you can alternatively choose to conduct this exercise in small groups, asking each group to tackle either a region or a right, and then report their findings to the class as a whole, preferably using a map for comparison.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS:

· Your state

· A state you have visited, or would like to visit

· On the Federal level in the U.S.

· In a country you have visited or would like to visit

RIGHTS:

· Basic Rights and Liberties

· Parenting and Adoption

· Relationships, Marriage Equality, including Same-Sex Immigration

· Youth and Schools including Anti-Bullying and Non-Discrimination

· Hospital Visitation & Medical

· Housing Laws

· Employment

· Hate Crimes Laws

As laws are always changing, it is important to reference up-to-date online resources, and to consider who the source is, and what their agenda may be. Are they an LGBTQ organization? Is it a factually vetted source or Wikipedia, which may be prone to errors? Below are some suggested research sites, but these are just a starting point.

SUGGESTED RESEARCH SITES:

ACLU: www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights

IGLHRC: www.iglhrc.org/content/keep-momentum-change-contribute-iglhrc

GLSEN: www.glsen.org

HRC: www.hrc.org/resources/entry/maps-of-state-laws-policies

Lambda Legal: www.www.lambdalegal.org/states-regions

Equaldex: www.equaldex.com/

THEME 2

LGBTQ REPRESENTATIONS IN MEDIA

Today, video content can be found from movie theaters to television to YouTube, and right onto mobile devices. But this wasn't always the case. The concept of "home video," easily watching a film outside of a movie theater and in your own home, wasn't around until the advent of VHS in the 1970s, and this wasn't widespread until the 1980s.

Without this personal access to films from the first 70 years of the 20th century, many LGBTQ people had no way of knowing that there were representations of themselves anywhere on screen, or even knowing that other LGBTQ people existed. Vito Russo, through working at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was able to discover titles with LGBTQ characters, and eventually create the lecture series, book, and subsequent film, *The Celluloid Closet.* But what if Vito had not taken this initiative? What if his boss, Willard Van Dyke, had not encouraged him in this venture?

Since the beginning of film, there have been gatekeepers and tastemakers deciding what narratives made it onto screens, who was represented, and how they were represented. In activities 5, 6, and 7, we will examine how those who create, and have access to, mainstream media affect the perception of LGBTQ people, and other underserved communities.

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Activity 5: Historical Context and Who Controls the Screen

In the film *Vito*, you can see representations of queer characters in films from 1895 through the late 20th century.

OPTION 1:

For this exercise, choose a Vito Russo quote representing different clips of the film, and write a paragraph examining how, if you had been alive during this particular time period, seeing these images might have affected your perception of LGBTQ people.

A. **Life As It Was Lived** 32:56 – 39:16 (Clip A) (beginning of film through 1933)
"In early films, we had a natural exposition of life as it was lived in this country, and that included gay people…
 It's an era that's forgotten, and that was wiped out by the censorship code from 1933-1961."

B. **With His Gay Eye** 39:17 – 40:53 (Clip B) (1934-1961)
"That production code banned any reference to the existence of homosexuality. Not only could you not do something gay in a film or say something gay, but you could not make reference to the fact that such people existed."

C. **Clowns and Villains** 40:54 – 43:32 (Clip C)
"As homosexual characters were introduced into American motion pictures, they emerged as alien creatures, as the monsters. And so, the discovery of a creature in the midst of normal society was a device that was used to portray gay characters, and in fact it's perfectly analogous of a horror movie."

D. **What Became of the Characters** 43:33 – 46:13 (Clip D) (1960s and 1970s)
"There was, in the 1960s and 70s, when the code was dismantled, a sort of cruel edge which emerged. Gay characters became explicitly gay, and they became threatening, and then they had to be punished. And what you find in those films is a fear of homosexuality. It created a kill them or cure them climate."

OPTION 2:

Consider one clip from a major film that appears in any point in the film that stuck with you in some way.
Write a paragraph explaining what message you think that clip may have sent to moviegoers of all/any genders or sexual identities at that time.

While LGBTQ representation is certainly better today than during the 20th Century, are there still gaps? Do all members of the LGBTQ community see themselves reflected onscreen equally? Are there still gatekeepers today who control what does and does not appear in mainstream film and television?

Among Vito Russo's many accomplishments, being a co-founder of GLAAD is certainly one of his most enduring. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD (formerly the acronym for Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialog that leads to cultural change. In honor of Vito Russo, GLAAD has presented the Vito Russo Award since 1992 to leaders in LGBTQ media. In 2013, GLAAD introduced the "Vito Russo Test."

Taking inspiration from the "Bechdel Test", which examines the way female characters are portrayed and situated within a narrative, the "Vito Russo Test" uses set criteria to analyze current portrayals, and to guide filmmakers to create more multidimensional characters, while also providing a barometer for representation on a wide scale. This test represents a standard GLAAD would like to see a greater number of mainstream Hollywood films reach in the future.

To pass the Vito Russo Test, the following must be true:

- The film contains a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender.

- That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity. I.E. they are made up of the same sort of unique character traits commonly used to differentiate straight characters from one another.

- The LGBTQ character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect. Meaning they are not there to simply provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punch line. The character should "matter."

LGBT INCLUSION IN MAJOR STUDIO RELEASES FROM 2013

16.7% / 83.3%

- 17 Releases had LGBT Characters
- 85 Releases Without LGBT Characters

LGBT BREAKDOWN OF RELEASES

64.7% / 23.5% / 17.7% / 11.9%

- Gay Males
- Lesbians
- Bisexuals
- Transgender Female

GENDER OF LGBT CHARACTERS

36% / 64%

- Male
- Female

RACE OF LGBT CHARACTERS

4% / 8% / 12% / 76%

- White
- Black/African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Latino
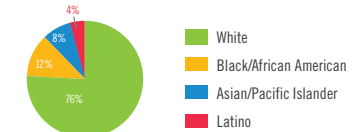
To look more carefully at the details from GLAAD's studies, visit their sites:

GLAAD's 2014 Studio Responsibility Index: www.glaad.org/sri/2014

GLAAD's 2014 Where We Are on TV: www.glaad.org/files/GLAAD-2014-WWAT.pdf
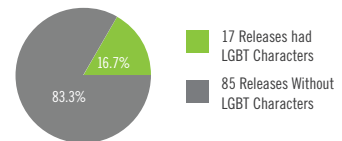
ACTIVITY:

As a group, compile a list of LGBTQ characters from films or television shows. Each student in the group should be responsible for at least one character, and analyze whether or not they think this character would pass The Vito Russo Test.
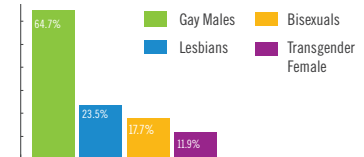
FOR DISCUSSION:

Once you have done this, consider other trends about these characters. What is their race? Are they cisgender? What is their economic class? For instance, according to GLAAD's Studio Responsibility Index analyzing films from 2014, nearly 65% of LGBTQ characters in mainstream films are gay males, 76% are white, and there are no LGBTQ characters in any animated or family-oriented films or documentaries. On television, the landscape appears to be somewhat more diverse, but, when you look at the details, there is also a difference between films on standard channels, cable channels, premium cable channels, and streaming sites such as Amazon and Netflix.
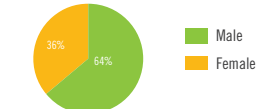
EXPANDING THE ACTIVITY:

According to GLAAD's "Where We Are on TV" (2014), 4% of series regulars are LGBTQ while in the American population, this number is closer to 10%. Are there others who perhaps are not appropriately represented on television or in films? Even when diverse characters do appear on screen, are they represented differently?

WOMEN:

According to a report by MM Lauzen from the Center for the Study of Women in Television, in 2013, women comprised only 15% of protagonists, 29% of major characters, and 30% of speaking characters in films, despite representing 51% of the population. Only 13% of the top 100 films featured equal numbers of major female and male characters.

The Vito Russo Test is derived from The Bechdel Test, created by lesbian graphic artist Alison Bechdel in 1985. In order for a film to pass the Bechdel test, a film must contain a scene in which two or more named female characters have a back-and-forth conversation about anything besides men.

The next time you watch a film, consider whether or not it passes the Bechdel test. Here are some films that it may surprise you to learn do not pass the test: *Toy Story, The Avengers,* and all three original *Star Wars* films.

PEOPLE OF COLOR:

A USC study that examined the 500 top-grossing films released in the U.S. between 2007 and 2012, and found that though Hispanic or Latino people make up 17.1% of the population, they only appear as characters in 4.2% of speaking roles. Similar statistics appear across multiple races and on both television and in films. Once again, consider this discrepancy next time you watch a film.

ACROSS ALL LINES:

Why do you think the numbers are this way? Is it prejudice? Is it habit? Many people argue it's the gatekeepers and tastemakers in film and television. For instance, men account for 84% of all directors in Hollywood, 82% of all film critics. Do you think this is why women are so underrepresented on screen?

Actor and director Chris Rock's seems to think this inequality on screen stems from who makes the decisions in the major film studios. Here is an excerpt from a 2011 interview with Alec Baldwin for his podcast/radio show *Here's the Thing*:

CHRIS ROCK: "Most movies suck, man, really suck. See, I'm, I'm messed up 'cause I like to see somethin' I haven't seen or I haven't seen with a black person. Black people in film is still at its — really at its infant stage. And —"

ALEC BALDWIN: "Why do you think that?"

CHRIS ROCK: "I don't know. You know what, here's the thing. You know, you hand a studio person a script, and sometimes the studio people are good. Ninety-nine percent of the time when you hand somebody a script, they pick a person in the movie that they identify with. So if you hand a woman a script, if the woman's got nine lines in the movie, the first person she gives you notes about is the woman.

And if you hand the boss the script, he's gonna give you notes about the main character. And if you hand his assistant the script, he's gonna give you notes about some other. Everybody figures out who they are in the movie.

Now, when you hand somebody a black script, they don't relate to anybody in it."

FOR DISCUSSION:

Consider what Chris Rock says here. Now think of a character you strongly relate to and identify with in a film, TV show, or book. What is this persons' gender, race, class, age, sexual identity and other details? How might these factors change the way you identify with or relate to that character? How can Hollywood address problems of misrepresentation or underrepresentation of minority characters and storylines?

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Activity 7: Big Media and Big Personalities, Changing Hearts and Minds

In the film *Vito*, there is conversation about successful celebrities at the time, such as Lily Tomlin and Bette Midler, and their roles in the movement for equality. Both those within the LGBTQ community and allies were incredibly important to progress for LGBTQ rights in the past, and today. For instance, one of the most influential people in the fight against AIDS was straight ally, and Academy® Award-winning actress Elizabeth Taylor.

ACTIVITY:

Pick a quote from an LGBTQ community member or ally below, and write a short response to it. If you can think of another quote, reply to that instead.

- **Elizabeth Taylor (AIDS Activist & Academy Award Winning Actress):** "Why shouldn't gay people be able to live as open and freely as everybody else? What it comes down to, ultimately, is love. How can anything bad come out of love? The bad stuff comes out of mistrust, misunderstanding and, God knows, from hate and from ignorance."

- **Laverne Cox (Actress and Activist):** "Many in the trans community are fed up with LGBT organizations that continue to erase trans identity or just give lip service to trans issues. We need our cisgender allies–gay and straight–to treat transgender lives as if they matter, and trans people need multiple seats at the tables in the organizations that say they're interested in LGBT equality; this absence has been painful since Stonewall."

- **Joe Biden (Vice President):** "I am absolutely comfortable with the fact that men marrying men, women marrying women, and heterosexual men and women marrying another are entitled to the same exact rights, all the civil rights, all the civil liberties. And quite frankly, I don't see much of a distinction—beyond that."

- **T-Pain (Rapper, Songwriter, Producer):** "I was at an Akon party, and for some reason everybody was trying to stay away from me because of my assistant, [who is a gay man.] I was sitting next to him, and it seemed like no one wanted to even come around us. It's not the hip or cool thing to do to be OK with [being gay]; you're not allowed to say it. Everybody was working with Frank Ocean before he came out. And now you have people like, 'No Frank Ocean features!' When he came out, it was like, 'Oh, that's not cool. People gonna think I'm gay if I put him on a song with me.' No, they're going to think you got a song with Frank Ocean. That's all."

- **Carrie Underwood (Country Music Singer):** "I'm in favor of acceptance... and I am a Christian person, and I do love the Lord, and I feel no matter who you are, what you believe, how you live your life, it's not my place to judge."

- **Cindy Lauper (Singer, Songwriter, LGBTQ Activist):** "If you are a parent and you have a child who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or just questioning, or whom you think might be, the most important thing you can do is let them know that you love them first and foremost. Do not let fear and long-held beliefs interfere with the most important relationship you will have in your life. Lead with your heart and with the love that you have for your child. Just a little bit of acceptance can make a huge difference, and that little bit will grow over time."

- **Jose Antonio Vargas (Immigration Activist):** "I don't think the LGBT community—that has always fought for inclusion—is as inclusive as it should be. When you're a gay person of color, there are many struggles to deal with. There are many closets to come out of…. Our equalities are tied to each other. So now, I wonder if the LGBT groups are going to start saying to the President, 'Wait, President Obama, don't you also have the executive power to stop deportations of immigrants, many of whom are LGBT, many of whom are transgender, many of whom are being detained and being kept in atrocious situations?'"

- **Britney Griner (Professional Basketball player for Phoenix Mercury):** "Don't worry about what other people are going to say, because they're always going to say something, but, if you're just true to yourself, let that shine through. Don't hide who you really are… I've always been open about who I am and my sexuality. So, it wasn't hard at all. If I can show that I'm out and I'm fine and everything's OK, then hopefully the younger generation will definitely feel the same way."

THEME 3

AIDS, In the 1980s and Today

The AIDS Epidemic of the 1980s was one of the most frightening public health crises of the 20th century. Activity 8 delves into the beginning of the crisis in the 1980s, the stigma that delayed critical medical research, and activist efforts that forced governments across the globe to act. The final portion of this curriculum, Activity 9, focuses on where we are now in the fight against the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis and how lack of access to medication and public stigma continue to be barriers in the eradication of the disease.

"So, if I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from homophobia. If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from racism. If I'm dying from anything, it's from indifference and red tape, because these are the things that are preventing an end to this crisis.... If I'm dying from anything — I'm dying from the fact that not enough rich, white, heterosexual men have gotten AIDS for anybody to give a shit."

— An excerpt from Vito Russo's speech "Why We Fight." Read the entire transcript on ACT UP's website.[1]

1. www.actupny.org/documents/whfight.html

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Activity 8: A Decade of HIV/AIDS

In the film *Vito*, we hear several first-hand accounts of the fear and confusion that occurred in the early years of the AIDS epidemic. There was little knowledge about HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s, and little support from government agencies or even-handed coverage by mainstream media, greatly contributing to widespread fear of the disease. For students and even teachers who were not alive during this era, it can be difficult to contextualize what it was like to live in fear of HIV/AIDS in the early years of the crisis, and to understand how the stigma around gay people affected the progression of the disease.

ACTIVITY:

For Activity 8, we will concentrate on the HIV/AIDS milestones from 1981-1991, highlighted on the timeline (page 29).

PART 1

Select and Research a Milestone

Divide into groups, each person taking on a different milestone on this timeline, and investigate the primary sources associated with this event (some have links, and others will need to be more thoroughly researched). For instance, the first item on the timeline is the July 3, 1981 article on GRID, and there is a link to the full article.

PART 2

Write a paragraph explaining how your research of the primary source of this milestone may help to prove (or disprove) one of the statements made in the film:

> "I remember thinking at one point in the mid-eighties we're all gonna die. That this is not just a disease. This is a catastrophe. That an entire generation of people was gonna get this and die. I mean you say that to people and I don't think that 'til today or even now people realize the impact of that statement, but it is happening."
>
> — Vito Russo

A. The Right People are Not Dying

"People are dying of homophobia. They're dying of Jesse Helms. They're dying of Ronald Reagan. You know they're not dying because we can't find a treatment or a cure to this disease. We're not trying. And we're not trying because the right people are not dying. You know we're not trying because it's only fags and junkies and nobody gives a shit." — Vito Russo

Vito was adamant that stigma and the United States government's lack of concern for minority and at-risk populations (LGBTQ people, people of color, intravenous drug users, sex workers, etc.) was a key component in accelerating the spread of the disease, and a hindrance to finding a treatment or cure.

Does your milestone help to prove or disprove the above statement from the film?

B. The US Government and Pharmaceutical Companies

"By the mid-eighties it became clear to virtually everybody in the gay and AIDS world that the government and the drug companies were not taking the epidemic seriously. There was no serious movement to develop drugs. To get them into people's bodies. To get them tested. To spend the money that was gonna be required to bring the epidemic under control." — Gabriel Rotello

The difference between the early 1980s and late 1980s feels very significant when discussed by the subjects of the film *Vito*, and also on this timeline. Can you see this pattern in the timeline?

Does your milestone help to prove or disprove the above statement from the film?

C. We Have to Start Being Powerful

"This is life or death. We are dying. We are going to have to unite. We are going to have to be angry. We are going to have to be perceived as being a threat. Our votes are going to have to be perceived as taking away elected officials. We have to start being powerful or we are going to die. It is up to us." — Larry Kramer

ACT UP was only one grassroots organization/movement at this time, and it was more aggressive in strategies than many others. Do you think Larry Kramer was right that "we have to start being powerful?"

Does your milestone help to prove or disprove the above statement from the film?

ADDITIONAL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Through the course of your research, did you discover other milestones that should be added to this timeline?

- Ryan White appears on this timeline, but never in the film. Who is he? Why do you think figures like Ryan White, NBA player Magic Johnson, and actress/activist Elizabeth Taylor were groundbreaking AIDS activists? What do these people all have in common?

- The confluence of grassroots activism, celebrity/media coverage, and government intervention seem to be dominant factors affecting change on this timeline. Have these three factors been a necessary part of other civil rights movements of the past? Can you think of movements today that have one of these elements working for change, but would be more effective if all three were working together?

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM

A DECADE OF HIV/AIDS

3 July 1981 — *The New York Times* prints the first story about rare phenomena and skin cancer found in 41 gay men. (www.nytimes.com/1981/07/03/us/rare-cancer-seen-in-41-homosexuals.html)

15 October 1982 — White House Press Secretary Larry Speakes has no comment on AIDS from the Reagan Administration (Transcript: www.channingkennedy.com/post/68730638203/october-15-1982-white-house-press-briefing)

1983 — Larry Kramer's 1,112 and Counting is published (www.bilerico.com/2011/06/larry_kramers_historic_essay_aids_at_30.php)

October 1983 — The World Health Organization holds its first meeting to assess the global AIDS epidemic, and begins worldwide surveillance.

23 April 1984 — The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announces that they have identified HTLV-III as the retrovirus that causes HIV. They expect to develop a vaccine within two years.

1985 — Actress Elizabeth Taylor joins a group of physicians to form the American Foundation for AIDS research (amfAR). (www.c-span.org/video/?c4494551/clip-hivaids-epidemic-america)

1985 — Ryan White is refused entry to his middle school because he contracted HIV from contaminated blood used to treat his hemophilia.

19 December 1985 — *The Los Angeles Times* poll indicates that the majority of Americans "favor the quarantine of AIDS patients, and some would embrace measures as drastic as using tattoos to mark those with the deadly disorder. (www.nytimes.com/1985/12/20/us/poll-indicates-majority-favor-quarantine-for-aids-victims.html)

March 1987 — ACT UP is founded by Russo and other prominent LGBT activists.

19 March 1987 — The Food and Drug Administration approves the first antiretroviral drug, known as AZT, to slow the progression of HIV in infected people. (www.aidsinfo.nih.gov/news/274/approval-of-azt)

June 1987 — San Francisco activist Cleve Jones and friends create the AIDS Memorial Quilt to honor those who died from AIDS.

11 October 1987 — Hundreds of thousands of activists participate in the National March on Washington to demand that President Ronald Regan address the AIDS crisis.

1988 — U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop authors "Understanding AIDS", and sends the eight-page brochure to 107 million households in the United States. (www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2013/02/26/c_everett_koop_understanding_aids_former_surgeon_general_became_a_hero_to.html)

9 May 1988 — Russo delivers famous speech "Why We Fight" at an ACT UP demonstration in Albany, NY. (www.actupny.org/documents/whfight.html)

11 October 1988 — ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) protests at FDA headquarters about the slow drug-approval process. The FDA announces new regulations to speed up drug approvals eight days after the protest. (www.actupny.org/documents/FDAhandbook1.html)

1 December 1988 — The World Health Organization declares December 1st as World AIDS Day.

18 August 1990 — President George H.W. Bush signs the Ryan White Care Act, a federally funded program for people living with AIDS. (www.hab.hrsa.gov/abouthab/careactcompilation.html)

7 November 1991 — Professional NBA player Magic Johnson holds press conference to announce that he is HIV-positive and will retire from the NBA.

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Activity 9: Where are We Today with HIV/AIDS?

HIV/AIDS CRISIS TODAY

Thanks to the work of activists in the 1980s and 1990s, treatment options are now available for those living with HIV. Additionally, it is now expected for U.S. presidents and other public officials to openly discuss HIV/AIDS, and to lobby for legislation related to minimizing the spread of the disease. It is expected that each President, and their administration, address the epidemic in some manner.

While AIDS is no longer a taboo topic in the world of politics, it can still be a taboo topic among everyday people. The disease continues to spread due to lack of education, lack of resources, and the idea that the AIDS crisis was a problem "back in the day" and is no longer a big deal. In the 2011 short documentary *My Experience*, LGBTQ activist and video blogger KenLikeBarbie discusses what it was like to be diagnosed with HIV, and what it is like to live as an openly HIV-positive person. He remarks on how he knew little about HIV/AIDS before he learned about his status.[1]

Like Ken, many young people are unaware about their status, or believe that they aren't at risk for contracting HIV. In 2010, the Center for Disease control published a report on HIV infection rates among young people aged 13-24, showing that young people are indeed vulnerable to becoming infected with HIV.

1.   www.youtube.com/watch?v=WW9ROfwpdx8

Below are key findings of the study. For the full report, visit the CDC's website.[2] You can also visit Planned Parenthood to learn more about HIV and to get information about HIV testing in your area.[3]

- Almost 60% of youth with HIV in the United States do not know they are infected.

- In 2010, youth made up 17% of the US population, but accounted for an estimated 26% (12,200) of all new HIV infections (47,500) in the United States.

- In 2010, young gay and bisexual men accounted for an estimated 19% (8,800) of all new HIV infections in the United States and 72% of new HIV infections among youth. These young men were the only age group that showed a significant increase in estimated new infections — 22% from 2008 (7,200) through 2010 (8,800).

- In 2010, black youth accounted for an estimated 57% (7,000) of all new HIV infections among youth in the United States, followed by Hispanic/Latino (20%, 2,390) and white (20%, 2,380) youth.

2.   www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/age/youth/index.html?s_cid=tw_std0141316
3.   www.plannedparenthood.org/health-info/stds-hiv-safer-sex/hiv-aids

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide your city or state into sections. (You may choose to divide cities by neighborhood, and your state by county.) In small groups of 2-3 students, create a list local HIV/AIDS awareness organizations in that area. Research the services provided by each organization and present the findings to your class. If you do not have local HIV/AIDS organizations in your city or state, research organizations that are online.

2. Medication is now available to slow the progression of HIV in people who test positive for the virus. However, not everyone has access to these life-saving medications. What are potential barriers that make it difficult or impossible to access HIV medication? What is being done to make medication more accessible for those who need it?

3. Infections rates are increasing among young people, and young black people account for well over half of new HIV infections among youth. What factors do you think may contribute to a disparity in infection rates among various groups of people?
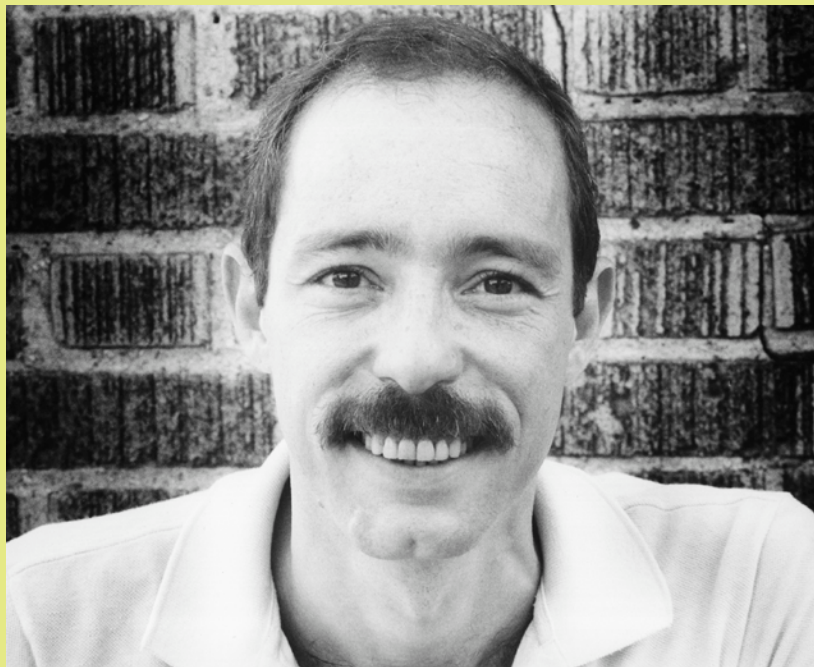
VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Action Guide Overview

While curriculum is designed for use in classrooms and other educational settings,
our Action Guide provides activities and suggestions on how to take what you have learned from
Visibility Through Activism: The Legacy of Vito Russo and apply it to the world at large.

Actions

A. Politics You Can Dance To

B. Make Your Own *Our Time*

C. Host Your Own Film Festival

D. Make An Impact!

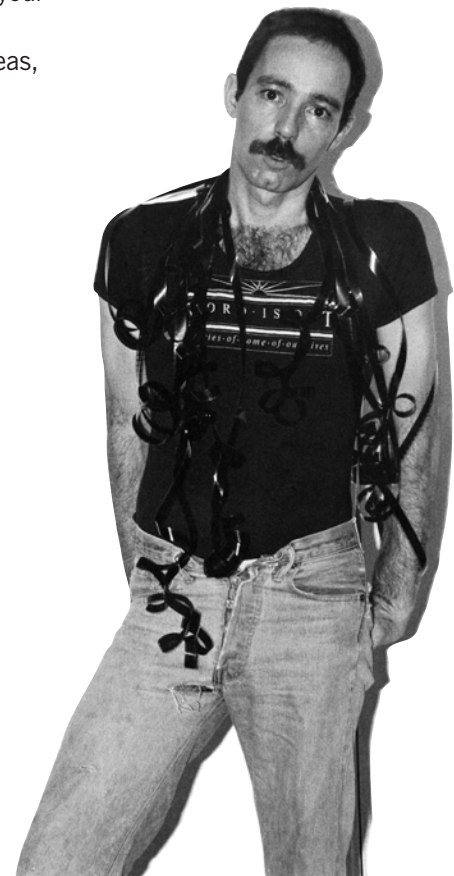# VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
A. Politics You Can Dance To

"Vito's idea was there were thousands and thousands of gay people in New York City who would never go to a ZAP, who would never come to a meeting, but who very much wanted to dance with other gay people." — Michael Schiavi, Author, *Celluloid Activist*

"When we got the GAA Firehouse, we had dances every weekend. That's the essence of gay liberation is politics you can dance to."
— David Ehrenstein, Member, Gay Activists Alliance

Vito believed that grassroots activism was integral to the success of gay liberation, but he also recognized that hosting social activities for LGBTQ people was just as important as organizing rallies and protests. Vito and fellow GAA members organized dance parties and movie nights to provide queer activists with social outlets that were either scarce or nonexistent.

What does activism look like for you? Does your activism include both political and social events? Do you protest injustices by marching in the streets of your community like those who joined the 1963 March on Washington or the nationwide 2014 Millions March? Do you write about your frustrations, ideas, and hopes on social media websites using hashtags like #ShutItDown, #BlackTransLivesMatter, and #HowMediaWritesWOC? Do you organize social gatherings like queer prom so that you and your friends can dance and socialize in an affirming space?

Discuss the ways you and your peers approach activism, and how social events can help strengthen your activism efforts. Consider looking to other organizations such as witness.org for ideas on how to expand your activism efforts.

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
B. Make Your Own *Our Time* – p.1

In 1983, Vito Russo co-hosted and produced *Our Time*, a television series focused on the LGBTQ community in New York City. *Our Time* was the first television news show dedicated to the discussion of LGBTQ issues. This show was broadcast on public television station WNYC for thirteen weeks, addressing important issues like race, gay history, drag, substance abuse, and the AIDS crisis. On-air guests included LGBTQ icons such as Rita May Brown, Larry Kramer, Cherríe Moraga, Harry Hay, and Lily Tomlin.

Our Time was both a groundbreaking television show and a vital source of news for LGBTQ people in New York City in 1983. Today, there are LGBTQ radio programs like *This Way Out,* podcasts, YouTube channels, and other specific queer programs.

What do you think *Our Time* would look like if it was on-air today? Would Vito and fellow host Marcia Pally tackle the same issues? Would they use the same language when discussing topics like the AIDS crisis, racism, and feminism? What topics might they cover that they did not cover in the 1983? Who would be featured as an on-air guest?

In "Episode 4 – AIDS", Vito and Marcia have frank discussions with guests about government inaction during the AIDS crisis, and why the LGBTQ community needs to get angry about AIDS.[1] Vito and Marcia explore the ways that racism pervades the LGBTQ community by asking people of color and white people to discuss racism within the LGBTQ community in "Episode 11 – Racism."[2]

Using these episodes as a guide, create an updated version of *Our Time.* Perhaps you would like to create an updated episode that discusses what it is like to live with HIV/AIDS in 2015. Maybe you want to discuss the ways that LGBTQ people experience and combat racism today. Or maybe you want to explore a topic not covered by Vito and Marcia.

1. **Episode 4–AIDS www.youtube.com/watch?v=_O5Vwyj4OOg&list=UU9g7meodjGq_x0x5Xd7qoNw&index=12**
2. **Episode 11–Racism www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnsgzxHlMiM&index=6&list=UU9g7meodjGq_x0x5Xd7qoNw**

TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN *OUR TIME*

Script Writing/Planning

Watch "Episode 4–AIDS" or "Episode 11–Racism" on YouTube in your GSA meeting. Ask everyone to take notes about the way Vito and Marcia conduct interviews, the way the episode is structured, the topics covered in this episode, etc.

Once you have picked a topic for *Our Time 2015*, decide on roles for everyone involved. You'll need scriptwriters, show hosts, a videographer, etc.

Consider whether you want a full script, or if you would prefer to have a rough outline of topics and see where the conversation takes you.

Shooting

Shooting your own episode of *Our Time 2015* is easy! You only have a few requirements. You'll need a camera, some participants, and a well-lit set. For *Our Time*, the set was as simple as a couch, a table and some plants.

You may be able to check out a camera at your local library, use a school computer with a built in camera, or use a mobile phone to record your show.

If you do not have access to recording devices, or you do not want to record your episode, consider performing *Our Time 2015* for a live audience.

Lighting

Getting good light for your set is really important to having a professional looking video. Light is like paint for a canvas. It can direct your eye to where it should be, and add depth to your shots. On movie sets, filmmakers will typically use bright, stand-alone lights that can be directed at the actors, along with lights on the side to get rid of the shadows created by the front lights. If you don't have access to film production lights, try taking the shade off of a lamp and place it out of shot to brighten the entire room, or even use a desk or work light to point at the actors' faces. The more light you can use, the better.

Sound

Capturing good sound from your actors is very important to creating a show that looks and feels professional. The discussion your actors are having is the most important part of your show, and you'll want that to be as clear as possible.

There are many ways to capture quality sound. Lavaliere microphones can be put onto a person's lapel or shirt and sit right under their mouth, so that it gets good sound. There are other microphones, like directional microphones (referred to as "shotgun mics"), table microphones, or a camera's microphone, if it's close enough to get a strong signal.

A mobile phone's microphone could be placed on the table to record the audio from the actors' conversation, and that audio can be placed in the video using video editing software after you are finished shooting.

Title Cards

The term "title card" basically refers to any words that come up on screen in between shots with people. Title cards are necessary for introducing your film, showing credits for those who made the film, and can also be helpful for introducing clips of the films your actors will be discussing during the show.

A basic title card draft is included on the DVD of *Visibility Through Activism: The Legacy of Vito Russo*, but you can also make your own. You can use software like Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Paint, or GIMP to create and edit title cards for your show. Or, you can create title cards by hand with pen, markers, and paper, then take pictures of them and place them into the video with your editing software.

Editing

In essence, editing a video is just getting rid of the bad parts like when the director says "Action!" and "Cut!" or when actors make mistakes. A show is produced when you take all your best clips and place them in an order over time to tell a story.

There is software available for your computer, like Adobe Premiere, Apple Final Cut Pro, Sony Vegas, Windows Movie Maker, and free downloadable software like Lightworks. There are also online video editors like Magisto or Loopster.

Post Online

Once you've finished editing your video, it's time to put it online and share it! The most well known video sharing sites are YouTube and Vimeo. Video files tend to be pretty big, so the first thing to do is compress the video so that it's smaller. Video editors will give options to export your movie using H.264 or Windows Media codecs that will make your video small enough to upload.

Once it's done exporting, it's time to upload! You can fill out additional information, like the name of your show, a description of the film including your cast and crew, and tags for keywords or topics your show is about. This will help people find your show once it's done.

After your show is uploaded and processed, it's time to share it with your friends, family, and on social media. Be sure to email us at **youthinmotion@frameline.org** and let us know about your new episode of *Our Time*!

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
C. Host Your Own Film Festival

HOW TO HOST A SCREENING

In the film *Vito*, numerous interviewees remark on the collective, communal experience of watching an LGBTQ film with your peers. Once you have watched *Vito* with your GSA, think about screening this film, or another, in a larger setting, and the impact that this kind of experience can have both in community and out of community.

Here's a checklist of things you'll want to consider when planning a film screening or event:

☑ Goals

What do you want your screening to achieve? Who is your target audience? Do you want to influence students, teachers, or parents? Do you want to have a social event to bring in new members to your group?

☑ Film Selection

The film in this collection, *Vito*, is an educational copy, with public performance rights included, allowing you to host as many admission-free screenings of the film, or any other Youth in Motion films, that you would like for the life of the DVD.

However, films appearing on Netflix, iTunes, or even standard DVDs don't generally come with these rights included. Be sure to consider this as you move ahead with a screening. You can track down public performance rights to most films by looking up the rights holder information for the film on www.imdb.com.

☑ Where & When

Decide where and when to hold a screening, based on your goals. Some ideas include:
- GSA meetings
- LGBTQ centers or other community/youth centers
- Classrooms or school assemblies
- Lunchtime/after-school event
- Churches, synagogues, and temples
- Conferences

Remember to plan ahead so you can be sure to reserve a venue or get on the agenda for an event!

☑ Equipment

How are you going to show the film? Does the venue come with a television or projector, DVD player, and speakers? You may want to test the equipment a day before the event to make sure it works.

☑ Co-sponsors

Ask other school clubs or local organizations to co-sponsor the event. This can help build community and allies, expose people to new resources, and will increase the likelihood of a good turnout. Ideas for co-sponsors include:

- identity-based student groups at your school, such as Black Student Unions, Chicano/Latino or Asian-American organizations, etc.
- local LGBTQ organizations or community centers
- film clubs

☑ Talk-Back

How can you engage the audience to increase the impact of the film? Consider inviting guest speakers for a post-screening panel. Or select GSA members to lead a discussion afterwards in small groups.

☑ Advertise

Market the event, using whatever works best at your school (flyers, email, PA announcements, social media).

☑ Refreshments

Providing popcorn or other refreshments is a good way to help turn out an audience!

WHAT IF OUR EVENT ELICITS ORGANIZED OPPOSITION?

It's important to be prepared both emotionally and strategically for this possibility. Talk about this as a group as you plan a screening. If you are screening the film on school property, be sure to follow all guidelines set out by your school district for screening movies.

Make sure that you all have a plan in place in the event your GSA runs into problems with your school or your community. There have been instances in communities across the country where screenings of movies discussing LGBTQ topics have been picketed or protested.

Do not be afraid to use the media to raise further awareness if the movie screening does elicit anti-LGBTQ responses. Contact your school paper or radio station, or your community media outlets and ask them to cover the controversy. Media coverage can help raise awareness about the film, about the subject, and about the harmful effects of anti-LGBTQ bias.

Contact GSA Network (www.gsanetwork.org) to get sample press releases, media tips and further support.

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
D. Make an Impact!

What can you do to change how you learn, what you learn, and how your school and non-school environment shapes the way you view LGBTQ history and rights? Here are some ideas on how to make your GSA more inclusive.

1. Screen clips of *Vito* at a faculty meeting and encourage teachers to consider how they can make their classrooms safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQ students.

2. Does your GSA have a lot to learn when it comes to HIV/AIDS awareness? Host a panel discussion with speakers from local HIV/AIDS organization, or see if they will participate remotely through Skype or Google Hangout if you don't have local organizations.

3. Ensure that teachers incorporate queer and trans inclusive sex education in their classrooms. Talk to teachers about HIV/AIDS history and how HIV affects young people today, and discuss how they can incorporate this important information into their curriculum.

4. Using hashtags, start your own social media campaign aimed at highlighting the way LGBTQ people are represented in popular media.

5. Review your GSA's name and mission[1] to determine if you are inclusive of transgender and gender nonconforming students. Edit your club's statement, constitution, bylaws, and other documents to include gender non-specific language. When you do an icebreaker or introduce new members, ask everyone whether they use pronouns to refer to themselves and to share their preferred gender pronoun–"he," "she," or "ze" (a gender neutral pronoun).[2]

6. Make your school a safe space for transgender and gender nonconforming students by implementing GLSEN's GSA Actions to Expand Awareness of Transgender Issues.[3] You can also launch a GSA Network campaign at your school. GSA Network provides step-by-step guidelines to help students create their own campaigns such as "Beyond the Binary" and "Take It Back: Anti-Slur Campaign." Visit GSA Network's website for helpful tips on how to launch a campaign.

7. Become a better ally to those you are not in community with. For tips on how to be a better ally visit GLSEN[4], GLAAD[5], Everyday Feminism[6] and The Root[7].

8. Approach your administration about conducting an anti-bias training for faculty and staff on transgender issues and provide practical steps they can take to support transgender and gender nonconforming students.

9. Create your own Anti-Slur Policy. Using GLSEN's model policies[8] as your guide, collaborate with fellow students to draft a policy that addresses the issues specific to your school. Share your policy with teachers, school administrators and your peers to help foster a safe and affirming school community.

10. Host or attend a LGBTQ prom or throw a drag ball event at your school or community center.

1. www.glsen.org/gsa/missionstatement
2. www.glsen.org/GSA/making-your-club-inclusive-transgender-and-gnc-students
3. www.glsen.org/gsa/gsa-actions-expand-awareness-transgender-issues
4. www.glsen.org/allyweek/betterallies
5. www.www.glaad.org/resources/ally
6. www.everydayfeminism.com/2013/11/things-allies-need-to-know/ and www.everydayfeminism.com/2013/10/avoid-everyday-ableism/
7. www.www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/08/ferguson_how_white_people_can_be_allies.html
8. www.glsen.org/learn/policy/model-laws-policies

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Resources

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Center for Media Literacy
Provides a wide selection of teaching tools, carefully evaluated for their quality and importance to the field. **www.medialit.org**

Gender Spectrum Education & Training
Seattle-based organization that provides education, resources, and training to help create a more gender-sensitive and supportive environment for all people, including gender variant and transgender youth.**www.genderspectrum.org**

GLSEN Educator Resources
GLSEN provides educators with lesson plans, LGBT-inclusive curriculum, and guides to help K-12 teachers create inclusive learning environments. **www.glsen.org/educate/resources**

GSA Advisor Handbook
A comprehensive guide to aid GSA advisors in creating strategies to empower youth leaders. **www.gsanetwork.org/advisor-handbook**

Hayward Unified School District Safe and Inclusive Schools Program (HUSD)
A collection of lesson plans for educators in elementary, middle and high schools working to create inclusive and affirming environments for their students. **www.husd.k12.ca.us/SISBP1**

Safe Schools Coalition
An international public-private partnership in support of LGBTQ youth that is working to help schools become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn. **www.safeschoolscoalition.org**

San Francisco Unified School District LGBTQ Support Services (SFUSD)
Tools, tips and resources provided by SFUSD to support educators in approaching LGBTQ topics in educational settings. **www.healthiersf.org/lgbtq**

Web English Teacher Media Literacy
An online clearinghouse of lesson plans and activity ideas to develop media literacy. **www.webenglishteacher.com/media.html**

Welcoming Schools
A project of the Human Rights Campaign aimed at school administrators, educators and parents working together to create welcome and respectful environments for students at school and at home. Use the Welcoming Schools Starter Kit, a comprehensive professional training guide for educators. **www.welcomingschools.org**

Additional Support from GLSEN and GSA Network

Aside from the national office, GLSEN has 40 Chapters in 28 states to support local youth and educators. Find a local GLSEN chapter in your area.[1]

GSA Network staff members are also available to work with student activists and teachers who face harassment, intimidation, or other opposition to an LGBTQ- inclusive curriculum or the work of GSA clubs.

Contact your **Regional Program Coordinator**[2] for additional information and support.

1. **www.glsen.org/chapters**
2. **www.gsanetwork.org/ about-us/staff**

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
Resources

NATIONAL RESOURCES

AIDS.gov: Information from the Federal government about HIV/AIDS prevention, testing, treatment, research, and using new media in response to HIV/AIDS. **www.aids.gov**

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): Works in the courts, legislatures, and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in the United States by the Constitution. **www.aclu.org**

amfAR: founded in 1985, amfAR is dedicated to ending the global AIDS epidemic through innovative research. **www.amfar.org**

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE): COLAGE is a national movement of children, youth, and adults with one or more LGBTQ parents. **www.colage.org**

GLAAD: Dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate, and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. **www.glaad.org**

Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN): The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. **www.glsen.org**

Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA): Gay-Straight Alliance Network is a national youth leadership organization that connects school-based Gay-Straight Alliances to each other and community resources through peer support, leadership development and training. **www.gsanetwork.org**

Gay Straight Alliances: Creating Safer Schools for LGBT Students and Their Allies: This report examines GLSEN's current research on GSAs and highlights major findings regarding school safety, access to education, academic achievement for LGBT students, and student access to GSAs in school. **www.glsen.org/learn/reasearch/national/gsa-brief**

Gender Education and Advocacy: Archived website with extensive articles and links. GEA is a national organization focused on the needs, issues and concerns of gender variant people in human society. **www.gender.org**

GLBTQ: An online encyclopedia of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer culture. **www.glbtq.com**

Implementing Lessons That Matter: GSA Network's document examines the effectiveness of inclusive LGBTQ curriculum, and is useful for building a coalition with administrators, parents, teachers, and students. **www.gsanetwork.org/news/new-research-reveals- paths-implementing-lgbtq-inclusive-lessons/010913**

Lambda Legal: Oldest national organization pursuing high-impact litigation, education, and advocacy on behalf of LGBTQ people and people with HIV. **www.lambdalegal.org**

National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR): A non-profit, public interest law firm that litigates precedent- setting cases, advocates for equitable public policies affecting the LGBTQ community, provides free legal assistance, and conducts community education. **www.nclrights.org**

National Center for Transgender Equality: Dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people through advocacy, collaboration, and empowerment. **www.nctequality.org**

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): A national chapter-based organization of family members and friends of LGBTQ people. **www.pflag.org**

Planned Parenthood: Planned Parenthood is dedicated to improving the sexual health and well being of individuals and families everywhere through providing high-quality, affordable healthcare and comprehensive sex education. **www.plannedparenthood.org**

Sylvia Rivera Law Project: Founded on the understanding that gender self-determination is inextricably intertwined with racial, social and economic justice, SRLP works to improve access to respectful and affirming social, health, and legal services for transgender communities. **www.slrp.org**

Trans Lifeline: TransLifeline is a non-profit dedicated to the well being of transgender people. This is a free helpline run by transgender and gender non-conforming volunteers. **www.translifeline.org**

TransActive: An internationally recognized nonprofit that provides services particular to the needs of transgender and gender nonconforming youth, their families and allies. **www.transactiveonline.org**

Transgender Law Center: California's first statewide transgender legal organization, specializing in individualized legal information, transgender rights and advocacy materials, and transformative public- policy work. **www.transgenderlawcenter.org**

The Trevor Project: If you or someone you know is a victim of bullying, reach out to The Trevor Project, a 24-hour national help-line for gay and questioning teens. **www.thetrevorproject.org**

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
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This Youth In Motion Curriculum Guide and Action Guide was developed by Patrick Hurley and Steven Kahl and edited by Frameline staff.

About Youth In Motion

Since 2008, Youth In Motion has provided free LGBTQ themed movies, with accompanying curricula and action guides, to student clubs and educators in middle and high schools. Thousands of students in more than 700 schools across the nation have received films over the past six years. *Visibility Through Activism: The Legacy of Vito Russo* is the second national collection to be sent across the United States. Youth In Motion gives student activists and teachers interactive tools to educate their peers about LGBTQ history and culture (and have fun doing it!) We believe that an inclusive curriculum is one step to creating truly safe and welcoming schools.

About Frameline

Founded in 1979, Frameline's mission is to change the world through the power of queer cinema. Frameline is the nation's only nonprofit organization solely dedicated to the distribution, promotion, funding and exhibition of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender media arts. Inherent in all of Frameline's work is the belief that diverse representations of LGBTQ life can challenge preconceived ideas and stereotypes of our community and in the process educate audiences and build awareness of human rights.

VISIBILITY THROUGH ACTIVISM
The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

Forty-five states have adopted the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. Many of the activities in the Youth in Motion units allow for students to develop "the capacities of the literate individual" as described by the authors of the CCSS. The chart below describes which activities in the curriculum allow for students to practice these skills and shift in mindset.

Students who are college and career ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language can exhibit the following:

COMMON CORE CAPACITY	They demonstrate independence	They build strong content knowledge	They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline	They comprehend as well as critique	They value evidence	They used technology and digital media strategically and capably	They come to understand other perspectives and cultures
Activity 1: Valuing Who You Are	•	•	•	•	•		•
Activity 2: History of Intolerance of LGBTQ People in the U.S.	•	•		•	•		•
Activity 3: LGBTQ Activism in the 20th and 21st Century	•	•			•	•	•
Activity 4: National and International Vestiges of Oppression	•	•		•	•	•	•
Activity 5: Historical Context and Who Controls the Screen	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Activity 6: GLAAD's Vito Russo Test and Beyond	•		•	•	•		•
Activity 7: Big Media and Big Personalities, Changing Hearts and Minds	•		•	•	•		•
Activity 8: A Decade of HIV/AIDS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Activity 9: Where Are We Today with HIV/AIDS?	•	•	•		•		•
Action A: Politics You Can Dance To	•		•				
Action B: Make Your Own Our Time	•		•				•
Action C: Host Your Own Film Festival	•		•			•	•
Action D: Make an Impact	•	•	•	•	•	•	•