

BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION GUIDE:

ALABAMA BOUND

We Dare Defend Our Rights



A LIVING IN LIMBO, INC. PRODUCTION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BIRMINGHAM AIDS OUTREACH (BAO)
CONCEPTOR ERIC KUHN EDITOR EILEEN MEYER AND JOE FENSTERMAKER CINEMATOGRAPHER CHRIS HILLEKE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ANN HUCKSTEP AND CAROL MISNER EXECUTIVE PRODUCER LAUREN JACOBS PRODUCED BY LARA EMBRY AND CAROLYN SHERER
PRODUCED BY MICHELE FORMAN AND EILEEN MEYER DIRECTED BY LARA EMBRY AND CAROLYN SHERER

www.alabamaboundfilm.com

*This guide may be used to facilitate group discussion by highlighting the topics that were covered in the film, **Alabama Bound**. The suggested questions in the guide encourage participants to explore these topics in depth, to reflect on their own feelings and experiences, and to explore what can be done to help ensure equality for all.*

About *Alabama Bound*



Alabama Bound explores the legal roller-coaster ride of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) family rights in the South over the last decade. The film offers an intimate view into the lives of three lesbian families in Alabama as they set precedents and fight the courts for their children during the time that federal marriage equality comes to a head. This is the story of a community living with both frustration and hope in a conservative state, where the line between church and state is often blurred.

About *Alabama Bound...*

Cari and Kim fell in love, decided to make a life together, and have a family in Mobile, Alabama. Eleven years ago, Kim gave birth to their son Khaya, who was born with a hole in his heart that required open-heart



surgery. When the medical staff at the hospital refused to train Cari in how to care for their son because they did not recognize her as a parent, she knew she had to fight to protect her family.



Kinley married her male childhood best friend when she was quite young. They had a child together before she came out as a lesbian. She could not afford legal representation in her divorce, and lost custody of her son to her ex-husband and his new wife. When Kinley's son called her in tears after having been beaten by his stepmother, Kinley was compelled to try to regain custody. After taking her son to the emergency room, Kinley was granted temporary custody by child services. She and her wife soon found their marriage on trial in a lengthy custody fight in family court where Kinley lamented, "The judges here prefer to give a child back to an abusive parent or step-parent instead of a lesbian."

About *Alabama Bound...*



The first openly gay Alabama State Legislator, Patricia Todd, is a champion for non-discrimination laws that protect LGBTQ citizens from losing their jobs because of their sexual orientation. Patricia originally ran for election after

testifying at a committee meeting about same-sex marriage in the Alabama State Capitol in 2005. She felt that nothing would change until an LGBTQ representative sat at the table with the decision-makers in the state.

Even though same-sex marriage became legal in all states in 2015, Alabama's LGBTQ families remain in jeopardy. Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore led the charge to reject the federal rulings recognizing same-sex equality. Judge Moore ordered probate judges, who reported to him, to stop issuing marriage licenses rather than grant them to same sex couples. Lawmakers continue to introduce bills that would authorize discrimination in marriage licensing and adoption.

Alabama is one of 27 states across the country where there are no legal protections for LGBTQ citizens from losing their job, housing, or access to public accommodations. Many devoted allies don't know that Alabama lacks a single LGBTQ anti-discrimination ordinance or law. On May 3, 2017, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey signed a bill into law making it legal for private adoption agencies to follow faith-based policies—such as not placing children with gay couples. While much of the nation has moved toward LGBTQ equality, many states have become bound in conflict, and families that call these states home have suffered.

Interview with Michele Forman, *Alabama Bound* Producer



When Carolyn Sherer told me about the interest in developing a film on lesbian families in Alabama, I thought the time was right. The U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that the federal government would recognize same-sex marriages in the 2013 opinion striking down the Defense of Marriage Act, but left the states to decide for themselves. I knew that was going to leave these families vulnerable in Alabama.

Based on my experience working in documentary film focusing on civil rights and justice-related issues, I wanted to help these two first-time directors make a film about their community.

Interview with Carolyn Sherer, *Alabama Bound* Co-Producer & Co-Director



I made this film because I wanted to be sure the story was told from an authentic insider viewpoint. We decided to focus on the legal ups and downs of lesbian families in Alabama. Lara Embry was passionate about following families that, like hers, faced legal battles for parental rights. And although our state adoption laws require parents to be married, Judge Roy Moore actively blocked

recognition of the federal mandate to recognize same-sex marriage. We worked together to create *Alabama Bound* in a conservative state where religion has been used to legislate morality, and some politicians stir up prejudice in others to create divisiveness.

When I started this film, my goal was for America to understand that

conservative states needed Federal protection to secure minority human rights. Now, I think these stories illustrate what could happen to Americans everywhere when the lines between church and state are unclear. We refer to this new concern as the potential *Alabamafication of America*, and it does keep me awake at night.

Interview with Lara Embry, Alabama Bound Co-Producer & Co-Director



As we proceeded to film and interview other families, we encountered several women who were fighting relentlessly, yet compassionately, for the rights they could see being assumed by families much like theirs in other parts of the country. These women would not let their families be left behind, nor would they abandon the communities they called home. As we filmed, we found ourselves in the midst of a legislative battle and a federal marriage case. We saw our elected officials come out against our families, and most profoundly, we saw our families stand up for themselves and their loved ones. And in doing so, they changed Alabama.

Additional Production Team Members



Eileen Meyer, *Alabama Bound* Producer and Editor.

When I met the *Alabama Bound* team, I was overjoyed at the prospect of these southern queer women telling their own stories. All too often, we are working with an outsider's perspective in media and entertainment, especially when it comes to the south. As a queer southerner myself, I felt a deep personal connection to these stories and the

timing could not have been more relevant. I was honored to get the chance to help bring these issues to a wider audience. As Patricia Todd says, "We still got a lot of work to do."



Lauren Jacobs, *Alabama Bound* Associate Producer.

In 2013, I had just graduated from the University of Alabama with my film degree and returned home to Birmingham with a desire to work in film and work with my southern queer community. But I had zero plans for how those desires might overlap. I feel so lucky to have met the incredible team involved in the creation of this project when I did. It meant the world to me to work

with our crew and families to tell LGBTQ southern stories as an LGBTQ southerner to ensure the film truly reflected our community's image through our own insider lens.

Suggested Discussion Questions After Viewing *Alabama Bound*

(Please select questions below based on your group's knowledge and special interests, as well as time available for discussion.)

1. What prompted you to see this documentary? What did you hope to learn? What did you learn?
2. Was there anything that you saw or learned in the film that was surprising?
3. Was there anything in the film that you didn't understand?
4. What motivated the families in this film to advocate for legalization of same-sex marriage?
5. How would you describe Judge Roy Moore's views on same-sex marriage? How did his views affect the rights and well-being of the parents and children shown in *Alabama Bound*?
6. How did you feel when the parents in the film learned that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage was now legal in our country? How did this affect the families shown in the film?

In Alabama, there are not statewide protections for our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) friends, families, and peers. Many still struggle to keep jobs, maintain child custody, and get acceptance from families of origin because of their sexual or gender orientation.

7. Did your own ideas about same-sex marriage or opinions of persons who are LGBTQ change after viewing *Alabama Bound*?
8. Are you satisfied with the current laws on same sex-marriage in our country? Are you satisfied with the current laws in your own state protecting the rights of LGBTQ citizens? What would you like to see changed?
9. What can you do to help ensure equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning persons in your own community, school, work place, or place of worship?
10. Would you recommend this film to others? Who else do you think should see it?

Links

Alabama Bound: <https://www.alabamaboundfilm.com/>

Alabama Bound Press Kit: <https://www.alabamaboundfilm.com/press/>

Alabama Bound on PBS Reel South: <https://www.pbs.org/video/alabama-bound-i2mkqc>

GLAAD Media Reference Guide: <https://www.glaad.org/reference>