

# A GAY VIDEO FOR SCHOOLKIDS

by Robert H. Knight

**R**EAD THE RAVES! "Essential viewing . . . I can't recommend it highly enough," gushes Carolyn B. Sheldon, president of the American School Counselor Association. The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Caucus of the New Jersey Education Association dubs it "compelling . . . incredibly inspiring . . . creative."

Is it *Schindler's List*? *Shine*? No, the work in question is *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School*, a video produced by Helen Cohen and Debra Chasnoff. A co-founder of the magazine *OUT/LOOK*, the forerunner of *Out* and other glossy homosexual publications, Chasnoff won an Academy Award in 1992 for the documentary short *Deadly Deception: General Electric, Nuclear Weapons and Our Environment*. She also made a 1984 film called *Choosing Children*, which promotes the raising of children by lesbians. That theme is repeated in *It's Elementary*: On Mother's Day, youngsters in one class are introduced to a pupil's two lesbian moms. There is no mention of the missing father.

*It's Elementary's* main cheerleader is openly lesbian California assemblywoman Sheila J. Kuehl, who arranged the showing in Sacramento and says she wants the video shown in all 50 states. Kuehl previously was known for playing the tomboy Zelda Gilroy in the 1950s sitcom *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*.

Set in six elementary and middle schools in San Francisco, New York City, Madison, Wis., and Cambridge, Mass., *It's Elementary* shows teachers and chil-

dren discussing homosexuality and prejudice. There is no discussion of homosexual sex acts. In one scene, a fifth grader explains how the Nazis used pink triangles to distinguish homosexuals to put them in concentration camps. Another fifth grader remarks, "Some Christians believe that if you're gay, you'll go to hell, so they want to torture them and stuff like that." Biblical admonitions about homosexuality are either ignored or misconstrued. The only reasonable view presented is total acceptance of homosexuality, with any resistance portrayed as bigotry.

One student explains matter-of-factly that homosexuality "is in your genes." Children learn that a lack of acceptance of homosexuality is just like racial or ethnic prejudice. At one point, an eighth-grade girl disparages the notion that young children should be spared lectures on homosexuality. "If kids are too young to be taught about homosexuality, then they are too young to be taught about heterosexuality," she declares. If children are reading *Cinderella*, she says, then they should also read stories about a "prince and a prince, or a princess and a princess." A first-grade teacher at Hawthorne Elementary School in Madison says, "If parents

are allowed to have their children opt out of gay and lesbian units, what will happen when we teach about Dutch culture or African-American history? It scares me."

In a San Francisco eighth-grade class, a man and a woman from Community United Against Violence (CUAV), a homosexual activist group, talk to students about their lives. They assure the students that "we are not here to recruit you at all," although the man later

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says that they have been brought in "to be a role model for gay students."

In the CUAV training manual, speakers are told that when asked the question, "How prevalent is homosexuality?," they should answer that Alfred Kinsey "estimated that about 13 percent of the male population and 7 percent of the female population are exclusively gay or lesbian. This does not include the 35-50 percent of the population that have had a homosexual experience at least once in their lives." Kinsey, whose studies have been largely discredited, actually estimated that 4 percent of the male population was exclusively homosexual, with lesbianism at less than half that level. More scientifically sound surveys estimate homosexuality at less than 2 percent for men and less than 1 percent for women.

*It's Elementary* is the latest tool in a fast-growing campaign. A homosexual teachers group, Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network (GLSTN), has produced its own video, *Teaching Respect for All*, as part of its second annual "back to school" campaign. The 50-minute video is based on the staff training program

of Education under Republican governor William Weld.

The American School Counselor Association is carrying the video in its new catalog mailed to school counselors nationwide. Funded largely by the Columbia Foundation, the film also credits People for the American Way, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the California Teachers Association's Gay and Lesbian Caucus, Friends of Project 10, and many other foundations and individuals. The National Endowment for the Arts helped out via the Northwest Film Center of the Portland (Oregon) Art Museum, which received a \$13,000 grant from the NEA in 1996.

*It's Elementary* has already been screened in Colorado Springs, San Francisco, New York, Montgomery County, Md., Salt Lake City, and other locations. It will probably come to a school near you if you don't do something about it.

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