

THE LAVENDER SCARE WEBSITE/ PHOTOS:

www.theLavenderScare.com/epk

NEW YORK /LOS ANGELES FILM PUBLICITY:

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ABOUT THE FILM

LOG LINE

Tens of thousands of gay men and lesbians are fired from their jobs in a decades-long effort by the U.S. government to rid the federal workforce of homosexuals.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

With the United States gripped in the panic of the 1950s Cold War, President Dwight D. Eisenhower deemed homosexuals to be “security risks” and vowed to rid the federal government of all employees discovered to be gay or lesbian.

Over the next four decades, the longest witch-hunt in American history, tens of thousands of government workers would lose their jobs for no reason other than their sexual orientation.

But the mass firings have an unintended effect: they stirred outrage in the gay community, helped ignite the gay rights movement, and thrust an unlikely hero into the forefront of the LGBTQ rights movement. Partly based on the award-winning book by historian David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare* illuminates a little-known chapter of American history, and serves as a timely reminder of the value of vigilance and social action when civil liberties are under attack.

WEBSITE: www.theLavenderScare.com

HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOS: www.theLavenderScare.com/epk

TRAILER: <https://vimeo.com/261660975>

GENRE: Documentary

LANGUAGE: English

RUNNING TIME: 75 minutes

RELEASE: June, 2019

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This project has been a journey of discovery for me.

I'm old enough to remember an era in which *The New York Times* used the words "pervert" and "homosexual" interchangeably, and I thought I had a reasonably good sense of the history of LGBTQ people in America.

But it was not until I read the book *The Lavender Scare* by historian David K. Johnson that I learned of the systematic way in which federal agencies went about trying to purge all homosexuals from the government workforce, or that the policy was still being enforced as late as 1995.

As a former producer and executive at the CBS News broadcast *60 Minutes*, I think I know a good story when I see one. I felt this unknown chapter of our history was one that needed to be told.

It's a story that's both tragic and triumphant. It tells of the heartbreak of those who lost their jobs and their careers – and even their lives – as a result of the government's brutal tactics.

But it is uplifting as well. It shows how the policy of discrimination stirred a sense of outrage and activism among gay men and lesbians and helped ignite what was to become the gay rights movement.

Several years ago, when I began work on this film, my goal was to shed light on an important but overlooked aspect of LGBTQ history. In today's social and political climate, I see the story of *The Lavender Scare* as more relevant than ever.

I am grateful to the men and women who shared their personal stories on camera – not just the employees who lost their jobs, but the officials who carried out the government's policies as well. Without their honest and thoughtful insights, this film could never have been made.

Josh Howard
Director
The Lavender Scare

Q&As

Where does the title of the film come from?

The term “the Lavender Scare” refers to a period of time in which it was believed that gay men and lesbians working for the federal government were a threat to the safety and security of the United States.

Why were homosexuals a threat?

With the United States locked in a Cold War with the Soviet Union, Senator Joseph McCarthy alleged that gay men and lesbians working for the government were a security risk because they were susceptible to blackmail by foreign enemy agents.

How many people were fired?

Over a 40-year period, tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs or were denied employment.

How many homosexuals actually gave up secrets in order to avoid being exposed?

After several investigations over many years, not a single case was ever found.

Were LGBTQ people always feared in Washington?

No! In fact, in the 1930s and 40s, there was a vibrant and very open gay community in Washington. A large number of new government jobs were created after the Great Depression, any of the people who came to Washington to fill those jobs were gay men and lesbians eager to make a new life in the growing city. They enjoyed a comfortable work environment and a lively social life, unaware of the devastating events that were ahead.

Why is the date April 27, 1953 important?

That is the day President Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450, which directed the firing of all government workers discovered to be gay or lesbian. More than a thousand federal agents (a couple of whom are interviewed in the film) were assigned to the task of exposing homosexuals.

Did any good come of this?

Yes! Rather than destroy the LGBTQ community, the anti-gay witch hunt made it stronger. It stirred a new sense of anger, outrage and militancy among gay men and lesbians. In 1965 (four years before the Stonewall Rebellion, commonly viewed as the start of the gay rights movement) a handful of brave men and women fed up with the government’s anti-gay policies staged Washington’s first gay rights protest – a picket line in front of the White House.

How long did this policy remain in effect?

The witch hunts didn’t end in the 1950s. The government continued for *four decades* to fire people just because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. President Clinton officially put an end to the practice, but not until 1995 – yes, 1995. The ban on service in the military continued for many years beyond that.

TIMELINE

- The 1930s and '40s** Government jobs created by The New Deal draw thousands of young men and women to Washington, D.C.; a large percentage are homosexual, and a thriving gay community develops.
- 1948** Publication of Dr. Alfred Kinsey's book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, shocks the country with the finding that 37 percent of American men had engaged in at least one homosexual act since adolescence, and that 4 percent were exclusively homosexual.
- February 20, 1950** Sen. Joseph McCarthy declares that the State Department is infested with homosexuals who are susceptible to blackmail and therefore create a risk to national security.
- February 28, 1950** Secretary of State Dean Acheson reveals his department has secretly fired 91 homosexual employees. The revelation causes alarm that homosexuality is widespread in the government.
- 1950:** The State Department starts administering lie detector tests to ferret out homosexual employees. Hundreds are fired.
- June 20, 1951** FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover creates a "Sex Deviate" program; the private lives of tens of thousands of government employees are examined.
- 1953** President Dwight D. Eisenhower issues Executive Order 10450, directing the firing of all gay men and lesbians from the federal government.
- October 1957** Frank Kameny, a Harvard-trained astronomer, becomes one of the thousands of government employees fired for being gay. He's the first person to challenge his dismissal.
- April 17, 1965** Seven men and one woman picket the White House; it is the first known gay rights demonstration in Washington.
- June 28, 1969** A series of spontaneous demonstrations against a police raid at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, becomes a defining moment in the gay rights movement.
- 1995** President Clinton signs an executive order wiping out the last vestiges of President Eisenhower's 1953 ban on homosexuals in government.
- June 29, 2009** Frank Kameny is honored by President Obama at the White House.

CAST AND CREDITS

Producer and Director **Josh Howard**

Associate Director **Jill Landes**

Editor **Bruce Shaw**

Director of Photography **Richard White**

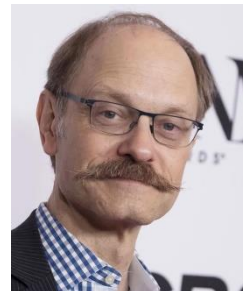
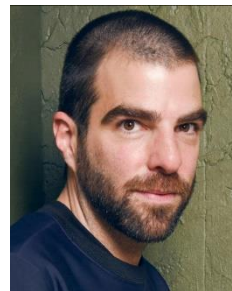
Original Music **Joel Goodman**

Executive Producers **Betsy West**
Kevin Jennings
Andrew Tobias

Co-Executive Producer **Paul Austin**

Senior Producer **Barbara Pierce**

Based on a book by **David K. Johnson**



Narrated by **Glenn Close**

Voice of Andrew Ference **T.R. Knight**

Voice of Madeleine Tress **Cynthia Nixon**

Voice of Dennis Flinn **Zachary Quinto**

And

David Hyde Pierce

As the Voice of Dr. Franklin E. Kameny

Full crew biographies at
www.theLavenderScare.com/credits

DIRECTOR'S BIO



Josh Howard is a producer and broadcast executive with more than 25 years of experience in news and documentary production.

He has been honored with 24 Emmy Awards, mostly for his work on the CBS News broadcast *60 Minutes*. Josh began his career at *60 Minutes* reporting stories with correspondent Mike Wallace. He was later named senior producer and then executive editor of the broadcast. Following that, he served as executive producer of the weeknight edition of *60 Minutes*.

Josh then joined NBC Universal as Vice President of Long Form Programming for CNBC. In that position, he created a unit that produced a series of award-winning documentaries focusing on American business. The 90-minute film *Big Brother, Big Business*, which explored the ways in which corporate America works hand-in-hand with the government to collect information about the personal habits of private citizens, won the Emmy Award for Best Documentary on a Business Topic, one of three Emmy Awards he earned for CNBC.

FESTIVALS AND SCREENINGS

Amsterdam

New Renaissance Film Festival

Ashford, Washington

Ranier Independent Film Festival

Atlanta

Jewish Film Festival / Out on Film

Atlantic City, New Jersey

Garden State Film Festival

Austin

Austin Gay+Lesbian Film Festival

Berlin

Courage Film Festival

Bethel, Connecticut

FilmFest 52

Bridgehampton, New York

Southampton Arts Center

Buffalo

Buffalo-Niagara Film Festival

Charlotte, North Carolina

Gay Charlotte Film Festival

Charlotte, North Carolina

International Film Festival

Charlottesville, Virginia

Virginia Film Festival

Cologne

FilmFest Homochrom

Fargo

Fargo-Morehead LGBT Film Festival

Flagstaff

Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival

Fort Lauderdale

OUTshine LGBT Film Festival

Fort Myers, Florida

Fort Myers Film Festival

Fort Worth

Q Cinema Film Festival

Fresno

Fresno Reel Pride Film Festival

Geneva

Everybody's Perfect Film Festival

Hartford, Connecticut

Out Film CT

Houston

Queer Hippo LGBT Film Festival

Huntington Beach, California

SoCal Film Festival

Kansas City

Out Here Now Film Festival

Livermore, California

Sandia National Laboratories

Long Beach, California

QFilms Long Beach

Long Branch, New Jersey

Monmouth University

Louisville

Louisville LGBT Film Festival

Macon

Macon Film Festival

Martha's Vineyard

Spectrum Film Festival

Memphis

Outflux Film Festival

Miami

OutShine Film Festival

Milwaukee

LGBT Film/Video Festival

New Haven

Documentary Film Festival

Newport Beach, California

Newport Beach Film Festival

Oakland, California

Frameline41 Int'l LGBT Film Festival

Ocean Grove, New Jersey

qFest LGBT Film and Video Festival

Palm Springs

Cinema Diverse Film Festival

Philadelphia

qFLIX LGBT Film Festival

Portland, Oregon

QDoc Film Festival

Rehoboth Beach

Independent Film Festival

Rochester, New York

ImageOut LGBT Film Festival

Sacramento

Sacramento Int'l LGBTQ Film Festival

Sag Harbor, New York

Hamptons Documentary Film Festival

San Diego

Film Out San Diego

San Diego

San Diego International Film Festival

San Francisco

Frameline41 Int'l LGBT Film Festival

Scottsdale, Arizona

Scottsdale International Film Festival

Seattle

TWIST: Seattle Queer Film Festival

Sonoma County

OUTwatch LGBTQI Film Festival

St. Louis

QFest Film Festival

Sun Valley, Idaho

Sun Valley International Film Festival

Sydney

Queer Screen Film Festival

Tampa

Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

Toronto

InsideOut Film Festival

Yonkers, New York

YoFi Fest

Zagreb

Festival of Tolerance

AWARDS

Amsterdam

New Renaissance Festival

NOMINEE - BEST DOCUMENTARY

Atlantic City, New Jersey

Garden State Film Festival

WINNER - FEATURE DOCUMENTARY, SOCIAL EQUALITY

Berlin

Courage Film Festival

WINNER – SPECIAL JURY AWARD

Cologne

FilmFest Homochrom

WINNER – AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST DOCUMENTARY

Fargo

Fargo-Morehead LGBT Film Festival

WINNER - BEST DOCUMENTARY

Fort Worth

Q Cinema Film Festival

WINNER - BEST DOCUMENTARY

Hartford, Connecticut

Out Film CT

WINNER - AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST DOCUMENTARY

Huntington Beach, California

SoCal Film Festival

HONORABLE MENTION

Kansas City

Out Here Now Film Festival

OPENING NIGHT SELECTION

WINNER - COURAGE AWARD

Louisville

Louisville LGBT Film Festival

WINNER - BEST DOCUMENTARY

Macon

Macon Film Festival

WINNER – BEST LGBT FILM

Memphis

Outflix Film Festival

WINNER - BEST DOCUMENTARY

Miami

OutShine Film Festival

RUNNER-UP - AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST DOCUMENTARY

Ocean Grove, New Jersey

qFest LGBT Film and Video Festival

WINNER - BEST DOCUMENTARY

Rochester, New York

ImageOut LGBT Film Festival

WINNER - AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST DOCUMENTARY

Sacramento

Sacramento Int'l LGBTQ Film Festival

CLOSING NIGHT SELECTION

WINNER - AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST FEATURE

Sag Harbor, New York

Hamptons Documentary Film Festival

WINNER - SLOANE SHELTON HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

San Diego

Film Out San Diego

WINNER – AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST DOCUMENTARY

Seattle

TWIST: Seattle Queer Film Festival

HONORABLE MENTION - BEST DOCUMENTARY

Sydney

Queer Screen Film Festival

WINNER - AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST DOCUMENTARY

Tampa

Int'l Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

DOCUMENTARY CENTERPIECE

WINNER - AUDIENCE AWARD, BEST DOCUMENTARY

Yonkers, New York

YoFi Fest

WINNER - BEST DOCUMENTARY

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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