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Acclaimed Documentary *Bully* Premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, October 13, 2014 on PBS

Season Opener Is an Intimate and Unflinching Look at How Bullying Has Touched Five Kids and Their Families

(San Francisco, CA) — A beautifully cinematic, character-driven documentary, *Bully* puts a human face on the devastating impacts of the most common form of violence experienced by young people in the nation. At its heart are those with huge stakes in the issue: five kids and families whose stories each represent a different facet of America's bullying epidemic. The film, shot over the course of one school year, opens a window onto the pained and often endangered lives of bullied kids, revealing a problem that transcends geographic, racial, ethnic, and economic borders. It documents the responses of teachers and administrators to aggressive behaviors that defy "kids will be kids" clichés and captures a growing movement among parents and youths to change how bullying is handled in schools, communities, and society as a whole. Directed by Sundance and Emmy-award winning filmmaker Lee Hirsch, *Bully* premieres on *Independent Lens* on Monday, October 13, 2014, 10:00-11:30 PM ET on PBS ([check local listings](#)).

Lauded by reviewers, *Bully* was awarded the Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia Award for excellence in journalism, as well as the 2013 Stanley Kramer Award from the Producers Guild of America, among other honors. Drawing on the film's success, the producers created The BULLY Project, an advocacy and educational organization. Since 2011, *Bully* has been seen by more than 3.4 million children through over 10,000 school and community screenings. Working with more than 100 partners globally, The BULLY Project motivates and builds capacity for educators to create safer schools, reduce bullying, and improve educational outcomes for all. Find out more at www.thebullyproject.com.

"We're proud to kick off our 13th season with *Bully*," said Lois Vossen, Deputy Executive Producer, *Independent Lens*. "In addition to our national broadcast, which falls during Bullying Prevention month, we will be supporting the Mayors Campaign to End Bullying, a groundbreaking partnership between The BULLY Project and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which will see over 220 mayors in all 50 states host screenings of the film and convene strategy sessions as part of their commitment to National Bullying Prevention Month. We're pleased to be part of this transformative campaign."

The Stories

Alex Libby of Sioux City, Iowa, was 12 years old when filming began and on the brink of starting seventh grade, which the arc of the film traces. Wanting more than anything to fit in, Alex assured his worried parents that the kids who taunted him daily on the bus were only "messing with him."



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But as the year unfolded, the bullying Alex had experienced since elementary school continued to escalate dangerously. Today, Alex is a senior in high school; since the film was theatrically released he has spoken about his experiences to students, educators, and politicians across the country. He was also featured in Anderson Cooper's one-hour special about the positive impact of the film, "The *Bully* Effect."

Kelby Johnson, 16 at the time of the filming, was treated as a pariah in the small town of Tuttle, Oklahoma when she came out as a lesbian. In the film, Kelby powerfully describes how she went from being an all-star athlete to being forced to leave her sports teams after facing an outpouring of prejudice from classmates as well as teachers. She refused her parents' offer to leave town, and, bolstered by her girlfriend and a few staunch friends, resolved to stay. Following the film, Kelby, who is transgender and today identifies as male, was asked to intern at Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in Washington, DC and visited members of Congress to speak on behalf of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) and Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) legislation.

In Yazoo County, Mississippi, 14-year-old **Ja'Meya Jackson** was picked on every morning and afternoon of the hour-long bus ride between home and school. One morning, the quiet honors student brandished a loaded handgun she'd taken from her mother's closet to scare off her tormentors. Incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility with the possibility of being charged as an adult with multiple felony counts, Ja'Meya is seen in the film as she awaits the hearing that will decide her fate. Eventually released during the course of filming, she later transferred to a different school and thrived. She plans to enlist in the Armed Forces in honor of her grandfather, who also served in the military.

In October 2009, **David and Tina Long's** 17-year-old son Tyler, who had Asperger's syndrome, died by suicide after years of abuse at the hands of his classmates and indifference from school officials in Murray County, Georgia. Demanding accountability from the school that failed their son so miserably, Tyler's parents catalyzed dialogue in their community about the widespread prevalence of unchecked bullying in one of the film's most compelling scenes. Since filming was completed, the Longs brought their case against the Murray County School District all the way to the Georgia Supreme Court, and started Everything Starts with 1, a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing bullying and finding solutions in honor of Tyler.

Following the death by suicide of their 11-year-old son, **Kirk and Laura Smalley** of Perkins, Oklahoma were determined to prevent other children from suffering the peer-abuse Ty experienced. Seeking to change kids' lives and raise awareness about the devastation bullying causes, the Smalleys partnered with Stand for the Silent, a nonprofit organization started by a group of students from Oklahoma State University's Upward Bound chapter, after they heard Ty's story. Since the film was theatrically released, the Smalleys have traveled to hundreds of schools and spoken with more than 800,000 kids, sharing their story and offering tools to prevent their tragedy from happening to another family.

Visit the *Bully* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/bully>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

About the Filmmakers

Lee Hirsch (Director/Producer/Cinematographer/Writer) made his film debut with the critically acclaimed documentary *Amandla! A Revolution In Four Part Harmony*, which chronicled the history of the South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle through a celebration of its musical heroes. This film won the Audience and Freedom of Expression Awards at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, as well as an Emmy.

Lee founded two organizations: Local Voices, a Super PAC that has raised over one million dollars to produce and place positive political advertising and strategy; and The BULLY Project, the social action campaign that grew out of the film *Bully* and for which he serves as Executive Director. As a social entrepreneur, Hirsch lectures globally on filmmaking, bullying, and social change.

Hirsch also directs commercials and other filmed entertainment for Moxie Pictures, and is the co-editor of *BULLY: An action plan for teachers and parents to combat the bullying crisis* (Weinstein Books). Lee grew up in Rockville Center, New York and attended Hampshire College. He lives in Brooklyn.

Cynthia Lowen (Producer/Writer) is an award-winning filmmaker and writer and the recipient of the Women Authoring Change Fellowship sponsored by William Morris Entertainment. Through her work on *Bully*, she has lectured extensively on bullying and school climate and culture. She is the co-author, with Cindy Miller, of *The Essential Guide to Bullying, Prevention and Intervention* (Alpha), and the co-editor of *BULLY: An action plan for teachers and parents to combat the bullying crisis* (Weinstein Books).

Lowen is also an award-winning poet and winner of the 2012 National Poetry Series for her collection *The Cloud That Contained the Lightning*, which uses the character of J. Robert Oppenheimer to explore the enduring legacy of nuclear weapons. Lowen grew up in Amherst, Massachusetts and attended Colorado College, receiving her MFA in creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College. She lives in New York City.

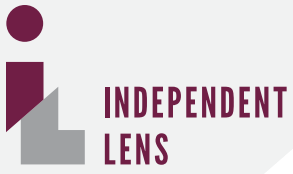
CREDITS

Directed by	Lee Hirsch
Produced by	Lee Hirsch Cynthia Lowen
Executive Producer	Cindy Waitt
Cinematography by	Lee Hirsch
Edited by	Lindsay Utz Jenny Golden
Original Score by	Ion Furjanic Justin Rice/Christian Rudder
Consulting Editor	Enat Sidi
Written by	Lee Hirsch Cynthia Lowen
Music Supervisor	Brooke Wentz

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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