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AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY CURED TO OPEN THE FALL SEASON OF PBS' *INDEPENDENT LENS* ON OCTOBER 11, 2021

Film Shines a Light on Pioneering LGBTQ+ Activists Who Fought to Remove Homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973



(San Francisco, CA) August 20, 2021—A powerful exploration of a pivotal yet largely unknown chapter in the struggle for LGBTQ+ equality, Patrick Sammon and Bennett Singer's award-winning documentary *Cured* shines a light on the campaign that led the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to remove homosexuality from its manual of mental illnesses. Praised as “fascinating” by the *Hollywood Reporter*, “striking” by *USA Today*, and “astonishingly rich ... one of the best documentaries of this or any year” by the British Film Institute, *Cured* will make its U.S. broadcast debut and open the fall season of PBS' *Independent Lens* on October 11, 2021—National Coming Out Day—at 10:00 p.m. ET ([check local listings](#)). The film will also be available on the PBS Video app.

In 1973, the APA made the landmark decision to remove homosexuality from its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), which had classified same-sex attraction as a “sociopathic personality disturbance” in its first edition, published in 1952. The psychiatric establishment deemed

homosexuality a condition to be “cured,” and—in addition to intensive talk therapy—members of the LGBTQ+ community were subjected to cruel treatments including electroconvulsive therapy, aversion therapy, and in extreme cases, castration and lobotomies. Facing these “cures” and widespread stigma, many gay people were afraid to come out, and the APA’s “scientific” diagnosis was often used to justify discrimination and persecution.

Cured offers viewers an inside look at the inspiring movement behind this momentous 1973 decision to remove the DSM classification and the pioneering activists who took on a formidable institution and, against the odds, emerged victorious. The activists’ mission was not only to overturn the official diagnosis, but to create a meaningful dialogue that would challenge deep-rooted prejudices and transform minds. During these discussions, activists pressed the APA to examine evidence and data,



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urging psychiatrists to move beyond what activist Dr. Frank Kameny called the “shabby, shoddy, sleazy pseudoscience masquerading as science” that underlay the sickness label for homosexuality.

Cured features rich, newly unearthed archival footage and incisive interviews with the people who experienced these events firsthand, including the pioneering LGBTQ+ activists Ron Gold, Dr. Lawrence Hartmann, Dr. Frank Kameny, Rev. Magora Kennedy, Kay Lahusen, and Dr. Charles Silverstein, among others, as well as allies and opponents within the APA. The filmmakers also interviewed Richard Socarides, an openly gay political commentator and advocate for LGBTQ equality who is the son of Dr. Charles Socarides, the leading proponent of the view that homosexuality is a curable mental illness. *Cured* illuminates a pivotal moment in the Gay Liberation movement that transformed not only the LGBTQ+ community, but also the field of psychiatry and the social fabric of America—propelling a revolution that is still reverberating today.

“This was a seminal moment in the fight for LGBTQ equality and a story that had not been told before in film,” says co-director Patrick Sammon. “We put more than five years of research and production work into this project and had the great privilege of interviewing many of the key people who were direct catalysts for this groundbreaking change. Five of our interviewees have passed away, so we see this film as a testament to their courage and persistence.”

“We’re thrilled that the broadcast premiere is taking place on National Coming Out Day—the perfect moment to remind the world that for LGBTQ people, coming out represents an incredibly powerful form of activism,” adds co-director Bennett Singer. “Even though this is a story from history, its lessons remain profoundly relevant today. This is a film about the process of bringing about lasting, systemic social change.”

“Our films this fall honor individuals whose determination in the face of challenge reflect major issues impacting our nation and our world, and our goal is always to inspire meaningful conversations around timely and often challenging issues,” said Lois Vossen, executive producer of *Independent Lens*. “*Cured* gets to the very core of this, shining a light on the inspiring LGBTQ+ activists who went up against a powerful institution and used open dialogue to create immense change, the impact of which is still felt today. I can’t think of a more appropriate film to open this new season.”

Cured provides vital historical context for the ongoing debate about conversion therapy, a harmful practice that aims to “cure” gender identity or sexual orientation through psychological or faith-based interventions. Although conversion therapy has been discredited by the APA and other major medical organizations, it remains legal for minors in 30 states.

The film has received numerous accolades, including the Audience Awards for Documentary Feature at Frameline 44: The San Francisco International LGBTQ+ Film Festival (the world’s oldest and largest LGBTQ film festival), at NewFest 2020: The New York LGBTQ Film Festival, and at 2020 ImageOut: The Rochester LGBT Film Festival; the Jury Award for Best Documentary Feature at Out at the Movies International Film Festival; and a \$50,000 award in the 2020 Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film.

Visit the [Cured](#) page on *Independent Lens* for more information about the film.

About the Filmmakers

Bennett Singer

Bennett Singer has been making social-issue documentaries for more than 25 years. He co-produced and co-directed *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival; was broadcast nationally on PBS' POV series and Logo; and won more than 20 international awards, including the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Documentary and prizes at LGBTQ film festivals in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other cities. Singer was an associate producer on the Emmy- and Peabody-winning series *Eyes on the Prize II*; a producer/director on *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right In America*; a consulting producer on *Codebreaker*; and co-director of *Electoral Dysfunction*, a feature-length documentary about voting in America that won the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award. The former Executive Editor of *TIME Magazine*'s Education Program, Singer is the editor of *42 Up* and the co-author, with his husband David Deschamps, of *LGBTQ Stats*, which *Booklist* described as "indispensable" and "astounding." He is the recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Video, a Visiting Artist Residency at The American Academy in Rome, and the National Endowment for the Arts Residency for Collaborative Teams at Yaddo.

Patrick Sammon

Patrick Sammon has a mix of experience in filmmaking, broadcast journalism, and LGBT political advocacy. He is President of Story Center Films, a documentary production company based in Washington, DC. He is the Creator and Executive Producer of *Codebreaker*, a "superb" (*The Telegraph*), "imaginative" (*Sunday Times*), award-winning drama-documentary that "artfully explored" (*The Mail*) the life and legacy of Alan Turing, one of the 20th century's most important figures. More than three million viewers around the world have seen the film through television, a limited U.S. theatrical release, film festivals, and more than 250 non-theatrical screenings (at venues including The British Museum, the US National Archives, and the Organization of American States). Sammon started his career as an award-winning television news reporter. Before founding Story Center Films in 2010, he served three years as President of Log Cabin Republicans, which advocates for LGBT rights in the Republican Party.

CREDITS

Producer/Directors	Patrick Sammon Bennett Singer
Executive Producers	Sally Jo Fifer Mel Heifetz Jeff Nalin Cole Rucker Andrew Tobias Lois Vossen



Co-Producers

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Christopher Racster
Ted Snowdon & Duffy Violante

Editor

Steve Heffner

Director of Photography

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Music By

Ian Honeyman

Major production funding for *Cured* is provided by JPMorgan Chase, AARP, Gilead Sciences, and The Better Angels Society. *Cured* is a co-production of Story Center Films LLC, Singer & Deschamps Productions, Inc., and ITVS, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

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, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter @IndependentLens.

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