

◆ Discuss this quote from Malcolm: *You can't say ... "transgender" and people really know what you're talking about. But anybody who says the word "transgender" probably means something different by it anyway, so it really is a story and not just a label.* Has the film changed or challenged your ideas about transgender women and men? Explain your answer. What can be done to create a safe space for transgender people to share their stories and express their truest sense of self?

◆ Malcolm encounters people who have experienced transgender-related violence. Pauline Mitchell's child, F. C. Martinez, was murdered because he identified as *nadleeh*, or "two-spirited," the Navajo way of identifying a transgender person. Calpernia Addams' boyfriend, a soldier, was killed when his fellow soldiers suspected he was gay because of his relationship with Calpernia. Miss Major talks about the risks of violence she has faced. How do you feel about these stories? What can be done to create safer communities and prevent violence against persons who are transgender?

◆ Discuss this quote from Miss Major: *The majority of people think that for transgender females like myself, well, all we know how to do is prostitute, steal and do drugs. You know? Well if you don't do drugs and you don't steal, and you don't prostitute, then you shouldn't be a transgender person.* Some states or communities have non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and gender expression in employment and housing, but most do not. What do you think about this? What legal rights and protections do transgender people need?

◆ How would you describe the "wholeness" Sgt. Thorne is talking about when he offers the following advice to Malcolm: *I encourage you to trust, I encourage you to trust, and to be open. It lets you be whole, instead of being divided ... It lets you be whole. And it lets them be whole, too.*

◆ Malcolm visits Harvey Milk High School, for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. What are some of the challenges transgender young people face? What kind of support would be helpful to them?

◆ Malcolm talks about meeting Mariah and together they plan for their wedding. Discuss the awkwardness they share about dating and their wedding plans. Identify some of the challenges they face. How do you feel about them? How would you work through these challenges?

◆ During ordination, Malcolm says that in his church, the United Church of Christ, gender is not a the defining characteristic of God's leaders. When you think of God's leaders, what characteristics come to mind? What opportunities and challenges might Malcolm face in his ministry?

◆ Discuss this quote from Malcolm at the end of the film: *If my perspective has changed in the last year, it's just to grow into more strength about who I get to be and, if there is a place for me in this world, not just on a closed campus where people are extra friendly, and believe in a gracious God, but in the big ol' world. And when I think about the future year, two years, three years, I generally anticipate good things.* What has helped Malcolm be so positive about his future? How do you think that might be different for other transgender persons and why? What might you and/or your group do to help make things better for transgender persons in your church and community?

### Closing

◆ Quietly reflect on what you have experienced from viewing the film and participating in the group discussion. Then, those who wish may share with the group one new or surprising thing they learned.

◆ Identify any next steps for following-up on the discussion.

◆ Share a closing prayer, benediction, reading or brief meditation that affirms the sharing and listening process.

### Resources

#### In-Depth Study Guide

A more comprehensive study guide designed for use with Call Me Malcolm is available for free download at [www.CallMeMalcolm.com](http://www.CallMeMalcolm.com). A print version may be purchased from UCC Resources (in the U.S., toll free 800-537-3394; outside the U.S., +1-216-736-3783).

#### On the Web

[www.uccoalition.org](http://www.uccoalition.org) The UCC Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns has resources and information, including their Youth and Young Adult Program.

[www.mattkailey.com](http://www.mattkailey.com) *Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience.* Matt Kailey, Beacon Press, 2005. Matt also gives educational presentations.

[www.tgchoir.org](http://www.tgchoir.org) Transcendence Gospel Choir, City of Refuge UCC, San Francisco, Calif. A documentary DVD about the choir and its ministry called, **The Believers**. The choir also has music and prayers on its CDs "Whosoever Believes" and "Oh Happy Day."

[www.hmi.org](http://www.hmi.org) The Hetrick Martin Institute (Harvey Milk High School) offers information on safe school ideas and practices for young people.

[www.dph.sf.ca.us/chn/HlthCtrs/transgender.htm](http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/chn/HlthCtrs/transgender.htm) Medical guidelines from the Tom Waddell Transgender Clinic.

[www.hbigda.org](http://www.hbigda.org) Harry Benjamin Standards of Care.

[www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/sfhumanrights/docs/tg\\_guide.pdf](http://www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/sfhumanrights/docs/tg_guide.pdf) Public policy non-discrimination guidelines from the San Francisco Human Rights Commission.

[www.nctequality.org](http://www.nctequality.org) National Center for Transgender Equality.

[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org) Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), is an excellent organization for support and information, especially for family members.

*Numerous local support groups exist. Find one near you for a transgender speaker or panelist in your community! A good place to begin looking is by contacting your nearest LGBT Community Center or PFLAG organization.*

#### Books and Articles

*Becoming a Visible Man.* Jamison Green, Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

*Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian.* Vanessa Sheridan, The Pilgrim Press, 2001.

*Gender Loving Care: A Guide to Counseling Gender-Variant Clients.* Randi Ettner, Ph.D., W.W. Norton and Company, 1999.

*Made in God's Image: A Resource for Dialogue About the Church and Gender Differences.* Ann Thompson Cook, Dumbarton United Methodist Church, 2003.

*Mark 947: A Life Shaped by God, Gender and Force of Will.* Calpernia Sarah Addams, Writers Club Press, 2002.

*Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach.* Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. ISBN 0-8298-1422-1, 208 pages, Hardcover, \$18.00.

*Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working With Gender-Variant People and Their Families.* Ari Istar Lev, Haworth Press, 2004.

*Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones, 2nd Edition.* Ari Istar Lev, Oak Knoll Press, 2003.

*Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith.* Justin Edward Tanis, The Pilgrim Press, 2003.

*Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality.* Leanne McCall Tigert and Maren C. Tirabassi, eds. ISBN 0-8298-1494-9, 176 pages, Paper, \$22.00.

*True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism for Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals.* Mildred L. Brown and Chloe Ann Rounsley, Jossey-Bass pubs., 1996.

#### Film

**Soldier's Girl**, directed by Frank Pierson, Showtime 2003.

#### About the author

The Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer is Executive for the UCC's Health and Wholeness Advocacy and provides leadership on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender concerns, HIV/AIDS and global health. Originally from Missouri, he earned a B.A. in Music from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and his M.Div. degree from Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis.

DVD and discussion guide design and packaging: Barb Powell; A UCC-PIC Production.

Call Me Malcolm produced by Filmworks, Inc. and the United Church of Christ.

© 2006 United Church of Christ

# CALL ME MALCOLM

## Discussion Guide

written by  
the Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer



Riverside International Film Festival  
Cleveland International Film Festival  
Wingspan Film Festival, N.Y.  
Frameline 29, San Francisco  
Mix Mexico Film Festival  
Adelaide (Australia) Film Festival

It is all of our stories ... reminding us how much love and family we all truly have to offer each other.

– Frameline 29 Film Festival



## INTRODUCTION

Call Me Malcolm is more than a documentary film, it is a journey of discovery. As Malcolm shares his own story and through the stories of others we meet, Call Me Malcolm offers us a glimpse into the real lives of real people who are transgender. But it is only a glimpse. There are many stories to be told and Malcolm

*You can't say the word transgender and people really know what you're talking about.*

*But anybody who says the word transgender*

*means something different by it anyway, so it really is a story and not just a label.*

*- Malcolm*

and express with confidence the marvelous gift of one's truest sense of self.

helps us make connections to our own stories, encouraging us to share them. In a culture which has done more to heap shame on persons who identify as transgender that can seem daunting. The good news in this film is that shame and fear are overcome by grace, compassion and knowledge.

I pray that through viewing the film and engaging in discussion you will come to a deeper understanding of faith, love, and gender identity, and by doing so you will arrive at a deeper understanding of your own journey. This is a story of the human spirit and God's spirit, and the liberating struggle to realize

—The Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer

This discussion guide is recommended for use by pastors, lay leaders, facilitators and individuals who wish to debrief after viewing the film.

An in-depth, six-part study guide is available for free download from the internet at [www.CallMeMalcolm.com](http://www.CallMeMalcolm.com).

A print version of the six-part study guide is also available for purchase from United Church of Christ Resources, call toll free: 800-537-3394.

### Suggestions for viewing with groups:

◆ Read through this discussion guide, and watch the film before you begin the group study sessions. Identify issues that are uncomfortable for you personally. Reflect and work through your own feelings before you jump into facilitating the group discussion.

◆ Preview Call Me Malcolm with sensitivity to the "culture" of the group. You may wish to view it more than once.

◆ This program may bring up painful memories, or strong feelings for members of the group. There may be participants who have witnessed or experienced transgender targeted abuse or violence. It is helpful for you as a facilitator to know ahead of time the resources in your community that you can recommend to these participants.

◆ Plan how you will structure your time and adapt the discussion process as needed.

◆ Take time to establish ground rules or a group covenant. As part of that process, remind people that there may be multiple viewpoints, and that each person's experience and thoughts are to be listened to and respected, even if there is direct disagreement.

◆ Another way to increase the emotional safety in the room is to arrange the seating in such a way that participants can both hear and see each other during the discussion. However, avoid a tight circle, which can feel too personal for some participants.

◆ Chances are your group will be made up of people with a variety of different personalities and comfort levels in sharing their ideas, reflections, and questions. If you have a person, or several people who are dominating the conversation it may be helpful to simply ask, "Is there anyone who hasn't shared who would like to say something?" This gives the talkers a chance to listen, and the quieter ones an opening to share without being personally put on the spot.

People may have very different opinions during the discussion. As a facilitator you can stop and remind them of your initial ground rules if someone becomes verbally abusive or personally attacks you or another participant if the discussion heats up.

### Additional tips for facilitators of youth groups:

If you are doing the program specifically with youth, or have youth in your viewing group, you might consider getting permission from their

parents/guardians for their participation. It is important to note that transgender youth are often times no longer living with, or connected to, their parents or guardians, or have not come out to their parents and/or guardians and involving those adults may cause difficulties for the youth. In this case, youth-only showings may be appropriate.

### Group Discussion Process

#### Before viewing with the group:

1. Create a sacred space for viewing the program and engaging discussion, using prayers, readings, meditations, and symbols such as candles.

2. Create safe space by sharing a community covenant or ground rules the group agrees to for how they will speak and listen to each other. It is often helpful to give participants the opportunity to contribute to this.

Here are some suggested items for the covenant or ground rules:

- ◆ Always share your concern and beliefs
- ◆ Listen carefully to others
- ◆ Be willing to examine your own beliefs in light of what others say
- ◆ Speak your mind freely, but strive to maintain an open mind
- ◆ Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you
- ◆ Cooperate with the leaders to keep the discussion on track
- ◆ Don't monopolize the discussion
- ◆ Address remarks to the group and not at an individual
- ◆ Communicate your needs to the leaders
- ◆ Value your own experience and opinions
- ◆ Engage in friendly disagreement: avoid emotional argumentation, yelling and personal put-downs
- ◆ Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points

3. Questions to help the group focus before viewing the program:

- ◆ Have you made a significant change in your own life? How did your family and friends react to your change?
- ◆ Most people experience a variety of changes throughout their lives. Has someone close to you made a significant change of any kind in his or her life? How did that affect you?
- ◆ Reflect on the following passage from Scripture: Isaiah 43:16-19.

### View the film Call Me Malcolm

#### After Viewing:

1. Take a few moments for quiet reflection, then, ask participants to share their initial impressions of the film.

2. Discussion questions to help the group debrief after the film:

◆ Malcolm talks about his childhood and growing to understand his gender identity. How have you come to understand what it means to be male or female?

◆ Malcolm shares how his parents reacted to the news of his gender transition. It has not been an easy journey for them. However, Malcolm's parents still love him and "show up" for him. What do you think helped to sustain the relationship between Malcolm and his parents through his transition?

◆ Messages of shame about gender identity or sexuality are nowhere in Jesus' teaching, but they are nonetheless present in many people's experience of Christianity. Malcolm shares how he struggled with God, his faith and his understanding of scripture. How do you think Malcolm's struggle enabled him to embrace his faith in a new way?

◆ The Female to Male (FtM) Gender Identity Group discuss the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender identity is about whom one perceives oneself to be, such as being a man or woman, boy or girl. Sexual orientation is primarily about to whom one is emotionally or physically attracted. Does this distinction make sense to you? How did the people in the film talk about the issues of gender identity and sexual orientation? How do their understandings relate to your own?

◆ For many transgender people, there is a disconnection between their physical characteristics and their idea of themselves, i.e., their truest sense of self. The opposite is "gender-congruency," i.e., people whose physical characteristics match their idea of themselves. Intersex is the term used to describe persons who have both male and female physical characteristics. In what ways do these realities change your notion of gender or sex categories? How important are these categories?

◆ Dr. Tinker talked about how gender identities are dealt with differently in various Native American cultures. How do these various ways of dealing with gender identity compare with your own experience?

*(Cont'd. on back)*