



an update



Once upon a time, I met these 16 high school students who were teaching sexual health to their peers. These energetic, determined teenagers were a mighty force for good – presenting lessons, sharing support and resources, and crushing shame and complacency wherever they went. Just in showing up, they made it seem OK to be really smart about sexuality. They inspired this film.

Eight years and 160+ hours of video later, I'm still learning about sexual health and education in the good company of hundreds of lovely, fascinating people. It's a funny thing – because I'm making a movie people are talking with me, and because people are talking with me I have a movie to make. One person leads me to another. I find another great book, talk with my friends, ask a new question, follow my intuition, think a lot, have another conversation...

Q. Aren't there more efficient ways to make a documentary? Yes, thank you for asking.

But I don't really mind. This gathering of people and ideas has been so completely effortless and delightful. I have never in my life experienced so much generous and sustained goodwill – everyone continues to say yes, to be helpful, and to care about this project. And I'm still learning, so I'm not always that motivated to wrap this up. But every day is another day of kids not being supported to write a healthy story about sexuality. What Sol Gordon wrote over 30 years ago remains just as sad and true as it ever was –

Thank you for your

(select all that apply)

participation
child's participation
ideas
questions
inspiration
introductions
trust
music
stories
classes
books
conversations
faith
expertise
friendship
art
courage
students
kindness
great work

and - for making this film possible.

“Our society persists in producing generation after generation of sexually ignorant and vulnerable citizens.”

Better classroom sexuality education – I thought – was the obvious solution. It could certainly be more meaningful, more open and direct, more positive, more empowering and inclusive. Absolutely. But kids get messages about sexuality all the time. More importantly, they are actively creating an internal story about sexuality, all the time, with very little support for writing – and experiencing – a healthy version.

“... what children and adolescents need most are not sexuality ‘experts,’ but wider and wider circles of everyday adults available to them for open dialogue about sexual matters. Otherwise, my work and the work of all of us in the classroom, no matter how skillful, becomes isolated, out-of-context learning experiences with, ultimately, very limited impact.”

– Deborah Roffman, *Sex and Sensibility*

The very best sexuality educators are a rich combination of philosopher, social worker, stand-up comic, and spiritual healer. If more people could see their approach and framing of these conversations, then maybe our common understanding of “sex ed” would deepen, and grow up a little bit. **Kids being really smart about sexuality might feel less scary and more like a tremendously good idea.**

I have new questions daily. How do we get parents interested in being better educators? Why is it so hard to communicate a whole, human, and helpful story of sexuality? Who sees what I see? Who can help?

Q. Do you think your homemade, zero-budget, radical, brain surgery* film about sexuality and kids might be challenging to pull off? Yes – it is the hardest and most wonderful thing I have ever attempted. But I’m betting that wonderful wins in the end.

We’ve been in post-production for about 3 years now (the kind where you still get to film more people, and change your mind about what the movie is about). And life happens, and paying work happens, and the film ends up waiting on me. July 17, 2016 there will be a test screening for feedback and discussion at Northwest Film Forum, here in Seattle, so that lives as a helpful deadline. Also, my friend Drew says I need to wrap this up before I get hit by a bus.

If you don’t feel at least mildly overwhelmed with this project, then I haven’t properly communicated the magnitude of what we’re after here. And if you don’t feel serious hope and excitement, it’s only because you haven’t met the people in this film yet – the parents, the experts, and the kids – all of them together telling a new and improved story about sexuality for kids.

Thanks to everyone for the gift of this project.

The goal from the beginning was to create something you will be very proud to be a part of – I’ll let you know when we’re there.

Blessings all around,
Greg

“My teachers told me that filmmaking was about telling gripping stories. It took me years to realize that that’s not an ambitious enough goal. You can do much more than that. You can give viewers new eyes and ears. You can change their states of awareness so that they see, hear, care, and feel differently [...] You’re doing something much more radical than telling a story. You’re rewiring people’s nervous systems. You’re doing brain surgery.” – Ray Carney