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A REVIEW BY KENDRA HENSON

"I've spent my whole life explaining my family to people who just don't get it," quips Ry, a 17-year-old straight woman with two moms and a lesbian sister. Ry is one of the children interviewed for *Our House*. Producer and director Meema Spadola tells the stories of five families who go grocery shopping, eat dinner together, go to church, and love each other. The difference between these families and typical "all-American" families is that they've had to justify their love to the heterosexual world.

The film starts off with each child sharing the most frequently asked questions and used lines in regards to their family, including such classics as "You call them both Mom? How do you tell them apart?!" and "I'm not a freak because my dad's gay." Most of the children interviewed in *Our House* are junior high and high school aged. Their feelings and experiences are articulated through strong senses of self and desire to deliver a message that family is about love, support, and encouragement. They demonstrate that their families are made up of the ingredients necessary to be a real, loving family.

"I wanted to demonstrate that children of gay and lesbian parents come in all different shapes, colors, economic backgrounds, religions, geographic locations, etc.," Spadola said in a phone interview. "I wanted to break the stereotype people have that gay and lesbian families are all white, well-to-do people, living in upper-class neighborhoods. When people think about gay and lesbian families they generally don't think about Mormon families, or African American families who take

their children to church."

The family that first appears in the film is made up of a Latino father the kids call "Papa," their father from New York they call "Dad," and five adopted children ranging in age from 13 to four years old. Spadola interviews Daniel, the 13-year-old, while Papa teaches Jessica how to put on stockings without getting a run.

Spadola wanted the film to show that gay and lesbian families live the same lives as their heterosexual counterparts. The one difference is the reality that homophobia does exist in our society. "Homophobia is real. It does affect the kids of gay and lesbian parents. They have to go through their own type of coming-out process when they tell their friends," said Spadola.

Jessica, who is nine, responds to most questions almost as if they seem silly. "My parents might get married someday... maybe in Hawaii or something." She tells Spadola that she doesn't talk about gay rights issues with her parents. "I don't even know what they are," she says. So much for the hidden gay agenda.

The next family Spadola interviews consists of two moms with their 23-year-old son and 15-year-old daughter, a working-class family living deep in the heart of the Bible Belt in Arkansas. When asked if their neighbors know that their parents are gay, both reply that they don't think so. Cary wonders how his neighbors would have concerns about his family "as long as we're on our own property." Ryan, who dealt with threats and violence in her school when classmates learned of her two mothers, seems a bit more shy in responding to questions.

# A very very very fine house



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**Our House: a very real documentary about kids of gay  
and lesbian parents**

**Produced and directed  
by Meema Spadola**

**Vermont Public Television, June 14**

**Available on video from The Cinema Guild**