

Finding Howard

The Legacy of a Song

A film from
Teaching Empathy Institute
51min | English
Digital | 16:9 | Stereo
findinghoward.org/press-kit



Director's Statement

I decided to direct *Finding Howard* the morning after I learned Howard Ray had passed away. I had only met Howard once, but I had been singing a song about him in schools for over 30 years. The song, *Howard Gray* tells the true story of how a young boy stood by as Howard was harassed and bullied throughout their childhood. It is written by Lee Domann, a Nashville songwriter, from his own point of view and shares the challenging lessons he learned about regret and compassion. As an educator, I had been in search of ways to create learning experiences about empathy and caring that were both memorable and hopeful. Upon hearing *Howard Gray* for the first time in 1987, I knew I had found what I had been looking for. Two weeks later, I had my students round up the chairs in our classroom, and I sang *Howard Gray* for the first time. Those kids had many questions such as: Why did they treat Howard that way? Why did Lee remain silent? Whatever happened to Howard? The next day, one of my colleagues asked if I could sing it for her class and the "Howard Gray Experience" was born. I have been singing *Howard Gray* and using its lyrics to spark conversations about empathy with students all over the country ever since. In our film, we introduce the viewer to Lee and some of his childhood classmates who reminisce about Howard and his family and how they were outcasts because they were treated poorly because of where they lived and how little money they had. We also meet Howard's daughter Terri who shares what a gentle and kind man Howard was. We hear some of the more than 2,000 letters children have written to both Howard and Lee through the years. And in the end, we are all challenged by educators, scholars and parents to hear the lessons from *Howard Gray* as a unifying call to action to create communities of belonging and safety for all.

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Stone Ridge, New York
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