

On Trial: Gay Pride

On Trial: Gay Pride is a production of Radio Telefís Éireann, Dublin. Jeff O’Loughlin, 21 from Wexford, Ireland, takes a controversial stance on the Gay Pride march which takes place in Dublin and around the world every year. He feels that it is a celebration of stereotypes – stereotypes that he, as a young gay man, does not feel he fits into. Along the way he has to take a closer look at some of these typecasts in order to get to the bottom of what exactly is bugging him. And not everybody he meets agrees with him. “On Trial” is a three part series in which young adults put the values and culture inherited from their previous generation to the test. In 2008 budding young documentary film makers were invited to pitch ideas to the RTÉ Young Peoples department about subjects that they felt needed to be put on trial. The result is a fascinating “authored” documentary series covering three very different yet relevant issues; including body image, plastic surgery and social networking.

On Trial: Gay Pride was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010 finalists in the 12-15 category.

International experts’ opinions



Figure 1: Jeff, the protagonist of the program.

Many experts liked the program for its “fresh approach to the topic of homosexuality” (male expert, Germany). “*I loved Gay Pride. Jeff is a very cool guy and construction, narrative, is very very good*” (female expert, Brazil).

The main topic of discussion amongst the international experts about this program was the stereotype associated with the concept of homosexuality in different countries. Some admired the courage of the producers to show a bold theme like homosexuality. “I thought actually it was getting brave enough to show it that way. It takes a lot of courage to do that, because it is still kind of a taboo” (female expert, Brazil). A female expert from Canada praised the program for breaking the stereotypes that are normally associated with homosexuals. “He is gay, and he did not have the appearance of what people would have thought was gay. It went against the grain of the stereotype.”

Since the topic of gay men is controversial in many countries, the international experts took this opportunity to discuss how such a topic would be handled in their respective countries. A female expert from Brazil was apprehensive regarding the possibility of a program on gays shown in her country on television. “Well, in my country, I don’t think we would be very open about it.” A male expert from Pakistan was too doubtful of the possibility of a program with a homosexuality theme shown on national television: “As a broadcaster of a local channel – if I would do a program on this topic, I would not treat it like that. We consider it is a disease in



Figure 2: Gay Pride March in Dublin.



Figure 3: Gays in Gay Pride March.

our society, because as a Muslim we also say: yes, it there; this is something prevalent in every society – right from the beginning of the human being everybody accepts it. But, we take it as a disease.” A female expert from Taiwan explained that though they showed programs on homosexuality still, homosexual men were scared of facing their parents. “In my country, we also do some programs about gay young people. For example, we have a program like a reality show, and we invite lesbian couples to join the show, to share their story, the couples’ lives. After our first broadcasts, a couple people called to ask us not to broadcast anymore, because their mother, their parents fear a lot of prejudice from their friends.”



Figure 4: Jeff got the support of his mother and friend.

An Australian female expert however was confident that children in her country would have accepted it. “In Australia, because these guys were very confident. They dealt with it; they had parents who always knew they were gay.” Similarly, a female expert from Denmark exclaimed that it was possible to show programs with such themes in her country. “In Denmark, it is not like we are having programs about kids being homosexuals, but because we were the first in the world in 1968 to have pornography released, I think everything is possible.” Another similar comment about the familiarity of the theme on national television was heard from a male expert from Germany: “This theme is quite common within Europe – in Sweden – you wouldn’t have any problems – in fact most European countries. In fact, it is almost become a kind of standard, mainstream.”

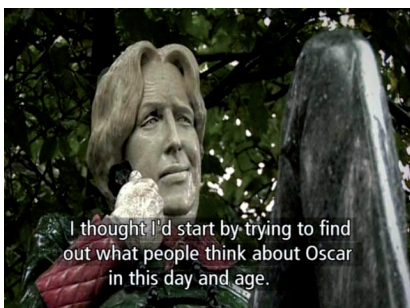


Figure 5: Oscar Wilde was a gay.

Many international experts were very impressed with the character of Jeff, the protagonist. “He was great. He was so well directed, I thought. It was like they let it be him” (male expert, USA). “I loved this program. I thought that the guy had a point that he was trying to make, and it was probably this human pride thing” (female expert, New Zealand). “I am very impressed about this very brave and crazy young guy Jeff” (female expert, Taiwan). Another expert liked Jeff’s communicating skills. “He seems so good at articulating what he was trying to get across” (female expert, USA). Some experts admired the program for its production. “I liked the way it was produced. It was like different opinions about this special topic and also the way of production with all the funny things in between and the different angles and the camera work” (male expert, German).



Figure 6: Stereotypes have been attached to homosexuality.

Some international experts however suggested that the program could have a better structure. “The structure was pretty loose. It took some time to get some points” (female expert, Netherlands). Some also felt that the program was not for the specific age group “The Gay Pride is not for the target group 12 to 15” (female expert, Germany). A male expert from Poland also expressed similar views.

“It is not for this target group.” Another female expert from Australia also thought that the program was meant for older young people. “I wonder whether the message was exactly right for 12 to 15 year-olds, or gave them as much confidence as it could have. I think so, but it probably was; but for me, I would have liked to see some 16 or 17 year olds, maybe who are a little closer in age to the intended audience.” Another female expert from Germany thought that the program was meant for older audiences as the protagonist was talking to the older more often than the younger children. “I think it was more for adults; not because of the topic, but to me it was even older than starting at 12 – because there were only adults talking, everybody who was saying anything was just age 25-40.”

International Youth Jury opinions

In 2010, the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL included the votes of an international youth jury, organized in co-operation with broadcasters worldwide. Teens between 12-15 years of age in seven countries discussed and judged 16 programs in the 12-15 year-old category. Here is a summary of their discussions on the program *On Trial: Gay Pride*.

The international youth jury from *Canada* had mixed reviews about the program. Some thought that the program was not appropriate for their age group. “I am not sure this program was aimed at the 12 to 15 because the things he was talking about are not really for that age” (male). Some also commented that the program lacked action. “I did not learn much from this program, everything that was talked about I already knew... too much talking and not enough action” (female). A few others however, liked the program a lot because of its theme of homosexuality and its take on stereotyping of homosexuals. “I really liked the subject but I would have liked to see more gay people say how they feel about the stereotype. It was nice to see that this guy was not like the gay stereotype, all effeminate, so it showed that not all gay people are like that” (female).

The international youth jury from *Georgia* had conflicting views about the program. Some thought that the program gave a good message regarding human rights. “The film transported the message well” (female). Some however found the program “lengthy” and “difficult to follow the language.” They ended up asking few questions. “How can a mother accept a child being gay?” (male). “What happened to the human pride in the end?” (female).

The international youth jury from *Ghana* had mixed feelings about the program. They did not like the concept of homosexuality and could not relate it to the culture of Ghana. “For me, I don’t like the movie at all because it has nothing to do with my age group and I don’t know what I’m doing to use such a movie for. You will not hear any person in Ghana say “I’m gay and I’m proud of it”. All he was doing was to encourage the gays” (female). “I’m sure that nobody in Africa will support a thing like this because of our culture; such a movie will not benefit Africans at all” (female). Some however could realize that the program was an attempt to make people understand the concept of homosexuality and to inform about the life of a homosexual person. “The film maker was trying to emphasize that if you



Figure 7: Jeff experimented with public display of affections with his friend.



Figure 8: Jeff met a lot of people to talk about the stereotypes attached with homosexuality.

Screenshots from *On Trial: Gay Pride* © Radio Telefís Éireann

are a homosexual, it does not mean that your capabilities are limited. We should accept homosexuals for who they are but not their sexuality. A homosexual could become the world's greatest person but people would want to avoid him because of his sexuality" (male).

Many members of the international youth jury from *Lebanon* did not find the program interesting: "It's long and boring in some places, I seriously didn't like it" (female). They could not relate to the program and could not find any message they could get from it. "It's a different culture than the middle east, but I don't think it will happen in our country, and I don't feel related to the movie at all" (male). Few however liked the concept of the program. "Good edit, nice concept. It is nice overall" (male). They also appreciated the role of the protagonist and his mother in the program. "I like his mom though, very understanding, other than that, I have no opinion about it" (male).

The international youth jury from *Nepal* had mixed reviews about the program. The majority of the jury liked the program as it has a social message about gays which they could relate to in similar situations in Nepal. "It is good to show this film in Nepal because recently gays in Nepal are fighting for their rights and society should accept gay rights as human rights as was said in the film" (female). They also appreciated the depth of the supporting characters. "His mother and his girlfriend are shown in supportive role, these characters are well defined" (male). Others appreciated the "flow of the film" and the "seriousness of the topic." Some, however, concluded that the program was "good for rural areas" (female). They also remarked that the length of the program was a problem and that the message was repetitive.

The international youth jury from *Venezuela* had mixed reviews about the program as well. Many of the youth jury did not like the program as they thought that it was not interesting and was meaningless. "I found no meaning. I do not like the guy that was getting married and stuff. I do not like it at all. Although it is what you see in the world today, but I did not like it" (female). "It isn't very interesting for our age, because that happens for people 18 years or more so we are not interested" (male). Some however appreciated the way the program raised the issue of homosexuality. "I understand the meaning that they want to give the program because today there is a lot of homophobia; many people are afraid of gays so I think that's what they want to show in the festival so people will not see them as strangers any more" (male).

Target Audience 6,9	Idea 7,7	Script 7,2	Realization 7,5
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010			