

## About the Moderator and Panelists

### ADOPTION'S HIDDEN HISTORY

Featuring the Cleveland Debut of the Documentary Film by Ann Fessler: *A GIRL LIKE HER*

November 29, 2012

#### MODERATOR BIO

##### EVAN LIEBERMAN

Evan Lieberman, Associate Professor, School of Communication at Cleveland State University, has extensive experience in Film Production, Film Studies and Screenwriting. Dr. Lieberman was accepted at the American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies where he earned an MFA in Screenwriting. He worked as a screenwriter for Trans-World Entertainment, TV-Ontario, and CFC, one of the leading motion picture studios in France. In addition his work as a producer-director for educational documentary *Churchill Films* garnered two blue ribbons at the American Film Festival. He was awarded a fellowship to pursue a PhD in Film Studies at Emory University in Atlanta where he remained to teach after getting his degree in 2000.

Dr. Lieberman has written, produced, directed, and/or worked as director of photography on dozens of commercials, music videos, and short films as well as four feature films. He has published on a wide variety of subjects including situation comedies, cinematography, and Mexican wrestling movies, and his co-authored book with David Cook, *The Moving Image* is forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

#### PANELIST BIOS

##### ANN FESSLER

Ann Fessler began making short films and videos in the early 1970s. Her work has focused on the stories of women and the impact that myths, stereotypes, and mass media images have on their lives and intimate relationships.

Fessler turned to the subject of adoption in 1989 after being approached by a woman who thought Ann might be the daughter she had surrendered for adoption forty years earlier. Though the woman was not her mother, Fessler—an adoptee—was profoundly moved by the experience. The conversation that ensued changed the focus of her work.

Since that time she has produced three films, audio and video installations, and a non-fiction book on adoption. Between 2002 and 2005, Fessler conducted over 100 interviews with women who lost children to adoption during the 28 years that followed WWII, when a perfect storm of circumstances led to an unprecedented number of surrenders.

Her film, "A Girl Like Her," reveals the hidden history of over a million young women who became pregnant in the 1950s and 60s and were banished to maternity homes to give birth, surrender their children, and return home alone.

Her short films on adoption have won top honors at festivals and have been screened internationally. Her book, *The Girls Who Went Away* (Penguin Press, 2006) was chosen as one of the top 5 non-fiction books of 2006 by the National Book Critics Circle, and was awarded the Ballard Book Prize, given annually to a female author who advances the dialogue about women's rights.

##### DENNIS GOULDEN

Dennis Goulden was the Executive Producer of *Montage: A Filmed History of the 60s and 70s* which aired on WKYC-TV through 1979. The show won dozens of Emmys and dozens more nominations, and hundreds of other awards. After the series ended, Dennis Goulden continued to work at WKYC as executive producer of their *Probe 3* investigative unit until 1980, at which time he began his own production house, "North Coast Productions." In 1982 he contracted with WEWS-TV, where he became Special Projects Producer and won two more Emmys. In 1984 Goulden became Local Programming Director of WVIZ-TV, Cleveland PBS station. After stepping down from his PBS job in mid-1988, Goulden became Director of Programming and Executive Producer of North Coast Cable. He currently produces special projects at WKYC, where he has won Emmys for his work on *Dateline-Cleveland*, and, as President of DBG Communications, Inc., develops documentaries and community-oriented productions for airing on commercial and public television stations for local and national networks.

##### BETSIE NORRIS

An adoptee having made the journey to a successful reunion on her own, Betsie Norris founded Adoption Network Cleveland in 1988 to provide support and assistance to others who are touched by adoption. The organization was at

first a fully volunteer effort, and as it grew, she became the organization's first executive director in 1995, a position she still holds.

Since then Betsie has become a frequent spokesperson in the media. With a wide array of programs and services, Adoption Network Cleveland serves as a successful national model for effective service and advocacy for members of the adoption community including adoptees, adoptive parents, birthparents, youth in foster care and related professionals. Adoption Network Cleveland serves as the lead agency of the Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids Initiative, which is responsible for helping over 450 youth find permanency and transforming the adoption system in Cuyahoga County since 2004.

Betsie has worked tirelessly on legislation to reform Ohio's adoption laws, both to decrease barriers to public system adoption and to increase information available to adult adoptees about their origins. She is co-author with Jayne Schooler of *Journeys After Adoption: Understanding the Lifelong Process*.

#### VALERIE TREISCH-CHIRDON

Valerie Treisch-Chirdon is the current Field Education Director in the School of Social Work at Cleveland State University. Former Program Manager and Clinical Supervisor of 8 years working in foster care and adoption as well as years of experience working with teens in general and pregnant parenting teens in particular, ranging from a residential treatment center and psychiatric hospital to a for-profit foster care network. Current private practice practitioner serving teens and young adults. MSW, LISW-S

#### ***Birthmothers:***

##### BEV

Bev was born and raised in the Cleveland area. In January 1966, at age 16, she "went away" to Woodhaven - a home for unwed mothers in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. In April 1966, Bev's baby girl was born. She was left alone during the labor, then she was put to sleep just before the delivery. She didn't see or hold her baby. She asked one "nice" nurse for information and that nurse gave Bev a Polaroid picture and told her that the baby was a girl. Bev's baby was adopted by an Indiana family at three weeks of age and named Holly. Bev returned to high school the following fall and married the baby's birthfather, Rob, a few years later. Bev and Rob were reunited with Holly in 1993.

##### JEANNE

Jeanne was born in Massachusetts and raised on the east side of Cleveland. In the summer of 1957, at age 22, she "went away" to her sister's home on the west side of Cleveland, until the birth of her baby. In October 1957, Jeanne's baby boy was born. She was not allowed see him or hold him, she was only told that that he was a boy. Jeanne has no memory of relinquishing, just a vague memory of being driven to a Courthouse. The baby was adopted by an Ohio family two months later and was named Eric. Jeanne and Eric were reunited in August 1998, and as Jeanne says "it was 40 years, 9 months and 26 days later."