

# PRESS KIT

## 400 More Homosexuals Ousted from Gov't Jobs



Washington, D. C., March 25.—A prompt drive to kick 400 known homosexuals off the Government payrolls may overshadow the showdown scheduled for next week in the Congressional probe of alleged State Department Commies, it was predicted here today.

The climax in the disloyalty investigation is set for Monday, when a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee questions FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover on charges that his secret files prove there is a "top Russian spy" still connected with the State Department. The charges were made by Senator



Narrated by  
**GLENN CLOSE**

Winner of  
**16 AWARDS**  
For Best Documentary

# THE LAVENDER SCARE

FULL EXPOSURE FILMS PRESENTS A FILM BY JOSH HOWARD BASED ON THE BOOK BY DAVID K. JOHNSON  
"THE LAVENDER SCARE" DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD WHITE EDITOR BRUCE SHAW COMPOSER JOEL GOODMAN  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BETSY WEST, KEVIN JENNINGS AND ANDREW TOBIAS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR JILL LANDES  
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY JOSH HOWARD

# THE LAVENDER SCARE

**The untold story of a vicious witch hunt.  
And the courageous few who fought back.**

## ABOUT THE FILM

### LOG LINE

Tens of thousands of gay men and lesbians are fired from their jobs in a decades-long effort by the U.S. government to rid the federal workforce of homosexuals.

### SYNOPSIS

With the United States gripped in the panic of the 1950s Cold War, President Dwight D. Eisenhower deemed homosexuals to be “security risks” and vowed to rid the federal government of all employees discovered to be gay or lesbian.

Over the next four decades, tens of thousands of government workers lost their jobs or were denied employment for no reason other than their sexual orientation.

But the mass firings had an unintended effect: they stirred outrage in the gay community and helped to ignite the gay rights movement years before the Stonewall Uprising.

Partly based on the award-winning book by historian David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare* illuminates a shameful and little-known chapter of American history.

In the words of the *Los Angeles Times*: “A wealth of archival footage and stills, candid chats with victims of this harrowing era (and a few unapologetic victimizers) plus effective voiceovers by Glenn Close and others combine for a vivid, disturbing and rousing picture of specious government intrusion at its worst.”

# REVIEWS

Los Angeles Times

**“A gripping, nimbly assembled documentary.** A vivid, disturbing and rousing picture of specious government intrusion at its worst.”

San Francisco  
Chronicle

**“Compelling and well-made.** The touching finale leaves you with a sense of resiliency.”

The New York Times

“Queer history is American history, and *The Lavender Scare* re-examines World War II, the Eisenhower administration, and the space race through a lens of gay liberation. **It’s fascinating and horrifying — and timely,** given the continuing scapegoating of marginalized groups.”

THEADVOCATE

“Josh Howard’s powerful film makes **sure we don’t forget** this lamentable time in history.”

Hollywood  
REPORTER

“Sheds a valuable spotlight on the U.S. government's shameful history of anti-gay discrimination. A film that **should be essential viewing** in these times when intolerance is on the rise.”

VARIETY

**“An essential and absorbing documentary** tells the story of the political repression of homosexuality in America in the '50s, when anti-gay panic fused with anti-Communist paranoia to create a new beast of injustice.”

IndieWire

“The eye-opening documentary **should be required viewing.** The message is clear not just about history repeating itself, but possibly regressing to socially harmful and unjust ways.”

Psychology Today

“An exceptional documentary, beautiful, carefully constructed and inspiring. **Watching this film left me hopeful and inspired.** I felt like I was back in the 60s, when I came of age, and anything seemed possible if we tried.”

THE  
PLAYLIST

“A must-see for anyone looking to immerse themselves in such history – especially LGBTQ viewers who want to learn more about their roots. **This film belongs on LGBTQ studies syllabi nationwide.**”

# CAST AND CREDITS

Producer and Director      **Josh Howard**

Associate Director      **Jill Landes**

Editor      **Bruce Shaw**

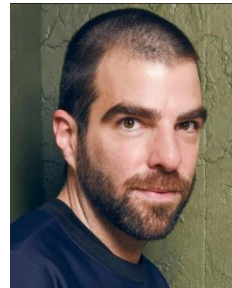
Director of Photography      **Richard White**

Original Music      **Joel Goodman**

Executive Producers      **Betsy West**  
   **Kevin Jennings**  
   **Andrew Tobias**  
   **Paul Austin**

Senior Producer      **Barbara Pierce**

Based on a book by      **David K. Johnson**



Narrated by      **Glenn Close**

Voice of Dr. Franklin Kameny      **David Hyde Pierce**

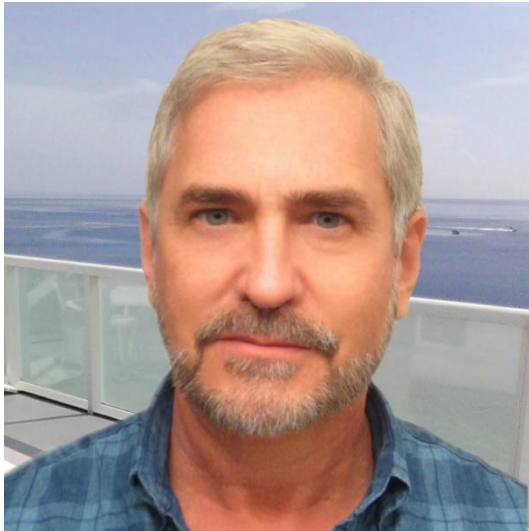
Voice of Andrew Ference      **T.R. Knight**

Voice of Madeleine Tress      **Cynthia Nixon**

Voice of Dennis Flinn      **Zachary Quinto**

Full crew biographies at [www.theLavenderScare.com/credits](http://www.theLavenderScare.com/credits)

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



This project has been a journey of discovery for me.

I'm old enough to remember an era in which *The New York Times* used the words “pervert” and “homosexual” interchangeably, and I thought I had a reasonably good sense of the history of LGBTQ people in America.

But it was not until I read the book *The Lavender Scare* by historian David K. Johnson that I learned of the systematic way in which federal agencies went about trying to purge all homosexuals from the government workforce, or that the policy was still being enforced as late as 1995.

As a former producer and executive at the CBS News broadcast *60 Minutes*, I think I know a good story when I see one. I felt this unknown chapter of our history was a story that needed to be told.

It's a story that's both tragic and triumphant. It tells of the heartbreak of those who lost their jobs and their careers – and even their lives – as a result of the government's brutal tactics.

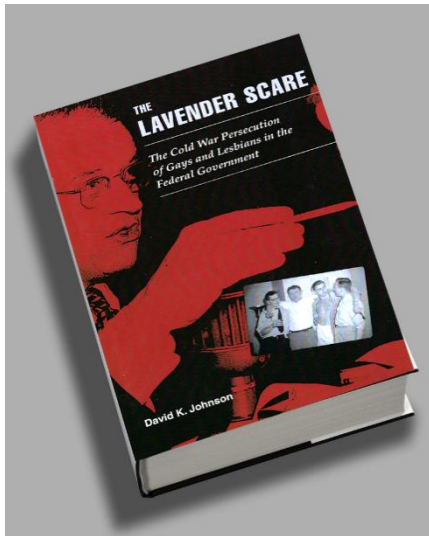
But it is uplifting as well. It shows how the policy of discrimination stirred a sense of outrage and activism among gay men and lesbians and helped ignite what was to become the gay rights movement.

Several years ago, when I began work on this film, my goal was to shed light on an important but overlooked aspect of LGBTQ history. In today's social and political climate, I see the story of *The Lavender Scare* as more relevant than ever.

I am grateful to the men and women who shared their personal stories on camera – not just the employees who lost their jobs, but the officials who carried out the government's policies as well. Without their honest and thoughtful insights, this film could never have been made.

Josh Howard  
Director  
***The Lavender Scare***

# BASED ON THE AWARD-WINNING BOOK



The scholarly framework of the documentary film *The Lavender Scare* is provided by the award-winning book of the same name by nationally recognized LGBTQ scholar David K. Johnson.

Published by the University of Chicago Press, it is the result of his groundbreaking doctoral research at Northwestern University, and as such was subject to rigorous peer review.

It has great credibility among educators and is now required reading in history classes at scores of colleges and universities around the country.

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“Given the degree of injustice and the scale of suffering caused by the Lavender Scare, it’s astonishing that no one before Johnson has thought to write its history.”

-- Hugh Brogan, *The Times Literary Supplement*



"Johnson's book is one of the most instructive histories of the domestic Cold War to have appeared in years, but its reach extends beyond its immediate subject to the question, which vexes us today, of achieving the right balance between freedom and security."

--*London Review of Books*



"Johnson has written a necessary, and extraordinarily compelling, social history of mid-century homophobia that should be read not only for what it tells us about then, but now as well."

-- Michael Bronski, *Bay Windows*



"Johnson's work assures that we shall never again be able to think about the anti-Communist crusade without acknowledging its fierce counterpart that affected so many people."

-- Leila J. Rupp, *Journal of American History*



"By demonstrating the extent to which gay history is part of mainstream history, (Johnson) continues the important academic endeavor of bringing the margins to the center."

-- Fiona Paton, *American Quarterly*

# Q&As

## Where does the title of the film come from?

The term “the Lavender Scare” refers to a period of time in which it was believed that gay men and lesbians working for the federal government were a threat to the safety and security of the United States.

## Why were homosexuals a threat?

With the United States locked in a Cold War with the Soviet Union, Senator Joseph McCarthy alleged that gay men and lesbians working for the government were a security risk because they were susceptible to blackmail by foreign enemy agents.

## How many people were fired?

Over a 40-year period, tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs or were denied employment.

## How many homosexuals actually gave up secrets in order to avoid being exposed?

After several investigations over many years, not a single case was ever found.

## Were LGBTQ people always feared in Washington?

No! In fact, in the 1930s and 40s, there was a vibrant and very open gay community in Washington. A large number of new government jobs were created after the Great Depression, any of the people who came to Washington to fill those jobs were gay men and lesbians eager to make a new life in the growing city. They enjoyed a comfortable work environment and a lively social life, unaware of the devastating events that were ahead.

## Why is the date April 27, 1953 important?

That is the day President Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450, which directed the firing of all government workers discovered to be gay or lesbian. More than a thousand federal agents (a couple of whom are interviewed in the film) were assigned to the task of exposing homosexuals.

## Did any good come of this?

Yes! Rather than destroy the LGBTQ community, the anti-gay witch hunt made it stronger. It stirred a new sense of anger, outrage and militancy among gay men and lesbians. In 1965 (four years before the Stonewall Rebellion, commonly viewed as the start of the gay rights movement) a handful of brave men and women fed up with the government’s anti-gay policies staged Washington’s first gay rights protest – a picket line in front of the White House.

## How long did this policy remain in effect?

The witch hunts didn’t end in the 1950s. The government continued for *four decades* to fire people just because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. President Clinton officially put an end to the practice, but not until 1995 – yes, 1995. The ban on service in the military continued for many years beyond that.

# TIMELINE

- 1930s and '40s** Government jobs created by The New Deal draw thousands of young men and women to Washington, D.C.; a large percentage are homosexual, and a thriving gay community develops.
- 1948** Publication of Dr. Alfred Kinsey's book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, shocks the country with the finding that 37 percent of American men had engaged in at least one homosexual act since adolescence, and that 4 percent were exclusively homosexual.
- February 20, 1950** Sen. Joseph McCarthy declares that the State Department is infested with homosexuals who are susceptible to blackmail and therefore are a risk to national security.
- February 28, 1950** Secretary of State Dean Acheson reveals his department has secretly fired 91 homosexual employees. The revelation causes alarm that homosexuality is widespread in the government.
- 1950** The State Department starts administering lie detector tests to ferret out homosexual employees. Hundreds are fired.
- June 20, 1951** FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover creates a "Sex Deviate" program; the private lives of tens of thousands of government employees are examined.
- April 27, 1953** President Dwight D. Eisenhower issues Executive Order 10450, directing the firing of all gay men and lesbians from the federal government.
- October, 1957** Frank Kameny, a Harvard-trained astronomer, becomes one of the thousands of government employees fired for being gay. He's the first person to challenge his dismissal.
- April 17, 1965** Seven men and one woman picket the White House; it is the first known gay rights demonstration in Washington.
- June 28, 1969** A series of spontaneous demonstrations against a police raid at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, becomes a defining moment in the gay rights movement.
- August 4, 1995** President Clinton signs an executive order wiping out the last vestiges of President Eisenhower's 1953 ban on homosexuals in government.
- June 29, 2009** Frank Kameny is honored by President Obama at the White House.

# FESTIVALS AND SCREENINGS

## Domestic

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Albuquerque  
Ann Arbor, Michigan  
Ashford, Washington  
Atlanta  
\* [Atlantic City](#)  
Austin  
Baltimore  
Bethel, Connecticut  
Billings, Montana  
Birmingham, Alabama  
Boston  
Bridgehampton, New York  
Brooklyn  
Buffalo  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
Charlottesville, Virginia  
Chicago  
Dallas  
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Detroit  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
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Fort Myers, Florida  
\* Fort Worth  
Fresno  
\* Hartford, Connecticut  
Hope, Arkansas  
Houston  
\* Huntington Beach,  
California  
Huntington, New York  
Indianapolis  
Jacksonville, Florida  
Juneau, Alaska  
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Livermore, California  
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Martha's Vineyard  
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\* [Miami](#)  
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Newport Beach, California  
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Palm Springs  
Peoria, Illinois  
Philadelphia  
Phoenix  
Portland, Oregon  
Raleigh, North Carolina  
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Sonoma County  
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Sun Valley, Idaho  
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Tucson, Arizona  
Vero Beach, Florida  
Washington, D.C.  
Winstead, Connecticut  
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Calgary  
Cape Town  
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Frankfurt  
Geneva  
Helsinki  
Johannesburg  
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Zagreb

Partial list.

\* [Denotes award winner.](#)

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