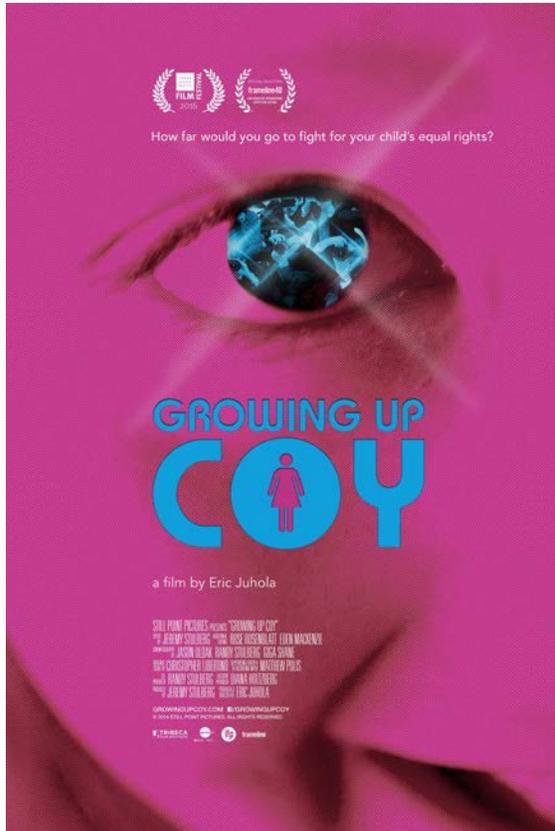




# GROWING UP COY

A feature documentary

How far would you go to fight for your child's equal rights?



*"...could not be timelier"*  
-- New York Times

*"A sympathetic, of-the-moment doc..."*  
-- The Hollywood Reporter

*"...urgent viewing"*  
-- The Guardian

*"...provocative, enlightening"*  
-- OUT

*"...unique insight into what anyone who dares to stand up for their rights must endure when their fight becomes public"*  
-- The Moveable Fest

*"...devastating and topical...a gorgeously made and breathlessly moving piece of work."*  
-- Criterion Cast

*"...contemplative and admirably honest"*  
-- NonFics

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## THE OVERVIEW

“Growing Up Coy” is a feature-length documentary about a young Colorado family who engages in a highly publicized legal battle and landmark civil rights case, as they fight for their 6-year-old transgender daughter’s right to use the girls’ bathroom at her elementary school. The film asks a universal question that any parent could face: “How far would you go to fight for your child’s equal rights?”



## THE STORY

The Rocky Mountains loom over rural Fountain, Colorado, a farm town on the outskirts of the conservative Colorado Springs area. In a small duplex home, Kathryn, 27, a portrait photographer and Jeremy, 31, a former marine and full time student, give the “5 minute warning” for bedtime to their 5 kids: 8 Year-old Dakota, 6-year-old triplets - Coy, Max, and Lily, as well as little Auri, who is 3. The kids scream “Noooo!” - a familiar scene in millions of households across America.

That night, Kathryn decides to read Coy’s favorite book, “Be Who You Are”– which shows the challenges of a gender variant child “Nick” as he transforms into “Hope”. It is Coy’s favorite book because Coy was born a boy biologically, but since she was 18 months old she has identified as a girl.

Kathryn laments, “At first, we thought it was a phase that he liked the color pink and wearing girly clothes. But one day, shortly before Coy began kindergarten, Coy asked ‘When are the doctors going to take my penis off?’ - and then I knew this was something serious.”

After consulting with a therapist and a little soul searching, Coy’s parents allowed Coy to publicly transition from male to female in Kindergarten with the support of her teachers and classmates. She also used the girls’ bathroom without incident until the school administration abruptly reversed their decision in the middle of her 1<sup>st</sup> grade year, letting Kathryn and Jeremy know that going forward, Coy must use the boys bathroom or school nurse’s bathroom.

Devastated that their daughter would be singled out and humiliated, the Mathises decide to fight back and retain attorney Michael Silverman to file a complaint on their behalf with the Colorado Civil Rights Division, pursuing a case that would set a precedent for school districts across the state and the nation.



After a press conference on the steps of the Colorado State Capitol, suddenly the Mathis family is at the center of an international media circus, with their child on the front page of the New York Times – and the target of extreme scrutiny from critics around the world.

What comes next is a tumultuous year full of ups and downs as the Mathises fight a very public battle that never lets up, ultimately threatening the very fabric of their family. Coy’s parents become outspoken public defenders of their daughter’s rights, and we see Coy make the transition from an innocent 6-year-old-girl to the proverbial “poster child” for the trans youth movement.

## THE PRESS

### The New York Times

*"The film could not be timelier, with transgender issues at the fore and 11 states suing the Obama administration over its directive telling schools to allow students to use whichever bathroom matches their gender identities."*

-- [Cara Buckley](#)

### THE Hollywood REPORTER

*"A sympathetic, of-the-moment doc..."* -- John DeFore

### theguardian

*"...urgent viewing...Juhola deftly humanises the couple before they utter a word...It's these intimate moments that go a long way to making Growing Up Coy more than a simple advocacy film. Coy's fight for equal rights is the focus of the documentary, but it's the family's willingness to allow Juhola into their turbulent lives that gives it the emotional heft needed to connect with even the most conservative of viewers."* -- [Nigel Smith](#)

### CBS NEWS

*"A notable world premiere"* -- [David Morgan](#)

### REFINERY29

*"...(we want to) try to help people understand what the transgender experience is like. When you see Coy and you spend 82 minutes with her and her family, hopefully [you] come away with the fact that this is actually just an ordinary family who loves their kids and want the best for their kids. And Coy is really just a little girl who wants to be like all the other little girls and do everything else that any other little girl would want to do, including using the girls' bathroom."* -- [Director Eric Juhola](#)

### the village VOICE

*"Growing Up Coy depicts the difficulties of a Colorado family's attempt, in clashing with their school district over their transgender daughter's access to the girls' bathroom, to set a precedent for transgender rights"*

-- [Michelle Orange](#)

### OUT

*"Coy's onscreen journey is...provocative, enlightening..."* -- [Jesse Steinbach](#)

### THE MOVEABLE FEST

*"...beyond becoming an important historical document, the film provides unique insight into what anyone who dares to stand up for their rights must endure when their fight becomes public"* -- [Stephen Saito](#)

GROWING UP COY  
A Feature Documentary

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(From Criterion Cast) *"...devastating and topical...Coy is obviously a timely piece of documentary filmmaking, but it comes at it in a decidedly singular way...(a) moving look at the impact on parents as they watch their children go through what can truly be a traumatizing affair...It's a gorgeously made and breathlessly moving piece of work."* --

[Joshua Brunsting](#)

**Gay City** NEWS

*"The film's subjects all speak from their hearts, which is what makes this documentary so affecting."*

-- [Gary M. Kramer](#)



*"...there is a very strong cohort of films that approach their subjects much more artfully, focusing on rich portraiture rather than narrow advocacy. The people themselves are no longer props, but fully fleshed out individuals who struggle with complicated situations. Look no further than Growing Up Coy, a new documentary from director Eric Juhola and producer Jeremy Stulberg (Broken Heart Land)...Growing Up Coy is, therefore, a fly in the banal ointment of the "issue film." This isn't The Case Against 8, with its glossy style and its conservative message. This isn't a victory lap. It's a real interrogation of what happens to those who take on the important legal battles of our time. Juhola and Stulberg ask the audience to quite seriously consider what we expect from our civil rights heroes, particularly the ones who don't get to fly home to the big city after the battle. Their message is not simple or straightforward, but contemplative and admirably honest."* -- [Daniel Walber](#)

## GAYLETTER

*"Growing Up Coy play(s) an incredibly important role in raising awareness and providing a personal connection to an otherwise distant news story."* -- [Jonny Gottlieb](#)



*"The bravest little soldier in the transgender bathroom access movement is Coy Mathis, a Colorado first-grader who won the right to use the girls bathroom in 2013...A poignant portrait of the a family whose persistence set of a national battle still being fought today, this documentary details the very personal and very public conflict they waged on behalf of the "thousands of Coys out there" -- [Joe Kukura](#)*



*"Growing Up Coy thoughtfully takes a mostly observational approach to showing...the stresses of educating and fighting against discrimination and the negative reactions to sexual identity issues in pre-teens. The subjects all speak from their hearts, which is what makes this documentary so affecting. -- [Gary M. Kramer](#)*

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



Three and a half years ago, before “trans was trending” and Caitlyn Jenner was Cait, I flew from New York to Colorado to meet a 6-year-old transgender girl after meeting her family’s attorney in New York. This 6-year-old’s parents were about to embark on a years-

long battle with her elementary school for banning her from the girls’ bathroom.

Like most LGBTQ children of the 80’s and 90’s, I couldn’t imagine having publicly supportive parents at such a young age. Meeting Jeremy and Kathryn Mathis, I realized we were at the beginning of a cultural shift – where for the first time in history, parents are starting to come out in support of their young trans kids, allowing them to express their gender identity openly.

However, with young children, the nurturing of gender non-conformity remains controversial. Even after 2015’s year of mainstream transgender visibility, “Growing Up Coy” raises many questions about what it means to grow up transgender in America today, and how one family deals with world-wide media scrutiny while fighting for their transgender daughter’s right to use the girl’s bathroom at her elementary school in a landmark civil rights case.

An estimated 0.1 to 0.5% of the population is transgender (or experience some degree of gender dysphoria). Though this is a relatively small percentage of the population, suicide and harassment statistics from within the transgender community are staggering (look to the right side column!).

These numbers demonstrate the need for education, support, and help for these kids and their families. “Transgender youth rights” is an emerging civil and human rights area, and has been little explored in mainstream culture until recently.

Coy’s case has garnered media attention from all over the world, spotlighting the issue. In light of the recent vitriolic dialogue in our country, I am hopeful that this film helps to create a new opportunities for discussion and exchange of ideas between parents and school communities that may not know how to proceed when they are introduced to their first transgender students.

I also hope that the film will highlight the sacrifice made by ordinary people who take a stand for the rights of all of us in the LGBTQ population. For that, I think Coy & her family, as well those who put themselves in the public eye to stand for equal rights, have put us all in a debt of gratitude.

### STATISTICS

- **53%** of trans people have been verbally harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation.  
–National Center for Trans Equality
- **90%** of transgender youth reported feeling **unsafe** at school because of their gender expression.  
–dragitout.org
- **78%** of transgender youth report having been **verbally harassed**.  
–National Center for Trans Equality
- **35%** of transgender youth report being **physically attacked at school**.  
–National Center for Trans Equality
- **57%** reported have experienced significant **family rejection**.  
–National Center for Trans Equality
- **41%** of trans people have had at least one **suicide attempt** compared to 1.6% of the general population.  
–National Center for Trans Equality

## THE **SPECS**

- Run Time: 82 mins 26 secs
- Screening Formats: HDCam, Blu-Ray

## THE **FESTIVALS**

- **Human Rights Watch Film Festival**  
New York, NY  
June, 16<sup>th</sup>, 7:30pm, IFC Center  
June 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm, Film Society of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater
- **Frameline Film Festival**  
San Francisco, CA  
June 25<sup>th</sup>, 11:00am, Castro Theater

## THE **MARKETS**

- IFP's Independent Film Week
- IDFA Roundtable Pitch
- Sundance Fellows Program
- Sheffield Doc/Fest Meet Market
- Sundance Creative Producing Lab & Summit

## THE **SUPPORT**



GROWING UP **COY**  
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## THE CREDITS

Directed & Produced by	ERIC JUHOLA
Produced & Edited by	JEREMY STULBERG
Executive Producer	DIANA HOLTZBERG
Co-producer	RANDY STULBERG
Cinematography	JASON OLDAK RANDY STULBERG GIGA SHANE
Original Score by	CHRISTOPHER LIBERTINO
Supervising Sound Editor & Re-Recording Mixer	MATTHEW POLIS

## THE CREATIVE TEAM

**ERIC JUHOLA** (DIRECTOR/PRODUCER) founded the film and television production company Still Point Pictures and produced the Gotham Award-nominated documentary [Off the Grid: Life on the Mesa](#), winning 8 best documentary prizes at festivals around the world, followed by a theatrical release and US broadcast on the Sundance Channel. Eric is also the producer of the ITVS/PBS documentary [Broken Heart Land](#) which premiered at the Frameline Film Festival and aired on PBS WORLD Channel's series America ReFramed in 2014.

**JEREMY STULBERG** (PRODUCER/EDITOR) produced and directed the award-winning feature documentaries [Off the Grid: Life on the Mesa](#) (Gotham Award nominee, Sundance Channel) and [Broken Heart Land](#) (ITVS Co-production, WORLD Channel). Jeremy's editing credits include: [The Education of Shelby Knox](#) (Sundance, PBS' POV), [White Horse](#) (Berlinale, HBO) by Academy Award-winner Maryann De Leo, several episodes of PBS' [NOVA](#), and the recent Viceland series [WOMAN](#), starring Gloria Steinem.

**DIANA HOLTZBERG** (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/SALES AGENT) is Vice President of [Films Transit International](#) and President of [East Village Entertainment](#), specializing in the production, worldwide marketing and release of acclaimed documentaries that have won Emmys, Peabodys, DuPonts, BAFTAs, and Oscars. She won an Emmy in 2009 for [The Art of Failure: Chuck Connelly Not for Sale](#) and more recently served as Executive Producer on [Back On Board: Greg Louganis](#). She was also the Executive Producer of [Broken Heart Land](#) with this team.

**RANDY STULBERG** (DP/ CO-PRODUCER) is a visual artist and documentary filmmaker. Randy directed and produced [Off the Grid: Life on the Mesa](#), as well as 2014's [Broken Heart Land](#) with her brother Jeremy (see above). Her work has been screened at over 40 film festivals worldwide and has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art and Lincoln Center.