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Documentary Explores Impact of Virginia Law

Couple forced to leave state because of anti-gay legislation

FREDERICKSBURG, Va.—In 2004, over the protests of the governor of Virginia, the state legislature went further than any other in the country in passing legislation to prohibit same-sex unions by any name. [Barbara and Tibby: A Love Story in the Face of Hate](#) looks at the impact of the law through the lives of one Virginia couple, forced to leave the state when the discriminatory and arguably unconstitutional legislation went into effect.

Barbara Kenny and Tibby Middleton, both in their 60s, had lived quietly, silently bearing the burden of discrimination throughout their lives. They are not activists; they are simply two people who have loved each other for nearly 40 years, and wanted to live out the rest of their lives together, confident that legal steps they'd taken would enable them to always care for each other. Virginia's Affirmation of Marriage Act robbed them of that peace of mind.

HB 751, which became Virginia Code Section 20-45.3, prohibits people of the same sex from entering into legal arrangements "purporting to bestow the privileges or obligations of marriage." Many lawyers believe the law could impact wills, medical directives, powers of attorney, and other legal documents, not just between same-sex couples, but between any persons of the same sex.

Virginia artist Suzanne Moe put a human face on the people targeted by this controversial legislation, interviewing her friends after they made their decision to leave their home. Combined with family photos, and music from Uppity Blues Woman Gaye Adegbalola, Moe's partner and close friend of the couple, [A Love Story in the Face of Hate](#) provides an insightful, entertaining and educational glimpse into the often misunderstood "gay lifestyle." This story, however, transcends gay rights—it is a story about human rights.

Though she planned only to screen the documentary for friends, to help them understand why Barbara and Tibby had to leave, Moe's documentary—and the powerful story it tells—has taken on a life of its own. The documentary already has been shown throughout the state, including a screening by Equality Virginia, the state's leading gay-rights organization, at the Virginia General Assembly's lobbying day during the 2005 session. Though the law has passed, and Barbara and Tibby have left Virginia, the controversy is far from over. During the 2005 session, the General Assembly passed an amendment that would write this anti-gay discrimination in to the Virginia Constitution. It will go before the legislature again during the 2006 session, and if it's passed there, could be put before voters as early as November 2006.

"Inform, educate and activate," Moe said. "That is our mission."

Copies of "Love Story" DVD are available for sale, and public screenings, complete with an educational program, are being arranged. www.sumoe.com/other_art/lovestory.html

Full text of Virginia Code Section 20-45.3 "A civil union, partnership contract or other arrangement between persons of the same sex purporting to bestow the privileges or obligations of marriage is prohibited. Any such civil union, partnership contract or other arrangement entered into by persons of the same sex in another jurisdiction shall be void in all respects in Virginia and any contractual rights created thereby shall be void and unenforceable."

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