



# STRANGER/SISTER

HATE CAN'T STOP A SISTERHOOD.

*a documentary film by Kirsten Kelly & Katie Taber*

## **Facilitator's Guide**

*for Virtual and In-Person Screenings*



Thank you so much for hosting a screening of the documentary film, *Stranger/Sister*! By hosting, you are now a key part in the Odyssey Impact national social impact campaign for the film. There are folks all over the country who are using the film as a catalyst for important discussions, relationship building, and joining together to sow peace and understanding, instead of division and hate.

The Odyssey Impact campaign for *Stranger/Sister* is designed to educate, engage and activate the public around intentional relationship building, and creating peaceful dialogue across lines of difference. The campaign, mirroring the film, dives into the delicate process of building relationships with awareness and deliberate care; encourages more openness, conversations and community-building between people who may have deeply held beliefs that are in opposition; and ultimately, demonstrates how this intentional relationship building can create a more peaceful society that stems the rising tide of hate.

As part of this campaign, we encourage you to use *Stranger/Sister* as a tool for training or teaching, guided by the campaign goals below.

## Campaign Goals

1. Utilize the film screening as a tool that models peaceful dialogue and relationship-building across lines of differences.
2. Inspire audience members to step out of their comfort zones, embrace their brave and adventurous spirits, and embark on their own journey from “stranger” to “sister” by elevating intentional relationship-building practices.

3. Highlight shared values among different faiths to encourage understanding and stronger and more peaceful communities.
4. Educate audiences and increase religious literacy of the Muslim and Jewish faith tradition, their commonalities, and the shared values between them.
5. Uplift the mission of the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, which seeks to “build trust, respect, and relationships between American and Canadian Muslim and Jewish women and teenage girls. Together, the women commit to end acts of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiment, stand up for one another when hate is aimed at [their] communities and engage in social action work.” In addition, the campaign aims to increase the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom’s network of members and support; and encourage members to step into leadership roles in their communities and beyond.

This document is simply meant to be a guideline that offers ideas and questions you might consider as you prepare for your screening. We invite you to make it your own by tailoring it to the specific needs of your community.

Screening *Stranger/Sister* is only the first step. The story within the film is a springboard to larger discussions you can have within your community about peaceful dialogue and relationship-building across lines of differences, and uniting against hate.

Thank you for bringing *Stranger/Sister* to your community. Now let’s get to work!

Sincerely,

The Odyssey Impact Team



# Director's Statement

In the weeks following the 2016 presidential election, we were stunned by the deep societal fractures revealed by the divisive campaign. This unease deepened with the Muslim ban that was enacted shortly after the inauguration. We felt we were witnessing the beginning of a dark chapter in our nation's history. And as the number of hate crimes rose at an alarming rate in the following months, like so many others, we asked ourselves as filmmakers how can we respond?

We came across a story in the New York Times about the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom. Here was an unlikely alliance of women responding boldly, despite their differences, with an example of building intentional friendships - one Muslim and one Jewish woman at a time. As Sisterhood Co-founder, Sheryl Oltzky often states, "It's hard to hate someone that you really know."



We began filming at a solidarity vigil the Sisterhood was holding in New Jersey in response to the 2017 Muslim ban. The school cafeteria

was humming with women, and some men, of different faiths, backgrounds and ages. Everyone in that room had come together, across lines that seemed to divide them, to provide emotional support to one another, pray, and directly challenge the idea that "the other" should be feared and shunned. Vigils like this were happening with over a thousand Sisters nationwide.

For two years we filmed numerous local chapters of the Sisterhood, across several regions of the country. We witnessed the transformative power of creating relationships with those you consider "the other." The care and cultivation of these Sisterhood bonds, the commitment to intentional relationships, deep listening, and the power these practices have as a pathway out of fear and hate was deeply inspiring to witness.



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We could not imagine that more than 3 years later, as we prepare to share the film, the country would find itself roiled by crisis. That Americans already exhausted by years of division, now in the grip of a pandemic, would face a reckoning of racial trauma and justice that has been a long time coming. So much pain has been laid bare in this moment. Watching the film now, the flashpoints of hate we include in the story strike us as early warnings of the current tumult.

Never has it felt more important to embrace the lessons of the Sisterhood. Near the end of the film, a group leader speaking to Muslim and Jewish sisters about the Israel-Palestine conflict explains, “In conversations such as these, we want to lead with what we’re not certain about. We’re listening not to react, but to go deeper into a relationship with one another.” More than we could have anticipated, these words ring out with a stinging moral clarity. This kind of listening, in such a fractured time in history, is a radical act.

The story of the Sisterhood has planted in us the seeds of bravery needed to look closely at ourselves, examine our biases, listen hard and reach out as allies to “the other.” We witness how the mission of building supportive friendships in solidarity with each other, across lines of difference, can be a powerful way to create change. We hope this story inspires audiences to move through the uncomfortable fear and embrace curiosity, trusting that there is so much we all share and that our differences, rather than a threat, can be a source of joyful discovery.

- Kirsten Kelly & Katie Taber



# About The Film

## ***Stranger/Sister*** (39min)

A FILM BY KIRSTEN KELLY AND KATIE TABER

The United States is experiencing a surge in hate crimes as a tide of white supremacy gathers momentum nationwide. Muslim and Jewish communities are particularly at risk. ***Stranger/Sister*** is the story of two ordinary women, one Muslim and one Jewish, who dare to believe they can join hands to stop the wave of hate. Overcoming a long history of distrust between their two religions, they build a movement that turns strangers into sisters, challenging our assumptions about how to fight hate in America. Intimately following women from Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom chapters in Austin, Chicago and across the Nation, the film follows the Sisters as they build a powerful network of hope in a time of chaos and hate.

**Transform Films Inc.** is a documentary production company that tells stories of hope, compassion and the quest for a more just world, presents ***Stranger/Sister***.

**Odyssey Impact** is a multi-faith media non-profit that builds impact campaigns and brings together changemakers in order to address the most pressing social issues facing our world. Odyssey Impact drives social change through innovative storytelling and media, connecting faith and secular communities.



# Meet the Filmmakers

## Kirsten Kelly

Director & Senior Producer



Kelly is an Emmy-Award winning documentary filmmaker who lives in Brooklyn. Recent projects include *Stranger/Sister*, [\*Healing the Healers: Communal Trauma\*](#) media project (Golden Telly Award, 2019), and [\*Healing the Healers: Domestic Violence\*](#); *The Girl With The Rivet Gun* (an animated short documentary on Rosie the Riveter), the Emmy-winning *The Homestretch* (PBS/ITVS, Co-produced with Kartemquin Films). She is the Senior Producer for Transform Films and an Impact Producer for Odyssey Impact. Previous film projects include the award-winning

*Asparagus! Stalking the American Life*. Her work has been supported by the ITVS, CPB, AmDoc, MacArthur Foundation, the Sundance Institute, Fledgling Fund, Chicken and Egg, Illumination Fund, Good Pitch and Bertha Foundation/Brit Docs. Kirsten is a Fellow at the Sundance Documentary Institute and a graduate of the Master's Directing program at The Juilliard School.

## Katie Taber

Director/Producer



Taber's recent documentary projects include producing *Siempre, Luis*, which follows Luis Miranda, the father of Lin-Manuel Miranda, as he attempts to mount a production of "Hamilton" in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. *Siempre, Luis* premiered at Sundance 2020 and will stream on HBO this October. She directed the Wavelength Productions feature *How to Be Normal*, the coming of age story of a young man who, as a child, underwent a unique and controversial treatment for autism. Other projects include the PBS special *Into the Night*:

*Portraits of Life and Death* and the award-winning *Milwaukee 53206*. She has worked on films for the PBS series FRONTLINE including *Life and Death in Assisted Living*, *Dollars and Dentists*, and *The Child Cases*, and she was a co-producer on the four-part PBS NOVA series: *The Fabric of the Cosmos*. Taber co-produced the Emmy-award winning feature documentary *The Homestretch*.

# Steps for Facilitating a Constructive Post-Screening Discussion (Virtual or In-Person)

## Be Prepared:

- View the film once or twice before your screening to familiarize yourself with the subjects' names & to discuss key themes & important scenes from the film.
- Determine what themes and/or scenes from the film might resonate with your audience members. These can be used as springboards for discussion.
- Identify specific actions to mobilize your audience and community.

## Know Your Audience:

- Get a sense of who will be attending your screening. Will members of a particular organization attend? If so, what is that organization's mission/perspective? Will any experts or community influencers attend?
- Realize that not all attendees will come into this screening with the same points of view, life experiences or prior knowledge.
- Be open to all points of view and encourage attendees with differing perspectives to participate in discussion.

## The Role of the Moderator:

- Create a safe space so that attendees feel respected and willing to engage in conversation.
- Feel comfortable to gently correct any misinformation.
- Supplement the discussion with background information and facts when necessary but make sure not to dominate the conversation.
- Be conscious of time and kindly remind attendees to keep their comments brief so that everyone has the chance to speak.





***Thank you for screening the film and being a part of the Impact campaign!***



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**For additional information on the film visit: [www.strangersister.com](http://www.strangersister.com)  
For screenings information contact: [screenings@odyssey-impact.org](mailto:screenings@odyssey-impact.org)**



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