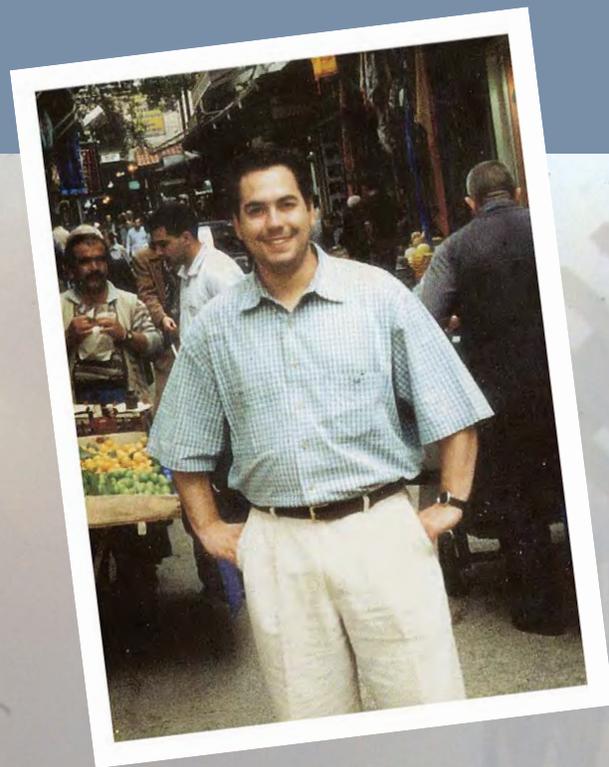


Discussion
and
Study Guide

IN OUR SON'S NAME

A Film by Gayla Jamison



*Forgiveness means recognizing the full humanity of the other person.
It also means letting go of something that can be self-destructive.*

How to Use This Guide

This discussion and study guide is intended to accompany the documentary film *In Our Son's Name* when used by community groups, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, and prisons. It includes suggestions on how to use this guide, a statement from director Gayla Jamison, and a synopsis. Also included are a chronological timeline of events depicted in the film, a list of people who appear in the film with their photos, and a brief explanation of the death penalty trial process.

The film inspires lively discussions by audiences wherever it's shown. Many of the discussion questions included here are ones sparked by early screenings. Discussion questions are organized in two parts, as questions relating to specific scenes and questions pertaining to the film as a whole. Questions about specific scenes follow a brief description of the scene and are accompanied by a representative still photo from that scene. The questions cover a variety of topics. Discussion leaders are encouraged to review the questions and select ones suited to their particular group and/or the direction they would like the discussion to take.

Audiences have especially been moved by the prison sequences in the film. A version of how to implement the Peace Circle exercise that is seen in the prison sequences is included here. That section also includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the Circle Process, a brief explanation of the concept of restorative justice, and excerpts from letters from two of the Sing Sing prisoners who participated in the Circle Process shown in the film. The letter excerpts may be used as a handout; so might a page that contains letters written by Orlando and Phyllis Rodriguez. They have been formatted to make printouts easy. This guide concludes with a brief list of books, internet resources for further reading and viewing, and the film credits.

The downloadable .pdf format was chosen so that this Study Guide can be shared on electronic devices and printed. It contains active links for moving from section to section and for accessing supporting materials on line. The .pdf format also will allow for periodic updates, if needed.

The user can navigate in Adobe Acrobat by using bookmarks or by clicking on chapter titles in the Table of Contents. Clicking on the page number — at the bottom center of each page — returns the user to Page 3, the Table of Contents page.

Table of Contents

How to Use This Guide	2
Table of Contents	3
Director's Statement	4
Synopsis	5
Comments About <i>In Our Son's Name</i>	6
A Chronological Timeline of Events Depicted in the Film	7
People in the Film	8
How the Death Penalty Trial Process Worked in the Case of Zacarias Moussaoui	9
Questions for Discussion with Suggestions for Talking Points	10
Scene Summaries and Related Questions	10
General Questions about the Film	17
A Group Exercise: The Circle Process	18
Organizing a Circle	18
FAQs about the Circle Process	19
Prisoners' Responses to the Circle Process in the Film	20
Handout – Letters by Orlando and Phyllis	21
For Further Reading and Viewing	23
Film Credits	24

Director's Statement

Like many people, I've wondered whether, if put to the test, I would have the strength to act according to my convictions. For instance, how would I react to the violent death of a loved one? Would my belief in non-violent responses to conflict hold up when put to such a test? The process of making the documentary, *In Our Son's Name*, with Phyllis and Orlando Rodríguez, revealed to me that not only is it possible for reconciliation to take the place of revenge, but that reconciliation is a path towards survival.

In Our Son's Name is a story that challenges conventional ideas about justice and healing, and it presents an intimate portrait of two bereaved parents who choose non-violence in response to their son's murder. When Phyllis and Orlando Rodríguez lost their son, Greg, in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, they were understandably angry, but they turned their rage and sorrow into positive action and found that, in the words of Desmond Tutu, "To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest."

Phyllis and Orlando are not saints; they are ordinary people who faced grief and anger with compassion and a sense of justice that transcended revenge. They chose to oppose an unjust, retaliatory war that would take the lives of innocent people, and they spoke out with bold conviction even though they feared possible negative repercussions for their actions. Searching to understand the reasons people commit violent crimes and recognizing that reconciliation begins with empathy, Phyllis and Orlando reached out to men incarcerated for homicide and violence—men who have come to terms with their actions, taken responsibility for them, and seek redemption. They believe their actions have literally saved their lives.

Following Phyllis and Orlando's journey over the course of seven years changed me. I have learned from their example. I deal with conflict, even day-to-day issues, with more compassion. I've come to realize that my response to conflict should reflect the person I want to be, and that reconciliation is actually a position of great strength. I hope *In Our Son's Name* provides an example of the power of reconciliation and a positive response to acts of violence to those who see it and want to use it in the classroom and share it with others.

Gayla Jamison
May 2015

Synopsis

In Our Son's Name tells a story of one couple's responses to loss, pain, and suffering and presents a powerful message of non-violence and reconciliation. It opens as the extended Rodriguez family celebrates the 98th birthday of Orlando Rodriguez' mother, Marta. Orlando's wife, Phyllis, offers a toast "to people who live in our hearts who aren't here with us today"—a group that includes Orlando and Phyllis' son, Greg, who was killed in the North Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The film then takes viewers back to the events of September 11th and its aftermath, with news reports and interviews.

In the film, Phyllis and Orlando talk about their son, their sense of loss, their anger, and how they coped. The film chronicles their transformative journey, a journey that both confirms and challenges their convictions. To deal with their grief, Orlando and Phyllis chose non-violence over vengeance, reconciliation rather than anger.

They publicly opposed going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, spoke out against anti-Muslim actions, and befriended the mother of accused 9/11 co-conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui. A letter they wrote that was circulated on the internet garnered worldwide sympathy and support. Orlando testified for the defense at Moussaoui's trial. Phyllis was the co-recipient of an international humanitarian award. Orlando brought education about terrorism to his college classroom and began teaching in a correctional facility, and the couple is shown interacting with violent offenders in a peace circle at Sing Sing and with other survivor family members.

"Reconciliation is recognizing that we are incapable of creating a better past," says Phyllis Rodriguez. "I can't bring Greg back. I can't bring back the suicide pilots. I can't reverse history. But what can I do to look forward and try to salvage some good from all this?" she asks. Orlando acknowledges that, "after I realized that Greg was gone, because I'm human I was angry. But I had this instinct that the anger really had to be channeled into something that was going to be good for others."

The film pairs intimate interviews over several years with striking archival footage and photographs, press clippings, correspondence, and news reports to redefine conventional ideas of justice and grief. It received standing ovations at its premiere at Fordham University on February 24, 2015 and at the Atlanta Film Festival on March 26, 2015. Since that time, it has been shown at colleges, universities, churches, and synagogues and to peace and justice groups. It also has been screened at the Global Peace Film Festival, the Peace on Earth Film Festival, and the 2015 meeting of the American Sociological Association.

Comments about In Our Son's Name

"I watched this powerful and healing documentary in a lecture theater filled with utterly transfixed undergraduates – literally the 9/11 generation – and you could have heard a pin drop in the room. None of us could help but be moved, even transformed, by Phyllis and Orlando's remarkable courage and dignity."

Dr. Shadd Maruna, Dean, Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice and author of Making Good and After Crime and Punishment

"I have always had difficulty understanding how people manage to find peace in times of tragedy, but I felt I got a glimpse of it in this movie. Their continued work with inmates and attempts to better the lives of those men, as well Professor Rodriguez' integration of terrorism into the courses he teaches, stood out as not only images of bravery, but a way of honoring the name of their son."

Artur Balanovskiy, Student, Fordham University

"Forgiveness, the search for good in all actions—that is what I took from this movie. The professor and his wife showed great compassion towards the mother of the terrorist and found a similar strength in each other. This is not easy to do, but it was nice to see done even in this tumultuous time when all we hear about is the killing of innocent individuals."

Jim Castillo, Student, Fordham University

"Watching this film gave me a different perspective of how certain experiences can be internalized and the options we have when coping with various situations."

Roddrick Bailey, Student, Fordham University

A Chronological Timeline of Events Depicted in the Film

- Spring 1961 – Phyllis Schafer and Orlando Rodriguez meet as freshman students at City College of New York.
- 1965 – Phyllis and Orlando are married.
- 1967 – Their daughter Julia is born.
- 1969 – Their son Gregory is born.
- Sept. 11, 2001 – Greg is killed in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.
- Sept. 15, 2001 – Orlando's letter is circulated on the internet.
- Dec. 2001 – Zacarias Moussaoui is arrested and charged in connection with the attacks.
- Jan. 4, 2002 – A letter by Orlando and Phyllis is published in the *New York Times*.
- Nov. 2002 – Moussaoui's mother, Aicha el-Wafi, comes to the United States, visits her son in prison, and asks to meet with family members of victims who would be willing to meet with her. Six family members of victims agree to meet with her; Orlando and Phyllis are the only ones who had lost a child. (The others lost siblings.)
- April 2005 – Moussaoui pleads guilty. His trial proceeds to the penalty phase, where his punishment will be decided. It is during this phase that Orlando testifies for the defense.
- May 2006 – Moussaoui's trial ends. Jurors impose a sentence of life in prison without parole rather than a death penalty.
- Oct. 2007 – Phyllis and Aicha receive the Die Quadriga Humanitarian Award in Berlin.
- 2008 – Orlando and Phyllis participate in a Peace Circle at Sing Sing Correctional Facility.
- 2010 – Orlando and Phyllis participate in a panel discussion with other survivor families at a synagogue in New York that was organized after public opposition to the construction of an Islamic Community Center in Manhattan near the site of the World Trade Center, and they visit the home of Talat Hamdani, another member of the panel and the mother of a first responder who died in the attacks.
- 2014 – The extended Rodriguez family gathers to celebrate the birthday of Orlando's mother, Marta. Thirteen years after the death of their son, Phyllis and Orlando reflect on their journey, their struggles with grief, and how they have attempted to salvage some good from their experience.

People in the Film



Marta Rodriguez



Greg Rodriguez



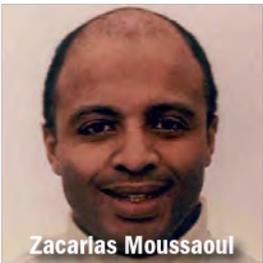
Orlando & Phyllis Rodriguez



Elizabeth Soudant



Julia Rodriguez



Zacarias Moussaoui



Aicha el-Wafi



Jose Ramos-Horta



Pamela Blume Leonard



Father Ron Lemmert



Sa'd



Rob



Jay



Jose



Chol

Greg Rodriguez, an employee of Cantor Fitzgerald who was killed when the World Trade Center collapsed on September 11, 2001

Marta Rodriguez, Greg's grandmother

Orlando Rodriguez, Greg's father

Phyllis Rodriguez, Greg's mother

Elizabeth Soudant, Greg's widow

Julia, Greg's older sister

Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen of Moroccan descent and accused co-conspirator in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center

Aicha el-Wafi, mother of Zacarias Moussaoui

Jose Ramos-Horta, Nobel laureate who presented Phyllis and Aicha at the Die Quadriga Award Ceremony in Berlin

Pamela Blume Leonard, facilitator of the Peace Circle at Sing Sing Correctional Facility

Father Ron Lemmert, a priest who was Catholic Chaplain at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in 2008

Sa'd, a prisoner at Sing Sing Correctional Facility

Jose, a prisoner at Sing Sing Correctional Facility

Choi, a prisoner at Sing Sing Correctional Facility

Rob, a prisoner at Sing Sing Correctional Facility

Jay, a prisoner at Sing Sing Correctional Facility

Talat Hamdani, mother of a paramedic first responder who died on September 11, 2001



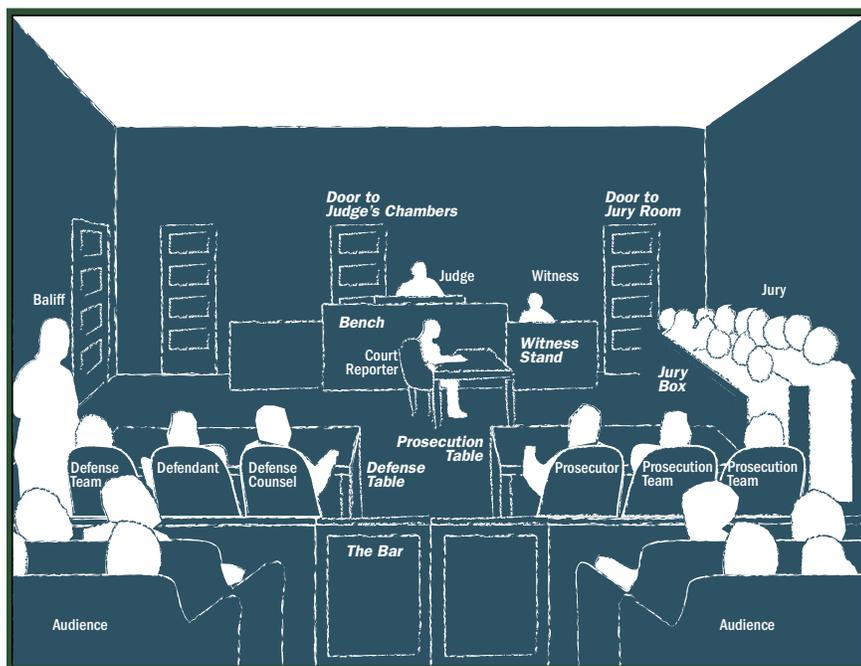
Talat Hamdani

How the Death Penalty Trial Process Worked in the Case of Zacarias Moussaoui

and How That Affected Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez

The U.S. government prosecuted Zacarias Moussaoui for his participation in the 9/11 attacks and sought the death penalty. When juries may have to decide among punishments that include sentencing the accused to death, trials are divided into two parts. In the first part, commonly called The Guilt/Innocence Phase, the jury (or the judge, if the defendant waives his or her right to a jury trial) determines whether the accused is guilty or not guilty of the crime or crimes he or she is charged with committing. Against the advice of his attorneys, Zacarias Moussaoui pleaded guilty to the charges the government brought against him. The judge accepted his guilty plea, thereby ending the first phase of the trial and making Moussaoui eligible to receive a death sentence.

When a defendant is convicted of a crime that is punishable by death—whether by a jury’s decision or by entering a guilty plea—there is a second phase of the trial. This is generally called the Punishment or Sentencing Phase. During this second phase, the jury hears evidence from the prosecution about why death is the appropriate punishment for the crime. Often the prosecution calls victim-survivors to give victim impact testimony at this point. Victim impact witnesses are not permitted to tell the jury what punishment they think is right, but by testifying for the prosecution, it is understood that they support the prosecutor’s case.



After the prosecution has made its case, the defense offers evidence in mitigation that is meant to explain and/or lessen the degree of culpability of the accused. Often the jury hears testimony from the defendant’s family and supporters. Expert witnesses also may be called to answer questions about facts and circumstances of the defendant’s life history, including mental health issues, which affected the defendant’s participation in the capital offense. In the Moussaoui trial, this is the point at which the defense called victim impact witnesses, including Orlando, to testify about the impact of the 9/11 attacks upon them. It is highly unusual for the defense to call victim impact witnesses to testify. In this case, even though they could not specifically speak against the death penalty, it was understood from their life-affirming testimony that the victim impact witnesses did not want Moussaoui to receive a death sentence.

Much to the relief of Phyllis and Orlando and other death penalty opponents, the jury rejected the death penalty. Zacarias Moussaoui is currently serving a Life Sentence Without the Possibility of Parole.

Questions for Discussion with Suggestions for Talking Points



**Opening Scene:
Grandma's Birthday Party**

The questions that follow can help guide a discussion of themes and events depicted in *In Our Son's Name*. Discussion group leaders should feel free to select questions on topics that are of interest and relevance to their viewing group—a group of therapists and counselors, for example, might likely have a different discussion than a classroom of students studying documentary filmmaking. Some viewers immediately will want to discuss their impressions; others require time for quiet reflection. Be sensitive to the needs and desires of the group.

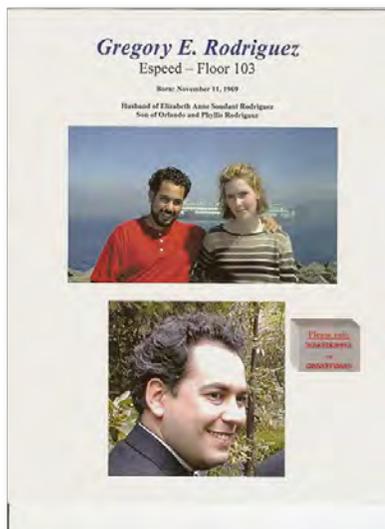
To facilitate recall and provide an organizational framework, scenes in the film are briefly described and are followed by questions that pertain to the content of what took place in that part of the film. After the scene-by-scene section, there is a section of more general questions about the film. Selected questions include talking points and examples. They appear in parentheses after the question.

Scene Summaries and Related Questions

The extended Rodriguez family gathers to celebrate Orlando's mother's 98th birthday. Phyllis offers a toast "to people who live in our hearts who aren't here with us today."

Q: What did you observe about the Rodriguez family in this brief scene?

Q: How might the family's multi-cultural influences have affected Phyllis's and Orlando's responses to their son Greg's death?



September 11, 2001

Family members describe the early days after the 9/11 attacks. Orlando and Phyllis recount the morning of September 11, 2001. Orlando remembers being in his office; Phyllis remembers her walk that morning and the telephone message she received from Greg. Elizabeth remembers seeing fire from her office windows. Soon everyone realized what happened was bigger than an accident. The chaos following the attacks is recalled, and the Rodriguez' initial search for Greg. After 36 hours go by, they admitted to themselves that Greg had died; Orlando calls this a "new mode for us."

Q: How did you feel as you listened to Greg's family members describing how and when they learned about the attacks on 9/11?

Q: What are your memories of Sept. 11, 2001?

Q: Did the terrorist attacks change your feelings about your and your family's safety and vulnerability?



First Months after 9/11

Phyllis and Orlando describe “going public” as victim-survivors of 9/11. They recall initial numbness, then retreating into overwhelming private grief. Orlando writes a letter, “Not In Our Son’s Name,” that is widely publicized and circulated. Phyllis and Orlando begin speaking publicly. On Greg’s birthday, Phyllis breaks down and daughter Julia takes care of her. To avoid seeing images of 9/11 over and over, they decide to cancel their television cable service and stop watching television. Orlando begins teaching about terrorism and uses his teaching skills to manage his anger and grief.

Q: What do you think influenced the estimated 90 percent of Americans who supported a military response to 9/11? What was your initial response? Has your response changed over time?

Q: A letter by Phyllis and Orlando, published in the New York Times on January 4, 2002, included these words:

“We who lost family members all share feelings of deep grief and loss, and are constantly bombarded with painful reminders of that terrible day. But there are many of us who oppose a vengeful approach to the war on terrorism. If any good can come out of the disaster of Sept. 11, perhaps it will include examination of how we can maintain our humanity in the face of terrorists’ threats.”

How can we do this? How have they?

Q: Phyllis and Orlando discuss various emotional triggers and how they affected them. Phyllis’ included the sight of smoke, fire, airplanes, sirens, and images of violence; Orlando’s were seeing photographs of his son. Have you experienced similar types of emotional triggers?

Q: Orlando believes that Greg died because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and that U.S. military action in retaliation to 9/11 would cause the deaths of other people who would be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Orlando and Phyllis concluded that their son’s life was not worth more than the lives of others. What is your response to that idea?

Q: When Orlando talks about his “becoming schizophrenic, in a nice kind of way”—doing things he didn’t feel like doing, not doing things he felt like doing, what does he mean by that? How does he cope?

Q: How can “doing things you don’t feel like doing” be helpful when grieving?

A news report summarizes the case against accused 9/11 co-conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui. Four of the six counts carried the death penalty. Moussaoui’s mother, Aicha el-Wafi, comes to the United States, visits her son in prison, and asks to meet with family members of victims who would be willing to meet with her. When Phyllis first saw Aicha on television, she recognized congruences in their lives, and wanted to meet her. At the meeting in 2002, Orlando saw Aicha and greeted her, then Phyllis embraced her.

Q: What does Phyllis mean when she says the first time she met Aicha, “a burden fell away”? (Something bad was gone.)

Q: What does Aicha mean when she says she and Phyllis are “linked through suffering and sadness”?

Q: Was Moussaoui a victim? A “scapegoat” for the Bush administration? Why or why not?



Relationship with Aicha



Reflections of Greg

Phyllis and Orlando remember their son and discuss his teenage rebellion, his risk-taking behavior as a young man, and the parallels between his life and Zacarias Moussaoui's.

Q: How do Phyllis' and Orlando's feelings about Greg engender empathy toward Zacarias Moussaoui and other young men in prison?

Q: Are parents responsible for the actions of their children?



Orlando's Testimony at the Sentencing Phase of Moussaoui's Trial

In April 2005, Zacarias Moussaoui entered a guilty plea; therefore, his trial was solely concerned with the punishment he would receive. Phyllis and Orlando agreed that the most important outcome of the upcoming sentencing trial would be to avoid a death sentence. While Orlando was preparing to publicly testify for the defense at Moussaoui's trial, Phyllis was privately communicating with Aicha. Phyllis pledged to give companionship at any time Aicha wanted it while in the United States, but was cautioned to "stay out of the press." There could not be any appearance of a connection between her and the mother of the defendant because Orlando would be testifying.

Orlando reflects on what it was like to testify. He was concerned about how testifying would affect their lives, wonders if people would think Rodriguez was "a rat." Prosecutors would not look at him, Orlando remembers. Victim-survivors were united in their "commonality of grief." The pro- and anti-death penalty victim-survivors respected each other. Moussaoui was not sentenced to death.

Q: What did Phyllis mean by, "Whatever [Zacarias] was guilty of is not what he was being charged with"? (Moussaoui was a member of Al Qaeda but was not directly involved in the Sept. 11 attacks; at that time he was being held in detention in Minnesota by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.)

Q: What is your response to Phyllis' statement that the most important thing was that Moussaoui not receive capital punishment? Was that the most important thing?

Q: What are your thoughts about Aicha? Do you agree with her statement, "I didn't do anything!"? Have you even been in a situation where you felt unfairly blamed and shamed? Did anyone defend you? Briefly describe your feelings.

Q: Have you ever testified in a legal proceeding? Were you nervous?

Q: Can you put yourself in Orlando's position as a witness on behalf of a person who pleaded guilty to participation in the 9/11 attacks? What is your strongest feeling?

Q: Why do you think Orlando, as a witness for the defense, was advised to keep a low public profile and stay in the background? What could have happened? (So as not to be impeached as a witness.)

Q: How did testifying help Orlando put his beliefs into action? (It helped dispel fear, made him want to be involved publicly.)

Q: How can taking action free one from victimhood and fear? What kinds of actions would? What kinds of actions would not?

Q: Do you agree with Aicha that the sentence of Life Without the Possibility of Parole is a “death sentence”? Is Moussaoui buried alive? What is your reaction to that sentence in light of post-9/11 terrorist activity?

Q: What thoughts went through your mind when Phyllis said that the U.S. government was seeking “symbolic justice”? What do you think she meant?

After the Trial

With the trial over, Phyllis could see Aicha in public. Orlando reflects on how things had changed.

Q: What does Phyllis mean when she states: “Our son’s life is not worth more than her son’s life”? How is this a “deep belief that is not intellectual”?



Reflections on Greg and Visit to Cemetery

Orlando and Phyllis visit Greg’s grave, bringing flowers, and talk about their memories of him. Orlando remembers Greg, recalls he was a “Phyllis type”—emotional and outgoing. Orlando describes himself (how he was taught to abstract, to generalize, and to be objective) and how he changed as he came to understand and appreciate Greg and to acknowledge that rational thinking and personal feelings complement each other. Phyllis wonders what she would have said to Greg if she had been home when he called on Sept. 11 and realizes that is something she will never know.

Q: How has coming to appreciate the kind of person Greg was helped Orlando become a more rounded person?

Q: What does Orlando mean when he says Greg “died in triumph”? (He had a wife he loved, plans for the future, a responsible job.)



Receiving the Die Quadriga Award in October 2007

Phyllis and Aicha travel to Berlin to receive the Die Quadriga Humanitarian Award and are introduced at the award ceremony by Nobel laureate Jose Ramos-Horta. Phyllis, in her acceptance speech, speaks of having had her convictions most of her life and wondering, if put to the test, could she hold those beliefs.

Q: Phyllis makes a statement about revenge—that seeking revenge for the death of her son would be a mistake and would hurt her and the world. How does seeking revenge hurt the world? How does it hurt an individual?

Q: “Aicha and I are just two ordinary women,” says Phyllis. Do you agree that they are just two ordinary women, mothers who did the best they could to raise their children well?

Q: Phyllis says, speaking of Aicha, “that the friendship symbolizes something powerful.” What does it symbolize to you?

Reflecting on Zacarias and the Trial



During this segment, Orlando remembers that Phyllis wanted to meet Aicha and he wanted to meet Zacarias. Phyllis reminds Orlando that he did meet Zacarias in court. Orlando talks about the trial.

Q: Why was Zacarias surprised by the outcome of his trial?

Q: What does Orlando hope Zacarias will learn?



Preparing for the Prison Circle

Orlando makes coffee and prepares with Phyllis and victim-offender mediator Pamela Leonard for the Circle Process at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Orlando ponders Father Ron's suggestion to consider prisoners in the circle as proxies for the men who killed Greg, and Phyllis speaks about listening to their stories.

Q: How do you prepare for a difficult situation?

Q: What do you see in the film that indicates Phyllis and Orlando's home is a place of safety and security? How might this help them navigate their public outer world?



Sing Sing Chapel - Prison Circle

Prisoner Rob asks Phyllis and Orlando how they found peace without any accountability from the perpetrators. Prisoner S'ad identifies with Rob's need to apologize, but did not apologize when he was convicted because he wanted to be a "tough guy." He speaks of his efforts to contact the son of his victim. Phyllis says she is sorry for the grave consequences the prisoners and their victims suffer because they broke laws and took risks. Depending on other people forgiving you, Phyllis says, is setting yourself up for failure. Choi says that prisoners don't talk much about their cases and when they do, they exaggerate and make themselves a tough guy. Inside, he says, "I knew I wasn't that tough guy."

Q: How do the Sing Sing prisoners remind Orlando of Greg? (They are like him in age and personality and interests.)

Q: As participants in the Circle, how do Phyllis and Orlando become proxies for the men's victims? (The prisoners are able to tell their stories, to express sorrow and regret, to ask forgiveness.)

Q: How does one have to listen to a person's story to make it valuable? Why?

Q: What does forgiveness mean to you? (The discussion might begin by generally defining what it means to "forgive," e.g., to excuse an offense or fault, to pardon, to renounce anger or revenge or resentment, and asking participants if they agree.)



Reflecting on Prison Circle

Phyllis and Orlando discuss their experience at Sing Sing, expressing the hope that the meeting was helpful. The meeting at Sing Sing, for Phyllis, was the second most important thing that had happened since the attack—meeting men who are working very hard at being better people and coming to terms with the consequences of what they have done. (The first important thing was meeting Aicha.)

Q: Did the scenes of the Peace Circle with the Sing Sing prisoners change your perception of violent offenders? Why or why not?

Q: How can empathy dissipate anger?



Orlando Teaching at Green Haven

Orlando reflects on teaching in prison, feels he is discharging a debt. He wishes he could teach the men who killed Greg and have conversations with them, and thinks that this activity is a good substitute. He feels sad when he leaves the lively classroom and takes the long walk to his car, but is comforted by feeling “Greg is with me during that long walk.”

Q: Orlando brings knowledge and analytical skills to his students when he teaches. Why do men in prison need those things?

Q: How does this work lighten Orlando’s load?



Phyllis at Home, Reflecting

Meeting Aicha in 2002 was “life changing,” Phyllis says. For a couple of years their friendship gave both of them strength to cross boundaries and find commonality in their humanity. But appearing together was emotional and brought back the past—it became “unconstructive.” By mutual agreement, they stopped appearing in public together.

Q: What does Phyllis mean by the term “unconstructive”? (Their being together brought back “that horrible day.”)

Q: Have you ever let go of a relationship that became unconstructive?



A Visit to Phyllis’ Childhood Home

Phyllis and Orlando sit on a bench outside an apartment building in the Bronx and reminisce about how they met and their marriage. Phyllis explains how, in a crisis, marriages can become fragile—when both partners are grieving, they can’t always help each other because they are taking care of themselves. She expresses how she is fortunate to have a partner who wants her to be herself and be open.

Q: What attracted Orlando to Phyllis? (Her independence, her sense of humor, and her personality, though he also liked that she was blonde and semi-bohemian.) **What about Orlando attracted Phyllis?** (He was calm and warm; she liked his sense of humor and his honesty.)

Q: How do Phyllis and Orlando complement each other?

Q: How do their differences and similarities influence their responses to the death of their son?



Panel Discussion at a Synagogue

Orlando and Phyllis appear on a panel at a Jewish temple with Talat Hamdani, a Pakistani-American and a Muslim. Talat speaks of her son, Salman, a first responder and NYPD cadet who was killed on 9/11. Because he was Muslim, Salman was under suspicion after the attacks and his family was questioned, then cleared of suspicion after six months. Phyllis discusses wanting to hear others' points of view, to have living room dialogue and coffee klatsches.

Q: "It's not fair to ostracize one group of Americans," Talat says, "for the actions of all those foreign terrorists." What do you think?

Q: Why was Talat's family investigated?

Q: Why does Orlando say it's not always "good for us to tell our story"?
(It's about pain and suffering, provokes emotions.)



At Talat Hamdani's Home in 2010

Orlando and Phyllis visit Talat at her home. They look at photos of her son, and they talk about sadness and their memories. Talat reveals she is "no longer sad all the time," and she recalls the first time after 9/11 when she "laughed with [her] whole self." Phyllis says she enjoys thinking about happy times, but is afraid she would forget Greg if she were not actively grieving. She recalls thinking, "I haven't thought about Greg in two hours!" Talat mentions her husband died two years after 9/11, saying "he couldn't take the pain." Phyllis says about Talat, "She's all there, you're all there with her."

Q: When Phyllis admits to struggling, having a hard time, harder than has been in several years, Talat tells her, "It will never be a straight line." What does she mean by that?

Q: What does Phyllis mean when she talks about her "fear of not grieving"?



Phyllis and Orlando Reflecting in 2014

Phyllis reflects on how she's changed—taking more time for herself, doing things that are not public or political. She stresses that she recognizes she will never be the same, and feels it's important to do what feels right. Phyllis and Orlando talk about the bracelets Cantor Fitzgerald gave families of victims, how they feel about them and wearing them.

Q: Thirteen years after Greg's death, how does Phyllis feel about wearing the bracelet? How does Orlando? What does the bracelet symbolize to each of them?

Q: How can grief bring people together? How can it separate them?



After Marta's Birthday Party

The film concludes in the setting where it began. The family looks at photos; Phyllis helps a grandchild who's learning to knit. "People say we were brave," Orlando remembers. "I'm not saying that what we did was not brave—it was." They want their story to give hope to others. Just because a human being did a terrible thing does not mean that person is a monster beyond redemption, they maintain. Orlando and Phyllis say good-bye to family members as they leave for home, and walk back to their apartment.

Q: What rituals were depicted in the film? (Examples: birthday celebrations, commemorations of anniversaries, the Peace Circle.) **How can rituals support healing and reconciliation?**

Q: How can anger make someone a perpetrator?

Q: How does empathy free one from victimhood?

Q: How have Phyllis and Orlando "salvaged some good" from "all this"?

General Questions about the Film

- Q:** The events depicted in *In Our Son's Name* are not revealed in a strict chronological order, but instead were organized to tell a story. Photographs, newspaper clippings, and news film clips that reveal background information and illustrate events for the viewer were interspersed with filmed interviews, events, and scenes from family life. How does the structure of the film contribute to its impact?
- Q:** The film depicts Phyllis' and Orlando's journeys over a number of years after their son is killed. What techniques did the filmmaker use to underscore the theme of the journey? (Examples include many instances of driving in a car—Orlando driving to work, Orlando and Phyllis driving to the cemetery—and scenes involving walking, where Phyllis and Orlando walk together, where Phyllis walks with Aicha, where Orlando walks alone.) **By interspersing scenes of people in movement and scenes where the people sit still, what does the film show?**
- Q:** How is food depicted in the film? (Examples include as a symbol of comfort and care, as an expression of tradition, as a communal ritual, as a social activity.)
- Q:** What are some adjectives that describe Phyllis? Orlando?
- Q:** What emotional states do we see Phyllis and Orlando go through and discuss in the film? (Examples: disbelief, shock, acknowledgement, numbness, anger, sadness.) **How are their reactions similar? How are they different?**
- Q:** What do you think Orlando meant when he said that their public opposition to going to war in response to 9/11 helped them withstand their grief?
- Q:** There is a parallel drawn between Zacarias Moussaoui and the Sing Sing prisoners who took part in the Circle. As perpetrators of violent criminal acts, how are they and their actions similar? How are they different?
- Q:** In the film, Phyllis talks about “letting go of something that can be self-destructive.” What does she mean by that? How might letting go play out on an individual level? For a community? For a country?
- Q:** How can the U.S. government balance its citizens' needs for safety and security with maintaining civil liberties and, at the same time, not degrade the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?
- Q:** Is there such a thing as a just war?
- Q:** Does making a film about something change it? Why or why not?

A Group Exercise: The Circle Process

Please note: The Circle Process is widely used and a number of versions can be found on line and in books. What follows is an adaptation of what Kay Pranis describes in her book, The Little Book of Circle Processes (Good Books, 2005).

Circles and the Circle Process provide a tool for practicing listening skills, giving participants an opportunity to share, and showing respect for a variety of perspectives. This activity can be a tool for reflection. In *In Our Son's Name*, a Circle Process was used in the scenes where Phyllis and Orlando met with prisoners at Sing Sing. Pamela Blume Leonard was the Circle facilitator.

Groups may want to use the Circle Process as a framework for discussing the film.

Organizing a Circle

Number of participants:

2 to 25 people (if your group is large, break it up into smaller groups.)

Materials needed:

Enough chairs, arranged in a circle, for each participant to sit.

Time needed:

15 minutes to indeterminate (as long as you like)

Guidelines for a Circle Process:

- 1 Set up chairs in a circle, with no tables. It is important that there are exactly as many chairs as there are people in the circle, no more and no less.
- 2 The Circle facilitator should prepare a question relevant to the topic to be discussed to begin the discussion. (A discussion question from this Study Guide may be used.)
- 3 Select a talking piece. The talking piece will be passed from speaker to speaker. (Pamela Leonard, the Circle facilitator in the film, generally uses a rock with the word "peace" carved on it as a talking piece. Because she could not take a rock into a prison, for the Circle Process seen in the film, she substituted a piece of plastic foam with a photocopy of the rock glued to it.)
- 4 In the initial Circle, the facilitator explains the guidelines of the Circle. Common guidelines are:
 - Tell the participants that the person who holds the talking piece is the only one who should speak. If someone else wishes to comment on what someone has said, that person must wait his/her turn. This means there will be no side conversations or comments.
 - Ask participants to be mindful of how long they speak so everyone has time to contribute to the discussion.
 - Ask that no one leave the Circle after the Circle Process has started. (It works well to schedule bio-breaks and snack times before or after a Circle Process to ensure adherence to this guideline.)
 - Ask that all electronic devices be turned off (or at least silenced) and put away.
- 5 The Circle facilitator holds the talking piece and speaks first, opening the Circle with a question or comment. (A discussion question from this Study Guide may be used.) The facilitator can then give a reflection or observation or pass the talking piece to her/his left or right.



Talking piece used in the film

- 6 The talking piece can be passed around the Circle as many times as needed, always in the same direction. Or, when the facilitator receives the talking piece back after one round, s/he can ask if anyone else has a desire to speak again.
- 7 The facilitator can summarize what was said or make concluding remarks.

FAQs about the Circle Process

Q: Is every person in the Circle required to speak?

A: No. It's okay to "skip a turn" (not comment) and simply pass the talking piece.

Q: Is it okay if some people in the Circle simply wish to observe? Why or why not?

A: Generally, no. It's best if everyone in the Circle participates. There are some special adaptations of the Circle Process that allow for observation, but in the context of this Study Guide and discussing the film, active participation (with the option to pass) is recommended.

Q: Can more than one topic be considered and discussed?

A: Yes, but each pass of the talking piece addresses a particular topic, and sometimes it takes multiple passes to fully cover a topic. When one topic has been fully covered, the facilitator can put another topic to the participants. There can be as many passes as time allows and interest indicates.

Q: What's the connection between the Circle Process and restorative justice?

A: The Circle Process incorporates restorative justice values and principles. Restorative justice focuses on victims and reframes the response to harm in ways that serve the needs of victims and/or victim-survivors, rather than focusing on the offense and punishing the offenders. To understand the difference, compare three questions asked by criminal justice system in response to an offense with three questions asked by restorative justice:

Criminal Justice	Restorative Justice
What laws have been broken?	Who has been harmed?
Who did it?	What are their needs?
What do they deserve?	Whose obligations are these?

(Zehr, 2015, p. 31)

Like many victim-survivors, Phyllis and Orlando instinctively sought responses and remedies to their loss that restorative justice offers. Remarkably, they had the courage to state their needs, stand behind their convictions, and find ways to respond to Greg's death that contributed to their healing. To learn more about restorative justice, see the "For Further Reading and Viewing" section at the end of this Study Guide.

Prisoners' Responses to the Circle Process in the Film

From Jose

What follows is an excerpt from a letter written by Jose, one of the prisoners who participated in the Peace Circle at Sing Sing that is shown in the film, to director Gayla Jamison.

“Allow me to share what I got out of participating in this documentary, which goes to the core of its message. The central theme is forgiveness. Yet, there are strong elements of truth and reconciliation...

“Hearing [Phyllis and Orlando’s] narrative and processing their experience in comparison to my own story caused an awakening in me. I had a sort of epiphany. See, I never took responsibility for harming anyone in my criminal case. There was one person dead, one seriously hurt, and another moderately hurt. Yet, I am the victim. Up to this moment, that’s how I thought. I blamed the prosecutor, the judge, the police, my trial attorney, my ex-wife... I blamed my conviction on everybody else, but I never took a look at myself. I never took responsibility for causing the death of one person and hurting another two individuals. Instead, I sought to justify my actions. On the other hand, Phyllis and Orlando lost their son. Instead of being consumed with anger, hatred, and bent on revenge, they showed love, compassion, and empathy towards Zacarias Moussaoui’s mother. So much was their love of humanity and love and respect for the memory of their son that they led a campaign against the death penalty [for] Moussaoui. They were not campaigning [for] his freedom or for him to be exonerated. No! If he was found guilty and he accepted responsibility, then he must be punished by the law to serve his time in prison. We cannot play God to determine who lives and who dies, just as we cannot play games by distorting the truth to make us look like we are the victims in all circumstances we find ourselves in. There is no spiritual or personal growth when we lie, fail to see the truth, don’t want to face the truth, or try to distort the truth to make us look good. This goes against our conscience, the Holy Spirit, and the morality of humanity. We can only grow personally or spiritually when we take responsibility for our actions. This is the lesson I got out of my participation in this documentary.”

From Rob

This comment came in a letter from Rob, another prisoner who participated in the Peace Circle at Sing Sing that is shown in the film, to Phyllis Rodriguez about his experience.

“...it was one of the most heartfelt and moving experiences of my life. It has buoyed me when trying to express how my life has taken a radically different trajectory resulting from such life changing experiences.”

**Handout –
Letters by
Orlando and
Phyllis**

Letters sent a few days
after 11 September, 2001
by Phyllis and Orlando
Rodriguez

A Letter to the White House

Dear President Bush:

Our son is one of the victims of Tuesday's attack on the World Trade Center. We read about your response in the last few days and about the resolutions from both Houses, giving you undefined power to respond to the terror attacks. Your response to this attack does not make us feel better about our son's death. It makes us feel worse. It makes us feel that our government is using our son's memory as a justification to cause suffering for other sons and parents in other lands. It is not the first time that a person in your position has been given unlimited power and came to regret it. This is not the time for empty gestures to make us feel better. It is not the time to act like bullies. We urge you to think about how our government can develop peaceful, rational solutions to terrorism, solutions that do not sink us to the inhuman level of terrorists.

Sincerely,
Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez

A Letter to the New York Times

Note: This is the letter titled "Not in Our Son's Name" that is mentioned and quoted in the film.

Our son Greg is among the many missing from the World Trade Center attack. Since we first heard the news, we have shared moments of grief, comfort, hope, despair, fond memories with his wife, the two families, our friends and neighbors, his loving colleagues at Cantor Fitzgerald/Espeed, and all the grieving families that daily meet at the Pierre Hotel. We see our hurt and anger reflected among everybody we meet. We cannot pay attention to the daily flow of news about this disaster. But we read enough of the news to sense that our government is heading in the direction of violent revenge, with the prospect of sons, daughters, parents, friends in distant lands dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against us. It is not the way to go. It will not avenge our son's death. Not in our son's name. Our son died a victim of an inhuman ideology. Our actions should not serve the same purpose. Let us grieve. Let us reflect and pray. Let us think about a rational response that brings real peace and justice to our world. But let us not as a nation add to the inhumanity of our times.

Source: <http://tagg.org/rants/gregrodriguez.html>

For Further Reading and Viewing

Books

Beck, Elizabeth, Nancy P. Kropf, and Pamela Blume Leonard, [*Social Work and Restorative Justice: Skills for Dialogue, Peacemaking, and Reconciliation*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2010)

Pranis, Kay, [*The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*](#) (Good Books, 2005)

Pranis, Kay, Barry Stuart, and Mark Wedge, [*Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community*](#) (Living Justice Press, 2003)

Zehr, Howard, [*The Little Book of Restorative Justice, Rev. Ed.*](#) (Good Books, 2015)

On the Internet

Howard Zehr's Restorative Justice blog:

<http://emu.edu/now/restorativejustice>

Circle Process:

<http://comingtothetable.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Circle-Process-2-pager.pdf>

http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/RJP/Projects/Victim-Offender-Dialogue/Peacemaking_Healing_Circles/Peacemaking_Circles_08.pdf

Website of September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows:

www.peacefultomorrows.org

Website of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation:

www.mvfr.org

Website of Fellowship of Reconciliation:

www.forusa.org

Website of the film:

www.inoursonsname.com

Website of Lightfoot Films, Inc.:

www.lightfootfilms.org

Film Credits

Produced, Directed and Written By
Gayla Jamison
Editor
Ellen Goldwasser
Original Music By
Ed Barguiarena
Director of Photography
Arthur Yee
Additional Cinematography
Trish Govoni
Scott Lansing
Rick López
Chris DesRochers
Location Sound
Merce Williams
Greg Linton
Mark Mandler
John Zecca
Daniel Zirngibl
Graphics
Ellen Goldwasser
Scott Lansing
JaBarr Lasley
Karen Tauches
Color
Labtopia Farms
Sound Designer and Re-Recording Mixer
Joe Milner
Consultant
Elizabeth Beck
Translation
Christine Badgley
Susanne Rabsahl
Transcription
Cecelia Burke
Legal Services
Kilpatrick Townsend and Stockton LLP
Troutman Sanders LLP
Jacques Verrechia
Insurance Broker
Film Emporium

Footage and Photographs Provided By
Associated Press
CNN
Getty Images
The Forgiveness Project
Thought Equity/CBS
Phyllis and Orlando Rodríguez
Julia Rodríguez
Elizabeth Soudant
Additional footage from
“I Am Al Qaeda” by Valentin Thurn
Courtroom Drawings By
Dana Verkouteren
Production Stills
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Institute for Healing of Memories
Gladys and Ellis Jamison
Georgia Lawyers for the Arts
Nada Khader
George King
Sue Klassen
Kol Ami Synagogue
Danny Martí
Peter Miller
Shannon Moroney
Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights
National Association of Latino Independent
Producers
Omega Women’s Leadership Center
Aaron Rugh
September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Ben Snowden
Memorial United Methodist Church
Lindsay Victor
Major Funders
Catholic Communication Campaign
Sarah Peter
The Riverside Church
Tides Foundation Institute for Socioeconomic
Studies in Memory of Leonard M. Greene
Samuel Rubin Foundation
The Francis and Ann Curran Center for
American Catholic Studies, Fordham
University
American Muslim Women’s Association