

University of the District of Columbia

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UDC-TV Channel 98 (Comcast Cable)/Channel 19 (RCN Cable) to air

Fierce Goodbye: Living in the Shadow of Suicide

Washington, D.C. – The University of the District of Columbia is proud to announce the airing of the documentary *Fierce Goodbye: Living in the Shadow of Suicide*. The documentary, which focuses on family survivors of suicide, features several D.C. area experts and is slated to air June 12, 14 and 16 at 9 p.m. on UDC TV, the TV station of the University of the District of Columbia. UDC TV broadcasts in the District of Columbia on Channel 98 on Comcast Cable and Channel 19 on RCN Cable.

Fierce Goodbye continues the series of highly powerful films airing on UDC Cable as part of *COPING and CARING*, which highlights films that address the challenging issues of caring for the elderly, the sick, the disabled, the loved, the animals, the clinic, the patients... living with pain, loss and illness. A detail listing of other offerings as a part of the *COPING and CARING* series is attached.

In the program, family survivors share personal stories of their trauma, and mental health experts talk about the stigma of mental illness and suicide. Theologians and biblical scholars spell out traditional views from three major faith traditions on what happens to the “soul” after suicide, and how some views are changing in light of new knowledge about mental illness.

Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison, a psychologist and professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore) and author of many books on mental illness, is the key mental health expert on the program. Jamison herself has bipolar disorder and has also attempted suicide.

Dr. Sherry Davis Molock, currently associate professor of psychology at George Washington University, Washington, D.C. also adds commentary. Molock has researched suicidal behaviors among African American adolescents and has published articles on suicide in *The Journal of Black Psychology* and *Suicide and Life Threatening Behaviors*. She serves on the National Organization of People of Color Against Suicide (NOPCAS) board of directors.

Dr. Donna Holland Barnes, president and co-founder of NOPCAS also appears, telling her own story of survival. Formerly a professor of sociology at Southwest Texas State University where she developed a course in suicidology, Dr. Barnes is currently with Howard University's Department of Psychiatry in Washington, D.C. where she conducts suicidology seminars.

Also, Dr. James T. Clemons, Professor Emeritus of Wesley Theological Seminary (Washington, D.C.) and founder of OASSIS (Organization for Attempters and Survivors of Suicide in Interfaith Services), appears in the program. Dr. Clemons is a retired clergyman in the United Methodist Church.

Folksinger Judy Collins hosts the hour long documentary; her 2003 memoir, *Sanity and Grace: A Journey of Suicide, Survival and Strength* (J.P. Tarcher) chronicles her journey as a survivor after the death of her 33-year-old son by suicide.

Over four million people a year in the U.S. mourn the tragic suicide deaths of family members. Suicide devastates family members for many years, and family

survivors are at greater risk of suicide themselves. The pain ripples out to entire communities.

The documentary includes stories from:

- Fred and Gail Fox, Harrisonburg, Va., a medical doctor (Fred) and educator (Gail), who hadn't realized the extent their 24-year-old son was suffering emotionally when he ended his life.
- Sheri Smucker, Harrisonburg, talks about her husband's depression as a pastor, and his death by suicide.
- Jill Marks, Minneapolis, Minn., a holistic psychologist, lost her 21-year-old daughter to suicide as the result of undiagnosed bi-polar disorder.
- Stephen Akinduro, Columbus, Ga., looks at his mother's death by suicide when he was nine years old.
- Barbara and Jonas Borntrager, Harrisonburg, tell the story of their son Jon who died from a drug overdose after suffering from Tourette Syndrome.

Theologians Rabbi Daniel Roberts and Rabbi Marcia Zimmerman (Reform Jewish), Reverend Stanley Harakas, (Greek Orthodox), Fathers John Grace and Chester Michael (Roman Catholic), and Roger Steffy (Mennonite) talk about traditional and current religious responses to suicide.

The *Fierce Goodbye* documentary includes an original music score written by an Emmy-award winning composer, David Cottrell, a music industry professor at James Madison University in Harrisonburg.

Burton Buller is executive producer/producer for the documentary. Buller has produced numerous award-winning films such as "The Amish" and "The Hutterites" earning numerous CINE Golden Eagle awards, which appeared on PBS, and numerous cable TV networks.

Mennonite Media has produced several documentaries winning awards from the US and International Film and Video Festival, The Videographer Awards, and the Columbus International Film & Video Festival among others.

The documentary was produced in cooperation with Faith & Values Media, the nation's largest coalition of Jewish and Christian faith groups dedicated to media production, distribution and promotion.

Full information on the stories, participants, and many additional resources helping families and churches struggling with the aftermath of suicide is available at www.fiercegoodbye.com The program is for sale on VHS and DVD from Mennonite Media at 800-999-3534 Mennonite Media is a department of Mennonite Mission Network.

UDC Cable Television is the District Government's non-commercial, adult education program service. The mission of UDC Cable Television is the innovative use of cable television technology and programming, to support the University in carrying out its land-grant function of teaching, research and public service. The business of UDC Cable Television is the acquisition, development, production, distribution, and marketing of educational and instructional video programming. Also, UDC Cable Television operates a 24-hour educational cable program service. And finally, UDC Cable Television has a business model which includes the operation of an audio and video recording service center, electronic field and studio production, and a video training center for television production.

The University of the District of Columbia is the fully-accredited sole public source for accessible, inclusive, affordable, and comprehensive public higher education in the District of Columbia and provides additional life-long learning opportunities. The University delivers quality instruction and uses student-centered approaches to empower and benefit both individuals and its local communities. The University, an urban land grant institution, is a very diverse community, a gateway to the world, and a significant investment engine for the District of Columbia. The University is located at 4200 Connecticut Ave, NW Washington, and is conveniently located at the Van Ness/UDC stop on the Red Line of Metro. For more information on other University activities,

contact Mike Andrews, Senior Director for Communications and University Spokesperson at (202) 274-5685 or visit the University's web site at www.udc.edu.

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