

THE GLOUCESTER 18

The True Story Behind the Gloucester Pregnancy Pact

Synopsis

Genre: Documentary

Running Time: 67 minutes

Language: English

Aspect: 16:9 (1.78:1)

Cameras:

- Sony HDWF900R CinAlta HDCAM
- Panasonic AG-HVX200 HD
- Sony PMWEX1 XDCAM HD

Frame Rate: 24p

Filmed in 1080p, High Definition

The story began as a whispered rumor, echoing through the hallways at Gloucester High School. There were eighteen pregnant girls—four times the norm--and they weren't all accidents. The story echoed through town: some of the girls had planned their pregnancies, together, as part of a secret pact. The personal lives of these girls became an international embarrassment for the fishing village of Gloucester, Massachusetts when the high school principal leaked the story to a national magazine, igniting a firestorm of controversy and criticism.

Public outcry ensued, and the girls became the nation's most infamous teen mothers. Reporters from as far away as Australia, the UK and Brazil flooded the coastal community, frenzied in pursuit of an explanation. They retreated empty-handed as community fell silent, resentful that the sex lives of its daughters had become the topic of gossip blogs and television talk shows. Little has been heard from the eighteen girls who catapulted Gloucester into international infamy—until now.

As the definitive investigation of the Gloucester pregnancy pact, "The Gloucester 18" introduces the world to the girls behind the headlines, many of who are speaking publicly for the first time. Beneath the unprecedented media fervor are the stories of girls searching for meaning and purpose to their young lives.

One sought unconditional love and stability after witnessing a murder/suicide, while others may have merely been trying to break free of social invisibility. Within the complications of the girls' young motherhood are hints of trying to please their boyfriends, their friends, and their parents. The girls face the stigma of teenage pregnancy, the daunting task of motherhood and the reality of what happens when children give birth to children.

Through interviews with the girls and their families, their high school counselors, physicians and media personalities, "The Gloucester 18" explores what really happened in this hyped and bizarre media circus, and its impact on a small fishing village.

The teen pregnancy rate in the United States continues to climb with more than 750,000 girls becoming pregnant each year. By deconstructing the story behind the international scandal and interviewing teenage mothers from all corners of Massachusetts, "The Gloucester 18" offers revealing insight into this disturbing trend.

Featuring songs by Beyonce and Solange Knowles, "The Gloucester 18" is an in-depth investigation of the Gloucester pregnancy pact and the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy across the nation.

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The Gloucester 18 has been featured on:

- The O'Reilly Factor
- FOX25 Morning News
- WBUR (Boston's NPR Station)
- WTKK (Boston's Talk Station)
- Greater Boston with Emily Rooney
- The Boston Globe
- The Boston Herald
- Boston Magazine
- The Gloucester Daily Times
- New England Cable News

"Every high school girl should see this on the first day of school and every year thereafter."

--Margaret Hoover
O'Reilly Factor, Fox News

"This film...should be mandatory viewing for every teen in the country."

--Yvonne Abraham
The Boston Globe

"We were universally moved. The power of the individual stories, set in the broader context of their lives, and in the larger story of adolescent sexuality and parenting, stayed with us all for days following the viewing. What happened in Gloucester means something about how we as a society understand young people and their intentions, and how we frame teen pregnancy overall. The film will be a valuable tool for parents, educators, policymakers and young people who all play a role in the outcomes for youth. I have been working to address teen pregnancy for more than 15 years, and I doubt I could have done a better job of telling the story of who teen parents are."

--Patricia Quinn, Executive Director
Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy

"One of the nation's great success stories of the past two decades has been the extraordinary declines in teen pregnancy and childbearing. The recent, alarming turnaround in the teen birth rate, however, is a stark reminder that our collective efforts on this front are far from over. "The Gloucester 18" is a sober, engaging, and thoughtful reminder that road ahead will not be easy. The documentary makes clear that adolescence pregnancy is a complex problem---not an issue captured in headlines and soundbites. It paints a detailed portrait of the profound challenges of early parenthood and its generational effects. My hope is that viewers of "The Gloucester 18" commit themselves to helping teen parents and their children succeed and to convincing other young people that the teen years should be a time for growing up, getting an education, and having fun---not pregnancy and parenthood."

--Bill Albert, Chief Program Officer
National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

"This movie just tells the truth. This story has been out there in such a false way and this is the truth—even with the negative side of the issue."

--Dr. Brian Orr, Former Director, Gloucester High Health Clinic
via Gloucester Daily Times

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The Definitive Investigation of the Gloucester Pregnancy Pact

Production Personnel

JOHN MICHAEL WILLIAMS

Director/Story

John is a writer, director, composer, and children's book author who wrote the screenplay, lyrics and music to "The Easter Egg Escapade," an animated 88-minute feature he directed, starring Brooke Shields, James Woods, and Natalie Cole. Based on a children's book he wrote, the film won the "Best Music in a Film" award at the Jackson Hole Film Festival, "Best Animated Film" at the Idaho film festival, Spudfest, and honors at the Hollywood Film Festival. John has performed on the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon and NBC's "Halloween on Ice," which he wrote. Most recently, John directed the Guatemalan documentary film "No Money For Butter," for which he also composed the score.

KRISTEN GRIECO

Producer/Story

Kristen, a former reporter for the Gloucester Daily Times, first broke the news of something strange going on with the Gloucester High teen pregnancy rate in March 2008, when only 10 girls were pregnant and rumors were surfacing of a clique becoming pregnant on purpose. She is originally from the Boston area and has an M.S. in Journalism from Boston University.

JOSEPH PROVENZANO

Associate Producer/Editor

Joseph is a Boston-based screenwriter, director and producer. He has written five feature film screenplays and produced and directed dozens of short films. Shortly after graduating from Emerson College, he directed his debut feature film, "Night Sounds," which he also produced and co-wrote. "Night Sounds" won rave reviews at Massachusetts film festivals, and he is currently working on the follow-up to his directorial debut.

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Filmmakers' Statement

Each of us heard about the Gloucester pregnancy pact in a different way, and when we came together to work on the film, we each had different goals in mind. Through a long period of debate and collaboration, investigation and exploration, we found the three of us—Director John M. Williams, Producer Kristen Grieco, and Associate Producer Joseph Provenzano—were able to bring different strengths to the table to create a moving and compelling narrative about the microcosm of Gloucester as a backdrop for the issue of teenage pregnancy.

We began this film as a way to find out the truth behind what happened in Gloucester during the 2007-2008 school year—*how* the pregnancy rate there had quadrupled and *why* girls were getting pregnant on purpose. Each of us thought the media had gotten it wrong: they'd painted the girls and Gloucester in the most scandalous way possible and reported based on rumors alone. In the process of getting to the bottom of it, we learned many universal truths about teen pregnancy from the time we spent with the Gloucester 18.

Namely, we learned that the reach of teenage pregnancy is far wider than any of us ever believed. Each year, 750,000 teenage girls become pregnant. If you think about the people those girls' pregnancies will affect—their parents, the teen fathers, the children they will eventually have—the reach of teen pregnancy suddenly becomes even wider. And then there's the tax burden that affects us all. Teenage pregnancy costs this country more than \$9.1 billion a year, and that is shouldered by every one of us.

Disturbingly, for the first time in 15 years, the U.S. is seeing an increase in the teenage pregnancy rate, so the numbers are only going to get worse. We already have the highest rate of teenage pregnancy of any developed country.

And so what began as a journey to right the sensational reporting in Gloucester resulted in an education for each of us. Teenage pregnancy is not taken seriously as an issue in this country, not because it is not important, but because those of us who can effect change are often too uncomfortable with the topic of teens and sex to talk about it.

This attitude towards teen pregnancy is a dangerous one, not only for the teen mothers whose lives are derailed after their pregnancies, but for the children that they bear who face a harder challenge than others from the moment they enter the earth, by virtue of being born to teen parents. Statistically, they will do worse in school, suffer from more health problems, they are more likely to end up in jail, and they're more likely to be teen parents themselves.

Exploring the microcosm of Gloucester's pregnancy scandal not only gave us the opportunity to better understand what had happened beneath the media firestorm, but it gave us the chance to show the world the ramifications of teenage pregnancy.