

well in making "Ivory." The story of two

TODAY

is playing today at 9:50 p.m.

# Knowing Makes a Difference



Jean Strauss, director of "For the Life of Me."

**M**aking "For the Life of Me" started for Jean Strauss when she made a 45-second Public Service Announcement (PSA) to help people in New Jersey understand adoption access legislation – laws affecting an adoptee's right to information about their birth. Then, according to Strauss, "almost overnight [it] became a 75-minute film."

Previously, Strauss had made several films about her own experience as an adoptee. In "For the Life of Me," she followed other adoptees in their quest for information about their origins. The information about their past is critical in so many ways, but they are denied access to even a copy of their own birth certificate.

Sometimes the search never yields any results, which Strauss describes as a tragedy. "People are dying without knowing who they were when they were born," she says.

Her commitment to making change in this arena is deep — it goes beyond the act of making this film. For Strauss, the issue needs to be addressed on a legislative level. Laws that prohibit adoptees access to their birth information need to change.

"It's important to underscore that giving adoptees access to their birth records is not about reunion. It's about the community into which they were born validating them," says Strauss.

This type of validation can be life-altering. Jean Strauss knows this first hand. She describes the tremendous impact finding her birth information had on one woman. "It was like she crossed a magic line and she was suddenly equal to everyone else in that room." She says, "That's what access legislation is all about."

—Bridget Kriner

SHOWING  
TODAY

FOR THE LIFE OF ME

is playing today at 7:30 p.m.

A Smile of Rainbows

**DAN STURMAN**

Soundtrack for a Revolution

**PETER KNEG**

**HARUN MEHMEDINOVIC**

**RUSS COLLINS**

Central and Eastern

European Film Jury

**ARON GAUDET**

**RYAN HARRINGTON**

**DEBBIE ZIMMERMAN**

Documentary Jury

**KEVIN RICHARDS**

First Voice Ohio

**ERIC BYLER**

9500 Liberty

**JOHN CHECHITELLI**

**RAYMOND MANCINI**

Youngstown: Still Standing

**MARK PAYNE**

Get Happy

**JEAN STRAUSS**

For the Life of Me

**EYAD ZAHRA**

The Taqwacores

**PETER-JOHN CAMPBELL**

The Story of Seema

**JOSH HOBSON**

Racing Dreams

**JOE VALENCIC**

A Call Girl

**VIOLETA AYALA**

Stolen

**ANDREW CHAN**

**LAURENCE GINGOLD**

Ivory

**BOB CHRISTIE**

Beyond Gay: The Politics of Pride

**GREG JACOBS**

**JON SISKEL**

Louder Than a Bomb