



Cinema/Chicago and the Chicago International Film Festival
Education Outreach Program Screening: *Sole Survivor*
Director: Ky Dickens
90 minutes, in English and in French with English subtitles

Please use the below synopsis, study ideas/questions and helpful websites to lead your students in preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the film, students are required to respond to the screening with a one-page essay. Essays (either all or select) must be sent to Cinema/Chicago.*

Synopsis: When Galaxy Flight 203 was in its final seconds, George Lamson pulled his legs above his head, an arbitrary decision that helped save his life as he was thrown through the fuselage on impact. Immediately after the crash, George's sole survival was considered miraculous and newsworthy, making him a fixture in the media for a year. Twenty-six years later, George lives a few blocks from the accident site and still struggles with the emotional weight of his survival. He doesn't know if he was spared for a reason and if he was, what is that reason? In an effort to heal, he seeks to connect with the other thirteen sole survivors of commercial aviation disasters, including Cecelia Cichan, Bahia Bakari and Jim Polehinke – none of which have ever spoken publicly. Jim was the co-pilot of Comair Flight 5191 that crashed in Lexington on August 27th, 2006. Jim lost the use of his legs in the accident, but when he woke up from his coma, the most devastating news was that everyone on the plane had perished. Since the accident, Jim has never spoken publicly. *In Sole Survivor*, Jim's emotional struggle with his survivorship is underscored by the NTSB's findings that the plane crashed solely due to pilot error.

Recommended for: psychology studies, humanities studies, film and video students
Most appropriate for: 7-12 grade (contains some adult themes)

Study Ideas/Questions:

1. In the beginning of the film we see footage of George being interviewed when he was 17, right after the crash. How did you feel about George's behavior in the footage? Why did some people find it inappropriate?
2. Why do you think Cecelia decided to be part of the film, though she had never talked about her experience in public before? Why do you think any of these survivors chose to be part of the film?
3. What does the word survivor mean to you?
4. Are there different kinds of survivors? Beyond the airplane passengers who survived the crashes, who are the other "survivors" of these crashes?

5. What is survivor guilt? Give specifics in how these survivors dealt with it differently.
6. The survivors all have scars from their experience. Think about the differences between emotional scars and physical scars. How do we deal with our own scars?
7. Why do you think Cecelia doesn't to the memorial of the 25th anniversary of the crash of Flight 255?
8. George and Bahia are able to become very close in a short amount of time. Why do you think their bond is so strong? Why do you think George calls Bahia and her dad "family"?
9. Some of the survivors were afraid to fly again, and some are not. What do you think of these reactions?
10. Think about the future of these survivors, and how this film might have changed their lives. What do you think happens to each of them?

Useful Links and Resources:

Film's official website, includes trailer: <http://www.solesurvivorfilm.com/>

Article on CNN: <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/08/health/survivor-guilt-plane-crash-sole-survivor/>

Information about Cinema/Chicago's Education Outreach Program:

<http://cinemachicago.org/education/>

*Schools who do not send in essay requirement will not be allowed to attend future Education Outreach Screenings.