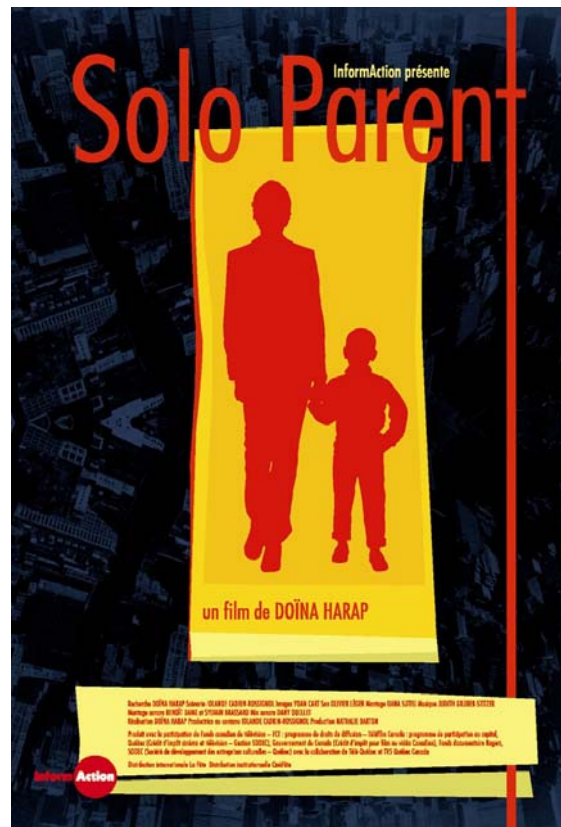




presents

A Film by Doïna Harap
produced by Nathalie Barton



How do you reconcile work and family when you live solo? In Canada, the United States and Sweden, socially innovative men and women are giving rise to new forms of single parenthood.

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Solo Parent

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Summaries

Short summary

How do you reconcile work and family life when you live solo? More and more men and women are choosing to raise children alone, and even to adopt. Their stories reveal some remarkable examples of single parenthood in Canada, the United States and Sweden: they are part of the increasing trend towards solo living.

Long summary

After *SoloLand*, experience the humour and challenge of *Solo Parent*, which investigates another dimension of solo living. More and more men and women are choosing to raise children alone, or even to adopt. Reconciling work and family, preserving intimacy, cultivating other relationships ... the social innovators in this film juggle their time without the fall-back position that having a partner affords.

Shot in Canada, the United States and Sweden, the inspiring stories in *Solo Parent* are put in the wider context of social and economic change by outstanding professionals who have studied the increasing trend towards solo parenting: Bernard Arcand, anthropologist; Ann Crittenden, author of *The Price of Motherhood*; Brook Noel, author of *The Single Parents's Resource Book* and Barbara Hobson, author of *Making Men into Fathers*.

Solo Parent

A film by Doïna Harap

Quebec – Canada, 2004 – 2005, Digital Video, Color, Dolby Surround, 52'

Researched and Directed by	Doïna Harap
Written by	Iolande Cadrin-Rossignol
Photography	Yoan Cart
Sound Recording	Olivier Léger
Edited by	Oana Suteu
Sound Editing	Benoît Dame Sylvain Brassard
Music	Judith Gruber-Stitzer
Sound Mix	Dany Ouellet
Associate Producer (Development)	Iolande Cadrin-Rossignol
Produced by	Nathalie Barton

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The Experts

Bernard Arcand

Bernard Arcand is professor of anthropology at Laval University and author of many studies and books, including: *The Jaguar and the Anteater, Pornography Degree Zero* (Boréale, Montreal, 1991. English edition: Verso, 1998) which won the 1991 Governor General's Literary Award for Nonfiction (French) and has been translated into English, Spanish, Italian and Korean; *De Nouveaux lieux communs* (Boréale, 1994), and *Les Meilleurs lieux communs, peut-être* (Boréale, 2003), written with Serge Bouchard, as well as the radio series *Le Lieu commun*; and *Cow-boy dans l'âme* (Editions de l'Homme, 2002).

"Our modern urban society is indeed the only one that has allowed individuals to live alone. And now it is in this context that we are having children. So, we shouldn't be surprised to see more and more children in the care of only one adult because there are not two adults in the apartment. For a third of the population, there is only one."

Ann Crittenden

Economics journalist for Fortune, Newsweek and CBS, Ann Crittenden has been nominated for a Pulitzer prize and elicited huge controversy with her book, *The Price of Motherhood*, (Metropolitan Books, 2002). She has also just published *If You've Raised Kids, You Can Manage Anything* (Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc.).

"The crazy thing is that we have things so arranged that we have disincentives for spending time with your kids. On the one hand, we have all this lip service to family values. People are constantly told, you've got to spend more time with your children. It's good for your kids. At the same time, we glorify this twenty-four seven economy, we glorify this workaholic culture, and we make it almost impossible for parents to have that time, even though kids grow up and pay everybody's pensions. Contributing a child to the system gets you a zero."

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The Experts

Brook Noel

Having grown up in a single-parent home, Brook Noel began to write on the subject after the age of 16. She specializes in questions related to everyday organization. *The Single Parent's Resource* (Champion, 2002) is a landmark in her life as author and editor.

"The single parent family isn't a trend. It isn't a phase. It isn't going away. There's a new traditional family. And it's a different type of family. And those are the families we have to start gearing towards in society."

Barbara Hobson

Barbara Hobson is an American sociologist who lives and works at the University of Stockholm. She has published a compilation of recent studies on masculinity and fatherhood: *Making Men into Fathers* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

"If more men take care and take the time off, it has the potential for really creating equity on the labour market, ending statistical discrimination against women, and just creating a society in which carers are not women, but men and women."

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The Solo Parents

Quebec, Canada

Michel Spénard

Teacher and bachelor by choice, Michel Spénard has five adopted sons from different countries. He lives on the shores of the St. Lawrence at Sept-Îles.

"When I was about 25 or 26, I started looking into adoption. Johnny was 8, Simon 8, and Rochelin 12 when I adopted them. In almost the same year or a year later, I went through with the fourth adoption: Juan Carlos, who was a Mexican street kid. He had just turned 7 when I adopted him. And finally, last year, I adopted a fifth, a young Vietnamese boy named Nicolas."

Dominique Ricot

Patrick's and Fabrice's fathers have left. Dominique is alone raising her sons. She knows she cannot play both mother and father, and counts on her father and brother to fill the gap.

"I could never be the children's father. I may take Patrick to soccer, but it's not the same as when a father goes with his son. They have my father and brother as examples, which helps. Patrick already told my brother he considers him to be his dad."

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The Solo Parents

United States

Carolyn Gable

After ten years as a waitress at the Hyatt Hotel, San-Francisco, Carolyn Gable realized she'd never be able to meet the growing needs of her young sons, for whom she was sole caretaker. Twenty years later, now the owner of a transport company and a multi-millionaire, she has received the prestigious *Ernst and Young* award, and created a foundation to help the children of single-parent families: the Expect a Miracle Foundation.

"When I went to the Ernst and Young Awards, it was an award that I did not know I was getting. As they called my name, it once again reiterated in my mind that I was being rewarded for starting and building this successful company, but there was no mention of raising really great children. The whole time I was walking up there, it just hit me that the world will recognize my success, but never as a mother."

Christine Buckley

She first became a mother at 18, then found herself alone with three boys, Zachary, Tim and Todd, with little access to government assistance. In the United States, this situation can be dire.

"I didn't set out to be a single mother. It wasn't my choice. Yet, I don't recommend anyone stays when someone's abusing them, no matter what. Even though it is scary to be out on your own with kids, it's not impossible."

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The Solo Parents

Sweden

Henrik Holm

The mother of his twins, Hugo and Astrid, left when they were still babies. Henrik became a single father and has organized his professional life to allow for solo parenting.

"In Sweden, the government is trying to make more daddies stay at home with the children, but it's a very difficult struggle, I think. I recommend it, if you have the possibility. I think you become better at work also, because you get used to do many things at the same time. You can learn very, very much from children."

Janna Olzon

When she was pregnant with Mons, Janna realized she had made a serious mistake and left the father of her son. But she has managed to find him a caring, mature surrogate father who is not only neither her lover nor her spouse, but a close friend who is also gay: Torbjorn Astner. Then, as a journalist who knows the issues inside out, she co-founded an organization, Makalösa, to generate solidarity among single parents.

"I trusted him. He wanted a child and being a homosexual, this was a very good way to have a child, wasn't it? And I thought it was fantastic having a child with a man I never had sex with, I never had a love story with, and we are the best of friends. It's nice."

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The Solo Parents

Sweden

Peter Orje

Peter lives in the country near Norshiping. He is a plumber, and also plays the dual role of father and mother for Nicklas, his 9-year-old son.

"You're both father and mother . . . You must comfort him when he's down, but also be firm when necessary. A lot can be learned from single parents. It might be worth listening to them."

Birgitta Egerbladh

Considered as the Swedish Pina Bausch, Birgitta Egerbladh is a choreographer well known, in Sweden and elsewhere, for her daring and innovative "danstheater" creations. Despite her successful career and numerous rewards, Birgitta felt her life would not be complete without the presence of a child. That is why at 44, when "prince charming" still did not show up, she decided to adopt on her own, the one who is today the love of her life, Wengie. Birgitta and Wengie form today what she calls "the smallest family that can be", small but happy together.

"It's really the best thing I've ever done, the most important and wonderful decision I've made. And I really remember that phone call, because I was so happy there were no obstacles."

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Director's Statement

This documentary will give us an unprecedented look into the private life of a number of in Canada, Sweden and the United States. In it, I pursue my investigation of an irreversible phenomenon: the exponential growth of living solo that is occurring worldwide. Since the beginning of this research, I've noticed one thing: nothing could be more different from the "singles" lifestyle than that of a single parent. Childless singles take care of themselves, single parents don't even belong to themselves, *they belong to others*.

But I also discovered that solo parenthood, while it does pose certain problems, also generates a great deal of creativity among those who are living it. It encourages the invention of new models, fosters the emergence of new families. This guided me in my choice of characters. I wanted to give voice to men and women who, in addition to meeting the challenge that the reconciling work and family represents, had also succeeded in overcoming the absence of a partner in raising their children.

Encountering such passionate people led me far beyond the media clichés about solo parenthood. For example, I discovered the surprising progression in the number of single fathers, and this inspired me a lot. It seems to me that not only is the notion of parenthood evolving, but traditional roles are being virtually redefined.

As a bonus, the situation of these single fathers allowed me to shed new light on women in the same situation, and presented a major question. I again realized that individuals (solo or not) who take care of children are not sufficiently supported by their society. Why is this?

Doïna Harap

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Doïna Harap Bio-filmography



After graduating in Philology in her native Romania, Doïna Harap worked first as a teacher and then in the film industry. Once she moved to Canada, she continued her studies with a BA and specialized in film production at Concordia University in Montreal. In 1990 in Toronto, she started working for TFO as director, then as producer. Back in Montreal in 1994, she became a free-lance director, with *La Roumanie, ma mère et moi* produced by the National Film Board of Canada, and the three part mini-series about the new phenomenon of living solo: *SoloLand*, *Solo Parent*, *Solo Senior* produced by InformAction. She has also produced and directed *Sylvia Safdie, Earth Marks*, a film inspired by the work of the internationally renowned artist Sylvia Safdie (Honorable Mention at the Columbus International Film and Video Festival and at the International Festival of Films on Art in Montreal in 2001). She also worked as assistant-director and research coordinator of the five hour series *Au nom de tous les dieux*, directed by Iolande Cadrin-Rossignol, a Canada-France co-production.