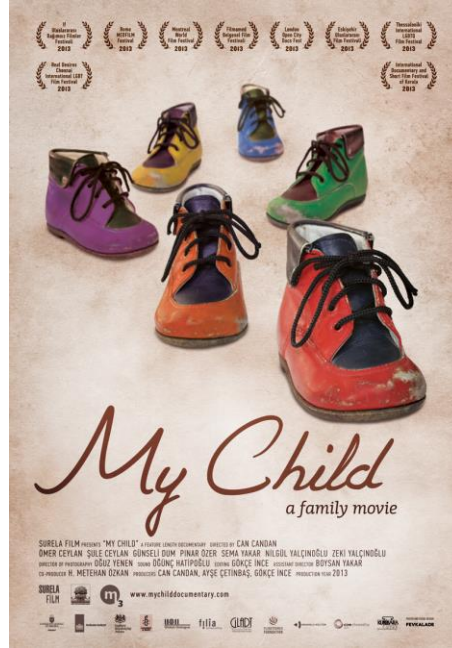




# My Child

a feature documentary film  
by Can Candan



2013 • 82 minutes • Color • Turkish with english subtitles

**Director:** Can Candan

**Production:** Surela Film

**Producers:** Can Candan, Ayşe Çetinbaş, Gökçe İnce

**Co-producer:** H. Metehan Özkan

What happens when your child comes out to you? MY CHILD is about a very courageous and inspiring group of parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender individuals in Turkey, who redefine what it means to be parents, family and activists in a conservative, homophobic and trans-phobic society.

[www.mychilddocumentary.com](http://www.mychilddocumentary.com)

**Contact:**

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## Synopsis

"My Child" is a feature documentary about a very courageous and inspiring group of mothers and fathers in Turkey, who are parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender individuals. They have not only gone through the difficult path of accepting their children for who they are, but also have taken the next step to share their experiences with other LGBT families and the public. In "My Child" seven parents intimately share their experiences with the viewer, as they redefine what it means to be parents, family, and activists in this conservative, homophobic and trans-phobic society.

In five homes in Istanbul, Turkey, seven parents of LGBT individuals talk about their experiences of becoming parents; about their children growing up and opening up to them; about the difficult path they had to go through in dealing with this; about themselves opening up to their families, and re-learning how to be a parent. They talk about themes such as denial, trauma, helplessness, fear, shame, acceptance, and re-birth. They say nothing has prepared them for this experience. None of the parenting guides, nothing passed on from their elders or schooling mentioned how one could be a parent of a LGBT child. They had to learn it from scratch. When they talk about how they experienced the coming out of their children, they refer to it as the death of a child and birth of a new one. They say this extremely traumatic experience has also led to their own rebirth, as they have been questioning what it means to be an individual, to be true to oneself, and to be a parent. In a conservative society, where family ties are important, they had to deal with their fears about what "others" would say, whether they would be ostracized if they were to come out to their own parents, families, and friends. They say that they are very lucky that they have children who have come out to them and their children have become their teachers in this process.

In their weekly meeting, as members of the support and advocacy group LISTAG, together with two LGBT-rights activists, who have been supporting LISTAG since its inception, we witness their activism for visibility, acceptance, and equal rights. At a monthly meeting, we sit with the parents and the volunteer psychologists where issues such as sexuality, sexual identities, orientation and transformations one goes through are discussed. There we meet other LGBT parents as well. At a monthly dinner party, we meet their children for the first time. Also, parents and children from other cities join us. At the end of the film, in preparation for the annual Pride March in Istanbul, the parents and activists meet up to make the signs and banners they will be using at the march. In the Pride March, the parents march with their banners as they are joined by thousands.



## **DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

Can Candan is a documentary filmmaker and an academician. He holds a BA from Hampshire College (USA) in film and video, and an MFA (a terminal degree) from Temple University (USA) in film and media arts. His works have been screened internationally at festivals, conferences, in galleries and on television. His documentaries include "Boycott Coke" (1989), "Exodus" (1991), "DuvarlarMauernWalls" (2000), "3 Hours" (2008). He has taught film and video courses and workshops, both in universities and media education centers in the United States and in Turkey. Between 2000-2005, he was a faculty member, department chair and director of the MA program at Istanbul Bilgi University's Film and TV department. Between 2005-2009, he taught at Sabancı University and since 2007, he has been a faculty member at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. He is also a founding member of docIstanbul - Center for Documentary Studies. "**My Child**" is his third feature documentary film.

## **FILMOGRAPHY**

Boycott Coke (1989), Exodus (1991)  
DuvarlarMauernWalls (2000), 3 Hours (2008), My Child (2013)



## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

The first time I encountered the parents featured in 'My Child' was at a conference in 2010, where they were talking very openly and movingly about their experiences of parenthood. As I sat there listening in tears, both as an adult child and as a parent of a young boy, I realized that, although they were talking about their unique personal experiences, they were also addressing something that each of us can relate to: a person's struggle to be who s/he really is, and to be accepted as such within the family and in the society. They were also fundamentally questioning what it means to be a parent, a family, and also an activist. I decided to make this film, because their stories needed to be heard by many more, and I wanted each viewer to feel what I was feeling as I was listening to their stories. When the parents responded with enthusiasm to the idea of making a documentary, we decided that this film had to be made and it had to be made right away, and it has been a very rewarding collaboration since then.

For me, the challenge was in bringing these moving stories to the audiences through a documentary without further marginalizing the subject, without perpetuating the existing prejudices and fears of the general public when it comes to LGBT issues. I decided to make a very simple film, where the viewer is left alone with the stories and the protagonists, who recount their very own intimate experiences, demanding the viewer's attention and participation. This film is less about activism per se, but more about a human experience of struggle, transformation and hope that each viewer, through empathy, can relate to.

What these parents have been able to do in a very short amount of time in Turkey is something that activists struggle to do for years of political activity. They have brought the plight of LGBT individuals from the margins to the center of this society. By sharing their stories, they have been able to touch people's hearts, change their minds, and move them into action.

Since we decided to make this film in the fall of 2010, tens of LGBT individuals have been killed in hate crimes in Turkey, and hundreds elsewhere in the world. We have to stop the violence and discrimination against LGBT individuals right now. In this basic struggle for human rights, we have a lot to learn from these courageous and inspiring parents. Listening to their stories and reflections, participating in their activism through this film could be a good place to start with.

*Can Candan, January 2013*



## PARENTS AND LISTAG



LISTAG, founded in 2008, is a solidarity and support group for friends, families, and especially parents of LGBT individuals, which actively works against homophobia, transphobia, discrimination, and hate crimes.

LISTAG organizes weekly meetings where newcomers are introduced to the group and forthcoming activities are planned, as well as monthly dinner parties where they get together with families of LGBT individuals. LISTAG also meets every first Thursday of each month with volunteer psychiatrists and psychologists from the Society for Sexual Education Treatment and Research (CETAD) to discuss subjects like sexual identity, sexual orientation, sexual roles and behavior, and gender. LISTAG parents joins also “coming out” meetings at Lambda Cultural Center every third Saturday of each month.

To gain visibility in Turkey, they participate in discussions, panels and meetings in cooperation with NGOs and universities, giving interviews to the media. In addition, LISTAG has been participating in the annual Istanbul Pride March since 2008, and has become one of the most striking groups in these marches. LISTAG also cooperates with other parent and family organizations in the world, organizing joint meetings with AGEDO (Italy), BEFAH (Germany), FFLAG (England), and AMGYL (Spain).

Since 2008, LISTAG has opened up an important political space within Turkish society. Acting in solidarity with LGBT individuals and their organizations, LISTAG has intervened in the current political sphere, by releasing public statements and engaging with politicians, thus becoming a crucial component of the movement. It has also encouraged LGBT individuals, by reminding them that it is not impossible to come out to their families.



### **Redefining what a family is...**

The most important contribution of LISTAG to our society has been in offering an alternative to the notion of a traditional family. LISTAG parents, sometimes faltering, other times accepting, always making an effort, and never losing the capacity to re-discover, but most importantly always with 'unconditional love', have been able to question and challenge the culturally inherited traditional family codes based on kinship and territory. With reference to Judith Butler's concept of 'performativity', we can define this new 'family' as "an intentional family, which comes to being through conscious effort."

In every meeting and demonstration they participate in, LISTAG parents stand by their LGBT children with the message 'I'm on my child's side!' and remind us that another type of family is possible and despite the prevailing assumptions, anybody's child or relative can be an LGBT individual.

These parents, through their children's sexuality, have managed to openly discuss their own sexuality, as well as issues around sexuality in Turkey. They have also made great efforts to help other families whose children have recently come out, by teaching them that homosexuality, bisexuality, or transsexuality is not a physical abnormality or perversion. In this way, they have been lifesavers to countless families by reminding them that they are not alone in this world.

The film features seven parents (including two couples) of LGBT individuals and two LGBT-rights activists who make up the core of LISTAG ('Families of LGBT in Istanbul').

[contactlistag@gmail.com](mailto:contactlistag@gmail.com)

[listag.wordpress.com/](http://listag.wordpress.com/)

[www.facebook.com/groups/listag/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/listag/)

[twitter.com/LGBTTAileGrubu](https://twitter.com/LGBTTAileGrubu)



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## FESTIVALS & AWARDS:

- 12<sup>th</sup> If International Independent Film Festival, Istanbul-Ankara-Izmir, Turkey, February-March 2013
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Warsaw Turkish Films Week and Film Market, Poland, April 2013
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Nar Film Festival, Antep, Turkey, May 2013
- 15<sup>th</sup> International Eskisehir Film Festival, Turkey, May 2013
- 16<sup>th</sup> Flying Broom Women's Film Festival, Ankara, Turkey, May 2013
- 6<sup>th</sup> Ege Documentary Film Days, Izmir, Turkey, May 2013
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Filmamed Documentary Film Festival, Diyarbakir, Turkey, May 2013 – **JURY SPECIAL PRIZE**
- 6<sup>th</sup> Documentarist - Istanbul Documentary Days, Turkey, June 2013
- 7<sup>th</sup> Balikesir Cinema Days, Turkey, June 2013
- 6<sup>th</sup> International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala, India, June 2013
- 19<sup>th</sup> MedFilm Festival, Rome, Italy, June 2013
- London Open City Docs Film Fest, UK, June 2013
- 8<sup>th</sup> Lemesos International Documentary Film Festival, Cyprus, August 2013
- 12<sup>th</sup> DokuFest International Documentary and Short Film Festival, Kosovo, August 2013
- 37<sup>th</sup> Montreal World Film Festival, Canada, August 2013
- 15<sup>th</sup> Thessaloniki International LGBTQ Film Festival, Greece, September 2013 – **BEST FILM AWARD**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Bodrum Turkish Films Week, Turkey, September 2013
- 8<sup>th</sup> Nuremberg International Human Rights Film Festival, Germany, October 2013
- 6<sup>th</sup> Cape Town & Winelands International Film Festival, South Africa, November 2013
- 8<sup>th</sup> Pravo Ljudski Film Festival Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 2013
- "Filmreihe Tüpisch Türkisch" Cologne Turkish Films Week, Germany, November 2013
- 18<sup>th</sup> Boston Turkish Festival Documentary & Short Film Competition, USA, November 2013 – **BEST DOCUMENTARY AUDIENCE AWARD**
- 6<sup>th</sup> This Human World - Vienna International Human Rights Film Festival, Austria, December 2013
- 3<sup>rd</sup> EU Human Rights Film Days, Turkey, December 2013
- 5<sup>th</sup> Merlinka International Queer Film Festival, Serbia, December 2013, Bosnia&Herzegovina, February, 2014
- 7<sup>th</sup> One World Romania International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, Romania, March 2014
- London Human Rights Watch Film Festival, UK, March 2014
- 25<sup>th</sup> Munich Turkish Film Days, Germany, March 2014
- 21<sup>th</sup> Multicultural Film Festival, Amherst, MA, USA, March 2014
- 11<sup>th</sup> Paris Turkish Films Festival, France, April 2014
- 4<sup>th</sup> International Youth Film Festival, Bursa, Turkey, April 2014
- TISFEST – Teen International Shorts Festival, Istanbul, Turkey, April 2014
- 17<sup>th</sup> Flying Broom Women's Film Festival, Ankara, Turkey, May 2014 - **THEME AWARD**
- 9<sup>th</sup> International Labor Film Festival, Istanbul, Turkey, May 2014



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- 13<sup>th</sup> Moldovan LGBT Pride Festival, Moldova, May 2014
- 13<sup>th</sup> New York Turkish Film Festival, NY, USA, May 2014
- 5<sup>th</sup> Kashish Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, India, May 2014
- 3<sup>rd</sup> International Children's Rights Film Festival, Bursa, Turkey, May 2014
- 18<sup>th</sup> International Documentary Film Festival of Santiago, FIDOCs, Chile, June 2014
- 8<sup>th</sup> FIWOM Film Festival for Women's Rights, South Korea, September 2014
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Queerstreifen Film Festival, Regensburg, Germany, November 2014
- 18<sup>th</sup> Queersicht LGBT Film Festival, Bern, Switzerland, November 2014
- 6<sup>th</sup> Passion for Freedom Festival, UK, November 2014
- 7<sup>th</sup> Beijing Queer Film Festival, China, November 2014
- Seattle Turkish Film Festival, WA, U.S.A., November 2014
- 17<sup>th</sup> International 1001 Documentary Film Festival, Istanbul, Turkey, December 2014
- Vancouver Turkish Film Festival, Canada, January 2015
- 18th Pink Apple Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Zurich, Switzerland, May 2015 - **BEST DOCUMENTARY AUDIENCE AWARD**
- Red Tulip Film Festival, Rotterdam, Netherlands, June 2015
- Bozcaada International Festival of Ecological Documentary, Turkey, October 2015
- Kreivės LGBT Festival, Vilnius, Lithuania, August 2015
- Queer Loox - Rotondes, Luxembourg, June 2016





## TEAM

### **Can Candan**

*Director, Producer*

Can Candan is a documentary filmmaker and an academician. He holds a BA from Hampshire College (USA) in film and video, and an MFA (a terminal degree) from Temple University (USA) in film and media arts. His works have been screened internationally at festivals, conferences, in galleries and on television. His documentaries include "Boycott Coke" (1989), "Exodus" (1991), "DuvarlarMauernWalls" (2000), "3 Hours" (2008). He has taught film and video courses and workshops, both in universities and media education centers in the United States and in Turkey. Between 2000-2005, he was a faculty member, department chair and director of the MA program at Istanbul Bilgi University's Film and TV department. Between 2005-2009, he taught at Sabancı University and since 2007, he has been a faculty member at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. He is also a founding member of docIstanbul - Center for Documentary Studies. "**My Child**" is his third feature documentary film.

### **Ayşe Çetinbaş**

*Producer*

Ayşe Çetinbaş is a producer and director. She graduated from the Economics Department of Istanbul University and has worked as a producer in various domestic and international documentary projects. She was the producer of the documentary 'Prison Nr.5: 1980-84' which received the Antalya Golden Orange Best Documentary Award in 2009, the Best Documentary Award of 2009 from SIYAD (Association of Turkish Film Critics) and Best Documentary award at Ankara Film Festival in 2009. 'Yıldız Alpar: From Bedii Raks Till Today' was the first documentary she directed. She is the co-founder of Surela Film Productions, where she produced the recent myth-shattering feature documentary 'Bakur/North' (2015) about the PKK guerillas during the ceasefire period in Turkey.

### **Gökçe İnce**

*Producer, Editor*

Documentary filmmaker and editor Gökçe İnce, graduated from Middle East Technical University's Chemistry Department. After finishing her MS in the Industrial Design Department of the same university, she received her MA from Istanbul Bilgi University's Film and Television Department in 2009. She worked on various documentary films including "Muezzin", where she was the assistant director and editor. "Muezzin" was screened at Karlovy Vary and Sarajevo Film Festivals. She has been working as an editor since 2008, has begun to produce documentaries with Ayşe Çetinbaş.



## **H. Metehan Özkan**

*Co-producer*

Hasan Metehan Özkan, graduated from Marmara University's Department of Political Sciences and International Relations in 1998. He received his MBA from Yeditepe University and is currently a Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology there. Between 1996-2000 he worked for the Istanbul Office of International Immigration Organization of the United Nations. Later he was involved in Civil Involvement Projects of Sabancı University. He is writing his dissertation on the families of LGBT individuals, which is at the core of the organization LiSTAG (Families of LGBT in Istanbul), where he works as a volunteer.

## **Oğuz Yenen**

*Director of Photography*

Oğuz Yenen teaches video production, short film production and lighting courses at Istanbul Bilgi University. Since 1984, he has worked in film projects as director of photography, especially in Germany. Since 2001, he has taught film courses in Turkey, at Bahçeşehir University, Kadir Has University and Middle East Technical University. Between 2007-2011, Oğuz Yenen was the lighting designer for the exhibitions at Santral Istanbul.

## **Mehmet Tarhan**

*Project Advisor*

Mehmet Tarhan is a conscientious objector and a LGBT activist. Until 2000 he worked as a veterinary health technician in Diyarbakır-Lice. In 2001 he resigned and got involved in the LGBT movement and the same year he declared his conscientious objection. Tarhan works at SPoD Social Policies, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association as Field Coordinator in Accessing Law and Justice.

## **Boysan Yakar**

*Assistant Director*

Boysan Yakar graduated from Yıldız Technical University, Department of Integrated Arts in 2008. Since 2005 he has been active in the LGBT Movement in Turkey. He worked as an assistant director and producer in the short documentaries "Transvestite Terror" (International Izmir Short Film Festival, Best Documentary, 2005), "We're Walking" (Akbank Short Film Festival, Honorable Mention in Documentary Award, 2007) and "The Transvestites" (2009). He also appeared as an actor in video performances "Empty Street" (2008), and "Only Me-letthegoodtimesroll" (2010). Yakar, has been a volunteer for LiSTAG since 2010.



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## FILM CREDITS:

### Participants

Ömer Ceylan, Şule Ceylan, Günseli Dum, Pınar Özer, Sema Yakar, Nilgöl Yalçınoğlu, Zeki Yalçınoğlu

H. Metehan Özkan, Mehmet Tarhan

Ali Murat Akay, Hatice Cengiz, Nusret Ercan, Seven Kaptan, Feride Ünal, Aynur Sütçü, Hakan Yakar, Nesrin Yetkin, Emrah, Ilgaz, İlksen, Kuzey, Zeliş, özge don karlos  
**and** Participants of the 20<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Pride Week March

### Written and Directed by

Can Candan

### Producers

Can Candan, Ayşe Çetinbaş, Gökçe İnce

### Co-producer

H. Metehan Özkan

### Director of Photography

Oğuz Yenen

### Editing

Gökçe İnce

### Assistant Director

Boysan Yakar

### Sound Recording

Öğünç Hatipoğlu

### Production Manager

Gökçe İnce

### Additional Camera

Koray Kesik, Oytun Orgül, Levent Çetin, Merve Kayan, Melisa Önel

### Additional Sound Recording



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Eren Dönmez

## **Sound Design**

Umut Şenyol

## **Color Correction**

Ufuk Genç - Cine Chromatix, Berlin

## **Title Design**

Emre Parlak – Fevkalade, Deniz Cem Önduygu - Fevkalade

## **Sound Mix**

Christian Wilmes - Cine Impuls, Berlin

## **Photographs**

Erkin Ön, Dilek Yaman

## **Graphic and Web Design**

Emre Parlak – Fevkalade, Deniz Cem Önduygu – Fevkalade, Ekin Yaşa, Erdem Demir

## **Project Advisors**

H. Metehan Özkan, Mehmet Tarhan

## **Publicity Consultant**

Metin Göksel

## **Press**

Ayşe Çetinbaş, Mehtap Doğan – Media Partner

## **Production Assistants**

Deniz Nihan Aktan, Yaprak Aydın, Rüzgâr Buschky, Feyha İren, Mert İzcan, Umut Kocagöz, Ekin Yaşa

## **Transcriptions**

Deniz Nihan Aktan, Çiğdem Kesik, Emine Tarhan

## **Subtitles**

Jacob Watson - Alias, Berlin, Yaprak Aydın, Can Candan



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## Thanks

Açık Radyo  
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BİANET  
Bant Mag  
Direnişin Ritimleri İstanbul  
İstanbul Sweet Home  
Habertürk TV  
Kumbara Cafe  
Kafası Karışık Kontrtenör & Kalp Kırmayan  
Erkekler Orkestrası

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Yönelim Çalışmaları Derneği  
Zencefil

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LİSTAG Aileleri

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IndieGoGo

## Fiscal Sponsor



Kumbara Art Workshop and Solidarity Association



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## This film was supported by

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Südblock, Berlin  
Gayhane-SO36, Berlin  
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ve Dayanışma Derneği, Ankara  
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Ankara  
PFLAG Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians  
and Gays, Australia  
FFLAG Families and Friends of Lesbians and  
Gays, United Kingdom



Hollanda Kraliyeti



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Ankara

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INTERNATIONAL



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die frauenstiftung.

GLADT  
Gays & Lesbians aus der Türkei  
Türkiyeli Eşcinseller Derneği

Global Dialogue

PLANETROMEO  
FOUNDATION

ANADOLU KÜLTÜR

[www.mychilddocumentary.com](http://www.mychilddocumentary.com)

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