

POV

Viewing Guide *Off and Running*

Name: _____

Directions: Respond to the questions below as you watch a series of clips from the film **Off and Running**.

Clip 1: “I Sent a Letter to My Birth Parents”

Background: Avery is an African-American high school student who was adopted as an infant and is being raised in Brooklyn, New York by two white Jewish women. Her two brothers were also adopted. One is biracial and the other is Korean. In the film, Avery recently has tried to establish contact with her birth mother by sending her a letter.

1. What does Avery hope to find out by writing to her birth parents?

2. How does Avery’s adoptive mother describe who Avery is?

3. Avery says she feels Jewish but is typically not recognized as being Jewish because of her race. What type of impact do you think that disconnect has on Avery’s identity?

Clip 2: “Letter From Avery’s Birth Mother”

1. What does the letter from Avery’s birth mother tell Avery about her birth family?

2. How does Avery’s birth mother respond to Avery’s question about who she is? Do you agree with this response? Why or why not?

3. In your opinion, what role does family play in the development of a person’s identity?

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Clip 3: “Jewish Elementary School Reunion”

1. What did Avery have in common with her friend Jenna? Why do you think those factors drew them together? What does Avery’s friendship with Jenna say about how Avery defines herself?
2. Describe how Avery’s high school environment differs from the environment she inhabited in her early schooling.
3. Why do you think Avery’s Jewish friend asks her if she feels safe at her high school?
4. Explain why Avery feels that it was a lot of pressure to be the only black student in her class at the Jewish school. Why might Avery’s friends assume that her perspectives are different from theirs, even though she is part of a Jewish family?

Clip 4: “I Can Create Who I Want to Be”

Background: This clip shows Avery’s biracial adopted brother, Rafi, who is a student at Princeton University.

1. What does Rafi see as an important difference between his identity and that of his sister, Avery?

Reflect

1. In your view, who or what defines your identity?
2. How does the way you define yourself compare with the way that others define you? How does this affect your relationships with others?
3. Can identity change over time? Why or why not?