

# THE AMISH SHUNNED

YOUR FREEDOM  
OR YOUR FAMILY

1 X 113 HD



PBS

INTERNATIONAL

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## CONTACT

Tom Koch, Vice President  
PBS International  
10 Guest Street  
Boston, MA 02135 USA

TEL: +1-617-208-0735  
FAX: +1-617-208-0783

jt Koch@pbs.org  
pbsinternational.org

A poignant and penetrating look at what it means to be cut off from faith and family, *The Amish: Shunned* follows seven people who have chosen to leave their closed and tightly knit communities for the outside world, knowing that they can never return. Each has paid deeply for this decision. Estranged from loved ones, these former Amish find themselves struggling to make their way in modern America. Interwoven with their stories are the voices of staunchly loyal Amish men and women who explain the importance of obedience, the strong ties and traditions that bind them, and the heartbreak they feel when a loved one falls away. Through its sympathetic portrayal of both sides, the film by the producer of *The Amish*, explores what is gained and what is lost when community and tradition are exchanged for individuality and freedom.

Revealing the pain of those who leave and the suffering of those left behind, the film is the story of people confronted with difficult choices. To the Amish, shunning is an essential tenet of their faith and a way to maintain the strength and viability of a tight-knit community. While the practice has helped protect them from the onslaught of modern culture, it is an agonizing decision for parents, relatives, and friends to sever ties with loved ones whom they believe to be eternally condemned for their decision to leave.

Many who leave face challenging obstacles: no birth certificates or social security numbers, language barriers because English is not their primary language, and the lack of a support network in the outside world. Young people who leave know that their families will disapprove, and some, particularly from stricter communities, run away without saying goodbye to avoid a painful confrontation. They shoulder the burden of knowing their families will wake up to an empty room and the realization they may never see their children again—in this life or the next.

Whether out in the world for two weeks or 35 years, the former Amish in the film struggle to create a new sense of community in modern America. The moment of walking out the door begins a lifetime of wondering: “If you are born Amish, must you stay Amish to go to heaven?” Each will spend their days trying to answer that question and to reconcile the life they have lost.

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## AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

### CREDITS

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Executive Producer: Mark Samels  
Writer, Producer, Director: Callie T. Wiser

Photo: Courtesy of American Experience/WGBH



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