

= Secret Truths =

" Secret Truths " is the two @-@ part pilot episode of the American teen drama series South of Nowhere which premiered on November 4 , 2005 on The N in the United States . It was written by series creator Thomas W. Lynch and directed by Donna Deitch . The episode introduces three siblings ? Spencer , Glen and Clay Carlin ? who start at a new school after their family moves from a small town in Ohio to Los Angeles .

Lynch conceived South of Nowhere from the idea of a teenager 's coming out after hearing that his friend 's son had come out to his parents . Lynch pitched the premise to The N and was commissioned to write the pilot . After the casting process was complete , the episode was filmed in October 2004 , but when the show was picked up for a full season , Lynch decided to recast many of the characters and the pilot was shot again in July 2005 with the new cast . The premiere of the episode was promoted with branded MetroCards that were handed out to teenagers in Manhattan . Generally , critics reviewed the pilot positively , particularly commending its treatment of current social issues ; however , some critics found the show 's introduction of these issues to be forced and inauthentic .

= = Plot = =

After their mother Paula (Maeve Quinlan) takes on a new job , the Carlin family moves from a small town in Ohio to Los Angeles , California . The three Carlin siblings start at King High School , where they each try to fit in . Glen (Chris Hunter) , a talented basketball player , tries out for the school basketball team , upsetting the star player Aiden Dennison (Matt Cohen) and his cheerleader girlfriend Madison Duarte (Valery Ortiz) . Tensions between Glen and Aiden escalate into a locker room fight over Aiden 's ex @-@ girlfriend Ashley Davies (Mandy Musgrave) , and Glen takes the spotlight in his first game , leaving Aiden on the bench . Glen 's sister Spencer (Gabrielle Christian) joins the cheerleading squad but ends up doing little more than take orders from Madison . She befriends the rebellious Ashley , but when Ashley indicates her interest in girls , Spencer starts to avoid her , only to admit later that she enjoyed their time spent together . That night , though , she dreams of being taunted by the cheerleaders and called gay , although she denies it . Glen and Spencer 's adopted African American brother Clay (Danso Gordon) is smart but naïve , and he finds himself facing the racial tensions of LA that he never experienced in Ohio . After Clay strikes up a conversation with a girl named Chelsea Lewis (Aasha Davis) , he is beaten up by her ex @-@ boyfriend Dallas (Marcus Brown) when Clay tries to defend her . He then earns the respect of Sean Miller (Austen Parros) , who is cynical about the way African Americans are treated in society , and when they go driving they are pulled over by the police for " driving while black " .

At a school dance , Sean persuades Dallas to make peace with Clay while Clay dances with Chelsea . Spencer convinces Ashley to come despite her disdain for school dances , but when Madison sees them together , she alleges that Spencer is gay and kicks Spencer off the cheerleading squad . It is revealed that Ashley was once pregnant by Aiden and lost the baby in a miscarriage , and when Glen tries to force Spencer to leave , another fight breaks out between him and Aiden . Spencer and Ashley flee the dance with Aiden and end up at a lookout over LA .

= = Production = =

Thomas W. Lynch first had the idea for South of Nowhere when one of his close conservative friends told Lynch that his son had just come out to him . The man asked his son , " How do you know you 're gay ? " and the son responded , " How do you know you 're straight ? " When Lynch heard this , he says , he " knew there was a series in there about identity . " He wondered why such a noteworthy event ? an adolescent 's coming out to their parents ? had never before been explored as an ongoing subject on a television series . He " sat with the idea for a few days " and then wrote an outline of the show 's pilot over a few weeks . In an effort to maintain authenticity in depicting

teenage experiences , Lynch spoke to high school counselors and asked drama students at a Los Angeles high school for feedback . He pitched the series ? which he was then calling " Out " ? to The N executives Amy Friedman and Essie Chambers , who then commissioned him to write the pilot script .

Gabrielle Christian first auditioned for the role of Spencer (then called " Zooey ") in July 2004 , though Lynch also had her read for Ashley 's part . Mandy Musgrave also auditioned for the role of Spencer , but Lynch liked her chemistry with Christian , so he paired the two up with Musgrave as Ashley . The pilot was first shot in October 2004 and directed by Rose Troche , but after the series was picked up by The N in January 2005 , Lynch decided to recast many of the characters . He said that " I didn 't pick [Christian] up right away , I had her keep re @-@ auditioning I [had] to make sure that this combination [was] perfect . " Her contract was finally picked up in May 2005 and the pilot was re @-@ filmed with the new cast in July . Filming took place in Los Angeles , with a correctional facility used largely as the high school set . Donna Deitch , who directed the second version of the pilot but no subsequent South of Nowhere episodes said that the pilot is " something I 'm really , really proud of , because I think that show has a look , a style to it that really helps " . She felt that the style she set suited the material and was " fairly inventive " for a low @-@ budget series .

= = Promotion = =

Before the airing of the pilot , The N joined with marketing agency Mr. Youth LLC to promote the show amongst teenagers in Manhattan . On Thursday November 3 and Friday November 4 , 2005 , street teams with chest @-@ mounted televisions as well as branded Vespas were dispersed around lower Manhattan . They visited various high schools and offered South of Nowhere @-@ branded MetroCards to teenagers who were traveling south on the N subway line .

= = Reception = =

Most reviews of " Secret Truths " were positive , particularly praising its treatment of social issues . Maureen Ryan wrote for the Chicago Tribune that " The lack of either cutesyness or condescension shown by this program is promising . " She also commended that the pilot " doesn 't shy away " from issues pertaining to race , religion and sexuality . Kate Authur of The New York Times compared the pilot positively to other series , writing , " If you took the plot of Beverly Hills , 90210 (a good @-@ looking Midwestern family moves to Los Angeles) , combined it with the identity issues of Degrassi (race , sexuality and class clash in a high school setting) and added a splash of One Tree Hill 's basketball backdrop , you would get South of Nowhere ... That 's meant to be a compliment . " Alessandra Stanley , another critic for The New York Times , mentioned " Secret Truths " in a feature about racial issues on television . She felt that the pilot distinguished itself from other teen shows by including a subplot about race ; however , she still found it to be " constrained and politically correct " . Variety 's Brian Lowry gave the episode a lukewarm review , comparing it to other teen dramas . He wrote that " the web of relationships doesn 't feel particularly fresh , mirroring the recent spate of nighttime teen serials " , but he felt the pilot was an " edgier treatment " , noting that it " isn 't screwing around " by addressing topics including abortion , drugs , homosexuality and racism . Karman Kregloe of AfterEllen.com , a website focused on the portrayal of lesbians in the media , thought that the episode was " well @-@ written , and the storyline for each of the lead characters is compelling " . She praised the show greatly for its authentic portrayal of teenagers ' questioning of their sexuality and the " big step " taken towards promoting tolerance .

Other critics responded to the episode less positively . Joanna Weiss of The Boston Globe was more critical , feeling that the show " takes pains to introduce as many hot @-@ button issues as possible " to give the illusion of authenticity . She found the characters to be predictable and to only serve as " plot vehicles " . The Seattle Times ' Kay McFadden also found a main problem of the show in the characters , believing that the pilot was more focused on plot development than it was on character development . She felt that the show was slightly hypocritical in trying to educate

viewers on moral values but at the same time emphasising its own sexual aspects , setting " a weird standard for young viewers " .