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Out of the Fire

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Abstract

This is a film review of *Out of the Fire* (2010), directed by Jeanette Reedy Solano.

Author's Note: After attending the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, where she reviewed movies for the Journal of Religion & Film's Report from Sundance, Jeanette Reedy Solano got the bug and wanted to become a filmmaker. The first result of that urge to make movies is a short film, *Out of the Fire*, which Jeanette directed and produced. We met again at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival and over dinner Jeanette asked if we wanted to see the film. We did, of course, and we thought that our readers might find the movie interesting. My review follows. (For information about purchasing the film you can contact Jeanette at jsolano@fullerton.edu.)

Out of the Fire

Out of the Fire is a product of the 168 Hour Film Project. Each year filmmakers are given a verse from the Bible and 168 hours (one week) in which to make a short film that is inspired by that particular Bible verse. Solano's film had an all-Latino and African American cast. The theme of the Project this year was "Hearing God" and the Bible verse was from Deuteronomy, Chapter 4, verses 35-36:

You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God: besides him there is no other. From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire.

Filmmaker Jeanette Reedy Solano wanted to find an unusual place from which one might hear the word of God, so she chose an old fashioned poetry slam. It is from out of the slam—the fire—that Marco hears the word of God and really changes his life. We are first introduced to Marco, a gang member, when he tries to sweet talk his ex-girlfriend, Samantha, into seeing their daughter. But Samantha will not let Marco see his daughter Aurora until he is no longer involved with his old gang. Marco claims to have changed after three years in prison, but we see that he

has not changed when he gets angry with Samantha because he doesn't get his way. Marco has been a gang member for many years. The old gang even took care of him while he was in prison. But Marco knows that he must leave the gang life behind if he is to see Aurora and be a part of her life. Escaping the gang, however, is not easy. Other members of the gang threaten to kill Marco if he tries to leave the gang.

After being beaten by his fellow gang members, Marco wanders into a building where they are holding a poetry slam and in the poetry he finds the message he needs to hear in order to leave the gang and become an upstanding citizen and father to Aurora. The change in Marco is confirmed in the film when Marco returns hoping to see Aurora and Samantha, this time, allows him to see his daughter.

In addition to the Bible verse, another inspiration for this film was Father Greg Boyle, S. J., of Homeboy Industries, an organization that helps young men leave the gang life by training them for a job and giving them the opportunity to live a productive life. Members of Homeboy Industries were given the task of writing original poems for the poetry slam, poems based on the 168 Hour Project's selected Bible verse. Father Greg has a great deal of experience working with gang members who want to leave the life, but have no job to go to and no job skills - no way of supporting themselves, yet alone a family. For information about the gang rehabilitation work of Father Greg Boyle, please visit <http://homeboy-industries.org>.