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Advocate

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Advocate

Abstract

This is a film review of *Advocate* (2019), directed by Rachel Leah Jones.

Author Notes

William Blizek is the Founding Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of the Continuum Companion to Religion and Film (2009).



Advocate (2019), dir. Rachel Leah Jones

Advocate is a movie that is both inspiring and depressing. It is a documentary film about Lea Tsemel, a Jewish-Israeli human rights lawyer who has taken up the cause of defending Palestinians in a justice system that is stacked against them. The movie is inspiring because Lea Tsemel is inspiring. She has been representing Palestinians for roughly fifty years. She is dedicated. Tsemel represents those who are most vulnerable in the Israeli court system. She shows remarkable compassion for her fellow human beings. And, Lea Tsemel operates under the pressure of death threats from her fellow Israelis for representing people who are seen as the enemy. Tsemel thinks that this is what an Israeli lawyer ought to do—protect human rights, the rights that apply to everyone, regardless of their behavior.

The movie is also depressing, however, just because of the assault on human rights for those that are perceived as the enemy. It is depressing to think that someone defending human rights would be the object of death threats. It is depressing that a system of justice should be

stacked against a particular group of people. It is depressing that Lea Tsemel has so little support in her efforts on behalf of human rights. The very things that make the movie depressing, however, are also the things that make the movie and the life of Lea Tsemel inspirational.

The message of the movie is that it is important to defend human rights, to defend the vulnerable, and not to succumb to hatred. *Advocate* is an expression of our humanity.