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The Fight

Rubina Ramji
Cape Breton University, ruby_ramji@cbu.ca

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The Fight

Abstract

This is a film review of *The Fight* (2020), directed by Elyse Steinberg, Josh Kriegman, and Eli Despres.

Keywords

ACLU, President Trump, Civil Rights

Author Notes

Rubina (Ruby) Ramji is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Cape Breton University. After serving as a Chair of the Religion, Film and Visual Culture Group for the American Academy of Religion and then on the steering committee, Rubina continues to serve on the Executive Committee for the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion as President and is the Film Editor of the *Journal of Religion and Film*. Her research activities focus on the areas of religion, media and identity, religion in Canada, and religion and immigration.



The Fight (2020), dir. Elyse Steinberg, Josh Kriegman, and Eli Despres

Much of the Sundance Film Festival 2020 film lineup has focused on specific themes. Many are about taking a stand, taking responsibility and most of all, fighting back. *The Fight* is the epitome of individuals taking a stand – to fight for the individual rights of anyone in the United States, under the Constitution – for those whose rights became jeopardized after Donald Trump was elected President of the United States.

The documentary follows a handful of cases pursued by various dedicated lawyers working at the ACLU. Focusing on Trump’s “Muslim ban” policy (which was handed down on Trump’s seventh day in office), abortion access, the transgender ban of people serving in the US military, parents separated from their children, and voter access, this emotional documentary follows these lawyers who are literally fighting for the lives of immigrants and American citizens. Although many of these cases could be argued from a religious perspective, these lawyers have to find ways for the law to protect the rights of individuals that are often seen as contrary to conservative

Christian morals. While having to argue for a seventeen year old teen's right to access an abortion while in detention, or fighting for a transgender person to be seen as equal to all the other people who have willingly joined the US military to serve their country, the moral and ethical side of these arguments cannot be brought into court—even when the judges and administrative authorities denying these individuals their rights to be treated as equal to all other individuals in the eyes of the law are doing so on the basis of their own personal religious ideologies.

Although these lawyers have dedicated their lives to fighting for the rights of those whose freedoms are in peril, *The Fight* makes it clear that we must all become invested in the fight, the battle to see all humans as equal, to provide everyone with the same rights across the board. Because if we do not stand up and fight for each other, to treat humanity with compassion and tolerance, we are setting ourselves on the path of exclusiveness and selectiveness.

To quote what Martin Niemöller said about Nazi Germany:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

We are truly poised to repeat history, to become complicit through our own silence. If we do not want to lose our own civil rights tomorrow, we must take a stand and fight for others today.