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Ask No Questions

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Ask No Questions

Abstract

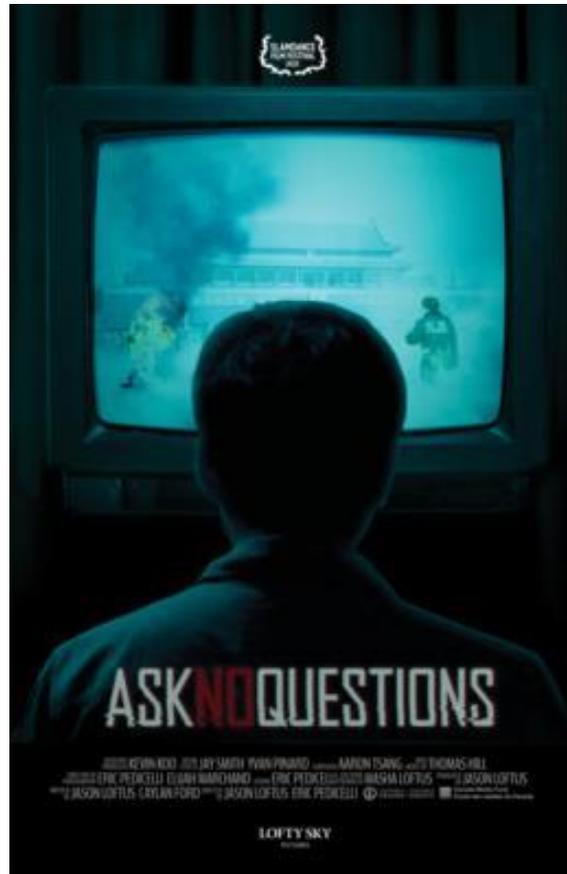
This is a film review of *Ask No Questions* (2020), directed by Jason Loftus and Eric Pedicelli.

Keywords

Falun Gong, China

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).



Ask No Questions (2019), dir. Jason Loftus and Eric Pedicelli

Falun Gong is a primarily Chinese spiritual practice that includes meditation and gentle movement exercises. Falun Gong believes that individuals are connected to the cosmos in both body and mind. It asks its followers to let go of negative attachments and seek truth, compassion, and tolerance. The product of these practices is a moral life and spiritual enlightenment.

Falun Gong began to be taught in China in 1992. Originally it was supported by the Chinese government. By 1999, however, Falun Gong had become the second largest religion in China: Chinese Buddhism being the largest. It was also more popular in China than the Communist Party. In 1999, the Chinese government began to crack down on members of Falun Gong, calling it a cult. Members were arrested, tortured and killed. It is said that many members

were killed for their organs which were sold on the black market. As the crackdown became worse, Falun Gong members went underground.

On the eve of the Chinese New Year in 2001, several people, identified by the government as members of Falun Gong, were said to have set themselves on fire in Tiananmen Square in protest of government suppression. Although members of Falun Gong often protested their treatment peacefully, self-immolation did not seem to comport with the principles of Falun Gong. Other features of the protest by self-immolation were also suspicious.

Ask No Questions explores the possibility that the protests were not carried out by members of Falun Gong but were instead staged by the Chinese government in an effort to discredit Falun Gong. The movie makes an excellent case that the protests were faked by the government and that the participants were not members of Falun Gong. It also shows how threatening religion can be to totalitarian rule.