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Forget Me Not

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Abstract

This is a film review of *Forget Me Not* (2021), directed by Olivier Bernier.

Keywords

Down Syndrome, Disability, Special Education, Special Needs

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Forget Me Not (2021), dir. Olivier Bernier

This documentary follows the efforts of Hilda and Olivier Bernier to get their son, Emilio, into an inclusive classroom. Emilio has Down syndrome and intellectual disabilities. His parents want him to be in a classroom with students who do not have intellectual disabilities—an inclusive classroom—as opposed to a classroom with only other students who have intellectual disabilities—a segregated classroom. Segregated students are often unable to use the same doors to enter their school as typical students. They have to come in through the back door or side door. Segregated students are not allowed to eat in the cafeteria with non-disabled students. They are not permitted to participate in gym classes with non-disabled students or not allowed to be on the playground with non-disabled students. They are not allowed to take music classes. When one woman went to pick up her disabled child, she was sent to the basement where her child was kept away from non-disabled children. Thus, the title of the film, *Forget Me Not*. Segregation is a way of forgetting disabled children.

Along the way we see the efforts of Hilda and Olivier to get Emilio into an inclusive classroom. We see how difficult it is for any child with disabilities to get into an inclusive classroom and it is clear from interviews in the film that if you do not get your child into an inclusive classroom from the get-go, it becomes more and more difficult, maybe even impossible, to change the original identification later in life. At the end of the film, we learn that Emilio will be assigned to a small, but segregated classroom and that he is to have “no regular contact with nondisabled peers.”

This is not, however, just a film about children with intellectual disabilities. This is a film about all who are different and, therefore, segregated from the rest of society. People of color, people who are gay or transgender, people who have a lower socio-economic status, ex-cons, these are the people who are segregated from the rest of society and that segregation prevents these people from having the same opportunities as the rest of society. It is no coincidence that this film received institutional support from Human Rights Watch.

This is a sad movie. The viewer feels sad for Hilda and Olivier whose hearts are broken by the way Emilio is treated. It is a sad movie because people with disabilities of all sorts are treated so badly. Maybe it is most sad because those who treat the disabled so badly are our neighbors, our fellow church goers, our political representatives, or those whose job it is to see to it that the disabled have the same opportunities as the non-disabled.