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Elsa

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Elsa

Abstract

This is a film review of *Elsa* (2023), directed by Cameron S. Mitchell.

Keywords

Deafblind

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Author Notes

William Blizek is the Founding Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Emeritus 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). Monica Blizek is a retired mental health professional.



Elsa (2023), dir. Cameron S. Mitchell

ELSA is the story of a multi-talented woman who is a published author, hiker, fencer, swing dancer and roars for people with disabilities. Elsa is deafblind and has a fierce message for the able world: “See us.” Elsa wants, like all people, to be seen, to be accepted and respected, however different she might be from others.

The message of this movie is that people with disabilities should be seen and recognized, not shunned, ignored, or categorized as lesser beings because of their disability. People with disabilities should be accepted and respected and loved.

This message, however, goes well beyond the community of the disabled. The message is that we are all God’s children, even though we are not all the same. And this is the message of many religions as well: caring for the stranger, helping the least of our brothers and sisters, giving alms to the needy, and so on. Unfortunately, many practitioners of religion do not seem to take this simple and fundamental truth to heart.

Some practitioners of religion attack the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and trans communities. In some countries religious practitioners see belonging to the LGBTQ community as punishable by death. Some religious practitioners attack and disrespect people of other religions and sometimes people who belong to other sects of their own religion. Religious practitioners attack people with AIDs, people of color, and others who do not look like them. But this disrespect for the other and these various attacks are not in the spirit of many of the world's religions. They are in fact contrary to those religious teachings. If, as religions teach, we are God's children, then all of us are God's children. We should all be accepted as children of God and be seen, as Elsa asks for herself, and we should be treated with love and respect.

ELSA is a film from the recently added *Unstoppable* program of the Slamdance Film Festival. *Unstoppable* includes films that represent the disabled community without tokenism. The films tell great stories that include people that happen to be disabled. Disability is a part of the landscape of the film, just like it is in the world outside of film. *Unstoppable* also encourages people from the disability community to make movies, to tell their stories through film.

We at the *Journal of Religion & Film* are excited to be able to cover films from the *Unstoppable* program and we applaud Slamdance for adding *Unstoppable* to its lineup of programs.