



The Chicago International Film Festival

Cinema/Chicago and the Chicago International Film Festival:

Education Program Screening: *93 Queen*

Directed by: Paula Eiselt

84 minutes, documentary in English

Please use the below synopsis/study questions to lead your students in film preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the field trip, students are required to respond to the screening with a one-page essay. Essays must be sent to Cinema/Chicago in order to be invited to subsequent film screenings.

Synopsis

93 Queen follows Rachel “Ruchie” Frier, a no-nonsense Hasidic lawyer and mother of six who is determined to shake up the “boys club” in her Hasidic community by creating Ezras Nashim, the first all-female ambulance corps in NYC. *93 Queen* is set in the Hasidic enclave of Borough Park, Brooklyn, where EMS corps have long been the province of men. Though the neighborhood is home to the largest volunteer ambulance corps in the world known as Hatzolah, that organization has steadfastly banned women from its ranks. Now Ruchie and an engaging cast of dogged Hasidic women are risking their reputations—and, literally, the futures of their children—by taking matters into their own hands to provide dignified emergency medical care to the Hasidic women and girls of Borough Park.

Key Themes

- Challenging existing social structures and breaking traditional roles
- Gender equality / the division between gender roles
- Feminism
- Changing a community from within vs. abandoning the community
- Modesty within religious communities
- Community organizing and grassroots activism

Discussion Questions

1. What is your previous knowledge of the Hasidic Jewish Orthodox Community? How did this documentary challenge or reinforce your preconceived notions of this community?

2. Why are the women motivated to organize Ezras Nashim? Why is it important that Hasidic women have the option to be treated by a female EMT?
3. How would you describe the gender roles within the Hasidic Jewish Orthodox Community?
4. How do the rules for female modesty reinforce the gender roles within the Hasidic Jewish community?

Scene Study

In the film, Rachel 'Ruchie' Freier states "they think that women aren't fast enough, strong enough, or smart enough".

- How do the women in the film challenge this notion?

In the scene where Ruchie receives backlash for her idea to start an all female group of EMTs, she gets a message questioning why she would change a system that 'already works'.

- Do you believe that it is sometimes important to change existing systems and challenge authority?
- Have you ever been in a similar situation where it was necessary to challenge authority for the common good?
- Can you think of any other examples where challenging existing social structures led to important social change?
- What tactics do the men use to oppose the women's attempt to organize Ezras Nashim?
- Can you think of how these tactics compare to the opposition to other social movements throughout history?

In the film Ruchie states, "sometimes I wonder why did God create me a woman? ... So much of the things that I want to do [are] much harder because I'm a woman. If I had been a Hasidic man I don't think I would have half the problems that I have."

- In what ways is Ruchie's statement true? What are some reasons that she might feel this way?
- In what ways can you relate to Ruchie? Have you ever felt like your social identity (race, class, gender, sexuality) has made aspects of your life more difficult?

In the film, an African American EMT states, “you know, this is a big thing you guys are doing. I’ll never forget, my grandfather before he passed away he told me, ‘Listen, you’re black, so you’re going to have to work twice as hard as anyone else.’... The fact that you’re females, just work twice as hard as they do, and you’ll succeed at it”

- Do you believe that this statement is true? Why or why not?
- What does this quote say about the connection between sexism and racism?

Because of her work with Ezras Nashim, there is opposition to Ruchie’s nomination as Bais Yaakov’s Mother of the Year.

- Do you think that Ruchie deserved the nomination?
- In what ways do you admire Ruchie’s work? Are you inspired by her passion and willingness to take action? Why or why not?

During a radio interview with Yitty and Ruchie, Ruchie states, “feminism is a secular concept. If you have a life that’s filled with Torah values, you don’t need feminism. From my perspective, feminism is the movement when a woman wants to be equal to a man, or she wants a man’s job. I’m very happy with my role as a woman.”

- Why do you think that Ruchie rejects the notion that she is a feminist?
- Why do you think feminism has such a negative connotation in the Hasidic Jewish Community?

Later in the film, Ruchie states, “I couldn’t achieve this position if the women who have been trailblazing for women’s equality hadn’t made it possible, so my connection with secular feminism I think is very obvious.”

- This quote represents Ruchie’s complicated relationship with the feminist movement. Based on your existing knowledge of feminism, in what ways do you think their activism falls in line with the movement and challenges patriarchal structures? In what ways do the Ezras Nashim uphold patriarchal structures?

In the film, single women are not allowed to join Ezras Nashim, causing a split in the group.

- How did you react to this decision? Do you believe that unmarried women should be allowed to join the group?

In the film, young girls in the Hasidic Jewish Orthodox community discuss their career goals and aspirations.

- Do you think that the existence of Ezras Nashim will change the way that young girls view the role of women in their community?
- In what ways will the Ezras Nashim reshape the lives of young girls growing up within the Hasidic Jewish Orthodox Community?
- Do you think it is important for young girls to see a group of women taking initiative and challenging existing gender roles?

On election night, the speaker introduces Ruchie's husband by stating, "behind every man there's a woman. Behind every woman, there's a great man."

- How did Ruchie's husband, Tzvi Dovid Freier, act as an ally and support Ruchie's cause?
- Why is it important for men to be allies to women in the fight for gender inequality? How can men be better allies?

Have a question or comment ready after the film!

Additional resources:

[93 QUEEN website](#)

[93 QUEEN POV website](#)

[Interview with Director, Paula Eiselt](#)

Schools that do not send in essay requirement will not be allowed to attend future Education Outreach Screenings.

Guide prepared by Claire Squibb and Lauren Ponto - Cinema/Chicago 2019