

Focus on Film

# The Light of Hope

Drama  
Holocaust

Monday, May 6, 2019 @ 4:00 p.m.

*Director: Silvia Quer, 2017 Spain*

*Running time: 96 minutes Spanish with English subtitles*

## **“When there is great suffering, you don't ask questions. You help...”**

The Talmud says that whoever saves a life saves the world. As the Spanish Civil War gives way to WWII, a group of women band together to save as many lives as they can in any way they can.

In a maternity home near the horrifying Rivesaltes refugee internment camp in France, Elisabeth Eidenbenz, a young Swiss nurse, provides a safe haven to pregnant women who face a 95% infant mortality rate in the inhospitable camp. The women are allowed to go to the maternity home four weeks before delivery and stay for four weeks after. During this time, Eidenbenz works to find the women jobs so they will not have to return to the camps.

Narrated by a child living in the maternity home with his mother, we see the loving community of women and children Eidenbenz creates in this home, celebrating life and enjoying it as much as possible in the midst of a world that is tearing itself apart.

When the home is ordered to shut down, Eidenbenz risks everything to create a bargaining chip to save it. Her plan is to enter the camp and surreptitiously

photograph the inhumane conditions and the supplies, meant for the refugees that are hoarded and stolen by the French running the camps. Her goal is to exchange the photographs for the ability to continue saving the babies who will almost certainly die in the camps and their mothers and siblings.

This little-known true story is a reminder of the many unsung heroes who saved precious lives against terrible odds and enormous opposition. Unable to let a single life be extinguished, 25 year old Eidenbenz, risking her life and freedom, stands her ground against the rules of the Red Cross, against the French and against the Nazis. Her work was impressive enough for the Israeli government to designate her as one of the “Righteous among the Nations.” Elizabeth Eidenbenz lived to be 98 and passed away in 2011. The house and grounds upon which the institution precariously flourished is now a historical center.

The combination of outstanding film-making and an unforgettable and inspiring story make this a Film Festival must-see.

*Reviewed by Beth Robinson*

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