

Jewish Current Issues

articles, essays, books and comments relating to current Jewish issues

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Laura Bialis' "Refusenik" Opens



Appropriately for the week of Israel's 60th anniversary, [REFUSENIK](#) -- a major new documentary -- opens in New York tonight, at [The Quad Cinema](#), with special appearances by Natan Sharansky at the 3:30 and 6:15 screenings on May 11.

[REFUSENIK](#) is the first documentary to chronicle the thirty-year movement to free Soviet Jews. The film is the project of the remarkable [Laura Bialis](#), currently living in Sderot where she is [filming](#) a documentary of the city on the frontline of Islamic fascism.

[REFUSENIK](#) is a tapestry of first-person accounts of heroism, sacrifice, and ultimately liberation, told through the eyes of activists on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The campaign to free Soviet Jewry is a major event in Jewish history. By 1992, one and a half million Jews had left the Soviet Union to live in freedom as a direct result of what was likely the most successful human rights campaign of all times.

One of the proudest chapters in Jewish history, the story of the refuseniks demonstrates the need for Jewish solidarity, the importance of the State of Israel, and the responsibilities we face as individuals living in a democracy.

Much of the material used in [REFUSENIK](#) is unique and exclusive to this film. Interviews with key leaders in the movement are some of the first ever to be recorded. Many of the photographs and covert film footage -- some of it smuggled out of the Soviet Union -- have never been seen before by a large audience, and help make [REFUSENIK](#) a unique portrait of this amazing story.

The [reviews](#) in the [Seattle Times](#), [Variety](#), [The Jerusalem Post](#), [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#), and [New York Jewish Week](#) have been uniformly favorable. The brief [trailer](#) is itself well done.

Bialis' first film -- "[TAK FOR ALT: Survival of a Human Spirit](#)" (1999), the story of Holocaust survivor turned civil rights activist Judy Meisel -- was produced a couple years after Bialis graduated from Stanford University with a B.A. in History (focusing on wartime and post-war Europe) and an M.F.A. in Production from the USC School of Cinema-Television. The film won the Anti-Defamation League's Dore Schary Award, aired on PBS on Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2000, and was honored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as one of the outstanding films of 1999.

Screenings of [REFUSENIK](#) are [scheduled](#) for around the country, and the film will be shown May 14 as part of the [Los Angeles Jewish Film Festival](#).

Posted by Rick Richman | [Permalink](#)

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