

The Whistleblower Film Guide

Film length: 112 minutes

Film rating: R (violence toward women shown)

Director: Larysa Kondracki

Genre: Drama

Synopsis:

This drama is based on the true experiences of Kathryn Bolkovac, a Nebraska police woman who was hired by a private security firm to serve as a peacekeeper in post-war Bosnia. She discovered the horrors of sex trafficking, and the fact that many of the police she worked with were involved with this illegal degradation of women. Trying to “bring justice” to the situation, she also learns of the attempts to cover up the situation on the part of some United Nations officials.

In addition to being demoted and finally terminated from her job, Kathy realized the physical danger of being a whistleblower on corruption. She also faced the moral danger of keeping silent in the face of injustice. While the film is not appropriate for younger teens because of the violence toward women it enacts, mature young adults may benefit from the questions the film explores.

CST Themes to Engage Through the Film:

- *Respect for Life and Human Dignity*
- *Solidarity with the oppressed*
- *Human Rights and Moral Responsibilities*
- *Discernment about what best serves the Common Good*
- *Courage to speak truth to power*
- *How the personal and the social connect*



Web Links:

Official Movie Site:

www.thewhistleblower-movie.com/

You Tube Video with the real Ms. Bolkovac:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGOC_Ci5FBE

www.educationforjustice.org: Today's Slavery: Human Trafficking and Church Response

Questions for Discussion:

- 1 This film is based on a true story and reflects the international concern with human trafficking. What have you heard about the issue of trafficking to date? Have you seen any reports or movies on the issue, such as *Taken*?
- 2 The Vatican and Catholic Bishops have issued a number of statements of concern about this issue; in 2002, the Vatican Representative to the United Nations organized a conference on Human Trafficking and Pope John Paul II wrote a statement for the delegates to this meeting. How does the issue of trafficking relate to the main Catholic Social Teaching principle of Respect for Life and for Human Dignity? Why has it taken so long for the general public to become more aware of the issue of trafficking? Why is it taking so long for human trafficking to be finally stopped?
- 3 Another central principle of Catholic Social Teaching is Solidarity, taking a stand with those who suffer and are oppressed in any way. What suffering and oppression does the main character witness? How does this impact her? Some of the images of the victims of trafficking and what they go through are quite graphic. Does the depiction of such degradation and violence enhance the moral perspective of the story? Should such violence and degradation be shown? What was your reaction to the scenes of violence toward women in this film?
- 4 The main character goes through a transformation in the course of the film. What brings about this transformation? What challenges and struggles does she face as she confronts the reality of the situation? Why and how does she take a stand with the victims? What does this cost her? What gives her strength to continue? Is she enriched in anyway during her difficult struggle?
- 5 Why and how do people in power allow the injustice of trafficking to continue? Social sin involves structures and systems, not just the acts of individuals--where do you see evidence of informal and formal systems and structures of injustice in the film? Why is it necessary to change both informal and formal structures to achieve justice? Do such systems reinforce each other?
- 7 What role does social conditioning play in this film--what are some of the views of women that are evident? Where do these views originate and how are they reinforced? The history of treating women as objects for men's pleasure is a long one; where do you see this changing, and where do you see this continuing? How are both men's and women's dignity compromised by disrespecting women? What are some ways you and your community can promote respect for all human persons?
8. The real Kathy Bolkovac has stated that she found many problems with the for-profit companies that were hired to provide policing and peacekeeping in Bosnia, including lack of appropriate training, lack of ethical commitment to justice for all, and little sense among some of the employees that they were hired to protect the common good. There have also been similar complaints about some of the private contractors hired to support U.S. soldiers in Iraq. The "privatization" of services formally done by government non-profit agencies and the use of for-profit companies is a growing trend. What are the pros and cons of using for-profit companies to provide services for the common good? What should we expect from those who are employed to help, support and protect people? Should people in public institutions such as the UN be held to a higher standard of ethical conduct?
9. The real Kathy Bolkovac has said she does not consider herself an activist, but only someone "concerned about justice" and willing to fight for justice (which many would say is an activist). In what ways can she be a role model for people and inspire them to be engaged in justice issues? Who and/or what challenges many people to become concerned about justice? What and/or who challenges you and those you know to become concerned with issues of justice?