



jewish film institute presents

talk amongst yourselves

women's history month:
SEEING ALLRED



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Group Discussion & Educational Resource Guide

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The Jewish Film Institute invites you to enjoy and discuss *Seeing Allred* (2018), a powerful documentary film directed by Sophie Sartain and Roberta Grossman that portrays Gloria Allred, the nation's most prominent attorney working for women's rights. The film traces Allred's long career representing the underserved and helping women to be heard.

The resources that follow, part of JFI's *Talk Amongst Yourselves* program, are meant to complement the film by offering viewers questions to consider and discuss and additional resources to deepen their understanding of Allred's career and commitments. You can craft your own watch party using the below resources to help you curate your event. Visit www.jfi.org/watchparty for more tips on how to host your own event.

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Questions Upon Viewing the Film

1. Identify the key themes in *Seeing Allred*. Are there themes that resonated particularly for you, or which reflected experiences or challenges you have had?
2. If you were already aware of Gloria Allred, did the way you think of her change over the course of the documentary? Did you notice how you responded to different parts of the film?
3. Allred states in the documentary, “People are afraid to be called a feminist because they thought it was a bad word...I thought it was a good thing to be a feminist.”
How do you understand the term “feminist”?
How has the concept of feminism changed over the last fifty years?
Is it a useful and/or relevant term today? Why is it at times controversial?
4. For Gloria Allred, “men of quality are not threatened by women of equality.” Do you agree? How can men be allies in the fight for women’s rights? Can you think of specific examples?
5. [*The Hollywood Reporter’s review*](#) of 'Seeing Allred' states that the film “leaves a lot of questions unasked.” Are there questions you would like to ask Gloria Allred? Are there questions that you would like to ask the filmmakers about how they decided to represent Allred and her story?
6. Gloria Allred says in the film: "I live in a war zone every day. There is a war on women. It's real, it can be very ugly. Women depend on me to be strong, to be fearless, to assertively protect their rights." What is your response to this statement?
Is this supported in the film? Do women need her strength?
7. How did hearing Allred’s story of being raped, and of her experience having an illegal abortion affect you? How does it help you understand the following statement from Allred: “It's because I have a passion for justice and because of what I have suffered that I feel that I can't undo what has happened to me, but I can use that to help others for them to have rights that I didn't feel that I had.”
8. Do you think Gloria Allred is ahead of her time? Would she have faced less antagonism if she had started her practice in today’s climate of #MeToo and #TimesUp? Is the culture as challenging today for assertive women advocating for women’s rights?
9. The documentary depicts Allred being portrayed by the media as *aggressive, humorless, striving, seeking glory, shrill, attention-seeking*, and as a *firebrand*. Jimmy Kimmel is shown saying that she “seems to be in league with the devil.”

Would these words have been used to describe a man fighting similar battles?

10. Bill Cosby was protected from most of his accusers by a statute of limitations—a law preventing prosecutors from charging someone with a crime that was committed more than a specified number of years ago. Are there solid arguments in favor of a statute of limitations? What are these arguments? How did Allred argue against a statute of limitations in the case of sexual assault?
11. Because the statute of limitations prevented most of the sexual assault cases against Bill Cosby to be heard in court, Gloria Allred gave a forum for victims of sexual abuse to share their stories with the media. What is the value of hearing their stories? What do you think this accomplished? In your view, is this an effective strategy?

NOTE: In 2016, California Governor Jerry Brown enacted the Justice for Victims Act (SB 813) to eliminate the 10-year limit in the case of rape and other sexual abuse.

12. Allred has pioneered innovative ways of fighting injustice, confronting the dominant narrative, and allowing victims to be heard. She has said that it is not always about winning, as sometimes the mere fact of being heard is enough: “Speaking out for women in and of itself is an empowering experience.” In the age of #MeToo something shifted in women’s ability to speak out and in the capacity of the society to hear? Have we reached a tipping point?
13. Gloria Allred, Gloria Steinem, and a number of other leaders in the feminist movement came from a Jewish background. Do you believe that there is a connection to be drawn here? If so, what is it?
14. Discuss Hillary Clinton’s candidacy in the 2016 Presidential election in the context of the film.
15. In 2004 Allred filed the first lawsuit in California challenging the state’s ban on same-sex marriage. In 2008 she successfully argued the case before the California Supreme Court. For you, what is the relationship between the struggle for women’s rights and the struggle for LGBT rights? What is the relationship to other civil rights struggles?
16. What are other examples of attorneys using the practice of law as a vehicle to effect social change, as Gloria Allred does?

17. Discuss your response to the scene at the Lincoln Memorial when Allred is confronted by aggressive counter-protestors.
18. In the film CNN news anchor Don Lemon asks, "Who else do you know who is like Gloria Allred?" How would you answer?

A Timeline of Gloria Allred's High Profile Cases

1976	Allred co-founded the firm Allred, Maroko & Goldberg with fellow Loyola graduates Michael Maroko and Nathan Goldberg.
1979	Allred represented seven children and their parents in a lawsuit against the Sav-On Drugstore chain to stop the store from allocating separate sections for boys' and girls' toys.
1985	With Catharine Mackinnon Allred drafted a version of the Antipornography Civil Rights Ordinance for Los Angeles County which failed to pass the Board of Supervisors.
1992	Allred wrote to the Senate Ethics Committee requesting an investigation of Oregon Senator Bob Packwood for sexual harassment. The Committee eventually voted for his expulsion, and he resigned.
1995	Allred represented Nicole Brown Simpson's family during the O.J. Simpson murder trial.
1997	Allred represented actress Hunter Tylo when producer Aaron Spelling fired her from her role in "Melrose Place" because she was pregnant. A jury awarded Tylo \$4.8 million – important recognition for women who are working and become pregnant.
2002	Allred represented the family of the transgender teen Gwen Araujo who was brutally beaten to death when it was revealed she had been assigned male at birth.
2004	Allred represented Amber Frey, a witness in the Scott Peterson criminal case.
2004	Allred's firm filed the first lawsuit in California challenging the denial of marriage licenses for same gender couples as being unconstitutional.
2007	Allred represented three former Circuit City employees on behalf of a large plaintiff class in an age discrimination lawsuit against that company after it fired 3,400 workers. Allred represented 217 ex-employees, winning a \$15 million settlement for 200 of them.
2008	Allred wins a decision of the California Supreme Court affirming the right of same sex couples to marry in California.
2009	Allred was retained by Rachel Uchitel after media sources alleged an affair with married golfer Tiger Woods. Allred also represented Joslyn James, an actress and Woods's alleged mistress.
2010	Allred held a news conference in her office where English actress Charlotte Lewis alleged that director Roman Polanski had sexually abused her in Paris when she was 16 years old.
2010	Allred represented Jodie Fisher whose sexual harassment claim revealed expense-account irregularities that led to the resignation of HP CEO Mark Hurd.
2010	Allred represented Nicky Diaz, a former domestic worker for Republican Nominee Meg Whitman, claiming Whitman knew for years that Diaz was an undocumented immigrant.

2011	Allred won court approval to represent nine former cocktail waitresses who were fired from their jobs at Resorts Casino Hotel in Atlantic City in New Jersey because they "did not look good enough" in new uniforms modeled after 1920s-era Flapper outfits.
2012	Allred represented Jenna Talackova, a Canadian woman who was challenging her disqualification from the Miss Universe Canada contest for not being a "naturally born" female. The Miss Universe organization ultimately reversed its decision.
2014	Allred represented at least 33 women who accused Bill Cosby of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and/or other sexual misconduct. She was initially hesitant to do this because the statute of limitations had passed for many of their charges.
2016	California ended its statute of limitations for rape cases after Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation filed in the wake of sexual assault allegations against comedian Bill Cosby.
2016	Allred is representing three women who accuse Donald Trump of sexual misconduct, claims which emerged during Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. He has denied these claims.
2017	Allred represented Beverly Young Nelson, who accused Roy Moore (then-Alabama Senate candidate) of sexual assault. In her testimony, Nelson alleged that Moore groped her when she was 16 years old.
2017	Allred is currently representing <i>Apprentice</i> contestant Summer Zervos in a defamation suit against President Trump. She claims he sexually harassed her in 2007.

Further Reading About Gloria Allred

Articles on Gloria Allred

[Gloria Allred's Crusade -The attorney takes on Bill Cosby, rape law, and Donald Trump](#), by Jia Tolentino, *The New Yorker*, October 2, 2017.

[Gloria Allred: 'Many women contacted me even prior to the Trump tape'](#), by Molly Redden, *The Guardian*, October 27, 2016.

[Q&A: Gloria Allred on Balancing Law, Business and the #MeToo Spotlight](#) by Christine Simmons, *New York Law Journal*, February 15, 2018.

[Who's afraid of Gloria Allred? Meet America's most formidable feminist lawyer](#), by Alex Clark, *The Guardian*, July 9, 2017

[Gloria Allred Is Ready to Take President Trump to Court: 'It's Going to Be a Battle'](#), by Marlow Stern, *The Daily Beast*, January 22, 2018

[Lawyer Gloria Allred's #MeToo Moment](#), by Alexandra Wolfe, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 16, 2018

Articles on "Seeing Allred"

[In A New Netflix Documentary, Gloria Allred Looks At Her Career And What's Next](#), by Michel Martin, National Public Radio, February 4, 2018

[Gloria Allred will keep fighting to get her way, and 'Seeing Allred' argues that's a good thing](#), by Amy Kaufman, Los Angeles Times, February 3, 2018.

['Seeing Allred': Gloria Allred on Cosby, Weinstein and What Comes Next](#), by Tessa Stuart, *Rolling Stone*, February, 2018.

[Seeing Allred, the New Gloria Allred Documentary, Reminds Us That Feminism Used to Be a Very Unpopular Brand](#), by Bridget Read, *Vogue*, February 9, 2018

[The New Gloria Allred Documentary Makes a Case for Public Shaming](#), by Katie Van Syckle, *The Cut*, January 23, 2018.

[Film Review: 'Seeing Allred'](#), by Peter Debruge, *Variety*, February 9, 2018

Gloria Allred's website: www.gloriaallred.com

Gloria Allred's autobiography: *Fight Back and Win: My Thirty-Year Fight Against Injustice—And How You Can Win Your Own Battles* by Gloria Allred, Harper Collins, 2006.

Background on the Feminist Movement

Merriam-Webster defines feminism as "the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities." The American feminist movement is often seen as having [distinct waves](#) across its history.

The First Wave

The first wave of the movement began in the mid-19th century. Its watershed moment was the 1848 [Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls](#), which yielded a [Declaration of Sentiments](#), modeled after the Declaration of Independence, which outlined the quest to achieve equal rights for women. Foremost among the movement's goals was the realization of American women's right to vote. Leaders of the movement included [Susan B. Anthony](#), [Sojourner Truth](#), and [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#). Although women gained voting rights in certain states beginning in 1870, it was not until 1920 that the [Nineteenth Amendment](#) to the United States Constitution, which guaranteed women's right to vote, was ratified.

The Second Wave

The second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and ended in the 1980s. It is in this wave that Gloria Allred emerged as a leading voice. Issues central to the movement included addressing sex discrimination in employment, the right to reproductive freedom, equitable distribution of roles in the home, seeking the admission of women to educational institutions and organizations that admitted only men, and addressing sexual abuse and coercion.

A rallying point for feminist activists during the second wave feminist era was, as depicted in the film, the [Equal Rights Amendment](#), a proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States that would protect equal rights for all citizens regardless of sex. The ERA passed both houses of Congress in 1972 and was submitted to the state legislatures, as adoption would require ratification by 38 of the 50 states. Due to heavy opposition from conservatives, the amendment did not receive support from a sufficient number of state legislatures before the deadline for ratification (which was originally established as 1979 and then extended to 1982). Although the movement has lost momentum, the fight for the amendment's enactment is not over. In 2017 [Nevada became the 36th state to ratify the ERA](#).

Third Wave

Feminism's third wave came of age in the 1990s among young women who sought to distinguish their convictions from the philosophical underpinnings of second wave feminism. Conventional conceptions of gender and sexuality were often challenged, and the movement encouraged different norms regarding appearances and language. For example, misogynistic terms like "bitch" might be adopted ironically or in a celebratory manner. Third wave feminism eschews binary classifications and is likely to incorporate an intersectional politics in which the conditions of multiple marginalized groups—be they defined by race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, or other sources of identity—are incorporated into the greater picture.

The #MeToo Movement

A phenomenon still in full steam, MeToo began as a term developed by Tarana Burke as a means of helping women of color who had survived sexual violence. Taking on a new life when it was promoted by actress Alyssa Milano as a hashtag on social media, it became a way of expressing a shared experience of sexual harassment or abuse, primarily (but not exclusively) among women, in solidarity.

The occasion for its growth was the revelation in 2017 of film producer Harvey Weinstein's extensive patterns of sexual misconduct and abuse of power. A number of significant figures from many fields have resigned or been fired in the aftermath of accusations regarding their behavior, including television host [Matt Lauer](#), author/editor [Leon Wieseltier](#), casino mogul [Steve Wynn](#), chef [Mario Batali](#), comedian [Louis C.K.](#), radio host [Garrison Keillor](#), and music producer [Russell Simmons](#). And a nation watched in shock as 156 athletes molested in their youth by [Larry Nassar](#), formerly the physician for the United States gymnastics team, confronted him in a courtroom with memories of sexual abuse at his hands.

The #MeToo movement has already made an impact in the United States government, with the resignation of numerous politicians like Senator [Al Franken](#), Rep. [John Conyers](#), and Rep. [Trent Franks](#), and [the enactment of Congressional legislation against sexual harassment and the use of public funds to settle harassment cases](#). A great source of contention is that President Donald Trump has been [accused by a number of women](#) of sexual assault or harassment, and he [has belittled](#) such accusations when applied to his political allies. [Gloria Allred is representing Summer Zervos](#), a former contestant on the television program "The Apprentice," in a defamation suit against President Trump, who has dismissed her claims of sexual harassment.

[Meet the Woman Who Coined 'Me Too' Ten Years Ago--to Help Women of Color](#) , by Abby Ohlheiser, *Washington Post*, October 19, 2017

[Actress Alyssa Milano Calls on Women to Share Sex Assault, Harassment Encounters with #metoo Hashtag](#), by Nicole Hensley, *New York Daily News*, October 15, 2017

[#MeToo: A Timeline of Events](#) in the *Chicago Tribune*, February 25, 2018

[Feminists from 3 different generations talk #MeToo](#), by Elizabeth Velez, April Sizemore-Barber, and Hanna Chan, *Vox*, Jan 31, 2018

[Ruth Bader Ginsburg Opens Up About #MeToo, Voting Rights, and Millennials](#), by Jeffrey Rosen, *The Atlantic*, February 15, 2018

A Jewish Perspective

Although Gloria Allred did not come from a religiously observant background, it is possible to look at her activism and work partially through a Jewish lens. And we simultaneously might ask why she and so many women (including [Gloria Steinem](#), [Betty Friedan](#), [Bella Abzug](#), [Susan Brownmiller](#), and [Letty Cottin Pogrebin](#)) who emerged as leaders in the second wave feminist movement were Jewish.

Bettering the World

Although the term [*tikkun olam*](#) (a concept used in Jewish mystical tradition meaning “repairing the world”) emerged fairly recently in Jewish thought as a way to express the commitment to improving the world in which we live, it is an apt reflection of this strong Jewish impulse.

Central to this quest to better the world is the commandment in the Torah, “Justice, justice shall you pursue” (Deuteronomy 16:20). The pursuit of justice is transformed into a religious obligation, and this quest becomes a lens with which to look at inequalities around us. A societal problem becomes a justice problem.

[Pursue Justice So That You May Truly Live](#), by Rachel Barenblat, *Truah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights*, 2016

[“Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue:” Finding Hope in Justice-Seeking Movements](#), by Ivy Helman in *Feminism and Religion*, December 14, 2014

[“Justice, Justice”](#), by Rabbi Jonathan Kligler, *Reconstructing Judaism*

[Parshat Shoftim: What the Torah Says About Justice](#), by Rabbi David Saperstein, *BimBam* (animated video)

Liberation Struggles

Jewish identification with struggles of liberation can be partly attributed to the importance Jewish tradition places on remembering the freeing of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt serves both as a means for Jews to relate to the struggles of others, and as a powerful model that has been incorporated into varying struggles for liberation. The Exodus has often been evoked in the experience of African-Americans (for example, Harriet Tubman was referred to as “Moses”). Relatedly, there are a number of contemporary *haggadot* for the Passover seder that connect the liberation of the Israelites to the liberation of women.

Jewish affinity for enacting radical social change also emerges not only from religious ideas, but from the lived experience of Jews. The Jewish embrace of struggles for justice and equality in the United States is deeply intertwined with the activism of Jewish garment workers—mostly women—and other workers who were in the forefront of the

labor movement in the early 20th century, as well as with memories of the struggles of Jews in Europe and elsewhere against discrimination and persecution.

Judaism and Women's Rights

The relationship of feminism and Judaism is complex. Many women experience traditional Judaism as patriarchal and sexist. For example, women are traditionally not counted in the mandated quorum for communal prayer; women are traditionally excluded from reading aloud from the Torah scroll in a public setting; and, while study is valued highly as a pursuit among men, [women's learning has often been neglected or discouraged](#).

There have been enormous changes in recent decades, corresponding to the ascendancy of feminism, and often occurring as a result of feminist advocacy within the Jewish community. An example is the rabbinate. Although the first woman ordained as a rabbi was in Germany in 1935—Regina Jonas, who would be murdered in the Holocaust—the first ordination of a female rabbi in the United States would not occur until 1972. The Reconstructionist movement would ordain its first woman rabbi in 1974, and the Conservative movement in 1985. [Women now constitute the majority](#) of students in the rabbinical seminaries of the Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative movements. Although Orthodox Jews are deeply divided on the permissibility of female rabbis, the wheels are already well in motion. There are now a number of [Orthodox women rabbis](#), and 2016 saw the [first woman calling herself a rabbi hired by an Orthodox synagogue](#). More conflict around this issue is likely to take place in the future, as the leading Orthodox umbrella institution, the Orthodox Union, has taken an increasingly hardline stance on the issue, announcing in January 2018 that [it intends to enforce a rule enacted in 2017](#) forbidding its member congregations from hiring female clergy.

Related Stories in the Torah

There are also texts in the Torah that depict efforts to overcome gender inequality. The first struggle for justice for women in the Torah is the insufficiently known episode of the [daughters of Zelophehad](#) (Numbers 27), set during the Israelites' years of wandering in the desert. After Moses reveals that land will be passed down only to male children, the five daughters of Zelophehad—a man who bore no sons—make the case before Moses and the entire community that it is not right for them to be excluded from their inheritance simply because they are women. Moses bring the case to the Lord, and the Lord sides with the daughters.

[The Daughters of Zelophehad and the Struggle for Justice for Women](#), by Dr. Brenda Bacon, *The Schechter Institutes*, July 2003

[The Daughters of Zelophehad: Power and Uniqueness](#), by Rabbi Silvina Chemen, My Jewish Learning

[Were the Daughters of Zelophehad the First Feminists?](#) by Shelley Lindauer, ReformJudaism.org, July 2005

A biblical story that can be said to relate to the #metoo movement is the episode of [Judah and Tamar](#) (Genesis 38). Tamar is married to Judah's daughter, Er. After Er dies, Er's brother Onan fulfills the custom (known as levirate marriage) of marrying his brother's widow. When Onan also dies soon thereafter, Judah assures Tamar that he will provide his young son Shelah as her husband once Shelah becomes an adult. However, while Tamar waits in his household as a widow, Judah reneges on this promise. Upset, Tamar enacts a plan to bear a child by Judah. Disguising herself, she stations herself on the side of a road he will be taking. Unaware of Tamar's identity and believing her to be a prostitute, Judah promises her a young goat in exchange for sleeping with him. After their sexual encounter, he leaves his signet seal and staff with her as a surety that he will provide the goat, but, since Tamar returns to her life as a widow, he is unable to find her again.

When Tamar is eventually found to be pregnant, Judah accuses her of sinning and publicly insists that she be punished by burning. Tamar then announces, "Let the man who made me pregnant acknowledge his signet seal, cords, and staff." The surprised Judah realizes that the child is his, and confesses: "She is more right than I, for I certainly did not give her to my son Shelah."

Tamar's courage in standing up for her own rights and speaking truth to power results in her saving her own life and in Judah's admission of his own wrongdoing. [As Rabbi Michael Panitz points out](#), "Tamar is exonerated and gives birth to twins— one of whom is an ancestor of King David. From the acknowledgement of error, redemption can spring."

[Torah's #MeToo](#), by Rabbi Evan Krame & Rabbi David Evan Markus, *The Jewish Studio Blog*, December 02, 2017

[What the Torah Can Teach Us about the #MeToo Movement](#), by Rabbi Jordana Chernow-Reader, *ReformJudaism.org* , January 2, 2018