

Survivors and witnesses

By Daniel M. Kimmel

In 1990 two films came out of Germany about the Holocaust that held a mirror up to the German population and made them confront their own pasts.

Movie Maven

One was "The Nasty Girl," a biting film by Michael Verhoeven about a young student writing an essay on what her town did during the Third Reich. She starts asking all the wrong questions – which is to say, all the right ones – and townspeople resent the inconvenient truths she dredges up.

Lesser known is Emanuel Rund's documentary, "All Jews Out!" Ostensibly its focus is on the Auerbacher family from the town of Goppingen in Germany. Combining home movies and new interviews, we see the events through the eyes of a child who survived Kristallnacht and being imprisoned at the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

She still has the documents that ordered her family to the transports as well as the identity card with the "J" (for "Jew") stamped on it.

What makes this film different than other accounts of survivors is that there are also interviews with German eyewitnesses, many of them being questioned by local students. These were not the perpetrators of violence but, as they themselves admit, the people who stood by and did nothing as their neighbors were stripped of their rights and eventually sent off to die.

Some seem to be in denial, like the party member who, he claims, just happened to be out of town the night the local synagogue was burnt down. Others are frank in their admission of complicity, as with the woman who worked at Theresienstadt who says it was only when meeting Inge Auerbacher that she realizes how much of her time there she had suppressed in her memory.

Auerbacher addresses the young students and tells them that she cannot blame subsequent generations of Germans for what happened, but they do have an obligation to learn their history and acknowledge their past. "All Jews Out!" is an example of that happening, suggesting that while there may not be forgiveness for the perpetrators, their descendants can join together to ensure it does not happen again.

"All Jews Out!" is available through the National Center for Jewish Film for \$36. Public performance rights separately available. Call 781-736-8600 or visit www.jewishfilm.org.

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