



Seeing Allred Discussion Guide

Director: Sophie Sartain, Roberta Grossman

Year: 2018

Time: 96 min

You might know this director from:

This is the debut feature film from this directorial team.

You may know Roberta Grossman from *Above and Beyond* (2014), or Sophie Sartain from *Mimi Dona* (2014).

FILM SUMMARY

It's been said that the feminist movement began with the philosophy of Gloria Steinem and the frontline fight of Gloria Allred. Known to most as the outspoken women's rights attorney famous for her high profile press conferences and civil rights suits involving women's rights, sexual abuse, wrongful termination, and employment discrimination, Allred has proven herself to be an unrelenting champion for social justice. With *SEEING ALLRED*, directors Sophie Sartain and Roberta Grossman outline the life and career of this indomitable advocate for progressive change with a fire and verve to match Gloria's hard-boiled personality.

The film begins, aptly, with Allred appearing on a talk show as a fierce commentator on gender politics, setting the record straight with fervid authority. Over her forty-year career as an attorney, she has made a name for herself by regularly appearing on television and radio broadcasts to talk about issues regarding representation and civil rights, and in court to represent women and minorities. Before Gloria got in the business of representing clients used or abused by celebrities like O.J. Simpson, Tommy Lee, and Anthony Weiner, she lived and worked as a teacher in Los Angeles educating underprivileged minority students, attained her a law degree from Loyola University School of Law, and shortly after, represented a family who sued a chain store to stop them from designating separate sections for boys' and girls' toys. She also staged protests against the outlawing of abortion in California, and even took on the then all-male Friars Club, taking them to task for its membership discrimination policies.

Celebrating Gloria's countless contributions to the struggle for civil rights and gender equality, *SEEING ALLRED* asks us not to idle in admiration, but to acknowledge how much progress there is left to make and to join Allred in the fight for change.

FILM THEMES

The ferocious feminist attorney Gloria Allred has spent her forty-year legal career working on behalf of women's rights and rights for minorities.

A MEDIA SAVVY VOICE FOR CHANGE

Since the mid-70s, Gloria Allred has provided legal services to an immensely diverse array of clients in cases involving women's rights, sexual abuse, wrongful termination, and employment discrimination. After appearing on television to comment on an active case early in her career, she realized the power of the media and has since become a regular commentator on feminist issues in the public eye, even co-hosting a regular radio show on KABC in Los Angeles and appearing in many TV shows over the years. Fearless and confrontational in her approach to civil rights activism, Allred has proven herself as a trailblazer in the fight for civil liberties and equal rights for all.

ON THE FRONTLINES OF FEMINISM

In *SEEING ALLRED*, Laurie Levenson of Loyola Law School, Allred's alma mater, explains that Gloria Steinem was the philosopher who created the feminist movement, while Gloria Allred was the soldier at the frontlines of the campaign. Earlier in Allred's legal career she decided to show no fear in the face of opposition and henceforth she has proven time and time again to be an indomitable, outspoken force in the fight for civil rights for women and minorities. Despite the conservative backlash she's received in various forms of media over the years, Gloria appears unphased and confident that with her commitment, change is possible.

ABUSES KEPT IN THE DARK

Over the course of her career, Gloria Allred has been involved with an incredible amount of sexual abuse and sexual assault cases, many of them high profile and many of which didn't come to light for years after the initial events took place because of the difficulty in sharing such traumatic experiences and the stigma that tends to attach itself to abused individuals. Allred reveals that in the mid-60s she herself was raped at gunpoint and was subsequently denied access to legal abortion services after she became pregnant in its aftermath. It took her years to be able to share this information with anyone, and therefore knows how hard it is for those who have been abused to come forward and publicly share their stories.

THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION

Gloria has been deemed the "Master of the Press Conference" for her tactic of placing accusations not feasible in the court of law in the battleground of public opinion. Throughout *SEEING ALLRED* we see her employing this strategy as a means of holding abusers accountable for their actions by publicly stating the claims of her clients and allowing the public to decide for themselves. It's a tactic that has brought her under fire from critics; however, the large majority of the time, it's worked brilliantly in her favor.

"Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living."

Mother Jones

"I start every day with the knowledge that helping people and fighting for justice is my duty, and that nothing worthwhile comes without sacrifice, self-discipline, and courage."

Gloria Allred

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS:

1. Prior to seeing SEEING ALLRED, were you aware of Gloria Allred. If so, how?
2. How do you feel about Gloria now that you've seen the film?
3. A major part of Gloria's career has been devoted to civil rights and gender equality. Were you surprised to learn of her professional accomplishments? Why or why not?
4. In the film, Gloria reveals that she herself was raped as a young woman, and subsequently was denied a legal abortion. She still appears visibly distressed when discussing it on camera. How did you react to this scene?
5. Gloria is well known for holding press conferences on behalf of her clients. How do you feel about this tactic of using the court of public opinion?
6. Gloria Steinem and Gloria Allred have been spoken about as key personalities of the feminist movement. Can you think of others who should be mentioned alongside them?
7. SEEING ALLRED is unabashedly in support of its subject, to the point of omitting or dismissing any valid criticisms one might have. How do you feel about this?
8. The film is mostly made up of new interviews and archival television appearances, telling Gloria's backstory chronologically. Did this format work well for you, or do you it were different in some way?
9. Most of the recent footage included in the film centers around Bill Cosby and the women who have come forward to share their stories of sexual abuse. Why did you think this secondary narrative was included in SEEING ALLRED?
10. What was your greatest takeaway from SEEING ALLRED? Would you recommend the film to a friend? Why or why not?

NOTES:

FILM FACTS:

- Roberta Grossman and Sophie Sartain's *SEEING ALLRED* had its world premiere at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. The film was purchased by Netflix that week and subsequently released internationally via the streaming service just two weeks later.
- On September 20, 1961, Gloria had her only daughter, Lisa Bloom, when she was 19-years-old, and for the better part of her childhood, raised her as a single mother. Lisa has followed in her mother's footsteps and has become a successful lawyer known for representing women accusing someone of sexism, sexual assault, or sexual harassment.
- Back in 1966 while on vacation in Acapulco, Mexico, Allred was raped at gunpoint and subsequently denied a legal abortion after she became pregnant from the rape. She later almost died due to hemorrhaging after undergoing a "botched" illegal abortion. The event helped solidify her decision to become a lawyer and champion women's rights.
- Allred has been nominated for an Emmy three times for her television commentaries on KABC-TV, as well as for a Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Legal/Courtroom Program thanks to her court TV show "We the People with Gloria Allred."
- In 1987, Allred filed a sex-discrimination case against the all-male New York Friars Club after she was barred from entering with a guest for lunch. From a New York Times [article](#) at the time: "A Friar policy of sex segregation which excludes females is as damaging as a policy of racial segregation would be if it excluded blacks," the attorney, Gloria Allred, said at a news conference outside the club, at 57 East 55th Street." She became the club's first female member in 1988.
- Despite Allred's history of famous clientele, the celebrities actually represent just a fraction of her cases. "More than 90 percent are confidential - You don't know about them and never will," she said in an [interview](#) with Harper's Bazaar.
- Months after Allred began representing 33 women who accused Bill Cosby of rape, drug facilitated sexual assault, sexual battery, child sexual abuse, or sexual misconduct, on April 26, 2018, Cosby was found guilty "of three counts of aggravated indecent assault against Andrea Constand, at the time a Temple University employee he had mentored," [according to](#) The New York Times.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Become** a member of the [National Organization for Women](#) (NOW). Founded in 1966, NOW is the largest organization of feminist grassroots activists in the United States.
2. **Know** your rights. The [American Civil Liberties Union](#) offers a thorough, easy-to-navigate guide to your civil rights in regards to all sorts of topics, from women's rights to free speech.
3. **Donate** to the [Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation](#) (GLAAD). As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change for the LGBTQ community.
4. **Stay** safe and get help when in need. Services like the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) are available to support those in need and shift power back to people affected by relationship abuse.

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Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.