



Movie Review — Norma Rae (1979)

Introduction

The film, *Norma Rae* (1979), presents the story of a woman during an American labor movement where labor was depicted to be too intricate and prosperous to care for the underprivileged. The labor movement portrayed in the movie is perceived to be extremely powerful, powerful to the extent that its interests are always met. The movie is set in the present day (1979) rural south with the protagonist Norma Rae, a Southern mill worker with two children. The film provides a significant evaluation of the radicalism that was portrayed in the post-1960s by southern managers and how they learned to oppress the unprivileged when they were able to resist their legal rights.

Historical, Political, and Aesthetic Points of View

The film, *Norma Rae*, places its characters in a recognizable social context that neither caricatures nor patronizes them. Essentially, it utilizes short, instantaneous, and effective scenes that exaggerate the limits enforced on the imaginations by both poverty and tradition. Norma Rae's father is cautious of the trade union as a stockholder. On the other hand, her mother is on the verge of becoming deaf as a result of the noise that comes from the weaving room where she works.

Historically, the movie, *Norma Rae*, depicts a mid-late 20th-century society full of gender inequality and racial prejudice. For instance, the women who worked in the mills were lumped together with the elderly and minorities, such as the African Americans. They all face exploitation from the white male authority figures so that they are able to maintain their social statuses.

In the film, Reuben Warshowsky is the coordinator of the labor union who realizes the exploitation of the town's factory workers. He tries to advocate for workers' rights through the labor union, but his voice falls on deaf ears. Reuben faced a lot of resistance, considering that he is a Jewish man, but he ended up managing to team up with Norma Rae. Together they formed a labor union for a significant cause. Norma Rae represents a strong feminist voice in a patriarchal society in 1978 North Carolina.

The intolerable working conditions forced Norma Rae and Reuben to stand up and fight for workers' rights. The opening scene of the film introduces the workers, who seem to be working the whole day in the O. P. Henley Company textile factory. The noise from the factory machines is deafening, and the workers tend to be overworked. Labor conflict is depicted well in the film and has a strong impact, mainly because workers' unions were taken for granted during the second half of the 20th century. *Norma Rae* accentuates the authority that unions can have in a capitalist system and the impact unemployment can have on workers.

Politically, the aspect of social class is also presented well in the film and seems to help define the sets of values and practices in the society of that time. The working class, who include Norma Rae and Reuben, are exploited, while the entrepreneurs, who represent the upper-class, seem to enjoy most privileges. The most powerful class struggle is depicted through Reuben's character and his interactions with *Norma Rae*. Reuben appears to be on the liberal side of the political continuum, which helps him to sympathize with the exploited working class.

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Conclusion

Norma Rae provides powerful insight into the social and economic class systems, and the labor union struggle during the second half of the 20th century. However, the film played down the power of the state, in addition to the union struggle. It can also be noted that the film elaborates upon the intricacies of culture and the working-class struggle.