

# Freedom writers by richard lagravenese

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The paper "Freedom Writers by Richard LaGravenese" is a great example of a movie review on visual arts and film studies. Freedom Writers is a riveting story of a maverick teacher who fights with racial and class differentiation among her students after gang riots in 1992. Directed by Richard LaGravenese, it is based on a true story, "The Freedom Writers Diary" by Erin Gruwell, who was a high school teacher in Long Beach, California in 1994. Despite having good career opportunities, she takes up a teaching job in racially sensitive and poverty-stricken Wilson High School after a few years of LA riots sparked by Rodney King. Erin Gruwell played by Hillary Swank, is a highly educated, smart and idealist white girl. She is a sensitive, passionate and unconventional teacher and her first experience are with these unruly students who are officially declared as "un-teachable" and "at-risk". She is 23 years of age and married with a loving and caring husband. Her family life appears to be peaceful and full of love and support. She is independent and free in her life and decisions.

The movie opens in gang-infested Long Beach street riots in 1992. Media reporting about the killing of people, no peace no justice placard, the chaotic situation in streets, violent blacks, gang and racial tension reports followed by Eva's story and her father's arrest in suspicion leaves a strong impression on the viewer.

Erin is introduced as an enthusiastic teacher but students respond in unexpected ways. They not only fought and abused each other but also ignored and ridiculed her. Erin was shocked at the situation in class and campus. Students belonging to one race or class get into fights easily with students of other race or class. Their body language, gestures, and feelings

were either threatening or frightening. They were insecure and unsure of themselves. Aggression, violence, abuse and gang affiliations were the top priorities in their lives. Despite everything Erin continues to teach her class in the more or less traditional way but Eva's "I hate whites" speech changed her approach. She took a rather creative and unconventional way to get into the minds and lives of her students. School administration refuses to help Erin in providing resources for these students. Erin had to fight hard without some positive results. After discouragement from authorities, Erin takes up another job to provide students with the resources she wanted.

Erin encourages students to write about their experiences in diaries and share it with her if they feel like. Erin's diligence and dedication start melting students' hearts. She took her third job to arrange student trips, meetings, and dinner outside Long Beach. During different class exercises, assignments and trip students who never even knew holocaust started feeling for each other's sufferings. Reading Anne Frank's books and meeting with her influenced them deeply. They become united and started depending on Erin. Class and racial differentiation in the outside world were so intense that they refused to get involved in it without Erin. Conventional teaching methods and teachers' hatred made them uncertain about their future without her. Erin's creativity and determination made students feel themselves in class. They became secure, happy and friendly even with their worst enemies. Seeing their enthusiasm and motivation, Erin stood for them once again and demands administration to let her teach them at the junior level. Her hard work and unconventional way of dealing students inspired the higher officials who permitted to teach her students at both junior and senior level.

While fighting for her students, Erin could not survive her marital relationship. Three jobs left her husband feel ignored and confused about her dedication towards the students. Gender differentiation is evident from her husband's behavior when Erin asked for his support and he said " I can't be the wife" because it is a norm to expect from woman to stand by her husband and support him through thick and thin but if women are in the similar situation, men don't have the courage to take a stand and support her just because they feel threatened and ignored.

Gender differentiation and role allocation are quite evident throughout the movie. A strong white woman like Erin had to fight on every ground for her decisions, whether it is in school with colleague and administration or at home with father and husband. Despite his resentment over Erin's career choice, her father finally becomes support while her self-centered husband couldn't. She may have lost the battle for herself at home but her victory at school saved many who needed her.

Irrespective of the racial violence prevailing in this particular environment, the movie highlights the approach of so-called non-racist institutions and education system. By ignoring and marginalizing such students or groups, they are actually providing breeding grounds for gang formation and racial violence. The movie leaves audiences thinking that teachers like Erin Gruwell are rare, even if our education system produces such teachers which is highly unlikely, will they dedicate themselves like her?