

Choice Movie Review: If These Walls Could Talk
by Emily



Made for HBO in 1996, this film is rated R for realistic depictions of abortion, a graphic shooting, and some language and runs 100 minutes. Directed by Cher and Nancy Savoca
With Demi Moore, Sissy Spacek, Cher, Anne Heche, and Jada Pinkett Smith
8 Award Nominations including 3 Golden Globes
Winner of the National Educational Media Network, USA Gold Apple, 1997

Summary: The abortion issue is shown through three vastly different stories and eras:

1952: This segment shows the desperation of the time when abortion was illegal and women had to use underground networking in order to obtain an illegal abortion. Demi Moore's character even attempts to abort her pregnancy herself, with a knitting needle in her bathroom, when she has no other options. After risking her own life, she turns to an untrustworthy man she had heard of through secondary sources, and he doesn't take the time to sterilize his equipment or wash his hands before he performs the procedure with her laying on her kitchen table.

1974: Just a year after the *Roe v. Wade* decision, this segment starring Sissy Spacek shows the diversity of beliefs and options of the time. A mother of four who is going back to college to finish her degree is suddenly faced with another pregnancy, but she is able to turn to her friend and to medical literature for guidance. Her friend advises that she doesn't regret her own abortion and actually feels relief, despite the pressure from friends who said she would be severely depressed after the procedure. Although this friend of Sissy Spacek's character believes her own abortion was the right decision, she also knows that abortion is "not for everyone." It turns out that even the mother of a passionate feminist teenager can choose to keep an unplanned pregnancy although abortion is safe and legal, based on her own family ideals.

1996: A young woman who had considered herself formerly pro-life finally chooses to get an abortion in this segment. In the process she calls herself a hypocrite and faces her own self-pressure as well as criticism and an ultimatum from her best friend and the swarming religious pro-life rioters outside the clinic she visits. The first time Anne Heche's character goes to the clinic, she is escorted in by an employee who ushers her away from the small but extreme group of protestors stationed outside. Inside, she is led to an office where she is provided with calm counseling and information about her decision. She decides not to go through with the procedure, but returns the next day, this time with the support of her best friend. The group of protestors outside has grown to an uncontrollable mass of extremists, and it takes both police and employee escorts to get her safely in the building. Cher's character, the doctor performing the procedure, faces emotional turmoil while she is alone in her office with the riots outside, but she quickly regains composure and displays a genuine positive attitude during the abortion. The procedure is clean, quick, and appears relatively painless compared to the encounters of Demi Moore's character in the 1952 segment. The peace is broken suddenly when a rioter permeates the safety of the clinic and fires a handgun.

If These Walls Could Talk has clear, competent historical and educational merit. The opening credits are shown over news clips throughout history from speeches about women's rights and abortion. The film is an apt and deserving winner of the National Educational Media Network, USA Gold Apple award. The direction by Cher and Nancy Savoca allows the film to powerfully and realistically depict the issue of abortion through three different decades, linked by the house where each woman lives during her segment. If the walls of that house could talk, they would have multi-faceted and mind-blowing stories to tell, for many sides of the issue are represented.

Cher Comments for the National Day of Appreciation for Abortion Providers



On the courage of abortion providers:

I think it's so important that you support a person's, a woman's right to choose. These people are providing a service whether you agree with the choice or not. Whether you would go through with the choice or not, still you have to have caring providers and these providers are risking their lives, and I don't know that there's any amount of money, they don't get paid any kind of compensation which is worth risking your life for. They believe they're doing this service, they believe they're there to help women at a time when there's no place else to turn. And so I believe that these people have to be respected and supported.

On getting involved:

I do think it's really important, it's like when you don't vote you can't really be upset about who's in office, and when you don't stand up for something you believe in, when you just casually say I believe in it but you're not willing to really stand up and put your money where your mouth is, that's what I think. Because I'm sure that if you got every woman and every man who really believes in pro-choice to actually come out and say something or show their support, it would be staggering. It's just that they don't want to put any energy behind it, or they're afraid, or they don't feel comfortable, or they don't think it's necessary. They don't think it's necessary for their small opinion to be heard.

Other Films to Check Out:

Cider House Rules



Vera Drake

