

San Luis Obispo Film Festival Review – New Times SLO

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## REFUGEES: ENEMIES OR VICTIMS?

What's it worth? **Full Price**

Where's it showing? **March 16 at 4:15 p.m. at The Palm; March 17 at 4:30 p.m. at The Palm**

**Pick** | Nearly 5 million Syrians have fled their home country in the face of destruction from civil war and the rise of ISIS. Yet, not even 15,000 Syrian refugees have been allowed into the U.S. *Refugees: Enemies or Victims?* is a potent and timely documentary that lays out the Syrian crisis and its horrific reality, charts how the U.S. and the broader international community has responded, and gives the crisis a historical context.

Based on interviews with refugees, activists, faith-based organizations, and scholars, *Refugees* makes a compelling case that the U.S. is turning its back on refugees in a historic way, during the worst refugee crisis since World War II. **Director, writer, and editor Terence Donnellan** does a nice job unraveling the complexities of the situation and discussing unflinchingly the roles Islamophobia and fears of terrorism in America has played in our response.

The film draws extremely interesting parallels to past times of world crisis and offers critiques of when the U.S. was particularly welcoming to refugees (Vietnamese during the Vietnam War) and when it was particularly discriminatory and fearful of the supposed dangers (Jewish refugees and Japanese-Americans during World War II).

*Refugees* also explores the diverse religious makeup of Syria, driving home important points about the relationships between Muslim and Christian Syrians, how people of both religions are victims of the crisis, and how ISIS is a political perversion of Islam that has impacted Muslims as much as any other religious group. (50 min.)

–Peter Johnson