A High Falls Filmmaker Preserves Her Father's Legacy

Hudson Valley resident Hanna Sawka spreads the word about her dad's historic vigilance.

BY JOHN MACDONALD

Film maker Hanna Sawka was only two years old when her family became Stateless. Her father, a writer and journalist, was arrested and exiled in a labor camp where he learned that her birth at the camp violated the Israeli government's 1956 immigration policy, making this difficult time for the family.

Fortunately, a special immigration provision for artists allowed her family to travel to the United States, where, after 12 years, she later studied film. As an independent filmmaker, she worked on a project that she says she had always wanted to make in her career. Her film, "The Search," which explores the history of American immigration policies and their impact on families, was the latest project in her artistic career.

"One of his illustrations that generated the most controversy involved the Pope, the Polish Pope," says Sawka, "He doesn't have a Pope walking through the South West and thousands of people following him." She described the project as a way to communicate the story of her family's struggle and the larger issues of immigration. She wants to use the power of film to bring attention to these issues.

Her father's experience shaped her perspective on immigration and social justice. "I think it's important to tell these stories," she said. "I want people to understand the history and the struggles that families go through when they're trying to get to a new country."

The film, "The Search," follows Hanna's family as they navigate the challenges of immigration, from their first steps in the United States to their eventual success. It's a story of resilience and determination, a reminder of the importance of family and the need for understanding and empathy.

In the end, the film not only tells the story of this particular family, but it also speaks to the broader issue of immigration in the United States and around the world. It's a powerful story that deserves to be told and remembered. __________

"The Search" is available for streaming on various platforms, including YouTube and Vimeo. It's a must-see for anyone interested in the history of immigration and the ongoing struggle for justice.

Home and family. Hanna Sawka's photos by Jeff Mackintosh

"Every time we show a screening, we get feedback that the fact that only 15 percent of films are directed by women, when you're talking about high budget films, it's very, very rare," said the director. "It's our school's policy that we have to have at least 50 percent women. And if that hasn't happened, then we're not interested in it. It's just too many opportunities that are wasted."