

FILM REVIEW: Atomic Homefront (Cammisa, 2017): USA

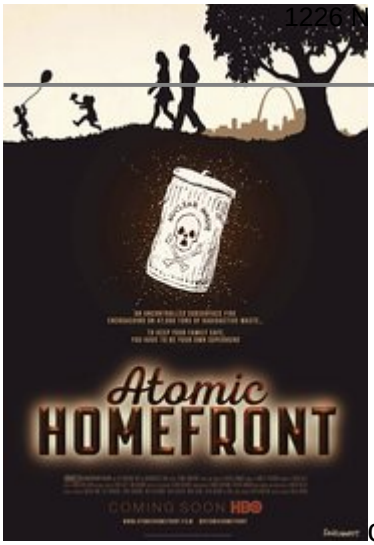
Description



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tory when she sees one. Cammisa received a tip from a St. Louis reporter about a situation unfolding in North County (St. Louis) communities. The â??situationâ?• has been festering for over 70 years. St. Louis has a little known secret â?? one among many Iâ??m sure. During World War II (WWII), St. Louis was one of the nationâ??s atomic weapons manufacturing locations. The well-known Mallinckrodt Corporation, in addition to a few other entities, was contracted to carry out war time operations related to to our countryâ??s Manhattan Project atomic program including uranium processing. Using traditional documentary film techniques such as the direct interview, voice-over narration, emotional testimonials and non-diagectic musical scoring, Cammisa gets right into the controversy that pits local residents against the federal government with *Atomic Homefront*, an HBO Documentary Film.

Hereâ??s why Cammisa made her film. After the atomic bomb uranium processing was



completed, the radioactive waste was deposited in several areas in and around St. Louis and its surrounding communities. A few areas, like the one Cammisa focuses on in her timely film, is the Coldwater Creek area. Here the waste lay in piles exposed to the elements, including rainfall, along Latty Avenue until 1973. The radioactive material ran off into the nearby creek where neighborhood children played. Moreover, when the creek flooded water made its way into nearby homes. Increased cancer rates associated with the radioactive isotope have been, and, are being reported. Cammisa chose to include a heart-wrenching, on-camera interview with a sixteen-year- old male on deathâ??s doorstep. His mother believed she had been contaminated by the radioactive materials and had passed it on to her son. The son heroically states he wanted to â??help othersâ?• by going on camera.

But thereâ??s more to the situation than the radioactive runoff in the Coldwater Creek area. After receiving numerous complaints of the god-awful stench emanating from the Latty Avenue piles of radioactive waste, the piles were illegally dump into the periphery, West Lake neighborhood landfill, which became an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund site in 1990. Now the EPA is responsible for the oversight and cleanup. But what about the odorific stench? Somehow, itâ??s still emanating and making it into the air making nearby residents cringe and worry about whatâ??s being ingested with each and every breath. And, the â??situationâ?• doesnâ??t end there.

The EPA set up air monitoring sites and the radioactive particles are under levels know to cause harm and advised residents to close their windows. That didnâ??t sit well with those moms I mentioned earlier. Theyâ??ve gotten together and formed Just Moms STL, a strong group of moms-turned advocates that believe their communities are being poisoned and have vowed to continue fighting until the EPA removes the waste or relocates nearby residents â?? neither of which or likely to happen anytime soon as the EPA lacks funding. And as reported in the Washington Post on March 28th, 2017, President Trump signs order at the EPA to dismantle environmental protections.

Unbelievably, for the last seven an uncontrolled subterranean fire has been burning in closed areas of the landfill and recently has been migrating towards the buried radioactive waste. And for the last seven years, Republic Services, a waste management company, has been stating the fire is contained and there is no threat from the radiation. Yet, in 2016, the EPA has clearly identified radiologically impacted material had migrated within 700 feet of the fire and was moving closer. What would happen if the radioactive particles attached to the smoldering vapors and became airborne migrating into the communities potentially miles away? Undaunted, Republic Services insists the site is in a â??safe and

managed state.â?•

Atomic Homefront highlights St. Louis an example of how radioactive â??situationsâ?• are sometime just swept under the rug by the federal and private agencies charged with overseeing them. What the federal government knew, knows or doesnâ??t know is smoldering underneath the center of Camissa latest documentary, *Atomic Homefront.* A 1988 film nominated for an Academy Award for best documentary, Radio Bikini, highlights another atomic, highly, radioactive â??situationâ?• from WWII with a bit more of an historical treatment. Personally, I would have appreciated that from Cammisa as I trained on ground, as a member of the U.S. Army Reserve, adjacent to the Weldon Springs, Missouri site (another radiologically contaminated dumping site). Nevertheless, Cammisa presents a powerful portrait of Just Moms STL with *Atomic Homefront* and poses questions sure to stimulate dialogue. Highly recommended.

*The local EPA office would not allow *Atomic Homefront* to record any meetings with concerned residents who were demanding answers to this sordid state of affairs.

Category

1. #AFIDOCS
2. television

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