“The 13th Step”

Rating: 8.8/10

Running Time: 79 min.

Year: 2015

The documentary “The 13th Step” features a focus on a very complex subject. I will admit, I haven’t always been able to find a documentary that captures my attention throughout the entirety of the film. However, this project in particular really kept me interested until the very end. While viewing this project, some parts were difficult to watch, but they turned out to be some of the crucial moments of the film that tied the story together as a whole. The concept focuses on the journey of director and former Alcoholics Anonymous member Monica Richardson, who spent the last few years going across the country speaking to former members of AA who told their stories about the traumatic experiences from other members that they endured while attending the meetings. Throughout the film, Richardson shared her personal story with the audience and explained how even though she wasn’t getting any support from the AA community on this film, she wasn’t going to let anyone stop her from telling the world what goes on in the lives of AA members, particularly women.

The use of reenactments for the AA meetings was very much needed. Since Richardson couldn’t get footage of actual meetings, doing this technique was quite brilliant and resourceful to accurately portray what she and other former members remember about their experiences. The fact that the reenactments were set up in the style of a legitimate setup gave me an actual representation of what really happens in AA meetings, and that how society sees them portrayed in television shows and movies isn’t what everyone originally thought of when they think of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The film was set up very appropriately for the standard style of a documentary. The originality and creativity was definitely noticeable for the story, as it gave a whole other side that is very unaware to the public about a very famous organization targeted at aiding to the sobriety of recovering alcoholics. It stayed in a consistent direction, which was very essential for understanding what kind of point Richardson was trying to make. The writing was obvious and clear about the focus of the story, otherwise I would’ve been very confused. The cinematography fit the documentary genre very well, and the camera work on the interviews was in focus, as well as the b-roll footage. Overall, I thought everything was very well done, from the performances to the pacing to the sound and all that brought the project into one big masterpiece. The 13th Step is definitely a great contender for an interesting documentary, and it does an excellent quality of showing what needs to be known to the world, even under potentially harmful circumstances.