

East Bay filmmaker's powerful look at apartheid politics premieres at Jewish Film Festival

Posted on Thursday, July 24 at 6:48pm | By [Carla Marinucci](#)

[East Bay filmmaker Abby Ginzberg](#) has won attention with her powerful focus on politics, law and justice issues — including her much-praised documentaries on California justices Thelton Henderson and Cruz Reynoso, and her recently Emmy-nominated “The Barber of Birmingham.”

Now, Ginzberg has turned her lens on another groundbreaking subject, [Albie Sachs](#) — the South African freedom fighter and scholar who became one of the lead forces behind South Africa's landmark new Constitution, and who authored the landmark gay marriage decision that made South Africa the first in Africa to approve same sex marriage.



Bay Area filmmaker Abby Ginzberg

Already, Ginzberg's film, [“Soft Vengeance: Albie Sachs and the New South Africa,”](#) has won awards at two international film festivals, and deservedly, a host of great reviews. And this weekend, her story of one man's role in the the dramatic events that lead to the end of the apartheid regime [premieres at the Castro Theater on Sunday, July 27](#) as part of the Jewish Film Festival.

She'll be in attendance for the screening. [\(Here's the link for information on that showing.\)](#)

Ginzberg, a member of the Berkeley Film Foundation, spent five years working on Sachs' amazing story, which she calls “a labor of love.”

She told me that she first met Sachs in the 1970s as he traveled in the U.S. to help lobby for support for the anti-apartheid movement — which had huge backing in the progressive Bay Area.



Ginzberg's film opens this weekend at the Castro

So she decided to document the personal struggles of an extraordinary lawyer who was tortured, endured 168 days solitary confinement, and was forced into exile for defending anti-apartheid forces in South Africa.

Her work literally starts with a bang — the day in 1988 when he was the victim of a car bomb that would destroy the sight in one eye, and cost him an arm.

The title of the film comes from Sachs' own belief that if South Africans would achieve democracy, freedom and the rule of law — “that will be my soft vengeance.”

He got it: after years of exile and physical rehabilitation, Sachs came back to South Africa when in 1990 Nelson Mandela was released from prison. He helped author what would become the country's new Constitution, and was appointed one of the country's first judges to the new Constitutional court.

Ginzberg's earlier works have included “Cruz Reynoso: Sowing the Seeds of Justice,” “The Soul of Justice: Thelton Henderson's American Journey,” and “The Barber of Birmingham: Foot Soldier of the Civil Rights Movement.”