

British Theatre Guide

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My Name Is Rachel Corrie

Rachel Corrie (original writings), Alan Rickman, Katharine Viner (editors)

T. Regina Theatre Company

Etcetera Theatre, Camden

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The brutality of Israel didn't begin in 2023. One of its many earlier victims was the 23-year-old American woman Rachel Corrie, who in 2003 was murdered by a military bulldozer when she tried to prevent the Israeli demolition of a Palestinian home.

My Name is Rachel Corrie is constructed from Rachel's diary and e-mails, taking us from her early years in Olympia, Washington to her final days as one of a group of international activists trying to prevent Israel from demolishing Palestinian homes and wells in Gaza.

Lyndsey Ruiz, directed by Alex Stroming, delivers a confident and engaging performance as Rachel, speaking mostly directly to the audience and occasionally representing a conversation with other people by holding a jacket or shirt beside her.

Articulate and optimistic, she says, "I got a fire in my belly" and talks about the possibilities of becoming an artist. However, her social conscience already leads her to help the local homeless, and later she decides she wants to "visit somewhere on the receiving end of the US military."

Soon, she becomes a witness to the appalling treatment of Palestinians in Gaza. She describes Israel building sniper towers and the international activist group which she has joined sleeping in tents that might act as a deterrent to the snipers. She recalls sitting in the hospital beside a young girl shot by one of the soldiers.

Israel's harassment by walls and checkpoints increasingly made it very difficult for Palestinians to work in Israel or even register at university. She explains, "sixty thousand workers from Rafah worked in Israel two years ago. Now only 600 can go to Israel for jobs... because the three checkpoints between here and Ashkelon (the closest city in Israel) make what used to be a 40-minute drive now a 12-hour or impassible journey."

A focus of their support for the people of Gaza was their attempt to discourage Israel from knocking down people's homes. We hear a witness statement of how on 16 March 2003, when she stood in front of a bulldozer in Rafah, the military driver deliberately crushed her.

Amnesty International reports that "between 2000 and 2004, the Israeli military demolished 1,700 homes in Rafah, leaving 17,000 people homeless." Rachel's parents took both Israel and the company Caterpillar that produced the bulldozers to court over their part in the death of Rachel.

The play concludes with video footage of Rachel aged ten saying:

"My dream is to give the poor a chance.

My dream is to save the 40,000 people who die each day.

My dream will come true if..."

On the screen appear some of Rachel's words in which she says, "I'm witnessing a genocide", and we have to "decide which side we are on."

Reviewer: [Keith Mckenna](#)