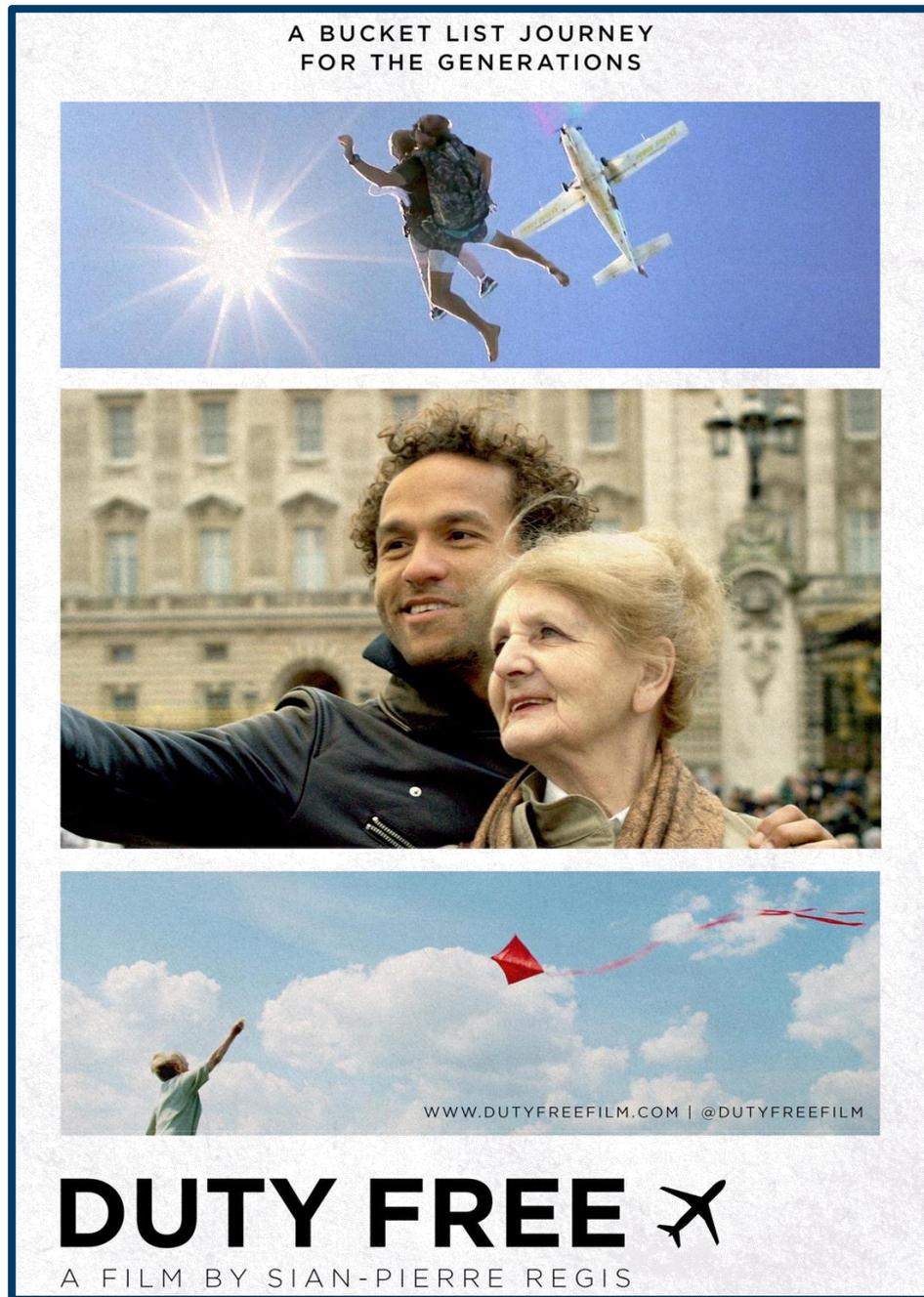


# DUTY FREE

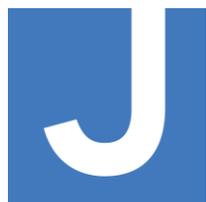
## Film Screening & Discussion



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National Council of Jewish Women  
Louisville Section



September 26, 2021



When Rebecca Danigelis, a British immigrant living in Boston, is fired from her lifelong job as a hotel housekeeper at the age of 75, she is financially and emotionally devastated. At the time, her adult son, Sian-Pierre, is living in New York City working his way into the competitive world of TV journalism. When his mother's reality crashes down, Sian-Pierre resolves to leave New York, and the life he expected to lead, to help get his mother back on her feet. While helping her search for a new job, the duo embark on an adventure spanning two continents. Through the journey and joy of crossing off Rebecca's "bucket list," a surprising family saga is revealed: the compromises and injustices placed on single mothers, the persistence of sexism and ageism, and the difficult dance of duty and freedom when generations of family members come together.

## FILMMAKER STATEMENT

This film has defined me.

As a burgeoning reporter, I focused my time and effort on telling stories of celebrities and social movements, on young artists and popular culture for outlets like MTV, CNN, HLN, and more. Though I was living out my dream of being on TV, most of the stories I covered felt in service to the audience, not to some greater good.

And then my mom was fired at age 75.

My mom worked every day of her life behind the hotel curtains, up and down stairs, on her knees and at the tips of her toes, making sure every room was spotless. She was a tireless champion of her family of immigrant co-workers. And in a day, she was cut off from all of them, from the work she so loved, and left with just two weeks pay and a move-out date from her apartment.

Her sheer disposal at her age and with no justifiable cause riled up a passion in me that I had never found in any story I'd covered. So I began shooting her life in earnest: her search for a new job to pay her bills, her daily frustrations supporting my mentally ill brother, etc. But as I searched for the core of her story, I also was compelled to be her son, to be her protector, and to be her friend. The bucket list idea was born from a deeply emotional desire to pull her out of her sadness, to show her what life could look like and prove that there was reason for hope in her latest act. And so this film jockeys between two worlds: what it's like to be invisible in this society at 75, and how just one person, or one experience, can bring all the color back.

In front of my lens, my mom was always raw and real. Coming from a blue-collar shipping family in Liverpool, she has grit, sass, and a determination to succeed without excuses. Throughout filming, it was important for me to focus on not simply what happened around my mom — her firing, my mentally ill brother's needs, the digital revolution — but how this woman dealt with them, often on her own. The reserved character that her co-workers saw on hotel floors, and that I often saw growing up, melted away through a series of one-on-one interviews, where her despair, her frustrations, and her unyielding hope shone through. These intimate, unguarded moments, both on our adventures and in her living room, are the heart of this story.

In making *Duty Free*, I've learned so much about what it means to be a storyteller and what it means to be a son. But what I want more than anything from this project is for my mom to be seen. I want others to experience her character, her authenticity, her grit, and her elegance. I want people to see the woman that has helped define me as a man. And in doing so, I hope that we, as a country, can re-center our notions of what it looks like to be "old" in America today. To surprise, delight, and inspire an audience with a character we don't often get to see in film — the 75-year-old everywoman.

Sian-Pierre Regis

## PANEL DISCUSSION OF FILM

Sian-Pierre Regis is a Film Independent Documentary Fellow, NextAvenue Influencer in Aging, an Encore Public Voices Fellow and a Firelight Media Fellow. He has been a contributor for CNN/HLN and MTV, covering stories of youth political activism and pop-culture. Duty Free is his feature-length documentary debut

Rebecca Danigelis is Sian-Pierre's mother, an 80-year-old single mother of two boys who immigrated to the United States from England. She worked for 40+ years in the hotel industry before she was let go. With little savings, she describes work as her "lifeline."

Mauri Malka is the Senior Director of Programs and Cindy Key is a Career Counselor at Jewish Family and Career Services.

## FILM THEMES



Ageism



Financial Insecurity



Family & Care

## Ageism

- Ageism is discrimination against an individual or group because of their age, especially prejudice against older adults.
- In a survey of people 60+ 80% reported experiencing ageism—such as other people assuming they had memory or physical impairments due to their age.
- While 72% of women between the ages of 45 and 74 think people face age discrimination at work, only 57% percent of men in the same age range agree.
- With pensions now fast becoming relics of the past, and the high cost of living and healthcare, many Americans will have to work well past 65.
- Yet, over half of American workers over the age of 50 will, at some point, will be fired outright or forced to resign.
- After being pushed out, only 10% will ever again be compensated at the level of the jobs they left.
- Older adults are working longer. By 2018, 24% of men and about 16% of women ages 65+ were in the labor force. Yet, older workers are also now more likely to face long-term unemployment due to COVID-19. Unemployment rates for adults 55+ went from 3.3% to 13.6%
- Age diversity in the workplace has been shown to increase productivity, learning, and output, as well as maintain a higher morale.

## Financial Insecurity

- Nearly 6 in 10 Americans cannot pull together \$500 for an emergency.
- 69% of Americans have less than \$1,000 in their checking and savings accounts.
- The median retirement savings account balance across all ages is \$1,100.
- The median retirement savings account balance for middle-income near retirees ages 55-64 is \$60,000.
- It is estimated that 50% of workers age 55 or older will be poor or near poor by the time they reach 65.
- 16% of worker retirees say that they may have to return to work because they cannot make ends meet.
- For about half of seniors, Social Security provides at least 50% of their income, and for about 1 in 4 seniors, it provides at least 90 % of income.
- The average Social Security retirement benefit in June 2020 was about \$1,514 a month, or about \$18,170 a year.
- The poverty rate among Black and Latino seniors is over 2.5 times as high as for white seniors.

## Family & Care

- When researchers study the longest living people in the world, one of the things these long-living communities have in common is prioritizing and putting first their relationships with their families and friends.
- 4 out of 5 older adults live with health ailments that could potentially limit their daily activities, physical functions and independence. Over the last 12 months, approximately 41.8 million Americans were unpaid caregivers to adults age 50+.
- The US Census Bureau shows that 1.4 million Millennials are financially supporting their parents.
- The estimated dollar value of the informal care that family and friends provide for older Americans totals \$522 billion a year—more than Medicaid spending in 2014.
- The aging of the baby boomer generation could fuel more than a 50% increase in the number of Americans ages 65 and older requiring nursing home care, to about 1.9 million in 2030.
- 1 in 10 women aged 45 to 64 provided significant parental care and either financial assistance or housing (within their homes for one year or more) to both an adult child (age 25 or older) and a parent during the period.
- Almost half of U.S. adults ages 65+ report they either need help or are currently receiving help with routine daily activities, such as shopping, transportation, bathing, meal preparation, or managing medication.

*Information was sourced from Duty Free Film*

# Jewish Family & Career Services Resources

## Jewish Family & Career Services



### Career Services

Helping people navigate career exploration and transitions.

- Assessment & Exploration
- Counseling & Coaching
- Job Search Preparation
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Recredentialing & Career Laddering for Refugees & Immigrants
- Vocational Evaluation
- Workshops



### Counseling Services

Helping people improve emotional well-being and realize life goals.

- Individual, Couple & Family Counseling
- Personal Coaching
- Psychiatric Medication Assessment & Medication Management
- Support Groups
- Workshops



### Family Strengthening

Helping people navigate life's changes and challenges through a client-centered case management approach.

- Career Coaching & Counseling
- Financial Assistance
- Financial Literacy & Coaching
- Food Pantry
- Individual, Couple & Family Counseling
- Parenting Coaching
- Resource Coordination
- Workshops



### Jewish Life

Helping people express Jewish values through service and action.

- Carole & Larry Goldberg Family Mitzvah Program
- Doris L. & Theodore B. Meyers Shabbos Friends Program
- Joy!Ride Transportation
- Marjorie & Robert Kohn Pledge 13
- Sonny & Janet Meyer Food Pantry
- Volunteer Opportunities

### Klein Older Adult Services

Helping older adults live with dignity and independence; helping families through the aging process.

- Care Coordination
- Counseling
- Family Caregiver Support
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support
- Long-Term Care Planning
- PALS Transportation Service
- Senior Concierge HomeCare
- Support Groups

### Navigate Enterprise Center

Helping people pursue entrepreneurship and economic self-sufficiency.

- Business Marketing Assistance
- Business Training & Individual Consulting
- Financial Education & Credit Building
- Microlending for Underserved Entrepreneurs



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Jewish Family and Career Services

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### Chavurat Shalom

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### JCC Senior Adult Programming

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