

'This Is Where It Counts': 'Spotlight,' On Church Abuse Exposé, Premieres In Boston Area

Some local journalists and filmmakers are hoping a major motion picture in wide release as of next week demonstrates the importance of investigative journalism.

"Spotlight" chronicles The Boston Globe investigation of sexual abuse by Catholic priests, and the film had its local premiere Wednesday.

The gray, rainy weather was fitting for a movie that depicts the Globe's extensive investigation into widespread pedophilia in the Boston Archdiocese. Tents protected journalists, and the film's cast and crew lined up on the red carpet leading into the Coolidge Corner Theatre.

"It's been a much more sober press line than anywhere else we've been, except for Venice, which may as well be the second seat of Catholicism," said actor Mark Ruffalo, who plays Globe Spotlight reporter Michael Rezendes in the film.

He says Boston is where the team behind "Spotlight" has to get it right.

"This is where, for this story, the victims are," Ruffalo said.

"This is where the people that we're playing are. This is where the Globe is. This is where it counts, you know?"

Walter Robinson was the editor who led the Spotlight investigation into church sexual abuse.



"I feel right now we're sort of standing on the shore and there's this tsunami approaching," he said before the premiere. "And the tsunami is a film. And we're beginning to realize that a film that's honest in

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its portrayal of a serious issue can probably do as much and more -- I hate to admit this -- to raise public consciousness about important issues than the printed word can. And I'm trying to adjust myself to that fact."

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Robinson is talking about issues like the abuse of children, but also the importance of investigative journalism to expose such tragedies.

Former Globe Editor Marty Baron feels the same way.

"We need to hold our powerful institutions accountable," he said. "We need to hold our powerful individuals accountable. This was a local story, it started with a local case and it became national and then international, and there are these big national and international stories in our own backyards and we need to pursue them."



Marty Baron, former editor of The Boston Globe, walks the red carpet as he attends the Boston-area premiere of the film "Spotlight." (Steven Senne/AP)

Capturing the story behind the Spotlight team's investigation accurately in the film was critical for co-writer Josh Singer. He says he became something of a reporter himself as he

interviewed both victims of sexual abuse by priests and the reporters who uncovered it.

"For us the more people we talked to -- and we used little tape recorders just like you guys did -- and it was incredibly useful because we were trying to get Phil Saviano right, you want to have his words," Singer said. "Same thing with Sacha Pfeiffer or Mike Rezendes or Walter Robinson, and so we really made a strong effort to do that, and I think the time we spent here was invaluable."

And one victim, Saviano, of the priest abuse survivor group SNAP, says he believes the filmmakers did the true story justice.

"I think that the movie is something for us survivors to really celebrate that this movie is out there," he said, "that Hollywood has taken note and done such a great job with the film -- couldn't ask for more really."

And more than a decade later, the Spotlight team's Pulitzer Prize-winning story is still unfolding. Former Editor Baron notes the Vatican [decided only recently to appoint a tribunal](#) to hold bishops accountable.

"The Catholic Church is still dealing with this," he said. "They've taken some measures, they're meaningful measures, but it's not complete. And there are many stories

yet to be told."