

It's the first time in the history of the [Los Angeles Film Critics Awards](#) that a foreign film takes home the coveted award for best screenplay. After a string of awards in Europe, writer and director, [Asghar Farhadi](#), received the LAFCA best screenplay award for his original script for "[A Separation](#)", which was also named Runner Up for Best Foreign Film. This powerful film offers a rare, nuanced, and timely glimpse into a complex society few westerners ever see.

The film tells the story of a couple who is facing the challenges of a divorce as they battle with several life changing questions—whether to move abroad in hopes of a better future for their daughter or to stay in Iran and take care of the husband's ailing father. Amidst their own personal dilemmas their issues get intertwined with a bigger problem that happens as a result of an accident that involves a poor and troubled family.

What Farhadi reflects through his latest story is far beyond a simple portrayal of a fragile and conflicted relationship between Nader ([Peyman Moadi](#)) and Simin ([Leila Hatami](#)), or a critique of the lost and hopeless nature of Hojjat ([Shahab Hosseini](#)) and Razieh's ([Sareh Bayat](#)) marriage in a troubled Iranian society.

Through portraying Iran's often harsh social and class structure through his characters and story, Farhadi raises questions and contradictions that challenge audiences to ponder Iran's current condition and uncertain future.

Nested within the chaotic social environment of the film, are the three generations portrayed in the movie: the old father with Alzheimer's disease, the two couples, and their children, (one of whom miscarries in the womb). These three generations - the elderly whose memories have faded, the couples in their 30s, who balance survival in today's Iran with lingering hope for a better future, and their children, who await an uncertain fate - fairly well represent Iran's past, present, and future.

In addition, class and education differences are a central theme of "A Separation". Farhadi's story introduces us to two social classes: the educated, modern, middle class family of Nader and Simin and their 11-year-old girl, Termeh, who's played by Farhadi's own daughter ([Sarina Farhadi](#)); and the working class, uneducated and prejudiced family of Hojjat and Razieh, who's breadwinner (Hojjat) has lost everything and continuously laments his failed life, and the fact that "he has nothing to lose", and is therefore—ironically—capable of anything.

On the other hand, Nader is an ingenious, sophisticated, curious, and educated man; who so eloquently portrays Iranian nationalism and the desire to solve things through dialogue, cooperation and fairness. However due to society's chaotic system, he too finds it difficult to maintain honesty at all times. He is giving up everything he has to take care of his old enfeebled father who is perhaps the last remaining vestige of a long-gone generation and social class. The first and perhaps most critical question that Farhadi poses is in the beginning of the film; where Nader and Simin are sitting in front of a judge—whom we never see—arguing over their divorce case. As Simin wants to move outside of Iran with her daughter in hopes of a better future, Nader reluctantly refuses to give way to that future given his father's vulnerable condition. Therefore, one would immediately question the conditions that the mother so desperately wants to leave behind;

and consequently makes the audience question the values that so strongly bound a father to its country amidst chances of losing his family.

This immediately sets the tone for the other conflicted scenarios that unfold throughout the film—all of which, for those who have lived in that country are a solid reflection of the corrupted political system, which in almost every way has paralyzed an honest and progressive society. Even though the movie does not have direct political critiques each social conflict, mockery, discord and misery reflects upon a government that has implanted hollow religious beliefs while allowing the demise of honesty, humanity, innocence and coexistence.

In the most delicate and intricate style, Farhadi throws questions that ignite the viewer's curiosity to understand the internal angst of the characters. More delicately he also critiques the poisonous presence of religion that's woven into the current Iranian society.

One of the movies most compelling scenes features Razieh—a symbol of a religiously brainwashed generation—who is hired to take care of Nader's ill father, after Simin's departure to her mother's house; where she feels reluctant to commit a simple human act and help the elderly man change his pants after he soiled himself and was left alone in the bathroom for some time. There is a nervous desire in Razieh's eyes that shows her deep pity for the man's condition, but she is in no way ready to make even the slightest religious mistake. Afraid of weakening her chastity, the confused young woman makes a phone call for religious advice. After she gets approval from the "religious advisor", her small daughter who accompanied her to Nader's house responds with an eerie precociousness "don't worry, I won't tell dad."

["A Separation"](#) explores deep and perhaps irreparable tensions between individuals, across generations and classes, and even touches—albeit gently—on the most sensitive matter of all—Iran's cultural identity. American audiences seeking authentic and thought-provoking insight into today's Iran well beyond standard news headlines will benefit greatly from this entertaining, well-crafted film.

"A Separation's" success among European film festivals and moviegoers has now reached America, and with its LACFA award in hand, this film will now be considered by the [Golden Globes](#) and perhaps even the Academy Awards. In this time of bilateral tension between the US and Iran, the transcendent role of film in communicating across cultures could make "A Separation" compelling viewing for a broad American audience.

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