

THE LOS ANGELES PRESS CLUB

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

VOICES CAN'T BE SILENCED FOREVER



July 25, 2019

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Director's Note

One of my previous films was the documentary *Casting By*. What began as a tribute to a casting director became my introduction to the gender problem facing Hollywood. The casting profession was not taken seriously (It is still the only main title credit without an Oscar category). I came to understand that this is because the profession is majority female. My experience makes the film what my appetite to go deeper and examine the larger forces at play within a structure and a system that has systematically diminished women. In 2015, I began a three-and-a-half-year journey that became *This Changes Everything*.



As a male director, I was keenly aware that there were too few men speaking out on the issue. I firmly believe that true change cannot happen unless men join the fight. As Meryl Streep says in the film, "Change can only happen when men take a stand. Our entire society must confront this injustice, not just those on the receiving end of it."

In the first year of making the film, I was introduced to the work of Geena and her institute. Through their work, I came to understand the outsized impact the disparity inside Hollywood has on the entire world. When half a society's population has no voice, the entire culture is degraded.

From micro-aggressions to criminal abuses of power, the mistreatment and underrepresentation of women in Hollywood is a hot topic these days. Yet, little real change has actually occurred in a system in vast need of a reset. There is growing consensus that the time for talk is over but this talk is not new. The film's title comes from my second interview with Geena when she speaks of female-led films that exceeded expectations, that many believed would finally cause change only to have no change actually happen. *This Changes Everything* is a call to action to further the cause of the radical cultural transformation necessary if we are to move forward as a country.

Tom Donahue

Maybe This Finally Changes Everything for Women in the Industry?

Penny Marshall knew the score. I was commiserating with the late filmmaker who'd helmed the classic *A League of Their Own* when she recounted how she'd hit the film industry's male outfield wall: ("Women can't play baseball, let alone open films!") Her encouragement to me to direct my own baseball screenplay was laced with advice: "Bring lots of green paint. You're gonna need to touch up the field." She went on to recap her difficulties in casting the female baseball player roles. She had seen actors who weren't athletes, and athletes

who couldn't act. Happily for all, she ultimately found Geena Davis who could do both.

Watching Geena in the new documentary *This Changes Everything*, it's clear gender barriers still exist in both baseball and film. Director Tom Donahue has packed his movie with a lineup of female all-stars showcasing the challenges they face and putting the spotlight on the creative women left out of it. A particularly moving sequence chronicles female directors in a legal battle, fighting to swap prejudice for parity. It makes one think of all the films they

"9 times out of 10, I'm going to give you something so multi-dimensional because I know what I'm bringing in is something much deeper than the words they put on that page." —Taraji Henson



"We see Dick all the time. I just wanted to see more Jane." —Geena Davis

"In order for true systemic change to happen, it has to be inclusive, everybody has to come along with it and change needs to happen immediately."

—Cate Blanchett



With the DGA (Directors Guild of America) at their side, the Original Six fought a battle for gender equality inside Hollywood in the early 1980s. Joelle Dobrow, Nell Cox, Susan Bay Nimoy, Dolores Ferraro, Lynne Littman and Victoria Hochberg.



"Women's creative input is not making it into our nation's storytelling."

—Maria Giese



Meryl Streep with director Tom Donahue

could've made, all the unread scripts women write, and how an industry, rebalanced with an equal point of view, could enrich our cultural world.

As this important documentary makes clear, the press has a part to play, too: Media can focus less on women's looks, and more on their talent. Critics can review films and TV through a Bechdel Test lens, evaluating the quality of female characters, or their absence, on both big and small screens. We can all take



"The door has to be opened. We just want inclusion."

—Meryl Streep

"I have worked with two female directors and one of them was me." —Natalie Portman

the testimony in this film to heart. Because if *This Changes Everything* finally does what its title hopes, there's a slew of female filmmakers waiting in the bullpen, just itching to get into the game. We've got stories. We've got paint. And we're ready to roll.

—Devra Māza

Breaking Barriers



Oscar winner **Geena Davis** is the executive producer for tonight's documentary, *This Changes Everything*. She also is the Founder and Chair of the non-profit Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, encouraging film and television creators to increase the percentages of female characters—and reduce gender stereotyping—in media made for children.

One of Hollywood's most respected actors in several landmark roles, she received the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for *The Accidental Tourist*; was nominated for a Best Actress Oscar and Golden Globe for *Thelma & Louise*; was nominated for a Best Actress Golden Globe for *A League of Their Own*, and received a Best Actress Golden Globe Award for *Commander in Chief*, a TV series in which she portrayed the first female U.S. President. She has appeared in dozens of films and TV shows.

Davis also was appointed special envoy for United Nations' programs to promote gender equality and empower women worldwide; co-founded the Bentonville Film Festival to champion women and minorities in media; and will be honored for advocating gender equality in media with the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences at its 11th annual Governor's Awards on October 27.



Choosing material that is thought-provoking and controversial, **Catherine Hardwicke's** films have helped to redefine popular culture and raise light on important social issues.

Hardwicke's first film as a director was the critically-acclaimed *Thirteen*, which garnered the Director's Award at Sundance, Golden Globe nominations for Holly Hunter and Evan Rachel Wood, an Academy Award nomination for Holly Hunter. She has since become best known as the director of *Twilight*, starring Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson, launching the franchise, *The Twilight Saga*, which earned nearly \$400 million worldwide. Other credits include: *Miss Bala*, *Miss You Already*, *Lords of Dogtown*, *Red Riding Hood*, and *The Nativity Story*.

Hardwicke has also ventured into music videos, with the Oscar-nominated song by Lady Gaga, "Til It Happens to You"; and into TV with episodes of *This is Us*, *Hell on Wheels*, and *Low Winter Sun*. She directed the pilots for *Reckless* and *EyeWitness*; and is currently starting post on a series for Jeffrey Katzenberg's new platform, Quibi, *Don't Look Deeper*, starring Don Cheadle, Emily Mortimer, and Helena Howard.



Tom Donahue's latest film as director is *This Changes Everything*, a documentary about systemic gender discrimination in Hollywood (including interviews with Meryl Streep, Shonda Rhimes, Taraji Henson, Reese Witherspoon, and more). The film had its world premiere at the Toronto international film festival in September 2018 and will be released in theaters in 2019 by Good Deed Entertainment.

Donahue's *Thank You For Your Service* examines the failed mental health policy in the military with interviews including General David Petraeus, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and General Loree Sutton. It premiered at DOC NYC in November 2015, was released theatrically by Gathr in 2016 and acquired by Hulu in 2018. In 2014, Donahue's Emmy-nominated HBO feature documentary, *Casting By*, was hailed as one of the Top Five Documentaries of the year by the National Board of Review.

His first feature documentary as director, *Guest of Cindy Sherman*, was called "a work of art" by *Variety* and given 5 Stars by *Time Out*. His work as producer includes the recent HBO documentary, *Bleed Out*, which won an LA Press Club journalism award. He also has extensive experience as a creator, producer, director and editor in television and is a founding partner of the NY-based production company, CreativeChaos vmg.



Devra Māza (Moderator) is a screenwriter whose work for film and television is inspired by the arts and sciences. Māza's credits include the highly rated original romantic mystery *Childhood Sweetheart* (Warner Bros., CBS), staff writer on the comedy/variety series *My Talk Show* (Imagine/MCA) and for animation house Klasky Csupo. Her *Ode To A Kiss* (Wolper Org.) won a Romancefest award for short film.

Māza's articles on film, baseball, romance and activism have been featured in *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Daily News* and *HuffPost*. A multi-LA Press Club journalism awards nominee, she has garnered wins for Best Entertainment Blog, Celebrity/Sports Features and Commentary. Her feature package "Preston Sturges: A Screwball Centennial" for WGA's *Written By Magazine* is taught in cinema studies courses across the country. Māza's WGA service includes Writers' Image Campaign and Women's Committees.

A devoted baseball fan, Māza's poem, "The Great Greg Maddux," was recorded by Vin Scully and unanimously voted by the Curators Accessions Committee into the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum at Cooperstown.

Breaking Barriers



Kimberly Peirce staked her place as a writer and director of singular vision and craft with her unflinching debut feature, *Boys Don't Cry*, which earned numerous honors including Oscar nominations for Hilary Swank and co-star Chloe Sevigny, and an Oscar win for Swank. Peirce subsequently co-wrote and directed *Stop-Loss*, an emotionally penetrating drama inspired by her brother's military service in Iraq. In 2013 she directed a masterful remake of *Carrie*. In television, Kimberly has directed episodes of *American Crime*, *Turn*, *Halt And Catch Fire*, *Manhattan*, *Six*, *I Love Dick*, *Dear White People*, *P-Valley*, and *Kidding*. She is Executive Producer and Director of *Impact* at A&E. Her upcoming projects include *This Is Jane*, the true story of an underground abortion ring in 1960s Chicago, and *Untitled*, a butch femme romantic sex comedy. A relentless activist for human and civil rights, Kimberly is a proud Governor of the Academy and head of the Diversity Committee, an Executive Board member of the DGA, and a founding member of REFRAME, an industry-wide effort to end discrimination against women and people of color. She is a member of Time's Up and the WGA.

The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

Founded by Academy Award®-winning actor and advocate Geena Davis, the Institute is the only research-based organization working within the media and entertainment industry to engage, educate, and influence the need to dramatically improve gender balance, reduce stereotyping and create diverse female characters in entertainment targeting children 11 and under.



GDIGM has amassed the largest body of research on gender prevalence in entertainment, which spans more than 20 years. Their biennial symposium is the only event convening over 300 decision makers, content creators, and thought leaders to share best practices and create a blueprint towards establishing a gender-balanced media landscape.

The Institute works collaboratively with decision makers and content creators through their workshops, training sessions and research-backed content evaluation and recommendations. Its community educational outreach aims to inspire and sensitize the next generation of content creators to focus on gender equality and reducing stereotyping in children's media. Their three-tiered approach of research, education and advocacy has brought the Institute to leading media and entertainment companies, organizations, educational institutions and multinational

companies. The Institute's research studies are frequently quoted in major media outlets including *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Variety*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN*, and *MSNBC*. www.seejane.org



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2016: *Spotlight* — went on to win Oscar for best picture and original screenplay

2017: *Hidden Figures* — nominated for Oscars for best picture and best adapted screenplay.

2018: *The Post* — nominated for an Oscar for best picture

2019: *Green Book* — won Oscars for best original screenplay and best picture



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