

## If Hollywood were serious about diversity, it wouldn't fail at every turn.

Lexi Alexander - from Lexi Alexander's blog.



There are only two kinds of people who are successful at this social media thing. Those who are funny and those who get real. I am not that funny, and I have yet to get real publicly.

Today is a good day to change that. Since funny is not an option, I am going to take a deep breath, muster up all the courage I can, and talk about an issue I have long observed despairingly from the sidelines.

Over the past three or four months I have been contacted by a civil liberties organization regarding this issue, I have spoken to several reporters anonymously, I've had lawyers call me to inform me that my forty-minute Academy Award-nominated short film somehow uniquely qualifies me for something I never, ever wanted to qualify for (it has to do with an excuse showrunners like to use when turning down feature directors for episode gigs), I even attended two DGA Women's Steering Committee meetings, and the best part, I have met many fellow women directors.

Facts:

1) The media has never covered the lack of women in film and television more extensively than right now.

2) There is no lack of female directors. Repeat after me: **THERE IS NO LACK OF FEMALE DIRECTORS**. But there is a huge lack of people willing to give female directors opportunities. I swear, if anyone near me even so much as whispers the sentence "Women probably don't want to direct," my fist will fly as a reflex action.

Side note: The previous statement labels me as "difficult".

If I would instead have ended the sentence with, "I don't know what I'm going to do," I would be labeled as "indecisive." By letter of the law, all female directors must fall in one of two categories: Difficult or Indecisive. Bitch or Ditz. "Hello, my name is Lexi Alexander, Difficult Bitch. Nice to meet you!"

3) Despite the fact that plenty of outlets love to cover the "Women in Hollywood" issue, not one mainstream journalist has had the [fortitude] to really get to the bottom of the issue. (There are rumors about a prominent investigative journalist circling the story, but I'll believe it when I read it.)

4) Gender discrimination in Hollywood goes far beyond women simply not getting the gig. It is reflected in movie budgets, P&A budgets, the size of distribution deals (if a female director's movie is lucky enough to score one), official and unofficial internship or mentorship opportunities, union eligibility, etc.

5) Women in Hollywood have no male allies. There are some who pretend to be on our side, but yeah, not really. They may say the right thing because, after all, they're liberals and that's a public image they'd like to keep up. Others may actually believe in gender equality, but are not willing to put up a fight for it that could sacrifice their own status or relationships.

The majority of people think exactly like those anonymous commenters that pop up under any [women in Hollywood] articles. Check them out, they're easy to recognize: White male, oblivious to the affirmative-action bonus that came with the cradle? Yup, that's him. He will shout and scream in capital letters about reverse discrimination and argue that people should be hired based on merit and not gender, revealing that his three-hundred-thousand-dollar education really isn't worth a dime.

I'm going to get a lot of heat for the above statement, but I promised to get real. "What's that? You're saying this is not true, that there are many men in Hollywood who have tried to change the status quo?"

Okay. Let's be fair and really dissect this. (I would love, love, love to be wrong about this).

This past Saturday I went to one of those Women's Steering Committee meetings at the DGA [Director's Guild of America]. To be honest, after the first meeting I went to a few months ago, I swore I would never go again. It just seemed weird and kind of upside-down. The people with the most intelligent things to say were bullied into silence, and the bullies were applauded. One fairly prominent female director actually stated several times in a row: "Let me make this very clear: I am not here as one of you. I am one of the boys, okay?"

Don't ask me to explain it. I still don't understand it. It was surreal, to put it mildly.

But when it was announced that our new DGA president Paris Barclay, National Executive Director Jay Roth and Western Executive Director Bryan Unger would attend the next meeting to inform us how the negotiations with the studios went and what they had achieved in regards to diversity hiring, I had to go.

Also, I do have the sticker on my fridge about "being the change you want to see in the world."

Here are the points of the negotiation they shared with us:

1) The number of female directors working in film or TV has decreased and everybody finds this abysmal number embarrassing.

2) There were heated arguments about who's responsible. The studio tried to put the blame on the DGA and its own small number of female members, but the negotiation committee reminded the executives that a woman can only become eligible to join the guild if she gets hired by a signatory company.

3) A Warner executive stated, "I am not embarrassed about what my company does, but I am frustrated by the lack of progress when it comes to gender equality."

4) TV continues to hire 80% white males. The number of first-time directors breaking into TV is actually acceptable. Unfortunately, it's only white males who do it.

5) The hiring process or the qualifications/skill-set needed to book an episode cannot be defined.

6) Shonda Rhimes [The creator, head writer, executive producer and showrunner of the Grey's Anatomy] gets it.

7) CBS doesn't.

8) It was decided during the negotiations to change the wording regarding diversity hiring from "best efforts" to "work diligently."

9) Nobody knows how to implement a successful diversity program. Many have tried and failed. SONY may have a plan that works.

10) The DGA needs to come up with ideas and present them by July.

Sigh.