

With women still woefully underrepresented in leadership roles in film, TV and advertising, groups such as the ACLU and the 3% Conference are stepping up

Calling the shots

BY JOANNE ZUHL
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Whenever Juliana Lukasik is in need of motivation, she turns on the movie “Miss Representation.” The 2011 documentary explores how women are represented in the media and its impact on people and culture. One line in particular always gets her fired up. It’s by Gloria Steinem, and it’s become the motto of the film: “You can’t be what you can’t see.”

After more than two decades in the film industry, Lukasik knows it to be true.

“I realized that during my career in the film industry — and I’ve worked since 1990. I worked freelance, I own a production company — all those years, I never once worked with a woman director. And quite frankly, never really thought of it as an option for me.”

It wasn’t a quirky sentiment. At the time “Miss Representation” was in theaters, women made up only 3 percent of the creative directors in the commercial advertising business. Today, that number has inched up a few points and includes Lukasik, who owns @Large Films in Portland and directs commercials full time.

Lukasik was one of 50 directors interviewed by the ACLU Women’s Rights Project on issues of discrimination and the gender disparity in the film and

entertainment industry. This spring, the ACLU called upon the federal government to launch an investigation into what it calls the “systemic failure to hire women directors at all levels of the film and TV industry in violation of state and federal civil rights laws.”

Pulling from numerous studies by unions, the Directors Guild of America and other sources, the ACLU has compiled some alarming statistics: Fewer than 2 percent of directors of the top-grossing 100 films of 2013 and of 2014 were women. Of the 1,300 top-grossing films from 2002 to 2014, only slightly more than 4 percent of directors were women. The numbers are only slightly better for television series, and many female directors reported being shut out of television work entirely, according to the ACLU’s research.

Lukasik was one of only a few commercial directors the ACLU contacted, and she emphasized the ACLU should consider the ever-growing influence of advertising, from television to tweets, in its investigation.

This week, Lukasik and other commercial directors converged on Portland for the 3% Conference mini-con — named for the fraction of women directors in the commercial industry. It’s a gathering to empower and educate women and men and move the industry toward gender equality.

Correcting the imbalance is not just a social or civil rights issue; it’s good business, Lukasik said. Because while the vast majority of people making commercials are men, the vast majority of the people buying the products are women. There’s money being left on the table, she said.

“The thing that baffles me and has baffled me for years is that women make the purchase about 80 percent of the time, on average,” Lukasik said. “But for the most part, we haven’t been advertised to very well. We’ve been pandered to: Make it pink, and that will work. Make it cute; that will work. I’ve heard situations where women are doing a pitch for a male-dominated product, and women directors have been told, ‘You can’t sell to men.’ But on the reverse side, they have no problem having men sell to women.”

Kat Gordon, an advertising executive, entrepreneur and consultant out of Palo Alto, Calif., organized the first 3% Conference three years ago in hopes of changing the ratio. Thursday’s mini-conference, hosted



“How do you truly give women the same chances as men if you are focused so much more on their looks, and everything but their brains? And that’s what media does.”

JULIANA LUKASIK
@LARGE FILMS
OWNER



Rosie the Riveter was the star of a government campaign aimed at recruiting female workers during World War II.

BY THE NUMBERS Women in film and TV

1.9%

Directors of the top-grossing 100 films of 2013 and 2014 who were women

4.1%

Directors of the 1,300 top-grossing films from 2002 to 2014 who were women

31%

TV shows with no women directing a single episode in the 2013-14 season

13%

Directors in prime-time TV in 2013-14 who were women

Source: American Civil Liberties Union