BY MAYA MONTAÑEZ SMUKLER

Liberating HOLLYWOOD

THIRTY YEARS OF WOMEN DIRECTORS

At the 82nd Academy Awards ceremony on March 7, 2010, American filmmaker Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman to win an Academy Award for Best Director. *The Hurt Locker,* the film that she directed, also won an Oscar for Best Picture. It was a contemporary historical moment very much rooted in the historical past of Hollywood and American culture during the 1970s. Bigelow, who attended Columbia University's Graduate School of Film in the 1970s and directed her first feature film, *The Loveless,* in 1982, was presented the award by Hollywood icon Barbra Streisand who in the 1970s also began cultivating her ambition to direct and made her directorial debut, *Yentl,* in 1983. The significance of the 2010 Oscar "first" was emphasized by Streisand's enthusiasm in her presentation of the award to Bigelow: "Well, the time has come [pause] Kathryn Bigelow. Whoahoo!" Off mic, as the music swelled, Bigelow could be heard saying to Streisand: "I am so honored. I am so honored," while Streisand joked about the statue: "Can I hold this?" Although her output as a director has received much acclaim, Streisand has never been nominated for Best Director by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Within this exchange, the legacy of American women directors dating back to the 1970s was acknowledged by the success of Kathryn Bigelow's win, the disappointment in Barbra Streisand's lack of equivalent recognition, and the way in which the two women recognized each other's place in history. As if this symbolism was not enough, the two directors exited the stage as the orchestra played Helen Reddy's 1975 women's liberation anthem "I Am Woman." A clichéd but resonate soundtrack, the song served as a link between women directors of the present, their formative years of the 1970s, and the feminist movement of the same era.

The 1970s was a crucial decade for women directors working in Hollywood as it marked a period of significant increase in their employment statistics compared to previous decades. Between the early 1930s up until the late 1960s, there was never more than one woman making commercially oriented movies in Hollywood or within the independent film communities adjacent to the studio system.[1] By the late 1960s and increasingly—ever so gradually—throughout the 1970s the number of women directing feature films grew. Between 1966 and 1980 there were an estimated fifteen women who had made feature films targeting commercial audiences, either within the studio system or as independent filmmakers.[2]

Throughout the 1970s the feminist movement impacted the entertainment industry in various ways influencing Hollywood's own political consciousness-raising. On-screen the women's movement and its objective of female autonomy were represented by characterizations and narrative themes in several kinds of movies including critically acclaimed studio films (most directed by men) such as *Klute* (1971, dir. Alan J. Pakula), *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1974, dir. Martin Scorsese) and *Unmarried Woman* (1978, dir. Paul Mazursky). Off-screen, myriad female industry employees formed various kinds of networking organizations. For instance, Women in Film, a non-political association created by established women in the industry, was formed in 1973; and in 1974 the American Film Institute, a mainstream conservatory for a new generation of filmmakers, still run by an old-guard Hollywood patriarchy, founded the Directing Workshop for Women, a hands-on program that trained individual women to become film and television directors. Several professional guilds, such as the Directors Guild of America (DGA), Screen Writers

OFF MIC, AS THE MUSIC SWELLED, BIGELOW COULD BE HEARD SAYING TO STREISAND: "I AM SO HONORED. I AM SO HONORED," WHILE STREISAND JOKED ABOUT THE STATUE: "CAN I HOLD THIS?"

Guild (SAG), and Writers Guild of America (WGA), were significant in projecting the influences of the feminist movement in the United States on the film and television industries during this period by involvement with sexual and racial discrimination within equal employment debates.

Advocating for their female constituents both the WGA and SAG each formed their own Women's Committees in 1972.[3] From 1974 to 1976, both guilds compiled statistical surveys that explicitly documented the disfranchisement of their women members; often linking the data to a specific studio, network and in several cases individual television shows. These efforts were spearheaded by the two organizations' individual Women's Committees, which the press reported on widely.[4] The WGA addressed the low numbers of women writers working in film and television, and SAG called for improved roles for actresses. More reticent then its colleagues in matters of public activism, the DGA was late to the era's feminist awareness not making a concerted effort to address the low employment numbers of its female directors until the very end of the 1970s. While the DGA was slow to organize within its membership ranks around issues of employment discrimination, ultimately the Guild's involvement extended beyond just press coverage and into the court of law.

At the end of the decade, in 1979, the DGA Women's Committee was formed. Original members of the Committee were Susan Bay, Nell Cox, Janet Davidson, Joelle Dobrow, Cheryl Downey, Pat Eyerman, Dolores Feraro, Anne Goodall, Nancy Heydorn, Victoria Hochberg, Ann Kindbery, Valeria Kircher, Flora Lang, Lynne Litman, Lisa Rich, Susan Smitman, Leslie Waldman.[5] Composed of award-winning television, documentary, and feature-film directors, the group was formed because of mounting frustration with their inability to get hired within the industry. Determined to assess their current employment status, the Committee was granted permission from the Guild to examine decades of employment records of studios, networks, and leading independent production companies. Between 1949 and 1979, according to the Committee's findings, 7,332 feature films were made and released by major distributors. Fourteen—0.19 percent--were directed by women. These statistics were

given to the media to draw attention to tangible evidence of sexism within the industry and to show specific percentages of women hired (or not hired at all in some cases) at individual companies, studios, and television shows.

On June 18, 1980, as a consequence of the DGA Women's Committee's actions in publically addressing industry sexism thirty-two executives from prominent production companies, television networks and film studios agreed to a meet with more than one hundred members of the DGA Women's Committee. Industry representatives included Barry Diller, chairman of the board and CEO, Paramount; Ned Tanen, president, Universal Pictures; Frank Wells, president and co-CEO, Warner Bros.; Steve Bochco, MTM's *Hill Street Blues*; James Brooks, executive producer, John Charles Walters Productions; and programming representatives from ABC, CBS, and NBC. The Committee introduced affirmative-action quota recommendations for studios and networks:

HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

10-16-70

No Lib Yet for Women in The Entertainment Industry

By ROCHELLE REED

Of 350 cinema majors at USC, only 20 are women.

Of approximately 500 film majors at UCLA, only 30 are female — "and they're mostly taking just viewing courses," said instructor Hugh Grauel.

At the American Film Institute, George Stevens Jr. leaned back in a director's chair and added up the girls enrolled among this season's 40 AFI fellows: 2.

Patricia Miller opened her books to the directors' division of the Film Industry Workshop and discovered that in the five years the division has functioned, only one woman — a Formosan student who has returned to her homeland — completed director training.

"It's reflective of the positions they can get in the film industry," said USC cinema professor Dr. Bernie Kantor. "If the profession won't take them, they don't come to us."

"... but they're awfully bright," said Stevens of his female students. "... they're good ... maybe better than the boys," said Grauel.

"... they're outstanding," Mrs. Miller reflected.

"They're very talented but okay, what else is new?" Dr. Kantor asked.

(Continued on Page 8)

Women in Industry

With Women's Lib and other such movements, The Hollywood Reporter decided to take a look at women in top jobs in the entertainment field. The Reporter's Rochelle Reed discovered the field is rather bleak. This is the first in a five-part series of stories.

WOMEN IN

(Continued f

Smart cookies all, women who look to film as a profession usually turn around in registration lines and change majors. The few who don't are led — or misled — by a passion stronger than native intelligence "and the hope that it won't be closed to you," as one female film student put it.

"A burning, passionate desire to do film leads girls into film school," Kantor explained. "The girls are well aware that there are no places — beds but no places — for a girl in the profession. Most are placed in jobs, USC sees to that, but not in the places the girls want. The typical offer is as a secretary."

Years ago, there were practical rea-

BETWEEN 1949 AND 1979, 7,332 FEATURE FILMS WERE MADE AND RELEASED BY MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS. FOURTEEN—0.19 PERCENT—WERE DIRECTED BY WOMEN.

ON JUNE 18, 1980, AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE DGA WOMEN'S COMMITTEE'S ACTIONS IN PUBLICALLY ADDRESSING INDUSTRY SEXISM THIRTY-TWO EXECUTIVES FROM PROMINENT PRODUCTION COMPANIES, TELEVISION NETWORKS AND FILM STUDIOS AGREED TO A MEET WITH MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED MEMBERS OF THE DGA WOMEN'S COMMITTEE.

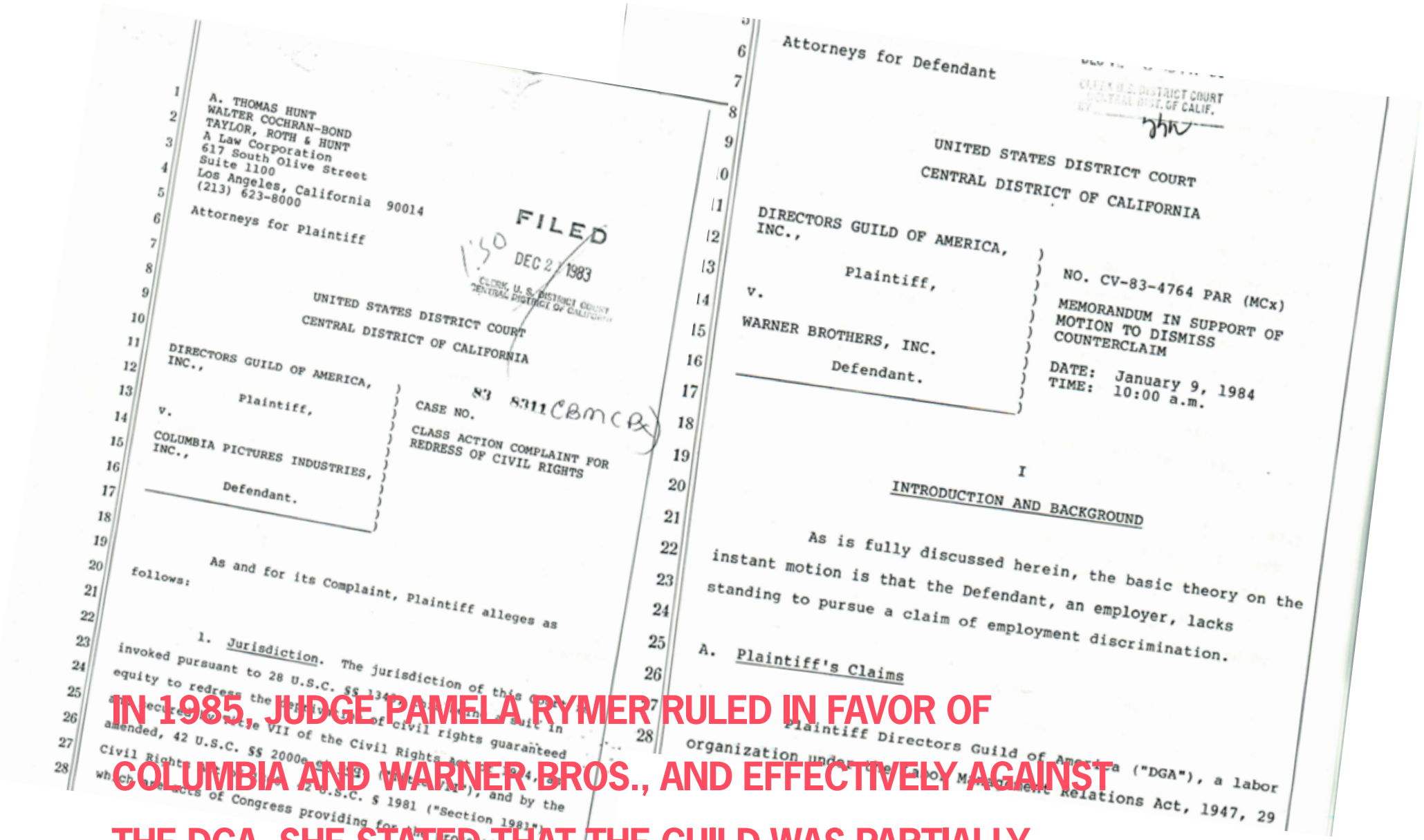
for every thirteen television episodes contracted, producers were requested to hire at least one woman director.[6] However, eight months later, discussions between the two sides had fallen apart. Aljean Harmetz, writing for the *New York Times* in February of 1981, reported that "according to the guild's complaint, each employer 'unilaterally withdrew' from a voluntary affirmative-action program.'"[7] Each side staunchly opposed the other's stance on affirmative-action quotas. Michael Franklin, executive director of the Guild at the time, explained that:

> *the DGA was forced into the suit because of Columbia's [and Warner Bros.] refusal to negotiate…based on a system of numerical goals and timetables."*

In response, Columbia released a press release stating that "despite [the studios] expressed willingness to continue negotiations…the Guild refused to…unless Columbia acquiesced in imposing quotas as to the numbers of women and members of minority groups to hired.[8]

While the DGA used statistical evidence documenting the low number of women and minorities actually hired by the studios to justify their demands for the usage of such programs, both film companies held the Guild responsible for those low numbers. Warner Bros. and Columbia cited culpability in the DGA contract which set certain provisions that controlled the hiring process supposedly making it difficult for the studios to access female and minority job candidates.

As a result of this impasse, in 1983 the DGA filed a class-action lawsuit with the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California alleging discriminatory hiring practices towards women and racial minorities: against Warner Bros. on July 25 and against Columbia Pictures on December 21.[9] In 1985, Judge Pamela Rymer ruled in favor of Columbia and Warner Bros., and effectively against the DGA.[10] She stated that the Guild was partially responsible for the small amount of women and minority film and television directors hired due to the way in which the organization's contract perpetuated the "old boys'



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CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA, INC.,
Plaintiff,
v.
COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC.,
Defendant.

CASE NO. 83 8311 CBM(Bx)

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT FOR REDRESS OF CIVIL RIGHTS

As and for its Complaint, Plaintiff alleges as follows:

1. Jurisdiction. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1343 ... suit in equity to redress the deprivation of civil rights guaranteed ... Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e et seq. ("Title VII"), and by the Civil Rights Act of 1866, 42 U.S.C. § 1981 ("Section 1981"), which ... Acts of Congress providing for ... Jurisdiction ...

Attorneys for Defendant

CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DIST. OF CALIF.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA, INC.,
Plaintiff,
v.
WARNER BROTHERS, INC.
Defendant.

NO. CV-83-4764 PAR (MCx)

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF MOTION TO DISMISS COUNTERCLAIM

DATE: January 9, 1984
TIME: 10:00 a.m.

I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As is fully discussed herein, the basic theory on the instant motion is that the Defendant, an employer, lacks standing to pursue a claim of employment discrimination.

A. Plaintiff's Claims

Plaintiff Directors Guild of America ("DGA"), a labor organization ... Management Relations Act, 1947, 29

IN 1985, JUDGE PAMELA RYMER RULED IN FAVOR OF COLUMBIA AND WARNER BROS., AND EFFECTIVELY AGAINST THE DGA. SHE STATED THAT THE GUILD WAS PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SMALL AMOUNT OF WOMEN AND MINORITY FILM AND TELEVISION DIRECTORS...

ALTHOUGH TECHNICALLY A FAILURE, THE DGA LAWSUIT AGAINST COLUMBIA AND WARNER BROS. WAS SIGNIFICANT REGARDING WOMEN DIRECTORS IN TWO WAYS. PRIMARILY, THAT IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE DGA, AN INFLUENTIAL AND REPUTABLE ORGANIZATION, HAD TAKEN LEGAL ACTION ON BEHALF OF THEIR FEMALE MEMBERSHIP. NEVER HAD SUCH ATTENTION BEEN DRAWN TO FEMALE DIRECTORS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.

club" and "word of mouth" hiring practices by stipulating that directors could choose their Assistant Directors and Unit Production Managers.[11]

Although technically a failure, the DGA lawsuit against Columbia and Warner Bros. was significant regarding women directors in two ways. Primarily, that it was the first time that the DGA, an influential and reputable organization, had taken legal action on behalf of their female membership.[12] Never had such attention been drawn to female directors within the industry. Furthermore, it was an uncharacteristic gesture made by an industry organization that was not known for taking overt political positions informed by potentially controversial issues such as feminism, sexism and racism. As DGA member Lynne Littman said in the press before the case was lost:

> *The important thing about the action the guild is taking now is that it is being taken by the whole guild, not by the women's committee. The guild is not a notoriously radical organization, and their support for us is a major advance.*[13]

Second, speculation as to why the DGA would take such a drastic action as filing a class action suit against two major studios without precedent set in the Guild's history suggests an effort at self-protection. In a recent interview with me, retired DGA member Barbara Peeters, who belonged to the Women's Committee during the 1980s and at the time of these legal battles, suggested that the Guild made those aggressive demands of the film companies in an effort to prevent their female members from accusing them of similar acts of gender discrimination.[14] The Guild preferred to sue the studios rather than be sued for sexism by its own associates. Ten years after the filing of the suit, Michael Franklin described the impact of the case on the

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Guild in a positive light: "Prior to 1978, the Guild had an image of a gentlemen's club. It didn't make waves. The lawsuit improved the Guild's status because the industry recognized that not only did the DGA represent important creative elements within the industry, but it was a strong force for the positive improvement of society as well!"[15] Three decades later, accepting her Oscar last year, Kathryn Bigelow described to the audience how "this was the moment of a lifetime." This statement is surely true for any filmmaker winning their first Academy Award. The hope for many, and no doubt the founders of the DGA Women's Committee in 1979, is that it wouldn't take so many lifetimes to arrive at such a moment.

Maya Montañez Smukler is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Cinema and Media Studies Department where she is currently conducting dissertation research on women directors in 1970s Hollywood. She is co-editor-in-chief of Mediascape, UCLA's on-line media studies journal, and has been a part-time faculty member of the New School University's Film and Media Studies Department since 2002. Maya received a CSW travel grant to interview women directors who worked in Hollywood during the 1970s and 1980s.

Notes

1. Dorthy Arzner (studio director) made films from 1927 to 1943; Ida Lupino (independent director working within Hollywood) made feature films from 1949 to 1966; and Shirley Clarke (independent director working outside of Hollywood) made feature films from 1961 to 1967.
2. My current research on this subject suggests this number.
3. Mollie Gregory, *Women Who Run the Show: How a Brilliant & Creative New Generation of Women Stormed Hollywood*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002, 5; David F. Prindle, *The Politics of Glamour Ideology and Democracy in the Screen Actors Guild.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998; 107.
4. Gregory, 7-11.
5. Gail Williams, "DGA Files Sex Discrimination Suit vs. Networks, Prod'n Co's," *Hollywood Reporter* 25 Feb. 1981.
6 Morrie Gelman, "DGA Wants More Work For Women: Asks One Femme Director For Every 13 Television Segs," *Variety* 20 June 1980; Eunice Post Field, "DGA Committee Wants More Women Directing for TV," *Hollywood Reporter* 20 June 1980.
7. Aljean Harmetz, "Suit Allege Sex Bias By TV and Film Makers," *New York Times* 25 Feb. 1981.
8. David Robb, "DGA Sues Columbia Over Hiring," *Variety (D)* 22 Dec. 1983.
9. David Robb, "Directors Guild Born Out of Fear 50 Years Ago," *Variety, 52nd Anniversary Issue* 29 Oct. 1985.
10. Directors Guild of America, Inc., Joelle Dobrow, Luther James, Lorraine Raglin and Cesar Torres, Plaintiffs v. Warner Brothers, Inc., Defendant; Directors Guild of America, Inc., Bill Crain, Dick Look, Sharon Mann, Susan Smitman, and Frank Zuniga, Plaintiffs, v. Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc., Defendant. Nos. CV 83-4764-PAR; CV 83-8311-PAR.
11. David Robb, "Rule Against DGA As Minority Rep In Class Action Suits," *Variety* 13 Mar. 1985.
12. At this point in my research it seems as if this is the first time a major film studio was sued for gender and racial discrimination by a leading industry organization.
13. Aljean Harmetz, "Suit Allege Sex Bias by TV and Film Makers," *New York Times* 25 Feb. 1981.
14. Barbara Peeters, personal interview, Ashland, Oregon, 11 Apr. 2010.
15 Joelle Dobrow, "The Man Behind the Women's Movement at the Guild," *DGA News* Dec. 1990/Jan. 1991; 21.