

FILM 101

COLLEGES + CLASSES + CRITICS

...AND it doesn't get any better when it comes to winning, or being nominated for, an Academy Award. Figures from *Variety* reveal that female filmmakers have rarely taken Oscar home: Only five women producers have scored that victory, out of 431 total nominees, while women directors and cinematographers have yet to bask in such glory. In fact, no female cinematographer has ever been nominated.

"This is a very complex issue. These low numbers are the result of a somewhat toxic combination of industry denial, misguided beliefs and a myth-making machine that largely excludes women," charges Lauzen.

If there's any silver lining, it's that a growing number of organizations and corporate initiatives have dedicated themselves to advocating for female filmmakers and recognizing their cinematic contributions. Sister organizations New York Women in Film and Television (NYWIFT) and Women in Film Los Angeles (WIF) have been doing so since the 1970s. Both offer panel discussions, workshops, screenings and networking, professional development and mentoring opportunities. They also provide financial assistance to film students and independent filmmakers through scholarships and grants. WIF, for example, with support from NYWIFT, maintains a Film Finishing Fund, which furnishes monetary and in-kind donations to cash-strapped female filmmakers, enabling them to complete their projects.

"Since WIF started, there have been gigantic strides at the highest level of power in the entertainment industry. Now we have women running networks and studios," says Jane Fleming, WIF president. "Where we're lacking is in the creative arts."

"Certainly, there has been progress, especially in producing. There are exceptional women producers who are working as much as men," adds Terry Lawler, executive director of NYWIFT. "Some execs still feel that women aren't qualified, and that's plain crazy. I think equity will be reached, but it'll take time."



Cynthia Wade, winner of Best Documentary Short Subject at the 2008 Oscars for her film *Freeheld*

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE GIRLS!

WOMEN IN FILMMAKING FIND STEADFAST SUPPORT

THE STATISTICS ARE STARTLING! According to Martha Lauzen, Ph.D., founder/executive director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University, women comprised only 15 percent of all the directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers and editors who worked on the top 250 domestic-grossing films in 2007. Women directors and cinematographers fared particularly poorly, at six and two percent, respectively...

By Julie Jacobs