

Mary Mazzio on making films that move the needle on social issues

By  Leigh Andrews

15 Mar 2019

I spoke to Mary Mazzio, former Olympic rower and lawyer, now independent documentary filmmaker and CEO of 50 Eggs Films at YPO Edge, about the power of a socially savvy millennial audience and her dedication to making films with social impact, ranging from 1999's *A Hero for Daisy* to the latest, *#iAmJaneDoe*.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

Thank you to @academypenguinhall for hosting @marymazzio on December 10th to discuss *A Hero For Daisy* and the urgency to break rules that hold women back. #AHeroforDaisy #iamJaneDoe #iamjanedoeilm #womeninilm

A post shared by [50 Eggs Films \(@50eggfilms\)](#) on Dec 20, 2018 at 1:09pm PST

decades ago, but it's fast proving a favourite with a new audience, in the form of socially minded millennials, for whom it's become a worthy gender equity war-cry, still relevant today.

On a rainy day in 1976, Yale's female rowing team protested the substandard conditions facing female athletes by stripping in the female athletic director's office, baring their bodies emblazoned with the phrase 'Title IX' in blue marker as she read their now iconic statement:

“ *These are the bodies Yale is exploiting. On a day like today, the ice freezes on this skin and we sit for a half-hour as the ice melts and soaks through to meet the sweat, that is soaking us from the inside...* ”

Mazzio explains that to create a good film is one thing. To create a film inspires people to take action is something else entirely.

Convening on issues of humanity: Social issues with social purpose

That's exactly what they do at 50 Eggs Films. It's been in the company's genetic make-up from when they first opened their doors in the year 2000. Of that first film, Mazzio says it could have been a polemic, it could have turned into a feminist rant about gender equality, which is why she insisted that the dialogue included the voices of fathers and sons.

In doing so, her team created a film that resonated with both men and women, and the impact of the film was dramatic.

"While Yale University in the 1970s was transitioning from being an all-male institution that made it completely unprepared for women. They were extraordinary athletes, paying tuition just like the men, they didn't have adequate facilities."

Mazzio adds that while 'Title Nine' was fairly new legislation that meant equal facilities for women, *A Hero for Daisy* became a cult film in many ways, and has formed the blueprint of everything they do now, which is not to create divisive content, but instead, content where the left and right conservatives and liberals can come together.

#iAmJaneDoe: How can it be legal to advertise children online for sex?

Fast-forward to where 50 Egg Films is today, where their most recent film *#iAmJaneDoe* catalysed federal legislation in the US. They have increasingly polarised nationalised politics, and yet, here was a piece of legislation where the left and right could get together and say, “We have the most disenfranchised children being sex-trafficked. They need a route to justice, how do we provide that in the context of the online world?”

Mazzio says amazingly, the legislation moved forward in spite of heavy opposition from the tech lobby led by Google. It’s extraordinary for a piece of media to have that much impact.

But as proof, Mazzio says just consider *A Hero for Daisy* again – a parent group in Michigan told her they had watched it and were going to file a lawsuit as their daughters were playing sport on landfills among shards of glass, while their sons played on manicured lawns. The girls’ games were in the afternoon when the parents couldn’t attend as they were working, while their sons’ games were at night, under strong lights.

Mazzio got a call in 2012 – 12 years after the movie came out, to say the lawsuit had gone all the way up to the US Supreme Court and was finally ruled in their favour.

“ It makes me sweat that you can create an opportunity for people of different minds to come together on a very simple, focused social issue. ”

Mazzio believes we are more alike than we are different, so we all need to spend more time convening on issues of humanity, on social issues with social purpose.

Socially savvy millennial consumers will speak out

I asked Mazzio for her views on media and advertising that’s still heavily reliant on social stereotypes, and she said that many ads rely on skewing the opposite way. They’re either “very testosterone-y,” or catering to the notion that women ought to be valued on what they look like, as opposed to what they can do and achieve.

However, as the younger generation of millennials comes into positions of power, Mazzio says this will be an extraordinary time as the generation is focused on purpose, values and who you are as a company. That means they purchase products on the value of what the brand stands for as opposed to the benefits of the product itself.

“ Thank you [@glamourmag](#) [@GlamourMagUK](#) for naming [#iAmJaneDoe](#) as one of the best true crime documentaries to watch: <https://t.co/vIX8CEdGWK> (although there are no re-enactments or actors)...— Mary Mazzio (@marymazzio)

[March 8, 2019](#) ”

It's already proven a huge shift over a six- or eight-year period, set to be more so as this generation will speak up and say business needs to be more open and transparent, and focused on issues and values.

We all need to take a step back a question whether the media we put out there is reflective of who we are as a brand. What is our value proposition, what do we care about and what do we want our public value system to look and feel like?

Mazzio calls this an extraordinary change.

“ You saw all kinds of ads ten years ago based on how strong your product is. That's increasingly irrelevant to the next generation. They're much more tolerant of differences and spectrums, whether that's gender or race or identity, certainly more so than previous generations, so the next generation will likely be the one to solve these problems. ”

Standing together to share knowledge and work to solve these problems is what YPO is all about.



How Cape Town's YPO 2019 brings meaning to a 'Life of Re' for creative CEOs

Leigh Andrews 8 Mar 2019



[Click here](#) for more on Mazzio's tweets and be sure to follow YPO's [YPO Edge](#) on Twitter and the [hashtag](#) for further insights from the global gathering.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

- #Loeries2020: Behavioural economics as creativity, but not as we know it... - 24 Nov 2020
- #D2020: Ignite your inner activist - representation through illustration - 27 Feb 2020
- #D2020: How Sho Madjozi brought traditional Tsonga *xibelani* into 2020 - 27 Feb 2020
- #D2020: Silver jubilee shines with Department of Audacious Projects launch - 26 Feb 2020
- #BehindtheSelfie with... Qingoile 'VingWing' Mbulwa, COO at The Whole Idea - 26 Feb 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>