

DEMOCRACY. ON HER TERMS.

REPRESENT

BACKBONE FILMS AND KARTEMQUIN FILMS PRESENT "REPRESENT"

A CO-PRODUCTION OF ITVS WITH FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

EDITED, SHOT, AND DIRECTED BY HILLARY BACHELDER ORIGINAL SCORE BY PAUL BRILL PRODUCED BY RACHEL PIKELNY AND ANNE SOBEL

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LOGLINE & SYNOPSIS



Logline:

In the heart of the American Midwest, three women take on the status quo in campaigns that promise to reshape local politics on their own terms.

Synopsis:

Equal parts personal and political, REPRESENT follows three women on both sides of the aisle who share the singular goal of improving their community through public service. Myya attempts to spark a youth movement and unseat the incumbent mayor of Detroit; Bryn, a farmer and working mother in Granville, OH, runs for township trustee; and Julie walks a tightrope between her identities as a Korean immigrant and Republican candidate for State Representative in a liberal Chicago suburb.





ARTIST STATEMENT

HILLARY BACHELDER DIRECTOR/CINEMATOGRAPHER/EDITOR

In April of 2017, I sat in a sunlit room in Wisconsin, exchanging pleasantries with twenty or so local farmers. They were all women, and today they'd all raised their hands to say they were interested in running for office.

In the five months since Hillary Clinton had lost the presidential election, I'd been showing up to a lot of rooms like these and meeting women just like this. Unpolished but determined. Passionate about fire stations and ditches and the schools in their community and tired of waiting for someone else to fix things.

I knew this was a story I wanted to tell. I was looking for a window into the current political landscape, and I was interested in exploring the experiences of women in office beyond a tired "year of the woman" or "pink wave" trope. Local politics felt like the perfect place to dig in— an opportunity to both celebrate the important work being done at this level while interrogating the systemic failings and intrinsic biases apparent even in these "smallest" of elections. So I borrowed a friend's camera, packed up my car, and spent the next few years chasing Myya, Bryn, and Julie through parades and fundraisers and chili cook-offs across the Midwest.

With a film titled "*Represent*," it felt like my responsibility to ask big questions about the true power of representation. Yes, the demographics of elected officials are important, and gender identity, race, and sexual orientation on their own can be powerful symbols. But even more significant is a candidate stepping into a space that wasn't built for them and still unapologetically bringing their whole selves into the spotlight with them.



ARTIST STATEMENT

It was this revelation that grew into the backbone of the film. While Myya and Julie and Bryn check all sorts of disparate demographic boxes, they share a universal struggle to redefine repressive expectations for women in politics, and to exist in the public eye on their own terms.

I knew it was important, then, for me to present each woman as more than a campaign commercial. I needed to let them be full people with flaws, complicated relationships, and moments of vulnerability and opportunities for improvement. *Represent* deepens these portraits by developing stakes that extend beyond the campaign trail, and the arc of the film ultimately continues past election night to paint a richly personal picture of joy, of loss, of mother-daughter relationships, owning your narrative, and of growth.

I wanted to ask more from our audience as well. *Represent* pushes all of us to sit with people we may disagree with while still recognizing their worth, and to consider the subconscious creep of our own biases and preconceptions. Time and time again during production I found myself outside the lines of my original thesis, caught off guard by three complicated women and communities that defied conventional punditry. But it was these moments of discomfort, the grey areas and digressions, that I kept coming back to weeks later in the edit.

So that's what I hope to offer now with *Represent*: a tender and often unexpected telling of three passionate candidates, the challenges they face, and a glimpse at what we all have to gain when women shape the future of our communities and ultimately, our country.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the country was captivated by a “pink wave” of women running for office. After the midterms, we were awash with overdue firsts — Muslim and Native Congresswomen, among many others, finally taking their seats in the halls of power. While this is an important milestone to acknowledge, the overall representation needle barely moved, from women making up 19.4% of Congress in 2018 to 23.7% this coming session. Even buoyed by a nationwide movement, the U.S. currently ranks a bleak 82nd in the world for gender parity in politics, a status that has actually worsened over the past 25 years.

So what is standing in between women and the offices they seek? Studies show:

Women self-select at a far lower rate than their male counterparts, and must be asked 7 times on average before deciding to run.

Female candidates struggle to find the financial backing and party-level support that their male counterparts access.

According to a recent UN report, in the U.S., 39% of people still think that men make better leaders.

Represent's stories tackle many of these issues head on...

MYYA JONES

MAYORAL CANDIDATE

MYYA JONES is a 22-year-old black woman running for Mayor of Detroit. She's a lifelong native of the city, activist, and a recent Michigan State graduate who stepped into the race in January 2017 to challenge the Democratic incumbent and first white mayor of Detroit in nearly 50 years, Mike Duggan. Already the underdog, Myya receives notice that the board of elections is challenging her residency requirement, and she will be forced to continue as a write-in candidate.

But Myya won't give up that easily, and despite a defeat at the polls, in 2018 she's on the campaign trail again— this time for State Rep. She's in it to show other Millennials and women of color that this is their fight, too.



BRYN BIRD

TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE CANDIDATE

In May of 2017, BRYN BIRD quit her job to help run the family produce farm while her mother was receiving cancer treatment. Not fully content with farming and family responsibilities, Bryn has her sights set on the upcoming township trustee election– even though, as a proud Democrat, she is far outnumbered in her rural Ohio community. Once she launches her campaign, despite being a four-person race for two open seats, the town's conservative "old boys network" acts quickly behind the scenes to pit Bryn against incumbent Melanie Schott, the only other female trustee that Granville has ever elected. Now Bryn must navigate a political system erected to exclude women like her, in a fight for the future and the values of this sleepy Midwest town.



JULIE CHO

STATE REPRESENTATIVE CANDIDATE

State Rep, faces long odds against a popular Democratic incumbent. Not long after launching, her own Illinois Republican party even tries to convince Julie to drop out of her race. Julie rejects the GOP's strong-arming and pushes forward to build a grassroots campaign, but as the national rhetoric intensifies and the midterm elections near, Julie's shared identities- woman of color, conservative, immigrant- may prove to be her ticket to success or her political undoing.



CAST & CREW



FEATURING:

Bryn Bird, Julie Cho, Myya Jones

Director, Cinematographer, Editor:

Hillary Bachelder

Producers:

Rachel Pikelny, Anne Sobel

Executive Producers:

Jolene Pinder, Betsy Steinberg,
Gordon Quinn, Sally Jo Fifer, Lois Vossen



ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is a North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary features. Recent releases include Kirill Mikhanovsky's *GIVE ME LIBERTY*, Francois Ozon's *BY THE GRACE OF GOD*, Levan Akin's *AND THEN WE DANCED*, and Brian Welsh's *BEATS*. Upcoming releases include Werner Herzog's documentary *NOMAD: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BRUCE CHATWIN*, Haifaa Al-Mansour's *THE PERFECT CANDIDATE*, Pablo Larrain's *EMA*, and Justine Triet's *SIBYL*. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, please visit www.musicboxfilms.com

ABOUT KARTEMQUIN FILMS

Founded in 1966, Kartemquin is a collaborative community that empowers documentary makers who create stories that foster a more engaged and just society. Kartemquin's films have received four Academy Award nominations, and won six Emmys and three Peabody Awards, multiple Independent Spirit, IDA, PGA and DGA awards, and duPont-Columbia and Robert F. Kennedy journalism awards. In 2019, Kartemquin was honored with an Institutional Peabody Award for "its commitment to unflinching documentary filmmaking and telling an American history rooted in social justice and the stories of the marginalized." Recognized as a leading advocate for independent public media, Kartemquin has helped hundreds of artists via its filmmaker development programs and championing of documentary. Kartemquin is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization based in Chicago. Recent productions include the Oscar and Emmy-nominated *MINDING THE GAP* by Bing Liu, Steve James' *America to Me* and *City So Real*, *Unapologetic* by Ashley O'Shay, *The Dilemma of Desire* by Maria Finitzo, and Jiayan "Jenny" Shi's *Finding Yingying*. www.kartemquin.com

ABOUT ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on PBS via their weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as on other PBS series and through their digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information, visit itvs.org.