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Independent Study & Mentorship

Mr. Speice 4A

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Interview Assessment #3

Name of Professional: Cynthia Salzman Mondell

Profession: Independent Filmmaker

Company: New Day Films

Date of Interview: 9/27/16

My interview was with Cynthia Salzman Mondell, an independent filmmaker in Dallas. Before I was on my interview with her, I did some in-depth research on both her and her profession. What I found so interesting was that she mainly makes documentaries that covered a variety of social action issues. This peaked my interest as I have created documentaries in the past and wondered what it would be like to make documentaries for a living. Because of my research, the interview ended up to be extremely helpful and valuable to my study in ISM.

One thing I learned from my interview was that there is sexism in this field. Honestly this shocked me because I had never had thought of it before. Mondell told me that is is especially hard being a woman and boss because she has difficulty gaining the respect of her male colleagues and can often be an object of ridicule. From the stories she shared about her personal experiences of sexism, it showed me that I really need to fight for what I stand for and that I should not let men talk to me in a condescending manner. Not only in this a problem that I could face in this field, but sexism is present in every occupation. This advice is not only for film and video production, but it is also advice for anything that comes my way in the future.

Another thing I learned was how hard it was to make documentaries especially. Because she does not work for a big-budget company, often she has to try to raise funding on her own time to fund new documentaries. Although these are not hefty costs to make a documentary as opposed to a live-action film, money is still needed mostly for travel. Often she has to reach out to people and also work on client videos in order to raise the funding. This showed me the hardships of making films when a person is not working on a multi-million dollar set. It may seem the this industry is all about glamour, but in actuality it is full of scraping up enough money to make a vision come true.

This most interesting thing I learned from my interview with Ms. Mondell was how she made some of her films and how ideas came to her. One of her films “The Monster Among Us”, talked about anti semitism still present in current-day Europe. Mondell told me that it came to her from a friend who told her that Jewish people still face hate and prejudice despite it being decades after the Holocaust ended. I thought this story was really fascinating to me because average people in the US would never know that this was an issue that was happening in Europe, and it would not be a story told in big budget films. It really taught me how to look for different perceptions and stretch your imagination.

Overall, I had learned to make sure to follow your heart when making films. The reason why Mondell’s films have been so successful was because they covered topics that were near and dear to her heart. This gives the audience intimacy and shows the depth of a film. My plan from now is to try to develop a film that I can personally relate to. I want to hear the feedback from my audience on this film to see if they connected with the topic as I did. Hopefully, this will better me as a filmmaker and help me develop a final product that shows not only my skills, but also my passion and soul.