

THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE

A film by Peabody Award-winning director Maria Finitzo



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The Dilemma of Desire | SYNOPSIS



Logline:

An exploration of “cliteracy,” and the clash between the gender politics and the imperatives of female sexual desire.

Synopsis:

Entertaining, thrilling and radical, THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE explores the work of four women who are shattering myths and lies about female sexual desire, bodies and - ultimately - power.

Groundbreaking artist Sophia Wallace challenges long-held ideas of women with her “cliteracy” project, putting front and center the clitoris as fundamental to female orgasm. Dr. Stacey Dutton, a neuroscientist who realized she had never seen a drawing of the clitoris until she discovered Wallace’s work, is now committed to studying its biology and pushing the publishing industry to correct the deliberate omissions of the clitoris in major anatomy textbooks. With 20 years of research, Dr. Lisa Diamond is dismantling outdated notions about women’s arousal. And industrial designer Ti Chang heads CRAVE, a company dedicated to designing and manufacturing elegant vibrators for women.

Providing the embodiment of this work are the personal stories of Umnia, Becca, Jasmine, Sunny, and Coriama - five young women discovering and owning their sexuality.

THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE is a powerful reminder that true equality will come only when we all arrive at a place of understanding and acknowledgement that women are sexual beings, entitled to live their lives fully within the expression of their desire.

The Dilemma of Desire | FILMMAKER STATEMENTS



THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE has taken much of its inspiration from the ground-breaking essay *Uses of the Erotic* by feminist Audre Lorde. In her essay, Lorde tells us that the erotic is a force within all of us. Women are warned against it all their lives by the male world, and so as a result, for women this means a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information in our lives. This is at the heart of *THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE*.

Power is easily taken when the truth is replaced with a lie. Sex education teaches us all about male anatomy and male pleasure and little about female pleasure and female anatomy unless it has to do with reproduction. The clitoris, the organ of female sexual pleasure, is omitted entirely. So a girl's understanding of her own sexuality begins with the lie of omission that will resonate deeply throughout her entire life.

THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE explores the profound impact of this lie. We believe it is the first film to directly connect women's struggle for personal and political power with the suppression of their human right to be sexual. The way women are viewed sexually in the world cannot be separated from the way they are treated. If girls and women can be denied the right to know the simple truth about their anatomy, than what other rights can they also be denied? It's not a leap from a lie to oppression. It's one small step.

It is a powerful thing to control someone's body. That is why no one wants to talk about the clitoris. It is a reminder of women's independence and is at the core of their liberation. As Lorde's essay goes on to tell us, controlling women's sexuality serves to reduce women to "docile bodies", loyal and obedient and willing to accept facets of their own oppression. As long as women remain in such a condition they will not challenge efforts to control them, whether in the bedroom, the boardroom, or in government.

A "culturally cliterate" world offers an alternative narrative to the one that promotes the notion that women are sex objects who take direction from male power and accept all with little resistance. In a culturally cliterate world, a woman defines sex according to her own values, desires, and pleasures, settling for nothing less than personal autonomy.

So yes, *THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE* talks about the clitoris—where it is, what it looks like and what it is for. But this is not just a film about the clitoris or even sex. Instead it is a film that connects the consciousness of clitoral facts -- THE TRUTH -- with a female empowerment that is way beyond sexual satisfaction. Empowerment that fuels growth, creativity, and personhood, helping women find and express personal and political power.

– MARIA FINITZO, DIRECTOR

"I have three daughters. I want it to be better for them than it was for me and unfortunately, there are times when I watch the news and it feels like we are going backwards. I was intrigued by how this story would be told: five young women share their intimate lives - the challenges and joys of being sexual in today's world. Four professionals also share how their work in science and art are breaking myths about what women want - or don't want. Together, their stories create an emotional film that will make you both laugh and cry. Most importantly, it will spur rousing conversation among both men and women. Until we can talk about female desire and equality of pleasure without embarrassment, change and equality on all fronts won't happen."

– DIANE QUON, PRODUCER

"I believe in this film – if women's libidos were taken as seriously as men's, the world would look, feel, and operate much differently. Having agency over the most basic element of our lives – our bodies – would determine a path to real equality."

– CYNTHIA KANE, PRODUCER

"As a longtime filmmaker who has been on the front lines of social justice and equality for all human beings, I'm thrilled to join The Dilemma of Desire team as executive producer. I have the highest regards for Maria's bold, intelligent, and courageous directorial style. This film pushes for equality in a way we've never seen and will break new ground in the realm of feminist filmmaking."

– BARBARA KOPPLE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

The Dilemma of Desire | FILMMAKERS



MARIA FINITZO (DIRECTOR/PRODUCER) is a two-time Peabody Award-winning social issue documentary filmmaker whose 30 years as a filmmaker has resulted in a body of work that has won every major broadcast award including most recently the Alfred E duPont Award and has been screened in festivals and theaters around the world. Her films are novelistic in their structure, providing multiple points of connection for an audience. She allows the narrative arc of her character's story to evolve, colliding with other subjects from the film, creating a complex, nuanced story that serves as a vehicle to deepen our understanding of society through everyday human drama.

A coming of age story that reveals the resilience of adolescent girls (5 GIRLS), a father determined to heal his daughter after a tragic accident (MAPPING STEM CELL RESEARCH: TERRA INCOGNITA) investigates the role of science in a democratic society, a young man, leaving foster care (WITH NO DIRECTION HOME) explores the challenges of trying to find one's place in the world, a soccer coach committed to teaching his players – Hispanic girls – about winning in life (IN THE GAME), and a young couple, both working minimum wage jobs struggling to make ends meet while building a life for themselves and their children (HARD EARNED) are all films that explore different realms of storytelling by investigating the important social issues of the day.

Finitzo's films have tackled a variety of subjects from the controversial science of stem cell research and the complex questions surrounding the command and control of nuclear weapons to the psychology of adolescent girls, each film demonstrating a depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise. Finitzo is a 2018 Film Independent Fellow and is also a fiction screenwriter and director. She is currently working on an adaptation of a short story by Nobel Prize winning author Alice Munro. A TASTE OF LIFE will be Finitzo's 2nd fiction film. She is a longtime associate of the award-winning documentary company, Kartemquin Films, one of the oldest and most respected social issue documentary film companies in the country.



CYNTHIA KANE (PRODUCER) created DOCday on Sundance Channel, shepherded over 150 international and U.S. co-productions for public media at ITVS, and at Al Jazeera America was Senior Producer in the Documentary Unit overseeing Kartemquin's series HARD EARNED (2016 Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia Award), Albert Maysles' final work, IN TRANSIT, Leon Gast's SPORTING DREAMS, Barbara Kopple's SHELTER, Jennifer Maytorena Taylor's DAISY AND MAX, Michelle Shephard and Patrick Reed's GUANTANAMO'S CHILD, Marc Levin's FREEWAY: CRACK IN THE SYSTEM among others. With gbgg productions and Les Film de l'Après Midi, Kane executive produced, NEW EYES, director: Hiwot Admasu Getaneh, (Venice, TIFF,

Rotterdam.) Kane joined forces with former NYC Film Commissioner Cynthia Lopez as creative consultants for Zeva Oelbaum and Sabine Krayenbühl's LETTERS FROM BAGHDAD about the extraordinary life and times of Gertrude Bell.



DIANE QUON (PRODUCER) is an Academy Award-nominated producer who worked as a marketing executive for 17 years at NBC and Paramount Pictures before moving back to her hometown of Chicago. Diane is producing multiple Kartemquin Films documentaries including the Oscar and Emmy nominated, Peabody and Sundance award-winning film, MINDING THE GAP directed by Bing Liu; FOR THE LEFT HAND along with Howard Reich, and co-directed by Leslie Simmer and Gordon Quinn; THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE with Peabody Award-winning director Maria Finitzo (premiering at SXSW 2020); and FINDING YINGYING with director Jiayan "Jenny" Shi (premiering at SXSW 2020). She is also producing the documentary I KNOW

directed by Nadav Kurtz (PARAISO) and executive produced by Public Record. Diane is a 2017/2018 Film

Independent Fellow, 2019 IFP Cannes Producer Fellow and 2019 Sundance Creative Producing Fellow. She is also developing a fiction film based on a New York Times best-selling book, HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET.



LIZ KAAR (EDITOR) is an independent director, producer, and editor based in Chicago. She has worked closely with Kartemquin Films, Chicago's documentary powerhouse, for over a decade. She recently directed, produced, shot and edited STRANDED BY THE STATE, a web series and TV mini series co-produced by In These Times magazine and Kartemquin Films, about the human cost of the two-year Illinois budget impasse, the longest a state has gone without a budget since the Great Depression. She co-directed and edited HARD EARNED, Kartemquin's six-part series about people living on low wages across the US, airing on Al Jazeera America. The series won a prestigious Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Journalism Award in 2016 and was nominated for an IDA award. In the past, she associate-produced and edited the music documentary ANDREW BIRD: FEVER YEAR, and festival-favorite ON BEAUTY. She is currently deep into production on two narrative films— producing COMPUTER HACKERS, a feature sci-fi comedy, and directing THE TURKEY, a feature “weirdo” comedy. She also edited Kartemquin's THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE AND EATING UP EASTER.



MIRIAM CUTLER (COMPOSER) Three time Emmy nominated, Miriam, has an extensive background in scoring for independent film & TV projects, as well as two circuses. In June, 2013, Miriam joined the Documentary Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and currently serves on the Branch Executive Committee. Cutler wrote the scores for DARK MONEY and Oscar and Emmy-nominated RBG which both premiered at Sundance 2017, as well as the Emmy-nominated LOVE, GILDA which premiered at Tribeca 2018. Other highlights include BAFTA nominated LOST IN LA MANCHA, Emmy winners ONE LAST HUG, VITO, HOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB, Sundance Special Doc Jury Prize winners AMERICAN PROMISE and LICENSE TO KILL, the Oscar-nominated shorts POSTER

GIRL and KINGS POINT and ETHEL (Sundance/HBO), Rory Kennedy's five time Emmy nominated documentary about her parents, Bobby and Ethel Kennedy, which was also shortlisted for an Oscar in 2013. She has served as Lab Advisor for the Sundance Institute Documentary Composers Lab since it began in 2003, as well as on documentary juries for the Sundance Film Festival, Independent Spirit Awards, International Documentary Association Awards, and American Film Institute's Film Festival Awards.



BARBARA KOPPLE (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) is a two-time Academy Award winning filmmaker. A director and producer of narrative films and documentaries, her most recent project was the documentary MISS SHARON JONES! which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2015. The opening night film of DOC NYC, the film tracks the talented and gregarious soul singer of the Grammy-nominated R&B band, Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings, during the most challenging year of her life. Barbara produced and directed HARLAN COUNTY USA and AMERICAN DREAM, both winners of the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. In 1991, HARLAN COUNTY USA was named to the National

Film Registry by the Library of Congress and designated an American Film Classic.



HUGH SCHULZE (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) is a filmmaker living and working in Chicago. In addition to a documentary on Wendell Berry and two films he has

helped produce by Ira Sachs (LOVE IS STRANGE and LITTLE MEN), he has written and directed the award-winning feature film, CASS. He is currently in production for his second feature, DREAMING GRAND AVENUE.



GORDON QUINN (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) is the Artistic and co-founder of Kartemquin Films, where over the past 50+ years he has helped hundreds of documentary filmmakers advance their projects forward and been a leading champion of the rights of all documentary filmmakers. He is the 2015 recipient of the International Documentary Association Career Achievement Award and was a key leader in creating the Documentary Filmmakers Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use. His credits as director and producer include films as diverse and essential as '63 BOYCOTT (2017), INQUIRING NUNS (1966), GOLUB (1988), and A GOOD MAN (2011), and as executive producer include Academy-Award nominated films MINDING THE GAP (2018), ABACUS: SMALL ENOUGH TO JAIL (2016), HOOP DREAMS (1994), and the Emmy Award-winning THE INTERRUPTERS (2011), THE TRIALS OF MUHAMMAD ALI (2013), THE HOMESTRETCH (2014), and LIFE ITSELF (2014), and the acclaimed limited series THE NEW AMERICANS (2003) and HARD EARNED (2015).



JOLENE PINDER (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) is the Executive Director of Kartemquin Films. She is a documentary producer and arts administrator with 15 years of experience in the independent film space. Prior to joining Kartemquin, she helped launch and served as the inaugural executive director of #CreateLouisiana, a grantmaking and mentorship non-profit designed to champion Louisiana talent in film. Prior to this role, Jolene helmed the New Orleans Film Society (NOFS)—the producer of the Oscar-qualifying New Orleans Film Festival (NOFF)—for six years during a period of unprecedented growth. She recently produced the documentary short, ALL SKINFOLK AIN'T KINFOLK (dir. Angela Tucker), which premiered at DOC NYC last fall. She currently serves on the board of Court 13 Arts, was a founding member of the Film Festival Alliance and the Alliance for Louisiana Filmmakers, an inaugural fellow in the UnionDocs Collaborative Studio, and has juried film festivals across the country (including Cleveland, Sidewalk, Ashland, and Dallas).



KARTEMQUIN FILMS

Kartemquin is a collaborative center empowering filmmakers who create documentaries that have consequences in the world and foster a more engaged and just society. In 2016, Kartemquin celebrated 50 years of sparking democracy through documentary.

The organization's films have received four Academy Award® nominations and won several major prizes, including six Emmys, two Peabody Awards, multiple Independent Spirit, IDA, PGA and DGA awards, and duPont-Columbia and Robert F. Kennedy journalism awards. Kartemquin is recognized as a leading advocate for independent public media, and has helped hundreds of artists via its filmmaker development programs that help further grow the field, such as KTO Labs, Diverse Voices in Docs, and the acclaimed KTO Internship. Kartemquin is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization based in Chicago. www.kartemquin.com

Advisory Board | THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE

Aymar Jean "AJ" Christian - Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Northwestern University and a **Fellow** at the Peabody Media Center; Author, *Open TV: Innovation Beyond Hollywood and the Rise of Web Television*.

Eve Ensler - American playwright (THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES); Performer, feminist, and activist.

Jessica Fields - Professor of Sociology at the Center for Research and Education on Gender and Sexuality at San Francisco State; Author of *Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality*.

Carol Gilligan - NYU Professor, American feminist, ethicist and psychologist; author of "In a Different Voice" credited with inspiring the passage of the 1994 Gender Equity in Education Act.

Mara Gubuan - is a human rights activist using the platform of sport and the power of athletes to change laws and culture worldwide. Mara is a film producer ("Afghan Cycles") and social impact strategist ("Warriors of a Beautiful Game" and "Strong GIRL RISING").

Frances Kissling - Scholar and activist in the fields of religion, reproduction and women's rights; President of the Center for Health, Ethics and Social Policy and previous President of Catholics for Choice.

Shelby Knox - Feminist organizer; Outreach Director for AUDRIE AND DAISY; Subject of 2005 film, THE EDUCATION OF SHELBY KNOX.

Cynthia Lopez - Executive Director, New York Women in Film and Television; Creative Strategic Consultant; Former Commissioner at New York City Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment.

Lisa L. Moore - LICSW, PhD is an Associate Professor of Social Work and Family Studies at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota where she teaches courses in human sexuality, Black Feminist theory, and Family Studies.

Nicole Page - Partner (Entertainment and Employment Law) at **Reavis Page Jump LLC**; President of the Board of Women Make Movies.

Catherine Park - has been with Giant Robot magazine & stores for over a decade. She is a principal of Hawkins Mikita, a social innovation firm dedicated to develop the intersection of influencers, philanthropy, and social change. In 2008 and 2012, Cate was a member of President Obama's National Finance Committee and has served as National Co-Chair for the AAPI Leadership Council, Women for Obama, and Tech for Obama.

Junauda Petrus - is a writer, pleasure activist, filmmaker and performance artist, born on Dakota land of Black-Caribbean descent. Her work is about queerness, Black-diasporic-futurism, ancestral healing and liberation. She lives in Minneapolis with her wife and family.

Katha Politt - American poet, essayist and critic; Author of four essay collections (*Reasonable Creatures: Essays on Women and Feminism*) and two books of poetry; columnist for *The Nation* magazine.

Dr. Nabeela Rasheed - Senior leader at Abbvie, Inc.; activist and advocate for the PRIDE group, Asian Leadership Network and Legal Council for Health Justice.

Gloria Steinem - is a writer, lecturer, political activist, and feminist organizer. She travels in this and other countries as an organizer and lecturer and is a frequent media spokeswoman on issues of equality.

Deborah L. Tolman - Ed.D. Professor of Women and Gender Studies, *Hunter College*; Professor of Psychology, *The Graduate Center at the City University of New York*; Co-Editor-in-Chief (with L. Diamond), *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*; Co-Founder, *SPARK*

Yvonne Welbon - is Senior Creative Consultant at Chicken & Egg Pictures. She is an award-winning filmmaker and founder of the Chicago-based non-profit Sisters in Cinema and has produced and distributed over 20 films including *Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis @100*, winner of ten best documentary awards and *Sisters in Cinema*, a documentary on the history of black women feature film directors.

Jenny Yang - is an award-winning, Los Angeles-based standup comedian, content creator, podcast host, comedy festival organizer, speaker, and professional opinion-haver best known for her viral comedy videos and satirical pop culture and political commentary.

Credits | THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE



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MARIA FINITZO
CYNTHIA KANE
DIANE QUON

edited by
LIZ KAAR

executive producers
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GORDON QUINN
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original music by
MIRIAM CUTLER

post-production supervisor
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