



Hollywood: Her Story November 2019 ENewsletter Cinematographers

The first time that a woman was nominated for Best Cinematographer in the nine decades of Oscar history was in 2018. In that year, Rachel Morrison finally broke the gender barrier and received, but did not win, the nomination for the movie *Mudbound*. In 1980, Brianne Murphy became the first female cinematographer to be invited to join the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC). She remained the only woman member for fifteen years. Today, only 4% of the members of ASC are women. Let's learn about these accomplished cinematographers.



British cinematographer **Brianne Murphy** was the first female director of photography at a major studio – Brookfilms – for the 1980 film *Fatso* which was written by, directed by and starred Anne Bancroft. Murphy's early career took many turns. She was a trick rider for the rodeo, a still photographer for the Barnum & Bailey Circus (after crashing the circus disguised as a clown), a cinematographer for movies and television and a technologist. Murphy shared the 1982 Academy Award of Merit for the concept, design and manufacture of

the Mitchell Insert Systems, Inc. (MISI) camera insert car and process trailer. This specially designed car included many safety features developed specifically to protect the technicians who were shooting close-ups of moving cars during action sequences.

Murphy was not only a trailblazer in the ASC, she also helped found Women in Film and Behind the Lens, an organization for women who work as film technicians. She said, "There were no film schools, no role models. The secrets of the trade were passed down from generation to generation and, let's face it, from father to son. We've come a long way, but we must continue to reach out to women and know that the road less traveled is worth the effort." Murphy also said, "Whenever I would try to get into the union, I was told they weren't taking women into camera. . . . I certainly did aspire to ASC membership. It's the highest honor that anyone can get in the professional cinematographer's ladder."



Rachel Morrison began her career as a cinematographer working on television projects. A graduate of New York University and the American Film Institute Conservatory's graduate cinematography program, she was nominated for an Emmy Award for her cinematography on *Rikers High*. She has been working in films since 2007. Named a cinematographer to watch by *Indiewire* in 2013, Morrison became a member of ASC in 2017. Also in 2017, she served as cinematographer on Dee Rees' movie *Mudbound* for which she became the first woman to win the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Cinematographer, the first woman to be nominated in the feature category for the ASC's Outstanding Achievement Award and the first woman to be nominated for the Best Cinematographer Oscar. She served

as cinematographer for the smash hit *Black Panther* in 2018.

Women in front of and behind the camera make the movies that we all welcome into our hearts and homes. Women across all the areas of moviemaking from actress to animator, editor to stuntwoman, costume designer to screenwriter, producer to director have contributed to the success of the movie industry since its founding in the 1890s. Help us celebrate these women who are written into movie history in *Hollywood: Her Story*.

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