BECAUSE OF ANITA

TRUTH, JUSTICE, RACE, GENDER, AND POWER
30 YEARS LATER

Saturday, October 16, 2021
Bing Theatre
University of Southern California
OPENING REMARKS

Willow Bay
DEAN, USC ANNEBNERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM

Daria Yudacufski
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, USC VISIONS AND VOICES: THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES INITIATIVE

SESSION 1: WHAT HAPPENED?

Re-Examining Anita Hill’s Testimony

Revisiting the fateful October 1991 weekend when Hill testified before the Supreme Court Judiciary Committee that her boss, Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, had sexually harassed her.

Jill Abramson
SENIOR LECTURER, HARVARD UNIVERSITY; CO-AUTHOR, STRANGE JUSTICE: THE SELLING OF CLARENCE THOMAS

Freida Lee Mock
DIRECTOR, WRITER, AND PRODUCER, ANITA: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER, AND RUTH: JUSTICE GINSBURG IN HER WORDS

MODERATORS:

Cindi Leive
CO-HOST, BECAUSE OF ANITA; CO-FOUNDER, THE METEOR

Dr. Salamishah Tillet
CO-HOST, BECAUSE OF ANITA; CONTRIBUTING CRITIC-AT-LARGE, NEW YORK TIMES

“Not That Bad”

From Hill’s testimony to today, how our culture diminishes survivors’ experiences—and what that costs us.

Roxane Gay
BESTSELLING AUTHOR; EDITOR, NOT THAT BAD: DISPATCHES FROM RAPE CULTURE

Miki Turner
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE, USC ANNEBNERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM
SESSION 2: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

What the Law Owes Survivors
Hill’s testimony gave way to a dramatic uptick in people filing sexual harassment complaints. How do legal options fit into our path to eradicating abuse at work now?

Fatima Goss Graves
PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL WOMEN’S LAW CENTER

Senator Connie M. Leyva
MEMBER OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE

MODERATOR:
Jessica Yellin
PEABODY, GRACIE, AND EMMY AWARD–WINNING POLITICAL JOURNALIST

Hotels, Restaurants, and Farms: Report from the Harassment Frontlines
Stories from women who experienced harassment—before and after Hill gave us the language to describe it—and are fighting to make these fields safer.

Thomasina Gross
FORMER EVENTS SERVER, CHATEAU MARMONT; ACTOR

Mily Treviño-Sauceda
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER, ALIANZA NACIONAL DE CAMPESINAS, INC.

MODERATOR:
Gabrielle Horton
AUDIO STORYTELLER; ADJUNCT FACULTY AT USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM

Has Hollywood Changed?
Two entertainment leaders who are pushing for accountability take stock and discuss how reporting and data are tools to create progress.

Kim Masters
EDITOR-AT-LARGE, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER; HOST, KCRW’S THE BUSINESS

Nina Shaw
CO-FOUNDER AND BOARD MEMBER, THE HOLLYWOOD COMMISSION

MODERATOR:
Cindi Leive
CO-HOST, BECAUSE OF ANITA; CO-FOUNDER, THE METEOR

In Defense of Ourselves: Demanding Justice for Black Girls and Women
Thirty years after a group of Black feminists showed their solidarity with Hill with “African American Women in Defense of Ourselves,” an ad in the New York Times, what support do Black women and girls critically need from the anti-violence movement?

Tony Porter
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, A CALL TO MEN

Dr. Salamishah Tillet
CO-HOST, BECAUSE OF ANITA; CONTRIBUTING CRITIC-AT-LARGE, NEW YORK TIMES

Scheherazade Tillet
CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, A LONG WALK HOME
Jill Abramson is a Senior Lecturer at Harvard University and journalist who spent the last 17 years in the most senior editorial positions at the New York Times, where she was the first woman to serve as Washington Bureau Chief, Managing Editor, and Executive Editor. After covering the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings for The Wall Street Journal, she spent three years reporting and writing the bestselling book, Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas, with Jane Mayer.

Willow Bay is a broadcast journalist, media pioneer, digital communication leader, and Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. With a relentless commitment to students, Bay has increased scholarship opportunities, launched the state-of-the-art Annenberg Media Center, accelerated curricular innovations, and vastly expanded the school’s partnerships with key media and technology organizations. Prior to joining USC, Bay was co-anchor of CNN’s Moneyline, a reporter and anchor for ABC News’ Good Morning America/Sunday, a correspondent for World News Weekend, and a senior editor and strategic adviser at The Huffington Post.

Roxane Gay is the author of the books Ayiti, An Untamed State, the New York Times bestselling Bad Feminist, the nationally bestselling Difficult Women, and the New York Times bestselling Hunger; editor of Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture; and contributing opinion writer for the Times. She is also the author of World of Wakanda for Marvel and is at work on television and film projects.

Fatima Goss Graves is president and CEO of the National Women’s Law Center, president of the National Women’s Law Center Action Fund, and a co-founder of the TIME’S UP Legal Defense Fund. With a distinguished track record working across a broad set of issues central to the lives of women and girls, with a particular focus on outcomes for women and girls of color, Goss Graves is widely sought after in the complex public policy arena at state and federal levels, and regularly testifies before Congress and federal agencies.
**Thomasina Gross** is an actor, performer, and proud member of entertainment unions SAG-AFTRA and AEA. Like many in the entertainment industry, she has also worked in hospitality—as an events server, events captain, and bartender—for more than 15 years. Gross worked at Chateau Marmont as an events server for two and a half years before being laid off at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In January 2021, she filed a lawsuit against Chateau Marmont alleging that she had been passed over for promotion on the basis of race and that her managers failed to respond appropriately to her complaints about sexual harassment by guests. The Chateau has since forced her lawsuit out of court and into private arbitration, where her case is now going forward.

**Beverly Guy-Sheftall** is the founding director of the Women’s Research and Resource Center (since 1981) and Anna Julia Cooper Professor of Women’s Studies at Spelman College. She is also an adjunct professor at Emory University’s Institute for Women’s Studies where she teaches graduate courses in their doctoral program. She is the former President of the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA).

**Professor Anita Hill** is the University Professor of Social Policy, Law, and Women’s and Gender Studies at Brandeis University. After the 1991 Senate confirmation hearings for U.S. Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, Hill became a leading figure in the fight for women’s rights and against gender-based violence. She has written for the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*, and her latest book is *Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence*.

**Gabrielle Horton** is a former Democratic political staffer turned podcast showrunner, story editor, and Adjunct Faculty at USC Annenberg School for Journalism and Communication. She is also the co-creator, executive producer, and host of the NATAL docuseries podcast about having a baby while Black, which was named to Spotify’s 2020 Podcast Hall of Fame and Indiewire’s Best Podcast Episodes of 2020.

**Cindi Leive** is a journalist, media leader, advocate for women, and the co-founder of The Meteor, a collective of journalists, artists, media leaders, and filmmakers committed to building a platform for modern feminist work. She is also the former editor-in-chief of both *Glamour* and *Self*; a cultural critic who speaks frequently about women, media, and the arts; and the co-producer of several *New York Times* bestsellers, including the 2018 book *Together We Rise* about the making of the Women’s March.

Reelected to represent the 20th State Senate District in 2018, **Senator Connie M. Leyva** is serving her second term in the California State Senate. Senator Leyva—the former Chair of the California Legislative Women’s Caucus—has authored important legislation signed into law, including banning secret settlements (NDAs) in sexual harassment, assault and discrimination cases (SB 820), eliminating use of political funds to fight assault and harassment claims (SB 71) and criminalizing sextortion (SB 500).

**Kim Masters** is editor-at-large of *The Hollywood Reporter* and host of KCRW’s *The Business*. A former correspondent for NPR, she has also served as a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*, *TIME*, and *Esquire*, and was a staff reporter for *The Washington Post*. She is the author of *The Keys to the Kingdom: The Rise of Michael Eisner and the Fall of Everybody Else*, and co-author (with Nancy Griffin) of *Hit & Run: How Jon Peters and Peter Guber Took Sony for a Ride in Hollywood*. Masters was named Print Journalist of the Year by the Los Angeles Press Club in 2012 and a Distinguished Journalist by the Los Angeles chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists in 2017.

**Freida Lee Mock** is an Academy Award–winning filmmaker, partner in Sanders and Mock Productions, and co-founder of the American Film Foundation, which produces films on the arts, sciences, and humanities. She is the producer, director, and writer of *Anita: Speaking Truth to Power*, and producer, director, and co-writer of *Ruth: Justice Ginsburg in Her Words.*

**Tony Porter** is an author, educator, and activist working to advance gender and racial justice. As the CEO of A Call To Men, Porter is internationally recognized for his efforts to prevent violence against women and girls while promoting healthy, respectful manhood. He is the author of *Breaking Out of the “Man Box”* and visionary behind *NFL Dads: Dedicated to Daughters*, and an adviser to the NFL, NBA, NHL, U.S. State Department, and hundreds of companies, organizations, and government agencies.

**Nina Shaw** is a founding partner in the entertainment law firm of Del Shaw Moonves Tanaka Finkelstein & Lezcano, among the founding organizers of TIME’S UP, and co-founder of The Hollywood Commission, an organization created to bring Hollywood executives, independent experts, and advisors together to tackle the culture of abuse and power disparity in the entertainment industry.

**Dr. Salamishah Tillet** is the Henry Rutgers Professor of African American Studies and Creative Writing and the Director of Express Newark, a center for socially engaged art and design, at Rutgers University-Newark. She is a contributing critic-at-large for the *New York Times*, and the author of *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination* and the recent book, *In Search of The Color Purple: The Story of An American Masterpiece*. She is currently working on a book on the civil rights icon, Nina Simone, for which she received the Whiting Foundation Creative Non-Fiction grant in 2020, and the cultural history of the ‘Me Too’ movement for which she was awarded the Andrew Carnegie Fellowship in 2021. In 2003, she and Scheherazade Tillet founded A Long Walk Home, an organization that uses art to empower people to end violence against girls and women.

**Scheherazade Tillet** is a photographer, art therapist, and community organizer. As a curator and social documentary photographer, Scheherazade use site-specific work to explore the themes of gendered vulnerability, racial invisibility, pleasure, and play. In 2003, she and
Dr. Salamishah Tillett co-founded A Long Walk Home, a Chicago-based national nonprofit that uses art to empower young people and end violence against girls and women.

**Mily Treviño-Sauceda** is considered the founder of the farmworker women’s movement in the U.S. Born in Bellingham, WA, to a migrant farmworker family, she worked in agricultural fields starting at age eight and became a union worker organizer in the 1970s. In the ’80s and ’90s, she co-founded “Mujeres Mexicanas” and Líderes Campesinas, which is the first state-based farmworker women’s unique grassroots organization advocating on behalf of campesinas. In 2011, she co-founded Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, the first national grassroots-based farmworker women’s organization.

**Miki Turner** is an award-winning journalist and Associate Professor of Professional Practice at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. At USC, she shares her vast experience with future journalists and is committed to making the school a more diverse and inclusive environment as the founder of the Annenberg Cross-Cultural Student Association and director of a performance organization.

**Kennedy Hill** is a junior earning her BFA in Acting at USC. Alongside acting, she also paints, sings, writes, and directs. This summer she worked with her friends to start their own production company, Fifth Floor Studios, and this year you can see her on the SDA main stage as God in Brandon Jacob Jenkins’ *Everybody*.

**Nicole Royster** is an actress, singer, director, and MFA Acting student at the USC School of Dramatic Arts who graduated from CSULB in Theatre Arts and Performance.

**Jessica Yellin** is a fellow at the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership and Policy and as a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Pacific Council on International Policy. The Peabody, Gracie, and Emmy Award-winning former Chief White House correspondent has covered Capitol Hill, domestic politics, state and national elections, the culture wars, and issues facing women in the workplace. Her work has been published in the *New York Times, The Daily Beast, Details, Entertainment Weekly*, and *The Los Angeles Times*.

**Daria Yudacufski** is the executive director of USC Visions and Voices: The Arts and Humanities Initiative. She has worked in higher education at the intersections of the arts, social justice, and cross-cultural education for 27 years. She also served as the co-publisher and co-editor of *make/shift*, an independent, feminist magazine that was published from 2007 to 2017 and is the co-editor of the anthology *Feminisms in Motion: Voices for Justice, Liberation, and Transformation*. 
KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Anita Hill is a lawyer, legal scholar, professor, and author who profoundly shifted the U.S. discourse around workplace sexual harassment. Her new book, *Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence*, has just been published.
- In October 1991, Hill changed Americans’ understanding of sexual harassment at work—and inspired movements to end it—when she testified in nationally televised hearings that her former boss, then–Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, had sexually harassed her.
- In 2018, Christine Blasey Ford testified that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her, drawing comparisons to Hill’s testimony and underscoring how critical these issues remain today.
- This Visions and Voices event, recognizing the 30th anniversary of Hill’s landmark testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, will be hosted by Cindi Leive and Salamishah Tillet, co-hosts of the new podcast *Because of Anita*.

“Thirty years later, I’m here to say that even though Clarence Thomas was confirmed, I do believe that what I did was effective because it opened the conversation publicly in a way that had never been done before.”—Anita Hill

ABOUT ANITA HILL

Anita Hill is University Professor of Social Policy, Law, and Women’s and Gender Studies at Brandeis University. She became a leading figure in the struggle to end gender-based violence after she testified in the 1991 Senate confirmation hearings for then–Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, her former boss, attesting that he had sexually harassed her.

Hill earned a law degree from Yale University in 1980, and by 1981 she was working at the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights as a legal adviser to then–Assistant Secretary Clarence Thomas. When Thomas became chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1982, Hill worked with him there. In 1983, she left legal work and turned to teaching, first at Oral Roberts University, and then at the law college of the University of Oklahoma, where in 1989 she became the school’s first tenured African American professor. When President George H. W. Bush nominated Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court in 1991, Anita Hill spoke publicly about the harassment from Thomas that she had endured on the job, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee (chaired by then-Senator Joe Biden) in hearings that were televised nationally.

For many Americans, the hearings and the media frenzy around them marked the first time they heard or seriously considered the phrase “sexual harassment”—though plenty of Americans had experienced what we now commonly understand that term to mean. The public’s response to the hearings was highly polarized—some dismissed or doubted Anita Hill’s account, disparaging and even threatening her, while many others wore “I Believe Anita Hill” buttons and condemned the all-white, all-male Senate committee’s treatment of her. Thomas was ultimately confirmed by a narrow vote, but a national dialogue about sexual harassment had been sparked that led to concrete advances in women’s rights. The number of women elected to the U.S. Congress doubled in 1992, which was popularly dubbed “The Year of the Woman.”

Hill became a professor at Brandeis University in 1999. She is a highly influential speaker on sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and

“Hill’s testimony served as a kind of fulcrum, marking an enormous and uneasy turn in America’s recognition of gender inequity and injustice. It was the catalyst for a generation of American women—who had caught a glimpse in excruciatingly real time of how underrepresented they were in government and professional life—to move into electoral politics in unprecedented numbers.”

—Rebecca Traister, in *New York* magazine, September 2021

Professor Anita Hill testifies before Congress, during Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings for the Supreme Court. October 11, 1991
“Where is the process that we need to be in place that will fully vet judges and Supreme Court justice nominees? ... We have a process right now ... that really is nonexistent ... I’m not even sure we can call it a process. Neither Christine Blasey Ford nor I knew where to go with our complaint. A process, an effective process, would have clear guidelines about where an individual should go if they have information about a nominee. That didn’t exist in 1991, and it doesn’t exist now, as far as I know.”

—Anita Hill to NPR, 9/28/21

During and after the 1991 hearing, pins declaring “I believe Anita Hill” were worn by students, activists, and advocates for women’s rights across the country.


ABOUT THE HOSTS

Cindi Leive is a journalist, media leader, advocate for women, and the co-founder of The Meteor, a collective of journalists, artists, media leaders, and filmmakers committed to building a platform for modern feminist work. She is also the former editor-in-chief of both Glamour and Self; a cultural critic who speaks frequently about women, media, and the arts; and the co-producer of several New York Times bestsellers, including the 2018 book Together We Rise about the making of the Women’s March.

Salamishah Tillet is the Henry Rutgers Professor of African American Studies and Creative Writing and the Director of Express Newark, a center for socially engaged art and design, at Rutgers University-Newark. She is a contributing critic-at-large for the New York Times, and the author of Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination and the recent book, In Search of The Color Purple: The Story of An American Masterpiece.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How did Anita Hill’s televised 1991 testimony before a Senate committee influence advocacy and movements for gender equality in the United States?
- Why is belief, or believing, such an important part of Anita Hill’s story and movements to end gender-based violence?
- If you were designing a process to more effectively vet judicial nominees, what are some things you would include in that process?
- Why does Anita Hill describe issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence as systemic? What can be done to change harmful systems?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Because of Anita: A Podcast About the Testimony that Changed Everything
  wearethemeteor.com/because-of-anita-a-podcast-about-the-testimony-that-changed-everything
- USC’s Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX
  eeotix.usc.edu
- USC’s Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)
  sites.usc.edu/engage/relationship-sexual-violence-prevention-services-rsvp/
- The USC Center for Feminist Research
  dornsife.usc.edu/cfr
- Society of Women in Law, a pre-law society at USC
  instagram.com/uscswil/
- Women’s Law Association at USC
  instagram.com/uscgouldwla/
- Sistah Circle
  instagram.com/uscsistahcircle
  housed in the USC Center for Black Culture and Student Affairs

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DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Kelsey Vukic of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS
Duchess Harris, Black Feminist Politics from Kennedy to Trump (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018).

DATABASES AND DIGITAL RESOURCES
Gender: Identity and Social Change
GenderWatch
News, Policy & Politics Magazine Archive
Political Science Database

JOURNALS
Journal of Gender, Race & Justice
Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics
Politics & Gender

STREAMING VIDEOS
Freida Lee Mock, Anita: Speaking Truth to Power (Santa Monica: American Film Foundation, 2013).