



THE UNMAKING OF A COLLEGE

A film by Amy Goldstein

Theatrical & Festival Booking contacts:

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“Non Satis Scire. To Know Is Not Enough.”

–Hampshire College Motto

LOGLINE

In *THE UNMAKING OF A COLLEGE*, students at Hampshire College confront a new president's underhanded attempt to shut down their school and discover that a powerful institution is bullying an inexperienced administration into giving up the independence of one of the most experimenting colleges in the United States. A raucous ode to democracy in action, this film evokes the courage required to stand up to power at a time when many liberal arts colleges are failing.

SYNOPSIS

THE UNMAKING OF A COLLEGE is a film about young people on a rescue mission—for a school and an educational philosophy.

The story sparks into action when Miriam “Mim” Nelson—the recently hired Hampshire president—leads her administration and board of trustees into a drastic reaction to the school's financial woes and announces a search for a “strategic partner”. She believes she is responding to the harsh new reality of liberal arts colleges closing all over the United States.

Hampshire, with a 50-year record of deep commitment to independence and shared governance, is one of the most activist and iconoclastic liberal arts colleges in the country, so its students quickly mobilize leading to national media coverage: if Hampshire were to collapse, what would that mean for liberal arts colleges throughout the country? Led by a collection of dedicated and charismatic students, a coalition emerges to oppose Mim's plan—undergrads, faculty, staff, and alumni working together. The students occupy the president's office and demand to find out who is leading the threat to their school, and why.

The film is constructed from a mix of video captured by the students and their social media threads, traditional observational footage, press conferences, news footage, and radio broadcasts to remind the viewer of the power of visual imagery and how modern political battles play out through an arsenal of sources.

As more information begins to leak out—secret communications, dissension on the board—Hampshire students extend their occupation for 75 days, the longest sit-in in American college history. The clash turns into a complex battle for the very future of Hampshire, its many stakeholders and constituents, and—by extension—a defense of liberal arts education as a whole. Whistleblowers give exclusive interviews and reveal how UMass-Amherst bullied an inexperienced administration into giving up Hampshire's independence.

THE UNMAKING OF A COLLEGE plunges into the students' investigation of the dismantling of their school, the firing of all frontline fundraisers, food workers, and many professors all the while asking: what is the purpose of a college education and who can guarantee it? Is college about getting a good job or is it about becoming an educated citizen who can continue to learn, adapt to, and invent the new world? Should students have a say over the kind of education they are getting? Can the storied tradition of liberal arts education—and the nation it has created—be saved? This is a story of young people moved to action by this question, how they were changed forever by their choices, and how they are becoming our future leaders.

THE UNMAKING OF A COLLEGE AND THE AMERICAN COLLEGE

The American college is going through a period of wrenching change, buffeted by forces – globalization; economic instability; the ongoing revolution in information technology; the elongation of adolescence; the breakdown of faculty tenure as an academic norm; and, perhaps most important, the collapse of consensus about what students should know.

At the core of the film is an important question: What is the purpose of a college education?

Professor Delblanco (*College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be*) participates in the film and summarizes the mission succinctly as teaching our young, “how to think and how to choose.” Colleges do many things, but historically they have shared the goal of creating a general uplift—contributing to economics, citizenship, and self-reflection. They are the foundation of our democracy. “The basis of our government” as Thomas Jefferson put the matter near the end of the 18th century, is “the opinion of the people.” And so if the new republic was to flourish, endure, and resist the spell of demagoguery, it required above all, an educated citizenry. As many liberal arts colleges are closing all over the United States (the trend has accelerated with the pandemic – MacMurray College and Mills College recently closed respectively in Illinois and California – and if we count as liberal arts colleges the roughly 600 institutions that make up the Council of Independent Colleges, this could impact around 1 in 14 of the nation’s undergraduate students), the film takes Hampshire College as a case study to delve into the broader picture of why this is happening (smaller colleges are tuition dependent with small endowments, enrollment is declining due to shifting demographics and the fallout of COVID-19, costs are rising), how an educated and engaged citizenry (the students) can save these colleges – and perhaps our democracy, and what should the model of higher education be. Are colleges a business or a public good? Should they promote a transactional model of education that promises job security, or are they spaces of unpredictable innovation and transformation? Do I need to go to college? Is it worth the debt? Can I learn skills to change the world in college?

The students we follow come from different backgrounds and are aware of the growing economic barriers between quality education and the American working classes and minorities (for young people in America whose families are in the bottom income quartile, the chance of going to college is about one in five. By the age of 26, fewer than two-thirds of white high school graduates have enrolled in college, while for minorities the figure is significantly lower – slightly more than half for black students, for Latinx, slightly less). Marlon thinks about it in a very rational manner: “... with the debt...I am not expecting ... to do whatever I want with my degree immediately...I do think that with a short-term sacrifice of a couple of years doing big law I’ll be able to pay off all my debt and then have the freedom and the skillset to make the difference in the world I want to see...A lot of these skills I learnt at Hampshire.”

In *THE UNMAKING OF A COLLEGE*, we see an educational mission and a student body dedicated to the ideals of the liberal arts and how it can be turned to socially, politically, and economically productive ends. In their record 75-day sit-in and investigation into Hampshire’s governance, the students successfully enact this dedication.

And so do we. Hampshire was fortunate that their plight received national attention (*Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *Fortune*, *Atlantic*, and more). But the mainstream media never uncovered the details of how a mega-university (UMass-Amherst) maneuvered behind the scenes to shut down Hampshire. What’s at stake is the truth itself and the film is being made with the help of current and former Hampshire students to guarantee that the radical experiment of Hampshire (from its 1970 inception, on the winds of social change and student movements, Hampshire has been both a political and a pedagogical project—“a new departure in higher

education” in the words of its founding document, *The Making of a College*), will benefit future students and by extension, democracy.

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

I am an alum of Hampshire College. My films are a result of the deep inquiry I learned at Hampshire. As someone with a learning disability, I found Hampshire’s inquiry-based learning - where knowledge is not merely received and memorized but rather explored and digested through various methods (photographic, agrarian, scientific, poetic, dramaturgical etc.) – was the best way for me to learn and share. It required to wrestle with ideas, to self-reflect, and to anticipate unexpected obstacles. I was not asked to learn by heart or excel at standard tests. A Hampshire education cultivates critical thinking and ethical reflection. Hampshire was for instance the first liberal arts colleges in the country to require community service by all its students.

In this extent, the students who organized to save Hampshire are implementing what they learnt. One of our visual signatures is projecting the students’ footage over the faces of our main subjects to capture how all-consuming the movement had become: the students have given up on normal comforts and are struggling to keep up with their schoolwork as they go to endless meetings, document and share their movement, and talk to the press. The layering of images is a way for the viewer to experience the full spectrum of the work the students undertook. Through projections we are also able to document the trauma of those directly affected by the conflict they endured, creating a catharsis for the viewer, but with an experience created in collaboration with those under our gaze.

–Amy Goldstein

CENTRAL CHARACTERS

The Unmaking of a College features an ensemble cast including:

STUDENTS:

MARLON BECERRA

Marlon graduated from Hampshire College with a B.A. in Economics and Legal Studies with a minor concentration in International Relations. He is currently studying law at Harvard Law School and has worked with the Innocence Project. He is passionate in community building and outreach. At Hampshire, he was a member of the Board of Trustees' Finance Committee, a member of Hamp Rise Up, a co-signer for Raíces (Pan-Latinx Alliance). Marlon's senior thesis (Division III) at Hampshire was an analysis of the crisis that played out during his last year on campus.

JOSHUA BERMAN

Joshua graduated from Hampshire College with a B.A. in Media, Film and Technology. He was an active member of Hamp Rise Up documenting the students' efforts to engage Hampshire's board and administration about the future of the college. He is currently working as a motion graphics artist. He has spent the last two years creating films as well as working in education, developing STEM curriculum, and teaching children from low income communities. When he is not working, Joshua enjoys exploring the outdoors and is currently building a campervan to use for film shoots.

RHYS MACARTHUR

Rhys graduated from Hampshire College with a B.A. in Ecology. She is an environmental justice advocate and intersectional feminist. She is currently working at the Holyoke Boys and Girls Club as a group facilitator and mentor while applying to graduate schools for Environmental Science. While at Hampshire, she worked in the admissions office reaching out to new potential students and learnt that admissions were actually up. When Hampshire College announced in February 2019 that they would not take a new freshman class, Rhys had to help early admission students find another school who would take them.

CHEYENNE PALACIO-MCCARTHY

Cheyenne received her B.A. in Applied Theater for Social and Political Re-Imaginations from Hampshire College. As an undergraduate, Cheyenne worked as an on-campus peer mentor and workshop facilitator. She also served as part of the teaching team of a new course at Hampshire College called Praxis: Collaborative Learning for Social Change, which she helped develop and co-facilitate. Cheyenne currently serves as the Academic Support Coordinator at Legal Outreach, an educational program that serves low-income, mostly minority, and/or first-generation urban youth from underserved neighborhoods in New York City. Cheyenne gave the student commencement speech the year Hampshire almost closed and managed to be hopeful despite the severity of the crisis.

PROFESSORS:

MARGARET CERULLO

Margaret Cerullo, a professor of sociology and feminist studies, has taught at Hampshire College for 40 years. She has a B.A. in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania, a B.Phil.

in politics from Oxford, and an M.A. in sociology from Brandeis University. While the crisis at Hampshire unfolded, she wrote an article for The Nation emphasizing that if Hampshire was going to go under, the arts and the liberal arts as inspiration to lives of critical inquiry and social engagement would be dealt a serious blow.

SALMAN HAMEED

Salman is Charles Taylor Chair and associate professor of integrated science and humanities in the School of Cognitive Science at Hampshire College. He is also the director of the Center for the Study of Science in Muslim Societies (SSiMS). He holds a Ph.D. in astronomy from New Mexico State University at Las Cruces and a B.S. in physics and astronomy from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. His primary research interest focuses on understanding the reception of science in the Muslim world. Salman recently led a 4-year National Science Foundation funded study on the reception of biological evolution in diverse Muslim societies. He hosts the YouTube channel Kainaat Astronomy in Urdu and has a regular astronomy segment for the Bill Newman show on WHMP and for Monte Belmonte on WRSI 93.9.

Salman was a member of the coalition working on the Re-envisioning Hampshire plan for the college's independence, that included faculty, staff, alumni, students and parents. He believes that at a time when some small liberal arts colleges across the country are closing or merging, Hampshire has a chance to show other struggling schools an alternative path.

JOURNALIST:

DUSTY CHRISTENSEN

Dusty is an investigative reporter for the Daily Hampshire Gazette — one of the country's oldest newspapers — where he currently covers the city of Holyoke and lead investigations. He previously covered the Five College Consortium (Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith, UMass-Amherst). His coverage helps reconstruct the timeline of the events that unfolded at Hampshire College and his public records request revealed that UMass-Amherst was not planning to partner with Hampshire but to shut it down.

Before working at the Gazette, he co-produced All Things Considered for WNYC radio. Dusty tries to open big, bright windows onto the human experience with his work, and to hold powerful people accountable.

WHISTLEBLOWERS:

JOHN BUCKLEY

John is the CEO of Subject Matters, a public relations firm based in Washington DC. He has long worked in corporate PR running communications and advertising at Fannie Mae and being executive vice president of communications at AOL. He also served in senior communication roles in three Republican presidential campaigns — Reagan-Bush in 1984, Jack Kemp's failed 1988 bid, and Dole-Kemp in 1996 — though he is no longer a Republican. John hails from the famous Buckley political family; he is the son of John W. Buckley, who ran the family gas and oil companies, and the nephew of the conservative author and founder of the National Review, William F. Buckley. He is also a Hampshire alum who studied fiction writing and whose final-year project in college became his first published novel, "Family Politics." John became a rock critic for several years after graduating Hampshire in 1979, writing for publications such as Rolling Stone and the National Review (among John's more innovative theses was that a direct cultural link could be drawn between "the explosion of great rock-and-roll in the 1970's" and supply-side economics).

He has advised every college president since Gregory S. Prince Jr (Hampshire College's fourth president – 1989-2005). "I actually run the firm, and so I'm not as a rule giving up significant amounts of my time for specific clients, but for Hampshire I am," John said in a telephone interview with Dusty Christensen. "I love the institution, and I'm determined to do everything we can to keep it going and providing the unique service to American higher education that it has provided for 49 years." John was hired by president Nelson to supplement the work of Hampshire's small communications team. In the film, he reveals the behind-the-scenes negotiations that took place between UMass-Amherst and president Nelson and how UMass-Amherst pressured her into following a script that would paint UMass-Amherst as the savior to a collapsing Hampshire - which would not appear to be collapsing without this script.

MINGDA ZHAO

Mingda graduated from Hampshire College with a B.A. in computer science and mathematics. He grew up in China and New England was his first home in the United States. He is now a partner in Houston-based White & Case's Global Mergers & Acquisitions practice where he focuses on mergers and acquisitions, private equity investments, joint ventures, energy transactions, and cross-border transactions. He holds a JD from Georgetown University Law Center.

Mingda served on the Board of Trustees at Hampshire College until he was asked to resign after doing due diligence. His resignation letter exposed some of the behind-the-scenes debate on what to do with the college as well as "bullying and fear tactics" by college leadership who pushed for the school to close and be acquired by UMass-Amherst.

PRESIDENT

MIRIAM "MIM" NELSON

Miriam "Mim" was Hampshire College's seventh president. She is a prominent health and nutrition scholar who worked at Tufts University for more than three decades and is currently president and CEO of Newman's Own Foundation. She also authored The New York Times bestselling 10-book series "Strong Women," based on the findings of a 1994 study she led, with more than a million books in print in 14 languages. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Vermont and a doctorate from Tufts.

Early on during her tenure as Hampshire's president and after digging into the school's finances, she decided that the only sustainable path forward was to find a partner institution (without making any diligent attempt to fundraise nor looking into other solutions).

Mim's tenure at Hampshire was short (less than two years), and much of it was marked by the frustration some stakeholders voiced regarding her administration's practices: lack of transparency, top-down decision making, lack of due diligence.

She resigned in controversy in April 2019.

FILMMAKING TEAM

AMY GOLDSTEIN

Director, Producer, Cinematographer

Amy is a director, producer, and screenwriter of television series, feature films and music videos. She seeks out daring people fighting the battles for democracy, justice and self-expression, an approach to life that she developed while attending Hampshire College. Her latest documentary, KATE NASH: UNDERESTIMATE THE GIRL (IDFA, Doc NYC, Sheffield Doc Fest, Doc Edge) was made for Storyville BBC and was released theatrically by Alamo Drafthouse in the United States, Level Film in Canada, and qualified for an Academy Award in 2021. The film follows musician Kate Nash as she goes from brutally honest pop star to struggling artist to a woman now in control of her career.

Other documentary films recently completed include SELF-MADE MEN (ITVS), an episodic docu-comedy about two publishers who created a transmen magazine and THE HOOPING LIFE (a Cinedigm release), an epic tale of a female-driven subculture.

Prior to documentary filmmaking, Amy directed music videos (Rod Stewart's DOWNTOWN TRAIN MTV #1) and scripted features (BECAUSE THE DAWN, a lesbian vampire musical, THE SILENCER, an action satire of exploitation films, award-winning EAST OF A, an edgy comedy starring Rashida Jones and David Alan Grier about an alternative family facing the challenges of raising a child with HIV). Her work has been presented at film festivals worldwide, including Toronto and Berlin. She also developed pilots for HBO, CBS, Fox, Showtime, and MTV. Amy served on the board of Outfest and is a member of the WGA and DGA. She graduated from Hampshire College and NYU Graduate Film School.

ANOUCHKA VAN RIEL

Producer, Sound Recordist

Anouchka started her career in finance at Activision where she was responsible for analyzing movie franchises (Ice Age 2, Scarface, Eragon) and evaluating new publishing and distribution deals. She founded Span Productions with Amy Goldstein in 2008, a production company delivering independent films and series with an edge. She produced the feature documentary THE HOOPING LIFE and the docu-series SELF-MADE MEN (ITVS, 6x10'). She produced and is currently overseeing the release of the documentary KATE NASH: UNDERESTIMATE THE GIRL (BBC Storyville) on the cutting edge of today's music industry with singer/songwriter/feminist Kate Kash. The film showed at IDFA, DOC NYC, DOC EDGE, SHEFFIELD DOC FEST and was released by the BBC in the UK and by Alamo Drafthouse theatrically in the USA. It qualified for an Academy Award in 2021.

Since 2004, she has also been an organizer of the largest French film festival in the world, COLCOA, promoting French artists and their films in the USA.

Anouchka grew up the child of teachers in France where education is free but she chose a transactional path (business school and a corporate career) before going back to a more meaningful life as a producer of documentary films. She graduated from ESCP Europe and studied at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad.

TROY TAKAKI

Editor, Co-Producer

Troy graduated Cum Laude with a degree in cinema from San Francisco State University. Starting in television, he worked on such hit series as DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES,

ALLY MCBEAL, TALES FROM THE CRYPT, AND SEAQUEST DSV. Takaki segued to feature films such as SWEET HOME ALABAMA starring Reese Witherspoon and HITCH starring Will Smith. He edited the feature documentary PAULY SHORE STANDS ALONE. Troy has also championed mentorship and inclusion in the industry through both the ACE Internship Program and by co-founding the ACE Diversity Program. Troy is the author of the book Don't Miss Out On Any Avocado Milkshakes: The Art and Joy of being a Film Editor. Troy's father, Ronald Takaki, taught UCLA's first black-history course, created in response to the Watts riots. When a student asked what revolutionary tools he would be teaching, Takaki said: "We're going to strengthen our critical thinking and our writing skills. These can be revolutionary tools if we make them so." Ronald Takaki made it his life's work to rewrite American history to include Asian-Americans and other ethnic groups excluded from traditional accounts.

CAITLIN DIXON

Editor

Caitlin Dixon has edited in a variety of film and TV settings, ranging from microbudget independent documentaries and features to television work that has appeared on PBS, Discovery, Oxygen, The Learning Channel, ABC, A&E, WeTV, the Style Network, TruTV, the Sundance Channel, and Cinemax Reel Life. She has edited two films chosen for competition in the Sundance Film Festival: LOGGERHEADS in the scripted feature competition, and FLOW: For Love of Water, in documentary. Recent television work includes Kids Behind Bars, for A&E, examining juvenile detention in American prisons, The Witnesses, a partnership between Oxygen and the Center for Investigative Journalism exploring misconduct in the Jehovah's Witnesses. She was an editor on an upcoming Netflix documentary series co-produced by Oscar winner Morgan Neville and Emmy Winner Jenji Kohan. Most recently, the festival darling feature-length documentary she edited, Kate Nash: Underestimate the Girl, had an extended run on Alamo Drafthouse's new streaming platform, Alamo On Demand.

Caitlin's parents were engaged in academia and teaching, and as a young professor, her father organized the union drive for his academic department at Olivet College in Michigan in the 1970s.

NICHOLAS KANE

Cinematographer

Nick is a cinematographer based in Los Angeles. He studied filmmaking at Idyllwild Arts Academy and the Los Angeles Film School and after 3 years of professional work, he returned to school at Hampshire College where he majored in ethnomusicology and documentary filmmaking.

ANDREW BOWLEY

Additional Cinematographer

Andy is a director and cinematographer who has shot commercials, features, and documentaries for the last 25 years. He specializes in applying narrative film technique to documentaries----making use of small, lightweight cameras that allow him the speed and unobtrusiveness to shoot in the most demanding conditions.

More recently he has shot award-winning feature pieces for the UN; traveled with Bill Clinton across Africa for the Clinton Foundation, and shot the pilot episode of the PBS Soundtracks series in Nigeria. He contributed photography on Alex Gibney's WE STEAL SECRETS. He shot documentaries for Al Jazeera's Fault Lines series, including MADE IN BANGLADESH, which was awarded a 2013 Peabody.

Andy graduated from Boston University with a degree in Film/TV Journalism. His work has won five Primetime Emmy awards, ten Primetime Emmy nominations, two Peabody Awards, an Overseas Press Award and most recently, an AI du-Pont Columbia award.

JOSHUA BERMAN

Additional Cinematographer

Joshua graduated from Hampshire College with a BA in Media, Film and Technology. He was an active member of Hamp Rise Up documenting the students' efforts to engage Hampshire's board and administration about the future of the college. He is passionate about filmmaking, engineering, robotics, inventing, and teaching

MARLON BECERRA

Story Consultant, Researcher

Marlon graduated from Hampshire College with a BA in Economics and Legal Studies with a minor concentration in International Relations. He is currently studying law at Harvard Law School. He is passionate in community building and outreach. At Hampshire, he was a member of the Board of Trustees' Finance Committee, a member of Hamp Rise Up, a co-signer for Raíces (Pan-Latinx Alliance).

ADVISORS:

MEREDITH WOO, *President, Sweet Briar College*

ANDREW DELBANCO, *President, The Teagle Foundation. Author, College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be*

ADAM FALK, *President, The Sloan Foundation*

HOLDEN THORP, *Editor-in-chief, Science Magazine. Former Chancellor of UNC at Chapel Hill*

THE UNMAKING OF A COLLEGE

CREDITS

Directed by
Amy Goldstein

Produced by
Amy Goldstein
Troy Takaki
Anouchka van Riel

Edited by
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Caitlin Dixon
Troy Takaki, ACE

Cinematography by
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Nicolas Kane

Music by
Nathan Larson

Additional Cinematography by
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Joshua Gaestel

Sound Recording by
Anouchka van Riel

Music Editing, Sound Supervision, Recording Mix by
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Joshua Berman
Ola'i Wildeboar

Story Consultant and Researcher
Marlon Becerra

Legal by

Lisa Callif

Color Grading by

Different By Design

Starring (in order of appearance)

Marlon Becerra

Miriam "Mim" Nelson

Nya Johnson

Joshua Berman

Rhys Macarthur

Andrew Delbanco

Adam Falk

Holden Thorp

Andrew Gordon

Salman Hameed

Ken Burns

Cheyenne Palacio-Mccarthy

Moon West

Margaret Cerullo

Dusty Christensen

Cheri Butler

Mingda Zhao

Lynda Pickbourn

Elí Alejo

Emery Powell

Naia Tenerowicz

Gaye Hill

Annie Wood

Desta Contave

Sophie Wood

Akil Gibbons

Jeffrey Sonnenfeld

Adele Simmons

Savvy Cornett

Liam Davis

Allie

Ronan

John Buckley

Sydney White

Ed Wingenbach

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Special Thanks

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Dusty Christensen
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Luis Hernandez
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