



Presents

RBG

A film by Betsy West and Julie Cohen

97 mins, USA, 2018

Language: English

Official Selection:

2018 Sundance Film Festival – World Premiere

Distribution



1352 Dundas St. West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1Y2
Tel: 416-516-9775 Fax: 416-516-0651
E-mail: info@mongrelmedia.com
www.mongrelmedia.com



Publicity

Bonne Smith
Star PR
Tel: 416-488-4436
Twitter: @starpr2
E-mail: starpr@sympatico.ca



SYNOPSIS

At the age of 84, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has developed a breathtaking legal legacy while becoming an unexpected pop culture icon. But without a definitive Ginsburg biography, the unique personal journey of this diminutive, quiet warrior's rise to the nation's highest court has been largely unknown, even to some of her biggest fans – until now. **RBG** is a revelatory documentary exploring Ginsburg 's exceptional life and career from Betsy West and Julie Cohen, and co-produced by Storyville Films and CNN Films.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It was three years ago, January 2015, that we first had the idea of making a feature documentary about Ruth Bader Ginsburg. We had both, separately, interviewed the Justice for projects in the past, and had both admired her trailblazing work for women's rights. But that was before she had broken out as the octogenarian rock star "Notorious RBG," with millennials extolling her virtues on Twitter and Tumblr, stocking up on RBG tee-shirts and tote bags and, in extreme cases, getting tattoos—big, permanent, multi-color tattoos—of her face.

Talking about the RBG phenomenon one day, we turned to each other and said "we need to make a documentary about Justice Ginsburg *right now*."

A phrase we used in those early conversations was that RBG was "having her moment." What we didn't fully grasp then was how that moment was about to expand into something bigger and more important even as we were documenting her extraordinary life.

Working with a team of women in the top creative and executive roles, we began filming in June of 2016, doing our best to keep up with the Justice's hectic schedule. We filmed her in her office, on vacation with her family and working out with her personal trainer. We also began tracking down the dramatic stories of the clients she represented as a young lawyer arguing before the Supreme Court in the 1970's. At that time, it was perfectly legal to discriminate on the basis of sex. RBG's brilliant legal strategy resulted in five groundbreaking rulings that made great strides towards putting women and men on an equal footing before the law.

As women who began our careers in television news after RBG changed the world for working women, we couldn't help but think about how far we've come. And yet, over the course of making this film, a series of powerful men have been revealed as sexual harassers, highlighting how far we still have to go.

We took to heart Justice Ginsburg's approach to sexism and adversity. When, after graduating at the top of her law school class, she could not get a job, she remembered her mother's advice: anger is a waste of time. Eventually, she was able to use her formidable legal skills to fight for justice for women--a fight she has continued through five decades.

Justice Ginsburg's steadfast commitment remains, not only for gender equality but for democratic institutions that protect the rights of all citizens. No wonder she is a millennial icon.

Meeting RBG in person is a powerful experience. Her voice is soft, but her words are so clear and carefully chosen that you find yourself drawing closer, riveted. After Donald Trump's election, the most frequent reaction we got when we told people about the film was, "How is her health? Is she OK?" We want audiences to see for themselves the Notorious RBG in action — staying up late into the night crafting blistering dissents and doing the planks, squats and push-ups that keep her in shape to do the job she loves.

– Betsy West and Julie Cohen

FEATURING

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, U.S. Supreme Court Justice

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was born in Brooklyn, New York, March 15, 1933. She married Martin D. Ginsburg in 1954, and has a daughter, Jane, and a son, James. She received her B.A. from Cornell University, attended Harvard Law School, and received her LL.B. from Columbia Law School. She served as a law clerk to the Honorable Edmund L. Palmieri, Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, from 1959–1961. From 1961–1963, she was a research associate and then associate director of the Columbia Law School Project on International Procedure. She was a Professor of Law at Rutgers University School of Law from 1963–1972, and Columbia Law School from 1972–1980, and a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California from 1977–1978. In 1971, she was instrumental in launching the Women’s Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, and served as the ACLU’s General Counsel from 1973–1980, and on the National Board of Directors from 1974–1980. She was appointed a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in 1980. President Clinton nominated her as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, and she took her seat August 10, 1993.

Jane and James Ginsburg – Children

Clara Spera – Granddaughter

Gloria Steinem – Colleague in the women’s rights movement

Nina Totenberg – Correspondent, National Public Radio

Lilly Ledbetter – RBG’s famous dissent in Ledbetter’s case led Congress to pass a law rectifying pay discrimination against women

Sharron Frontiero and Stephen Wiesenfeld – Clients from cases in the 1970s

Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik – Authors of “Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg” (2015)

Bill Clinton – President who appointed RBG to the Supreme Court

Ted Olson – Conservative lawyer who has argued numerous Supreme Court cases.

Judge Harry Edwards – Former colleague on the U.S. Court of Appeals

Senator Orrin Hatch – Republican ranking member of Senate Judiciary Committee during RBG’s confirmation hearings

Eugene Scalia – Son of close friend and fellow Associate Justice Antonin Scalia

Bryant Johnson – Personal trainer

RUTH BADER GINSBURG - CAREER HIGHLIGHTS VICTORIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY:

Reed v Reed (1971) Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote the brief in this early landmark women's rights case. Ginsburg and her team convinced the Supreme Court to strike down an Idaho law stating that "males must be preferred to females" as the administrators of estates.

Frontiero v Richardson (1973) In her first oral argument before the Supreme Court, Ginsburg and her co-counsel prevailed in getting the Court to overturn a discriminatory federal law. Ginsburg sought and won housing benefits for her client, a married woman in the U.S. Air Force, equivalent to what a married male airman would receive.

Weinberger v Wiesenfeld (1975) In this case, Ginsburg showed that men too suffer the consequences of laws that discriminate on the basis of sex. Representing the widowed father of a young son, she argued successfully that widowers should have access to the same child care benefits that widows do.

Duren v Missouri (1979) Following Ginsburg's powerful argument, the Supreme Court ruled that a Missouri law allowing women, but not men, to opt out of jury service was unconstitutional, denying defendants their Sixth Amendment right to be tried by a jury representing a cross section of their community.

United States v Virginia (1996) In her first women's rights case as a Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote the landmark majority opinion. With her 7-1 ruling, the Court struck down the male-only admissions policy of the Virginia Military Institute and concluded that government policies which discriminate on the basis of gender should be presumed unconstitutional.

Sessions v Morales-Santana (2017) Justice Ginsburg authored the majority opinion declaring unconstitutional a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act regarding citizenship for children born overseas to unmarried parents when one was a U.S. citizen and the other wasn't. The ruling struck down the provision that gave a path to citizenship to the children of non-citizen mothers who had lived in the U.S. for a year, whereas the residency requirement for non-citizen fathers was five years. She wrote that the distinction between men and women in the law "is stunningly anachronistic."

KEY DISSENTS:

Shelby County v Holder (2013) When the Supreme Court struck down a key provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, arguing it was no longer needed to prevent discrimination against African American voters, Ginsburg wrote a blistering dissent. The Court's decision, she wrote, was "like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet."

Burwell v Hobby Lobby (2014) Justice Ginsburg dissented from the majority opinion which allowed a family-owned business to decline to provide insurance coverage for contraception on religious grounds. "The Court, I fear, has ventured into a minefield" Ginsburg wrote, which could open the door to employers opting out of covering anesthesia, blood transfusions and antidepressants.

Lilly Ledbetter v Goodyear (2007) Justice Ginsburg's dissent in this case led to a new law with wide impact for American working women. The Court ruled that although Goodyear employee Lilly Ledbetter had been underpaid because she was a woman, she was not entitled to compensation because she waited too long to file her complaint. In her dissent, Ginsburg wrote that "The court does not comprehend or is indifferent to the insidious way in which women can be victims of pay discrimination." She continued, "The ball is in Congress' court." Sure enough, Congress soon passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act ensuring women who have suffered long term pay discrimination the right to sue.

Bush v Gore (2000) When the Court ruled to stop the recount of the disputed Florida vote in the 2000 election, effectively making George W. Bush President of the United States, Justice Ginsburg wrote in dissent. Using civil, technical language, Ginsburg argued that the majority was favoring the Republican Party at the expense of the well-established principle of states rights.

Gonzales v Carhart (2007) The Supreme Court ruled a Congressional ban on so-called "Partial Birth Abortions" did not violate the Constitution even though it provided no exception for procedures necessary to protect the health of the mother. In her forceful dissent, Ginsburg wrote that legal challenges for abortion rights "center on a woman's autonomy to determine her life's course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature."

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Betsy West – Director & Producer

Betsy West is an award-winning filmmaker, journalist and educator. She was executive producer of the *Makers* documentary and digital project (AOL & PBS, 2012), the feature documentary *The Lavender Scare* (2017) and the short doc *4%: Film's Gender Problem* (Epix, 2016). She is a principal at Storyville Films where she co-produced *Constantine's Sword* (First Run Features, 2007).

A producer and executive for over two decades at ABC News, West received 21 Emmy[®] Awards and two duPont-Columbia Awards for her work on “Nightline” and “PrimeTimeLive” and the documentary program “Turning Point,” where she served as executive producer. As senior vice president at CBS News from 1998-2005, she oversaw “60 Minutes” and “48 Hours,” and was executive in charge of the CBS documentary *9/11*, winner of the Primetime Emmy[®] Award in 2002.

A graduate of Brown University, West holds a Master's in Communications from Syracuse University. In 2007, she joined the faculty at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, where she is the Fred W. Friendly Professor of Professional Practice in Media and Society.

Julie Cohen – Director & Producer

Julie Cohen has directed and produced eight feature documentaries, including *The Sturgeon Queens* (7th Art Releasing), which screened at the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival and 60 others, winning 10 Audience Choice Awards; *American Veteran* (Freestyle Digital Media) which screened at 20 festivals, and won the 2017 Panavision Showcase Award for New York filmmakers; and *I Live to Sing* (WNET) which won the 2014 New York Emmy[®] Award for Best Arts Program, one of three New York Emmys[®] she has won since 2012.

Before starting her own production company Better Than Fiction, Cohen was a staff producer at NBC News for nine years, where she won the Individual Achievement Award for Best News Producer from American Women in Radio and Television (Gracie Award). In the 1990s she created and produced Court TV's weekly program *Supreme Court Watch*. A graduate of Colgate University, she holds Master's degrees from Yale Law School, where she was a Knight Journalism Fellow, and Columbia University, where she is currently an adjunct professor in the documentary program.

Carla Gutierrez – Editor

Carla Gutierrez is the editor of the Oscar[®]-nominated documentary *La Corona*, and the Emmy[®]-nominated *Reportero* and *Kingdom of Shadows*. She also edited *When Two Worlds Collide*, winner of a Special Jury Award at Sundance. Her latest film, *Chavela*, won the 2nd place Audience Award at the 2017 Berlinale Film Festival. Gutierrez's work has been broadcast on HBO, Netflix, POV, Independent Lens, and the Sundance Channel. She's been a creative advisor for the Sundance Edit Lab and the Firelight Producers' Lab.

Claudia Raschke – Director of Photography

Award-winning cinematographer Claudia Raschke has photographed independent feature films and feature documentaries for over 20 years. Among her many notable award winning films are: *Particle Fever* (Bond), Oscar[®]-nominated *God is the Bigger Elvis* (HBO), Peabody Award-winning *Black Magic* (ESPN), Oscar[®] shortlisted *Mad Hot Ballroom* (Paramount), *The Freedom To Marry* (Argot Pictures), *Miss You Can Do It* (HBO), Oscar[®]-nominated *My Architect* (add'l DP), Oscar[®]-nominated *Small Wonder* (add'l DP), Oscar[®]-nominated *Sister Rose's Passion* (add'l DP); as well as indie features like *Kiss Me Guido*, *The Last Good Time*, *Frame of Mind*. Her most recent feature documentary work *Atomic Homefront* (HBO) was released in theaters November 2017.

Miriam Cutler – Composer

Emmy[®]-nominated composer Miriam Cutler is passionate about scoring documentaries: *The Hunting Ground*, *Ethel*, *Lost in La Mancha*, *Thin*, *Poster Girl*, *Vito*, *Kings Point*, *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, *A Plastic Ocean* and more. She co-produced and scored *One Lucky Elephant* and has served multiple times as a Lab Advisor for the Sundance Institute Documentary Composers Lab, on documentary juries including Sundance, Independent Spirit Awards, and IDA Awards. She is an AMPAS documentary branch member, and a film expert for the USC/US State Department's American Film Showcase. In addition to her own music, Cutler has co-produced two Grammy-nominated live jazz albums on PolyGram / Verve for Joe Williams, and albums for Nina Simone, Shirley Horn, and Marlena Shaw.

Amy Entelis – Executive Producer

Amy Entelis is executive vice president for talent and content development for CNN Worldwide.

She is based in New York. Entelis joined CNN in 2012 and is responsible for new program development and acquisitions, as well as the development of on-air talent for CNN Worldwide.

Entelis established CNN Original Series in 2013 and has developed more than 30 multi-part, nonfiction series to date, including the Primetime Emmy[®]-winning *United Shades of America* with W. Kamau Bell; the Primetime Emmy[®] and Peabody Award-winning

Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown; and *Chicagoland* and *Death Row Stories*, with executive producer Robert Redford's Sundance Productions among them.

Entelis also established CNN Films, created to co-produce and acquire documentary films and leverage distribution opportunities at festivals and in theaters, and CNN Films Presents, which acquires and broadcasts encore runs of notable documentary features. In addition to *RBG*, directed by Betsy West and Julie Cohen, CNN Films has acquired, co-produced, or commissioned more than 40 films, including *Blackfish*, directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite; *Steve Jobs: The Man in the Machine*, directed by Alex Gibney; *Life Itself*, directed by Steve James; *Ivory Tower*, directed by Andrew Rossi; the News &

Documentary Emmy[®]-winning *Dinosaur 13*, directed by Todd Miller; *Whitey: United States of America v. James J. Bulger*, directed by Joe Berlinger; *Legion Of Brothers*, directed by Greg Barker; *Blackface*, directed by Roger Ross Williams; *The Hunting Ground*, directed by Kirby Dick; *Trophy*, co-directed by Shaul Schwarz and Christina Clusiau; *The End: Inside The Last Days Of The Obama White House*, and more.

Entelis co-developed *We Will Rise: Michelle Obama's Mission To Educate Girls Around The World* and *Girl Rising* with The Documentary Group, amplifying calls to action for rights for women and girls. *We Will Rise* was honored with a 2017 Television Academy Honors Award for harnessing 'the extraordinary power of television to advance social change,' and received a CINE Golden Eagle, for exceptional nonfiction media content. With Tribeca Film Institute and Camden International Film Festival, she has established an annual workshop to support the next generation of documentary filmmakers.

Entelis' illustrious career in television journalism began at ABC News as a producer on the weekly news magazine *20/20*. She was later a producer at *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, and during her tenure at ABC News, Entelis worked in various roles of increasing responsibility, ultimately serving as senior vice president for talent strategy, development, and research. Prior to joining CNN, Entelis served as executive vice president for talent strategy at Sucherman Consulting Group.

A graduate of Vassar College, Entelis received a Master's of Science in journalism from Columbia University and serves as a member of the Board of Visitors of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Courtney Sexton – Executive Producer

Courtney Sexton is vice president of CNN Films. Sexton, who joined CNN in 2013, works day-to-day with filmmakers to supervise the production of documentary films for theatrical exhibition and distribution across CNN's platforms.

In addition to *RBG*, directed by Betsy West and Julie Cohen, CNN Films has acquired, co-produced or commissioned more than 40 original feature and short films including *Life Itself*, *Blackfish*, *Our Nixon*, *Ivory Tower*, *Whitey: United States Of America V. James J. Bulger*, *Fresh Dressed*, *Steve Jobs: The Man In The Machine*, *Blackface*, *The Hunting Ground*, *Holy Hell*, the News & Documentary Emmy[®]-winning *Dinosaur 13*, *Glen Campbell...I'll Be Me*, *Elián*, *Trophy*, *Legion Of Brothers*, *Jeremiah Tower: The Last Magnificent*, and more during Sexton's tenure.

Prior to joining CNN, Sexton worked for eight years as a development executive at Participant Media in documentary production. Her projects at Participant Media included the Academy Award[®]-winning *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Academy Award[®]-nominated *Food, Inc.*, *Standard Operating Procedure*, *Page One: Inside The New York Times*, and more.

CNN Films

CNN Films, now celebrating its fifth year, produces and acquires documentary feature and short films for theatrical and festival exhibition and distribution across CNN's multiple platforms. Amy Entelis, executive vice president of talent and content development for CNN Worldwide, oversees the strategy for CNN Films; Courtney Sexton, vice president for CNN Films, works day-to-day with filmmakers to oversee projects. For more information about CNN Films, please visit www.CNN.com/CNNFilms and follow [@CNNFilms](https://twitter.com/CNNFilms) via Twitter.

CREDITS

Directors and Producers Betsy West and Julie Cohen

Editor Carla Gutierrez

Director of Photography Claudia Raschke

Executive Producers Amy Entelis, Courtney Sexton

Coordinating Producer Alexandra Hannibal

Associate Producer Nadine Natour

Associate Editor Grace Mendenhall

Original Music by Miriam Cutler

Archival Producer Renee Silverman

Post Production Supervisor Katia Maguire

Graphic Artists Kook Ewo, Ronan Guitton, Lauriane Bernat