



FEMINISM

Get Ready For "Brewsters," A Documentary About Craft Beer & Gender Equality

AUGUST 6 by NATALIE ZISA

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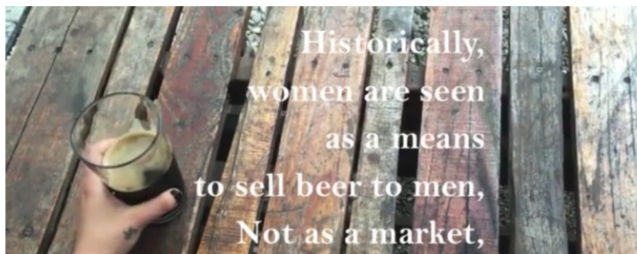
Christina Bartson, a senior at Emerson College, grew up in Michigan where her parents introduced her to craft beer and often took her to local breweries. She, like many other young women, enjoys the taste of a cold beer and often prefers a Guinness over a cocktail. But when she orders one at a bar, she regularly gets asked the same question: 'Are you sure you want that?' Instead the bartender will usually suggest something fruity or with fewer calories, characteristics usually used to describe a girl's drink.

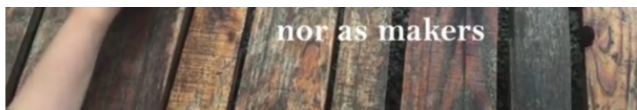
It was experiences like this that led Christina to do research on the topic and found that women account for 25% of total beer consumption and 37% of total craft beer consumption. But unfortunately, the majority of the beer brewing industry is dominated by men. According to research conducted in 2014 by Stanford University, across 1,993 breweries in America, only 20% have at least 1 female founder, only 2% have an exclusively female founder, and only 4% of brewmasters are female. This lack of female representation among the creators of beer implicates an inability to understand the interests of their consumers.

What's surprising is that compared to other industries, these numbers are actually high. And that's largely due to the breweries in Michigan. Michigan is ranked 6th in the country for having the most craft breweries and it happens to be a hub for women who want to work in the industry. Between Christina's love for beer and her home state, the idea for "Brewsters" was born. But she also knew this was her opportunity to share her passion for women and social change.

"At the core of why I'm making the film is because I want to do everything in my power to promote gender equality and this is one way I can do that. The film is going to look at what's working in Michigan, what's unique to that culture, and how that can be used as a model for other breweries across the country," says Christina.

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Diversifying the beer brewing industry not only has a social impact, but also an economic one. According to the Brewers Association, in 2014, small and independent craft brewers contributed \$55.7 billion to the U.S. economy. If more women continue to hold leadership in this business, it can lay out the framework for disruption in other industries.



"Getting more women into those positions of power is going to change the perception of the industry from the inside, out," explains Christina.

While the documentary will focus solely on craft beer, this certainly has implications for commercial beer as well, which has a major marketing problem. Drinking beer, as most people are introduced to it, is another way to perform gender.

Christina points out that, "Women and men are equally frustrated with how commercial beer is marketed to people because it does the brand and everyone who works in the industry a disservice."



Along with three other friends, Christina will film the documentary over the course of one week. Throughout that week, she plans to interview at least 10 different women in the industry. Among them include: Angela Steil, the world's youngest cicerone (a sommelier for beer), Annette May, the state's first female cicerone, and 24-year old Shannon Long, who owns an export company and is a co-host on "Pure Brews America." A few men will most likely be interviewed as well.

The documentary has a budget of \$2,000, which Christina is crowdfunding via [Kickstarter](#). To date, they have raised \$1,194, but need to raise the remainder of the money by August 31st. This budget alone is going to cover food and transportation on their week long journey throughout Michigan. Her team of four includes her best friend, Florence Rivkin, producer, Louis Weismann, cinematographer, and Joe Fiorillo, sound designer. Though given a short amount of time to film, Christina plans to complete the editing process by the end of the fall semester.



When Christina initially announced the documentary, she was nervous about how people would react. But over the past couple of months, she was most surprised to learn how supportive people can be, even strangers. After sharing the trailer to their Facebook page, a father of two girls expressed his support for the film. He wrote, "I applaud documentaries like this. I want my girls to know that no matter what industry their heart leads them to they can flourish. They need great role models out there and these kind of documentaries highlight that."

Feedback like this is especially important because in Christina's experience, most people have a hard time talking about gender, but the documentary is a good medium for people to learn about gender equality.

"Beer as the subject makes it more accessible. It's a commonality for people to communicate and learn from each other. It's like food in that it's neutral and most people can connect over it. There's a beer for every kind of palette."




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Images courtesy of Christina Bartson

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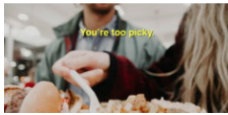
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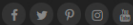
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