

[Interviewer:](#) Welcome to Office Hours, presented by the University of Pennsylvania's Office of University Communications.

[Interviewer:](#) Through this series we bring you discussions with some of campuses' great minds, dialogue a little more unbuttoned than you might find in a lecture hall, or even reminiscent of this quirky chats you had in college with your favorite professor.

[Interviewer:](#) Today we knock on the door of Kathy DeMarco Van Cleve, a screenwriter, film producer, three time novelist, and senior lecturer at Penn's Cinema and media studies program, teaching screenwriting and the art and business of film.

[Interviewer:](#) Fresh off the 2019 Oscars, which was filled with a dizzying amount of wins, snubs, and surprising moments that left viewers a gasp and frantically punching commentary into Twitter, we sit down with DeMarco Van Cleve for our own Oscar's postmortem, plus discussion of what's so special about Los Angeles, her quote, visceral attachment to books and fried chicken.

[Interviewer:](#) How are you this morning?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I'm good.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) How are you?

[Interviewer:](#) I'm great. Fantastic. Are you ready for spring?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh, I'm so ready. I can not wait for spring. I think I would feel better if I didn't just eat a bunch of potato chips on my way to work, but other than that, I'm feeling excellent.

[Interviewer:](#) Right. Well, we can all run it off soon in that nice warm weather.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Yes.

[Interviewer:](#) So, yeah. The Oscars has happened. It's a late February morning. How'd you spend your Oscars evening?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Interestingly, because I'm a mom and my other life, I hosted the seventh grade boys and girls book club from 4:00 until seven-ish, and then one of the families-

[Interviewer:](#) I was going to say until 11:30, I hope not.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) No, no, no. Then, after most of the people left, one family stayed. Coincidentally, and luckily the family actually brought all this amazing food and we stayed and watched most ... They stayed till about 9:30, then the kids kind of

disappeared/fell asleep, my own children. Then I continued to watch, just with my husband.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) When I started to get that sinking feeling it was not going to go where I wanted it to go, I went upstairs, put the TV on and as I was falling asleep, I just remember Julia Roberts' big smile and pretty gown.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I just heard someone talk about Julia Roberts. She has that massive, amazing smile that hasn't changed at all in as long as she's worked and, but someone said, oh, she has many permutations of that smile. The one that she had on Oscar night was, wow, I don't want to be the one saying who won best picture, but she did it and carried it through.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. Well, she had to close out the show, too, because there was no house.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Right.

[Interviewer:](#) Did you think that hurt the show at all?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) No. I am somebody who loved a Billy crystal and all those spoofs he used to do. I would laugh about all of his films and his running around. I remember the Silence of the Lambs one when he came out in the Hannibal Lecter kind of straight jacket. I like that, but when there's a host who's even, let's say he's an excellent host, under that, it's hard. It's a hard thing to do. I was surprised. I didn't want to like it without a host, but I actually did. That said, if we could get anyone or two or three of Maya Rudolph, Amy Poehler and Tina Fey to do it, I'm all in. I think that would be great.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah, I think that was a good decision on their end to at least give like a mini host introduction.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Right, to start it off and give them a slightly longer bit.

[Interviewer:](#) Right.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) That, and also, gosh, Melissa McCarthy and Brian Tyree ... I can't remember his last name.

[Interviewer:](#) Costumes.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh, when they came out, that's just fantastic. Those are kind of moments I think on the production side of the broadcast that makes us happy, that someone was doing their work. Someone played to the performers best strengths and the categories.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. It was a funny contrast with Melissa McCarthy because she is known for those comedy shticks, but she was nominated there for best actress in a drama.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I love that movie, loved that movie, Can You Ever Forgive me?

[Interviewer](#): Yeah. It was a slight movie, but it was pretty good, I thought.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Yeah, I really liked it. I mean, I guess just because my background's in writing, maybe that's why.

[Interviewer](#): Well, what a story.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : That's the thing. I read the memoir on which it's based, and it's striking to me in this, this obviously is a personal thing. I really didn't like Lee Israel in her story. She was very arrogant about her actions and not apologetic. Yet, in the movie, I mean, it's kind of interesting, right, when we think about the purpose of movies, but in that case, I mean, I was like, wow, well, if, if she did have this vulnerability as expressed by Melissa McCarthy and she really did exhibit a writerly voice, or genius kind of style with her impersonation of all those brilliant writers.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : That is a form of writing. I'm just thinking now, I'm sure I'm going to get ... I'm thinking about fan fiction.

[Interviewer](#): Yeah. Right.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Right? It's that people get screamed at in the social media universe if you say anything that it could have a lack of integrity, which would mean that then what Lee Israel did by writing a Dorothy Parker letter, and Dorothy Parker could, or [inaudible 00:05:56] or whatever. I don't know. Imitation is flattery.

[Interviewer](#): Well, that you do it that well and get away with it for that long is probably something.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Oh. I really liked that movie. I loved Richard E. Grant.

[Interviewer](#): For sure, yeah.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I love the script. I loved that a woman directed it and didn't get nom- I don't love that. I love that a woman directed it and I don't love that she was not nominated.

[Interviewer](#): Yeah. I think that's the only word that it was up for. No, because Richard Grant. Right?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Yeah. Richard Grant, and so was Melissa McCarthy and screenplay. It just wasn't-

[Interviewer](#): Oh, it was up for screenplay, too? I didn't know that.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Yeah. Best adaptation, best adapted screenplay. Didn't win. Then when Nicole Holofcener and somebody else, but I'm only remembering her because she's wonderful, too.

[Interviewer](#): Right. I imagine those categories is hard for any film like that to topple the best picture nominees who are also in the category.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I just heard it on my way in that, and I should know this since I teach screenwriting, but I heard that often whoever wins best original screenplay, wins best picture or best adapted screenplay. One of those winners of adapted or original wins best picture. I don't know. I just heard that this morning, but it's certainly how Green Book, adapted I guess, or was it an original screenplay? I don't know if there was source material. I guess it was original.

[Interviewer](#): I think it was original.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Right. I mean the source material was his dad. Right?

[Interviewer](#): Right.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Then that one, that was not my vote.

[Interviewer](#): Not your vote?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : No.

[Interviewer](#): So what were you generally rooting for? Just even something inside the categories.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Spike Lee, Spike Lee, Spike Lee, Spike Lee, Spike Lee, Spike Lee.

[Interviewer](#): Well, that happened?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Well, it did, but he didn't get director. He didn't get best picture. I wonder sometimes if it's because I grew up with Spike Lee movies, that he's roughly up here, I think is a little bit older than I am, but for someone whose work holds up, and do the right thing, I mean, that is a magnificent movie, that is a magnificent script, and his energy, you can see it. You saw it at the Academy Awards.

[Interviewer](#): Yeah, it's infectious.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Right. And his passion for everything, right? That's just a real artist. He deserves to be commended, and he has done such far reaching. I know people have ... Whatever, I don't even know what people's issues are besides the obvious racial issue. I think he's great and I wanted him to win. I knew he wasn't going to win best director and I still put them down in my Oscar pool. I didn't think it was going to win best picture. I thought Roma was going to win, but now that Green

book has, and now with my little bit of research afterwards, I think I kind of understand why, or have some ideas of why it one. That being said, anyway, I just wanted Spike Lee to win a time.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I'm glad he did. I'm glad he won. I'm glad that the world got to see him running up the aisle and jumping into Sam L. Jackson's arms. I love that he and Barbara Streisand had their little moment.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. I thought that was really interesting that they had Barbara Streisand introduce the preview for that film and not A Star is Born.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I know.

[Interviewer:](#) That was a choice.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Who introduced A Star is Born?

[Interviewer:](#) Oh, I can't even remember.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Me either. That's so interesting. What did Serena Williams do? Did she do A Star is Born? I can't remember.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Anyway, I went back and re-watched Barbara Streisand, and here's what I found ... When she talks again, she said that she saw BlackKlansman and was completely affected by it, and she tweeted about it. Then, Spike, I think, got in touch with her via Twitter. As much as old people like me want to bash Twitter, how great? They started a correspondence or dialogue or something, and that's what led, I think, to her being the person to introduce it.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) All these artists are also people, so I just love that it came from just a love of the movie, her expressing it, and then kind of snowballed after that.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. Am I still feel bad for Bradley Cooper? I feel like there's all this energy out there that suggested I suppose to somehow feel, I don't know, pity for him not getting a best director nomination or something, and then obviously not really winning much of anything except for that one.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) The song. Yeah. Okay. I think I have three-

[Interviewer:](#) Which was all her.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I have three things to say about that. The amount of work that he did, let me just repeat, anybody who is a director and a star, I think he might have screenplay credit on the rewrite of the script. Director, writer, star.

[Interviewer:](#) I think you were some of the music, too.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) And wrote some of the music. The mainstream or mainstream theater audience does not understand. I mean, it's so easy, and let's do it. Let's bash all the rich Hollywood people, et cetera. That's so much work. To be an actor and to make your directing debut on something that, he knows before he casts Lady Gaga, before he steps out, crossed the line that he's going to be the lightning rod. Right?

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) For better, for worse, it's all on him. Everything. He's willingly taking that on. Again, pity might not be the right word, but I do think acknowledgement of all that work is lost. I mean, he had written before, I think he wrote Limitless, I believe with a friend of his from Germantown Academy here in Philly. I think he's, by all accounts, he was a really director. Lady Gaga has never acted before and she's nominated for best actress. I kind of think, should you feel sorry for him? No. There's no reason to feel sorry for an incredibly competent, artistic, sensitive, ambitious, gorgeous man. No, no. And who's also healthy and young, and can write a lot more, and perform a lot more, and direct a lot more, so, no.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) We should feel sorry for ... There's so many examples of people in the world to feel sorry for. We can talk about Glenn Close, too, and where that pity you're feeling sorry for.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah, I mean, I do kind of draw that parallel. I mean, do you think it's possible for stars to get to this point where they reached this point in their career where they're almost too big to ever really win?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) No, no, no. I mean look at Al Pacino.

[Interviewer:](#) Because they're always going to be the giant in the category.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) You mean like Meryl Streep or Glenn Close? What do you mean?

[Interviewer:](#) Well, she sort of the exception because Meryl wins any time she is nominated, even if the movie's not quite up to snuff.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Not anytime, but many times.

[Interviewer:](#) Right. But I mean, I think of Glenn Close, or Bradley Cooper has been nominated several times and he never seems to win.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) He's 41, so he's got lots of time. Right? Who won best actor? Oh, Rami Malek. I'm going to say that I think A Star is Born got more of a backlash all in, because people were so surprised it was good. I think that was the ... Like Lady Gaga, look at that. She can act. We all know she can sing, but she was good.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Look at that, Bradley Cooper, he's really good in this role and he's singing.

[Interviewer](#): Right.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I think people were not expecting it to be as good as it was and when it was then, then kind of the pendulum swung, too. It's going to win everything. He's going to win a best ... In the fall, last year when it came out, right?

[Interviewer](#): Yeah. There was a ton of hype in the rollout of that movie.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Exactly. He's going to win everything. Then, when more movies came out and then the press and all those studios and the [inaudible 00:14:00] started positioning things, then it kind of fell out. I think the pendulum went the other way with that.

[Interviewer](#): How much of the stuff is really politics then? Because a lot of it is really the campaign on the release schedule. I've heard the argument that maybe if A Star is Born, if they hadn't released so early in the fall and had come out later, then maybe they would have kept some of that momentum.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Well, that's certainly a would back up what we were just talking about as a pendulum shift in terms of the market's response.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : At every studio, there's a place and the person who are in charge of the politicking or as politicking/marketing/all of that.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : There's a woman who Netflix hired, who used to work, I think, for the Weinsteins. First name is Lisa. I can't remember her last name. She kind of pioneered this whole strategy of figuring out who votes for the Academy Awards and getting in contact with them, and telling them, and pushing and marketing their movie.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : There's a lot of backlash this year about Netflix. I mean, that's a whole category. That's a whole podcast all by itself. Right? Should a streaming platform be entitled to win best picture?

[Interviewer](#): That was really one of the things working against the Roma. Right?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Right. Interesting, actually, Roma is the kind of movie ... It's so funny. We talk about this all the time in my classes about streaming and being able to watch on everything, on your phone, watching a movie, a full length feature on your phone or your iPad or something. Roma is a film that is best experienced in a theater, in the dark, with a lot of other people in the shared experience where people aren't going to get up necessarily and go get more popcorn. That's Kinda that movie. Right?

[Interviewer:](#) Well, I can't tell you how many people I know who say that they're almost through it, and they're on their third or fourth watch session on Netflix. Just like you were saying, it really is that kind of movie that to really good full experience, you need to go sit and focus-

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Go to the theater.

[Interviewer:](#) Things like that wave scene, I mean, wouldn't you want to see that in a theater?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Of course. I mean, he won the cinematography award, which is amazing for a director. Again, talking about these creative souls who put on different hats, wear all kinds of different bags on them, just like Bradley Cooper. I mean to be the DP, to be the person holding the camera and directing, he's amazing, Cuarón, so everybody knows he can walk on water and float on a cloud and all that stuff.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Anyway, It's interesting to me that Netflix as a platform, mostly on small screens. It delivers their content on small screens and that is a specific movie that would have benefited from being in the theater. At the same time, I'm not sure that movie would have gotten made.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Maybe it would have, I don't know, but he had some, I think one of the great things about Netflix, and besides they're seemingly ocean of cash to give to content providers, to use the fancy euphemism for just people can make things.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I think that Cuarón, he had a lot of flexibility. He could cast unknowns, people who'd never acted before. He could film it the way he wanted it in black and white, and that Netflix is like, yes, go. We have you. They know what they have. We have Cuarón, so you do whatever you want.

[Interviewer:](#) Right.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) We're not going to tell you, no one's going to know what the box office is. Even better.

[Interviewer:](#) I guess my question with movies like Green Book and Bohemian Rhapsody is can these movies kind of ... Can all these points being made about the critiques and the portrayals and everything going on behind the scenes, can all those things be valid and still be good movies, I guess is what I'm curious about? It's just kind of a fundamental dialogue.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh, I have so many answers to that. Whether they can still be good movies and all the criticism is valid. Well, I have criticisms about both of those movies. I'm just going to make it personal for a second and just think, and are they good movies? I think that anybody who works in the industry, even peripherally, right, we're going to have ... There's that audience, right? It's kind of like the people who watch cable news all the time, know about politics, and people who like



movies or reading Deadline or Variety, and watching the awards over and over and the little clips. Right?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Then there's the movie going public. Their definition of what constitutes a good movie is different. Their reason and motivation for even going to the theater is different than that first subset of the movie watching audience. Then there's another whole subset right now that's been given their microphone, right, which is fantastic. Social media, it's democratization of responses. Right?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) There's a real legitimacy, validity, to use the word you used, with their criticisms. I mean, it is striking and bitterly ironic that Spike Lee's, Do the Right Thing, lost to Driving Miss Daisy, 30 years ago, with Morgan Freeman driving around Jessica Tandy to Sunday night when Green Book beat out BlackKlansman and the seven others with Viggo Mortensen driving Mahershala Ali around, right? That's staggering.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I think there's just a lot of answers to that question, because I don't think that everything on social media is valid. Nobody would probably think that, right? Everything's valid and that everyone in ... It's art, you have an opinion, people have an opinion on it.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I can just tell you what my opinions on those films are. I think that ... Listen, Bohemian Rhapsody, if you don't like the music of Queen, there's something wrong with you. You have a bad soul or something. It's fun music. I'm not even a big ... I don't know, I'm just like an old housewife and I still ... You hear all the songs and you're like, oh, that's so great, all that stuff. I just like even saying the words Bohemian Rhapsody. What a fun groupings of just words to name a song.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) That movie, I have lots, lots, and lots of issues, none of which I think are even on the social media thing. Okay, I'm just going to say it. I think it's a terrible screenplay. Terrible screenplay.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. I mean, I wasn't too impressed with that portion of it, no.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh, my gosh. The whole idea that I'm old to remember live aid. Definitely, the phones were ringing prior to Queen's performance. That's absurd. It's like, who made that note to put that in? The writers are really good writers, so I suspect that that just had a lot of hands on and somebody was like, no, we have to raise the stakes and make it seem like Queen is having such an impact, let alone he wasn't diagnosed with AIDS until two years after live aid.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Okay. Actually, that latter point, I understand what they did it. So I don't think there's a really good screenplay, but I think it's a crowd pleaser because it's the music.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. That's kind of how I feel about it. If you're looking at it as a crowd pleasing movie, sure.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : But is it the best movie? No, and thankfully it didn't win.

[Interviewer](#): Yeah. Right. That's sort of the thing. That means it's fine. That doesn't mean that it's best picture, necessarily. It wasn't.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Then, Green Book has a lot of ... Listen, as I told my screenwriting class yesterday, this is probably completely unfair, but I'm about to say, but the guy, the writer, Nick Vallelonga, and I know he's apologized for this, so I shouldn't say this, but when they unearthed the tweets after 9/11, right, that makes me want to scream, right? That makes me think this this is a really despicable human. Then I have to say, you're an adult and you can't say that.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : What I'd like to think about Green Book is that he is telling the story that he honestly believes it's true. A story that he honestly, he feels he is translating correctly what his father told him. Can we say, that's not valid? Well, I don't know if we can do that because that's his life experience.

[Interviewer](#): Right.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : People are saying that, or that it didn't open a big enough lens, sorry, into the whole ... Like Don Shirley's family. Why didn't anybody call his family and why didn't ... There's a bad visual to do a movie about racial reconciliation and everybody up on the stage except for Octavia Spencer and Mahershala Ali, are white men. That's bad. I mean, if you're going to tackle that kind of subject.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : At the same time, I don't think everybody involved in that movie wanted to elicit this, of course they didn't want to elicit the backlash, but they didn't want to ... I think they're probably mystified, many of them, as to why is receiving this kind of a backlash, even still.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I don't think filmmakers as a whole, any of them set out to make a bad movie or an offensive movie, and I'm sure that a movie like that they thought they were doing the right thing, no pun intended.

[Interviewer](#): What is an extravagance to you? How do you treat yourself?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Oh Gosh. I buy books. I buy books and more books, and I need to stop buying books, because apparently it's a dying art. No.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : For me it's that, I would say that and shoes, but that's not quite as charming as the book extravagance.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I always wanted to be a writer. So when my first book was published, I made a little pact with myself that whenever I wanted a book I would buy it. This was pre iPads and e-books and stuff. I think my husband would attest that I've done a pretty good job of that. I bought a lot of books, and I love it.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I'm somebody who even when I was young and would go away to school, I would need to take my boxes of books. I need to think more deeply about this attachment I have to them, but it is a genuine visceral attachment. I need to have books around me.

[Interviewer](#): Do you have a lot of bookcases and display shelves?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Yes. Oh my gosh, we have a room. You know those Billy bookcases you buy at Ikea, you get them when you're in college?

[Interviewer](#): Yeah.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I hadn't like, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, like nine of them, and they're all in this little room we have with bean bag chairs and Ikea chairs, and that's the reading room, and my kids go up there to play video games, but I read books there.

[Interviewer](#): Yeah. Who do you admire?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Living? Dead? Doesn't matter?

[Interviewer](#): I'd say living.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Living people. Gosh, Kathleen. All right. Well, I'm going to say Erica Armstrong Dunbar, who is my co-author on this young reader's book I just did. It's called Never Caught, and it's about a slave of George Washington's who ran away.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Erica is a rockstar historian/writer. She has inspired me so much. She's very clear that her mission is to ... She takes the business of putting African American women in the center of American history. She takes that business very seriously. It's been a real privilege to be able to work so closely with somebody who is so clear about her mission and her goal, and she just approaches it with such integrity and discipline and passion. I'm awed.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I'm awed by John Leguizamo. I mean, these are people I know. Okay? So I'll start with that. I used to work with John Leguizamo. He's a creative wonder kid. If you don't know who he is, you should find his stuff and see it. One of the most, there's two out of many remarkable things, the two most remarkable things in my opinion is one, he's just a font of creativity all the time, every way. His brain is always working, ideas, ideas, ideas, ideas, expression, expression, expression.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Then, he's all about the work. He's been in well over a hundred movies and some get great reviews and some get horrible reviews and everything in between, and he's just like, next, next, next, what's next? What can I do? What can I do? He doesn't let things bring him down. I think that's he's really inspirational to me.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Let me think. What was the question again? Who do I-

[Interviewer](#): Who do you admire?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Who do I admire? Okay. I'm going to regret that I can't think of where people I admire.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : He just died. William Goldman, the great screenwriter, William Goldman. I admire Anne Lamott, the woman who wrote Bird by Bird.

[Interviewer](#): Oh, yeah.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Love her, love everything about her.

[Interviewer](#): I've re-read that book three times in my life already.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Yeah. You know what? You'll always be able to keep going back to it. It's one of those kinds of books. I'd say Stephen King's book on writing, let alone all his other novels, I think he's just seems like such a supremely decent man.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : This is so random. Oh my gosh. But I do think I admire this guy, John Brennan. I see him on TV and I just trust him. I want him to run the world. Okay.

[Interviewer](#): He's very reassuring.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Yeah. He's so smart and honest. Oh my gosh, Michelle and Barack, would that I knew them so I could call them by their first names. I admire them, I admire them, I admire them. I know probably everyone listening to this won't believe it, but I'm not even saying that about politics. Decency. People who can live decent lives and be leaders and set the example that they have set. We don't know what a blessing we have with those two, I think. Or maybe we do.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Then there was someone else. Who'd I say? John Brennan. Jeez Louise, I'm all over the place. Who do I admire? Oh, I can say some writers I like. There's a writer named Lily King. I love her work.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : I love Graham Moore. He wrote the Imitation Game, but he also wrote a book called the Last Days of Light, which I loved. I guess-

[Interviewer](#): That's a lot.

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Yeah. I admire lots of people.

[Interviewer](#): Yeah. Where do you like to eat in Philadelphia?

[Kathy DeMarco](#) : Fried Chicken. I love fried chicken. I wish I didn't. Federal Donuts right now is my favorite. There's a new place, this is New York City, that just, it's a Filipino fast

food chain and I can't remember what it's called, but the article that I read about it has the word "chickenjoy" as if it's one word. I just love that word. Anyway, I love fried chicken. I definitely Federal Donuts and that would be my favorite, I guess.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) What else do I like to eat? Okay. I eat like a 12 year old boy. I don't eat cheese sticks anymore, but I've been told by my son who eats cheese sticks all the time, that Del Sandro's is the best by far, and that's a mile from our house. So we're there a ton.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I wish I were more of a Foodie, but I'm not. I love the ... What's it called? [inaudible 00:30:34]. I can't remember. It's an Italian restaurant. It's fantastic, and I can't remember the name, but it's one of those small little bistro eat kind of places that I love.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I do love the one, the guy who owns Federal Donuts. What's the Israeli place down by the Ritz?

[Interviewer:](#) Oh, Zahav?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Zahav.

[Interviewer:](#) Of course.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Yeah. That's amazing. Amazing.

[Interviewer:](#) Do you like Los Angeles?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Love Los Angeles? I love it. I don't have a lot of regrets. I do regret never living there full-time and not going there right after Penn. I regret that.

[Interviewer:](#) It gets a lot of flack. What do you think people get wrong about it?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) You get to be outside. If you can't appreciate the landscape in Los Angeles, again, there's something wrong with you. It's tough. I get it. Especially if you work in the film business, but if you like the outdoors and you'd like to be ... I like to run, and you can run on the beach, you can run in the trails, you can go hiking all the time, and the canyons, they're crazy.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Also, I think on a creative level, again, let's bash all the Hollywood people, but there are so many. What do I find? I love people who think very fast, very quick on their feet and are creative and they live out there. Yes, you have to weed through some people who are all about the games playing stuff of Hollywood, but once you find them, you really feel like you've met your tribe and that's just amazing.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I think there's so much to recommend in Los Angeles. I don't like earthquakes. I don't like mud slides. Obviously, the fires are terrifying, all of that. There's the plastic culture, et cetera. The appearance on looks, the focus on youth. I don't know what we do about that, given that even those young people today focusing on youth, they're going to get old, and they're going to be crotchety and their time. If you can just forget it, just go out there and just go and take deep breaths and go for a great hike. What's not to like?

[Interviewer:](#) What do you think is an overrated virtue?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) An overrated virtue? Being frugal. I don't know if this is my Italian background or what, but my caveat is if you really don't have any money, you need to be frugal, in my opinion, that's not what I'm talking about. But this idea of frugality and not being generous with everything, I don't like.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) You said overrated virtue, so I would say an underrated virtue is generosity of everything. Spirit, money, intelligence, wisdom.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) This is so dumb, but I always have this thing. I was in an Oscar Wilde phase for a long time and read a lot, read his works and read about him and I was still mad at him. This is going to sound insane, but he would meet all these young boys all the time, not talking about that, and he would talk. He was just this magnificent mind as an intellect, and yet he never opened it up for girl. He never told the young or old, maybe some younger or older women, but for the most part, his focus was only on men, understandably on one side, but just, I don't know, be generous with that kind of wisdom.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) I think it's two sides of the same coin, but I think being miserly, I have a really hard time with that. Especially if you have a roof over your head, and at the same time when somebody [inaudible 00:34:19] doesn't have a lot of money, is really quietly generous, not asking for accolades for that. They're my favorite people.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. What is your favorite place to be on campus?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh, that's a good question. I love the new room here in the library, the Moelis reading room with the clear ... You know when you walk in on the first floor and you go all the way to the end, it's just revamped. It's amazing. It's quiet. Have you been there?

[Interviewer:](#) No.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh, you have to go.

[Interviewer:](#) I need to check it out.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) You should go on your way out. It's kind of old school library. It's kind of an interesting and the evolution of libraries, right? We've lost this idea of the green shaded lamps and sitting on these beautiful tables, almost if you get in the [Furnace 00:35:02] building here, which is also, I'm sure everybody says that the art building, the Furnace building, but that reading room is amazing. I love my office. I have to say I really love my office and Fisher-Bennet.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. With your candy dish.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh my gosh. My candy dish. You know what else I love? I'm sorry. I really, I can't believe I forgot this. I love Kelly Writers House. I think Kelly Writers House. Wow. I wish that had been here when I was a student. That is a place everybody needs to visit and go to at least one event there. It is a special, special place.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. What do students most often ask you?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) How do I get an agent? How do I get an agent? How do I sell my screenplay? Also, am I any good? Am I any good? Tell me the truth. I can take it. Am I any good? It's constant.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. What is the hardest part of your job?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) On a personal level, it's just getting through. If each student writes a full screenplay, that's 120 pages. If I have 15 of those students plus another class of 15 kids who are each writing at least minimum 50 pages, that's a lot of work just to go through, but that's my job.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) The hardest part is when I have a talented student who doesn't put in the work, because that's just sad to me because they have all the potential in the world.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) To go back to the movie talk, I can get very overwhelmed thinking about all the battles that are going on between the studio system and Netflix, et cetera. What I do to kind of calm myself down is think, oh my gosh, how many opportunities now exist for writers? It seems infinite to me. So when I have a student who's really talented but doesn't ... Everybody at Penn is so smart, so they kind of take it for granted. That's really hard and I try to impress upon them, but whatever. Also, youth can be hard, just youth, when you're like, oh, don't make those mistakes, but that's part of growing up.

[Interviewer:](#) Yeah. What is your favorite movie?

[Kathy DeMarco :](#) Oh, I should be totally prepared for this. I know I should be prepared for this. I'm going to say Little Miss Sunshine, today. This'll change as soon as I walk out this door. I ask all my students these movies. Again, the ones I've said already, Shawshank Redemption, I loved the Graduate. All About Eve, All About Eve, All About Eve, All About Eve, All About Eve.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#)

You know what I just saw that I loved? Steve Jobs, the movie, the three act movie that kind of crashed. I think Aaron Sorkin is really, really a wonderful writer. I love Goodwill Hunting. Yay, Goodwill Hunting. I love Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Love Princess Bride. Love Sense and Sensibility. I've see Jane Austin, the original, but, Emma Thompson who was another one of these amazing talents who can do everything, write and act, and probably direct, and just be a wonderful, honest person.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#)

I've said too many movies, but what did I start with? Little Miss Sunshine, Michael Lawrence. Go Michael.

[Interviewer:](#)

I like to ask this of every guest. What gives you hope? Just generally. It can mean whatever you want it to mean.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#)

What gives me hope is when both my own kids who have to do some writing now and my ... In short answer is when people look up from their screens. Longer answer is when my students still want to write about human connection. That gives me great hope. When they write about it a quest, it doesn't have to be a romantic love, it can be just a friendship or a parent child, or anything, and a need for human connection, that gives me great hope.

[Kathy DeMarco :](#)

I wish I could add something about climate change here because that's what terrifies me. I wish that I could say like, that other thing gives me hope, but I don't quite know enough about the remedies to that. Anyway, I mean, yeah. Green new deal. That gives me hope, too.

[Interviewer:](#)

This podcast is a production of the Office of University Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. We hope you'll join us again soon for another session of Office Hours.