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PERSON: Welcome to another episode of the "Talks at Google" podcast, where great minds meet. I'm Mistral, bringing you this episode discussing the recently released film, "On the Basis of Sex," about the early life and career of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. "Talks at Google" brings the world's most influential thinkers, creators, makers, and doers all to one place. Every episode of this podcast is taken from a video that can be seen at youtube.com/talksatgoogle. This conversation with Googler Rachael Janowski includes Justin Theroux, director Mimi Leder, and screenwriter Daniel Stiepleman, who is RGB's real-life nephew. "On the Basis of Sex" was inspired by the true story of a young Ruth Bader Ginsburg, then a struggling attorney and a new mother who faces adversity and numerous obstacles in her fight for equal rights throughout her career. When Ruth takes on a groundbreaking tax case with her husband, attorney Martin Ginsberg, she knows it could change the direction of her career and the way the courts view gender discrimination.

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The film also chronicles the storybook-like romance between Ruth and Marty, a partnership that succeeded both personally and professionally. Here is Justin Theroux, Mimi Leder, and Daniel Stiepleman: On the Basis of Sex.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Welcome. Please join me in welcoming our panelists today. First, right here to my right, we have Mimi Leder. She's the director. Has had a long, successful directorial career spanning decades, with numerous TV shows which I think you've heard of, "The Leftovers," "Vanish," "John Doe," "E.R." among them, and several film credits including "The Peacemaker," and one of my personal favorites, "Deep Impact." Then we have Justin Theroux. He plays Mel Wulf, who was then the head of the ACLU.

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Justin's known for his work with David Lynch on "Mulholland Drive" and "Inland Empire," and most recently seen as Kevin Garvey in HBO's "The Leftovers," Tom in "The Girl on the Train," and Dr. James K. Mantleray on Netflix's "The Maniac." And then we have Daniel Stiepleman. He is the film's screenwriter and the real-life nephew to Justice Ginsburg.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Oh. Oh, that's nice. What a happy accident of birth.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Exactly. So I think to start off with, I would love to ask you, Mimi, how did you get involved with this project?

MIMI LEDER: Well, I was given the script by my manager, my agent, John Leven, Robert Cort, our producer, and Jonathan King, also our producer, president of Participant, sent me the script, and I immediately read it and felt that I had to do it.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Yeah.

MIMI LEDER: I just felt like I really understood her.

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Having, you know, lived through a very--in a very different generation and in a different industry. You know, lived through a lot of discrimination and inequality and, you know, just had to fight the fight in my profession, in my world. And I felt a commonality with Ruth being a woman, who's a mother, who's Jewish, who's been in a long-standing marriage and know what that takes. And I, you know--breaking the glass ceilings in our own ways for generations to come. And I just felt this is a story about a living icon, someone who I have--who did so much for our country and changed the world as well for all of us. And I just felt very lucky to have been able to direct this film.

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RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Well, I got to see it earlier this weekend. I think we're lucky to get to watch it. It's fantastic, so you should all definitely check it out. It'll be in theaters in Christmas. So, for Daniel. How did--first, nephew to Justice Ginsburg. Pretty exciting.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Why is that always first?

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: First. And, you know, I think--growing up, did you realize the impact that Justice Ginsburg was having sort of in the world and our country's laws, both as an attorney and a Supreme Court justice. Was that a part of sort of the dialogue in your home or?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Well, mostly I just found it confusing, because I was born after all the events of this film, and so people would say, "Oh, that's your aunt and she changed the world." And I'm looking across the Thanksgiving table, and she's just very quietly, very slowly, you know, eating her turkey dinner, and I'm going, "Her? Really?" 'Cause I had--you know, I had a vision in my head, I think like a lot of us, of what would a feminist from the '70s was, right?

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It was Gloria Steinem standing in front of a crowd, bringing everyone to their feet. And here's my quiet aunt, you know, who changed the world, and part of what I came to appreciate and understand from writing the movie is that--my voice is very loud--is that--is that, you know, sustainable change takes a Gloria Steinem to shift the culture, and it takes a Ruth Bader Ginsburg to change the laws and the institutions.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: You are quoted saying, "One of the great joys of writing the movie was that it felt like I got to really know her for the first time." So what were some of the surprising things you discovered as you wrote the screenplay or as you sort of dug in and put this together?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Yeah. I mean, she's my aunt, but she's 50 years older than I am. Marty was 13 years older than my mom. My older brother is ten years older than I am. So, like, I grew up with her grandkids. And so, you know, for me, like I said, she's a very private person, and so to get--it's not that there was like this one thing that was so surprising. It's just--I mean, if you think about your--I assume everyone's relationship with their aunts and uncles, you don't really sit for hours and talk about, like, "What did you and your husband fight about?"

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"And how did you make up? And what did you"--and you certainly probably never had to write a sex scene between them. And so--so--

MIMI LEDER: There was no detail in that script. None.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Oh yeah. I gotta say we had a screening the other night in D.C., and the moderator asked Ruth how she felt about the sex scene, and she goes, "Marty would have loved it." That has nothing to do with the answer to your question, but it's really funny.

MIMI LEDER: That is the answer.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: You know, so it was just a matter of asking the hard questions, you know. For my wife and I, when we got married, we very consciously said to each other, "Let's be like them. Let's be Ruth and Marty." So I was, like, on this stealth mission to figure out how did they build this marriage where they were--not only did they both have incredible careers, which is I think is something we're getting better at these days, but they were also equal partners at home, where they--you know, Marty did all the cooking because Ruth was a god-awful cook.

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But they shared the load of, like, getting food on the table and taking care of the kids and getting the kids to school everyday and all that. And, statistically, we still suck at that. And so understanding how they pulled that off with such confidence and love and mutual support was the goal of writing the movie.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Yeah. Speaking of that scene, the bedroom scene, why was it important to include that scene in the movie? Why portray this aspect of her life specifically?

MIMI LEDER: Well, because everybody has made love since the beginning of time. And everyone's human, and everyone makes love. And it was really important to show her as a real, authentic woman. And it was really interesting, though, not shooting the scene with Armie and Felicity, it was cutting the scene that was--you know, made me had to think. 'Cause, you know, I had--you guys haven't seen the film, but it's very tame. It's not even really a love scene.

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It's--I mean, it's very tame, and I had it far more risqué. You know, I had her sitting on him. I mean, it was--they got into it a little. And then I was in the editing room going, "Oh. No. I don't know. I don't know if RBG will like this."

JUSTIN THEROUX: Her nephew wouldn't have.

MIMI LEDER: He was like, "No." And it was really interesting. So it was deeper and more contemporary than it is in the film. And then I just said, no, let's make this really simple. But the point of the story is I'm at--we're at dinner after we showed it to her with this tame version and her biographer--her official biographer--went, "Oh, my god. The sex scene." And I was like. And she goes, "Oh, it was just so much." And I said--

JUSTIN THEROUX: Woah.

MIMI LEDER: I was like--I said, "Really?" I said, "You should've seen it before."

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And then she said to her, "Well, what do you think, Ruth?" And all eyes go to RGB, and she goes, "I'm fine with it." And it was really funny. Anyway--

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: For Justin, so I know you and Mimi have worked together before on "The Leftovers," but how did you get involved with this project? Was it through your relationship with Mimi or through a different sort of avenue in?

JUSTIN THEROUX: It was, I think--I mean, yes. Mimi sent me the script and said, you know, "There's this part that I'd love for you to play," and blah blah, so I said of course. I mean, I read it and then--.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Eventually.

MIMI LEDER: He didn't read it. He just said yes.

JUSTIN THEROUX: Yeah. I just read my parts and then, eventually--

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: And it sounded cool. So you read--your parts sounded great. And, you know, a lot of the characters that you've taken on have been sort of eccentric characters in different ways but fictional characters. What was it like playing someone who obviously is a real-life person, and how did you sort of prepare for the role and get to know Mel as a person?

JUSTIN THEROUX: I think of him as an eccentric character.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: That's true.

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JUSTIN THEROUX: I mean, he was an odd duck, kind of. We didn't have any source material on him, really. There was no--Felicity and Armie were able to look at photos and videos and, you know, hear audio recordings. We didn't have any of that. We sort of knew what his, you know, trajectory was and his career. Just, you know, there was sort of newspaper clippings of--newspaper clippings--there was the Internet about him. So we--I got to play around a little bit more, but he was kind of a controversial figure at the ACLU. And I know you haven't seen the film, but he was a bit of a misogynist, even though he was very progressive and forward-leaning and taking on a lot of very important issues as it relates to, sort of, Constitutional stuff, the First Amendment, and some civil rights issues, but feminism wasn't really on his radar, at least advancing through the ACLU. And also I didn't have--just, I didn't have to do any sort of mimicry, you know to--'cause we couldn't find the guy, frankly.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Right.

MIMI LEDER: Justin steals every scene in the movie.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: He does.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: The one's he's in, anyways.

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Just stop showing up.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: I guess, for Daniel and Mimi, how true to life was the relationship that you portrayed between Ruth and Marty? And there's so much of it that are these sort of quiet moments of

their domestic life, but then also them sort of pioneering together within the legal profession, and how much of that was really true exactly to--it's based on a true story, but--

MIMI LEDER: Well, I would say that, you know, the Justice was very--worked very closely with Daniel, and he can speak to that--that everything--she was a stickler on the law. And it was, you know--not being a family member, but just being a director and wanting to portray a marriage that is long-standing and a real equal partnership, I really understood that, and I really--you know, when you hire incredible actors, no matter how incredible you are--they are--you never know if it's really gonna work.

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You never know if the chemistry's gonna really hit. And it did. And a lot of the relationship is, I believe, really, truly authentic in the feelings of love and equal partnership. And it was important to get the stuff in between the lines. The looks. The feels.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: But the lines were pretty good too, right?

MIMI LEDER: They were okay.

JUSTIN THEROUX: Lot of polishing.

MIMI LEDER: Yeah, and Marty...

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I was asking for that.

MIMI LEDER: Did bring her the case, and it was really important to all of us, and especially RGB, to tell the story the way it happened.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And why--why did you specifically choose this period of her life to focus on for the film, for the screenplay? Because she's obviously had an enormous and impactful career across decades.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Which was a point she made when I raised it with her, actually. You know, I heard the story of this case for the first time--it was at my uncle's funeral.

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A friend of his got up and gave a eulogy--it was in 2010--and he mentioned the only case that Ruth and Marty ever argued together. And it was like, wow, it's the two of them fighting in court for exactly what they figured out how to live at home, real equality. And it was the first case she ever argued. And it was the first case to convince a federal court that women should be considered people under the U.S. Constitution, despite the fact that they argued it by representing a man. So there's so much about the story that I thought was fascinating, and I thought, "This would make a great movie." And then I thought, "What kind of asshole am I? I'm sitting here at my uncle's funeral mining his life for material. That's not, like, a thing you can do." And so I was like, "Okay, clearly I can't write this." And I sat on it for over a year. But then finally I just couldn't stop thinking about it, and so I called Ruth and I said, you know, "I'd like your permission. I'd love your help." And she raised the exact same point you did. "I argued other cases. I argued bigger cases. I argued cases in front of the Supreme Court." But once I said, "Yeah, but this is the one that's about you and Marty. This is a movie about a marriage."

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Then she--well, I was gonna say she got excited, but what she actually said was, "If that's how you want to spend your time."

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Fair enough.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: That's Ruth Bader Ginsburg for great enthusiasm.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: One of my favorite scenes in the movie was the moot court scene in the home beforehand. I thought it was a really great way to incorporate Pauli Murray into the film as well and, you know, and her sort of impact as a pioneer in this space too. Was this something that really happened? The moot court scene? Was this based on anything, or is this completely brought in to sort of show the dynamic and the preparation?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: No. At first, actually it was--I agree. It's my favorite scene in the movie. But it came initially just out of, like, need as a writer. Because what was happening in the first draft was, you know, like, you're getting up to the end, towards the third act, end of the movie, you're building up to the climax in court--"We'll see you in court"--and then she goes marching into court, and then the whole movie has to stop to explain how federal court works. And it was just killing me on the page. [Inaudible]. Yeah, exactly.

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MIMI LEDER: Everybody would have gone to sleep.

Stiepleman: And so what I finally figured out was, oh, if I can put in a moot court 20 minutes earlier, I can teach the audience how this is all gonna work, so that by the time we get to the end I don't have to stop to explain it all. And so it's like, initially it was just, like, a structural thing to teach the audience how to keep score during the final scene. It's like in "Invictus", that movie about rugby, where, like, they have to stop and explain how rugby works to the American audience before they--and so that's where it originally came from. And then out of that, it just kept all these more--because there's so many characters there. Mel Wulf's there, you know, being a jerk--in the most charming way possible--you know, and, you know, Ruth and Marty are there. And it's--I don't want to spoil the movie, but it's a huge turning point in the film.

JUSTIN THEROUX: Spoiler alert. She gets on the Supreme Court.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: That's the moment she gets on the Supreme Court. And so it becomes this sort of crucial moment, because all of the main characters sort of reach a big turning point in their relationships moving forward in the film.

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But it was made up.

MIMI LEDER: Yeah. But it was really important to the Justice to have Pauli Murray in the film and Gerald Gunther, her teacher. Pauli Murray, you could do a movie just on her alone. And so in that way, it was paying tribute and honor to what they had achieved and done in the Civil Rights Movement.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I think there's something, to Ruth's credit--she didn't give me very many, like, big notes about how she wanted the movie to work, but the one that she gave me was--well, the two that

she gave me were, "Get Marty right," and she just said, "I just don't want people to think that I invented this area of the law, as if it never occurred to anyone before me that women should be considered people under the 14th Amendment." And she said, "I built my career on the shoulders of women who came before me, like Dorothy Kenyon, like Pauli Murray, and people should know that." And I'm like, "What am I supposed to do with that note?" And so as you see in the film, Pauli--so, Pauli's is in that scene and Dorothy Kenyon plays a big role, played by Kathy Bates, who's incredible.

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RACHAEL JANOWSKI: So, one of the things I noticed a lot was the film portrays this really special relationship between mothers and daughters. So, there's a lot of Ruth with her daughter, with Jane, but there's also glances of Ruth at her mother's picture and sort of the sentiments her mother had shared with her. And as you were developing some of the dialogues that go on between Jane and Ruth in the film, were those some insights that Justice Ginsburg had shared with you, or that potentially Jane had, as you thought about them or where they just crafted from--a lot of them I could actually imagine myself and my mother sort of having some of those conversations at home.

MIMI LEDER: Absolutely.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: But for the development side of it.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I mean, none of the dialogue was real dialogue. You know, it was taken based on research. I remember at one point I said to my mom--I was like, "I'm having trouble figuring out how to write Jane." And she goes, "Oh that's easy. Just write Clara," who's Jane's daughter. And I was like, "Oh, I know how to do that." 'Cause they're, like, a family of really strongly opinionated women who do not hold back, which is what we love about them.

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Most of the time. I will say that right after we had a screening for the family and we went out for dinner, and Clara goes, "Mom, is that what you were like when you were a teenager?" And Jane tried to hedge, and she, like, hesitated for a second, and Ruth just busts in and goes, "Yes." I think, you know, that dynamic of being a fighter and how you learn it from your parents, but also you can't, like, admit that to yourself that you got it from your parents.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: I can invite anyone to come up to the mics. I'll continue to ask some questions, but if you can make your way up there if you have any questions.

PERSON: How is Justice Ginsburg doing these days with her ribs? Is she feeling better?

MIMI LEDER: She's fantastic. She has other ribs.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: She's already back at work and back in the gym, so--

PERSON: Great. Great. Good to hear.

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And, second, with this nature of Hollywood coming out with sequels--her life is so grand and so epic. Are we gonna see a sequel? "On the Basis of Sex 2?"

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I'm not writing it.

MIMI LEDER: That's very interesting. I mean, I think the other film would be her relationship with Justice Scalia, and I think that would be...

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: That would be the one to make.

MIMI LEDER: A great story to tell.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I've gotta go. I have to write that.

PERSON: Thank you. I can't wait to see the movie.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Thank you.

MIMI LEDER: Thank you.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: That was a good answer, the Scalia answer.

MIMI LEDER: Thank you.

PERSON: Hi. I just wanted to ask about the ongoing conversation, socially and politically. And I'm sure the creative process took quite a few years, and over those period of years the conversations has really kind of grown, as far as the women's rights, with Me Too and what not. How did kind of the social escalation of all of these issues either inform or weigh on your creative process?

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JUSTIN THEROUX: It was interesting when we are shooting it, 'cause, you know, all the--you know, Harvey Weinstein and Kevin Spacey--all those things were breaking literally around, so we were all showing up on sets going like, "Have you read the"--this, that, and the other? It just felt like there was this avalanche of things happening. It didn't really, at least for me--

MIMI LEDER: No, it didn't

JUSTIN THEROUX: It didn't really affect what we we're doing as far as--'cause we already had our story in place, you know. We weren't really changing anything on the fly because some asshole, you know, got into trouble, you know. So we just sort of kept doing what we were doing. I mean, if anything, it sort of added to the--you know, we weren't timing this movie with these movements, you know. But it--of course, you know, telling more stories about her life feels more relevant in this time were we feel like we're taking enormous steps backwards, you know, or at least the last couple of years.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I feel like it changes the experience as a viewer, right? Like, 'cause when I started this movie in 2011, I started saying to people, "I'm going to write a movie about Ruth Bader Ginsburg."

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And they would be like, "Well, the biggest problem is nobody knows who Ruth Bader Ginsburg is." And it's like now, as you said, she's become this pop icon, and that all happened after the movie was written. And so it's sort of my experience--like, I thought I was writing the movie that was gonna introduce the world to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and then it becomes--like, for me now, what the movie feels like it's about in a lot of ways is it's still about how Ruth changed the country, but it's about how she change the

country--like, today, looking at it in 2018, it becomes about how she changed the country by convincing people who disagreed with her to agree with her rather than trying to destroy the people who disagreed with her. And that feels like--now, for me as a viewer, that feels like the poignant lesson of the movie. It's like, there was a time when we didn't try to destroy each other, and maybe we can get back to that if we are willing to, like, learn what Ruth has to teach us.

PERSON: As you were doing some of the research or as you are putting together the film, was there anything that you learned about Justice Ginsburg that to you--during the making--that you wanted to include in the film but either she vetoed or didn't want or that you just couldn't fit in to the story line?

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DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Well, I should say for the record, there was never a time that she ever said, "Oh, I don't want that in the movie." I mean, the only reason she would do that was if the law was wrong for the way the law was practiced was wrong. But she never once gave a note based on ego, which is, I think, really kind of incredible. Because she went through--I sent her the script the first time in she's like, "Oh. Daniel. I'm in the middle of reading the Affordable Care Act. Can you call me back in 20 minutes?" And I'm like, you know, okay.

JUSTIN THEROUX: 20 minutes?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Yeah, exactly.

JUSTIN THEROUX: She read it in 20 minutes?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Well, she was in the middle, so 40 minutes. And so then I call her back and she's like, "Okay. Page one." And then she goes through it like a contract. And, she'd be like-- literally, I mean, like, the opening line of the screenplay is, like, a pair of heels amongst a sea of loafers. And she's like here on page one you have me wearing a pair of heels, but in those days I used to walk to Harvard, and so I never would have worn heels. And I'm like, this is how this is gonna go? Buckle in. Like, we're going.

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And then I have to argue it with her, right? 'Cause that's what you want to do, is get into a debate with Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

JUSTIN THEROUX: Yeah, you're gonna win that, right?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Well, I did win that one. The heels are in the movie.

Yeah. DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I was like, "It's orientation. It's a special day." And so, but--and then we get to, like, scenes where she fumbles. And I'm going, oh no. What's she gonna do? If we have to go ten minutes on the heels, what are we gonna do when we get to that? And then she'd be like, "And skip the next five pages." I'm like, "Really?" And said yeah. And I said like, "Well, 'cause you kind of fumble over here"-- I don't know why I decided to negotiate against myself--"but you kind of fumbled over here." And she goes--and she goes, "Oh, yeah. It has to be that way. It's more dramatic." And you're like, oh, okay. That's nice.

PERSON: Speaking of the heels in the beginning, one of the things that I thought was really poignant but also really interesting in watching the film is how many moments--and maybe it's based on sort of, like,

you mentioned, this last year of sort of the political discourse and the conversation that's been heightened--but all of the moments where she's the only woman, either literally in the room or even in the conversation.

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From the opening scene to, obviously, the dean's remarks in Harvard, the elevator rides up to the interviews.

MIMI LEDER: Yes.

PERSON: I mean, just moment after moment in the film. I assume that was intentional?

MIMI LEDER: Very intentional.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Spotted. And it worked really well.

MIMI LEDER: Even when there was nine women, I would only put maybe one or two in the same frame, because in a sea of men, it would be just little dots on a map.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Right. The dinner party that is hosted.

MIMI LEDER: Yes.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Was that something pulled--was the dinner party hosted by the Dean of Harvard...

Leder; Yes.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: For "the ladies," as he called them, who had been accepted that year and "taking the spots from men."

MIMI LEDER: Yes:

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Was that--is that sort of verbatim as how it went?

MIMI LEDER: Verbatim. It is exactly--

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I have been accused of being heavy-handed in writing that scene.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Really?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Because people are like, "Clearly that couldn't have happened. I'm like, "No, that's exactly how that went down."

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MIMI LEDER: The only thing different from how it happened was we put it at a dining room table, and from what I can gather, it was in a room where there were--

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Small tables.

MIMI LEDER: Small table. But it felt more--the visual felt stronger to put it at a table, because she dropped the ashtray in reality. And it just felt better to drop it off a dining room table where people are smoking while you're eating, which--

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: This was the '50s.

MIMI LEDER: Very '50s.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Just pointing out --

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Please--oh, thank you. Please.

PERSON: Hi. Thank you. I'd love to hear a bit about the casting pro process and finding the perfect person to portray Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

MIMI LEDER: Well, so we had a list of women who could play RBG, and I kept focusing on Felicity Jones. I kept looking at the young RGB pictures and Felicity, and I felt there was a striking resemblance. And Felicity has a really deep, deep inner life, from what I've seen in her work, and I felt that she could--it was just instinct. You have instinct. You have to go on your instincts when you're casting 'cause you never really know. Sometimes you--like, I knew Justin actually could just inhabit this guy, and we don't often see Justin be this person. In fact, I've never seen you be this person.

JUSTIN THEROUX: Yeah.

MIMI LEDER: So I didn't know he could actually do it, but I knew he could, if you know what I mean. I had not seen it before, but I knew he was the right guy. And beautifully, beautifully performed. But, you know, finding, you know, Felicity Jones was a big key. And we sent her the script on a Thursday in London, and then she replied on Monday with a yes, which is very rare in our business.

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You know, it takes months for someone to read and someone to agree to something. And she immediately agreed to it. And then there was Armie Hammer, who I've never seen do this kind of role either, but I had a real desire and hunch that he did--that he had in him. 'Cause I always thought was charming, and he never really played a guy like this. And he's the only one I wanted. It was like I was at the agency and they have--you go through this process where the agents show you--it's horrible to say this in front of an actor.

JUSTIN THEROUX: I know what happens. It's not like, "What happens, Mimi?"

MIMI LEDER: You're in this room and they give you all these pictures and resumes. You have your own lists anyway. And you go through them and--no, no, yes. Like, it's horrible.

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But I just knew that Armie could inhabit this character and bring his unique charm and wit to it. And I also loved the height difference. And thought that was really--

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Which is accurate.

MIMI LEDER: 'Cause Marty was tall and Ruth is a little, tiny, beautiful woman, and I really loved the idea of this kind of frame, which is really hard to do, and which goes to picking the format of how you shoot something. So this was shot in 1.85, and 2.35 is a much, you know, shorter frame and stretched out. And with such a tall person and such a shorter person, you want a ratio that's like this. And also to fit the

Supreme Court in a shot. And how far back people do you put your camera to get this wide shot? Well, in format 1.85, you can do it. I don't know if that's interesting, but.

PERSON: Extremely. Thank you. I'm so excited to see it.

MIMI LEDER: Thank you.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: And I just want to add, because I've known Ruth and Martin for a long time, that their portrayals of my aunt and uncle are uncanny.

[00:29:01]

It's really kind of freaky.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: A final question for you all. So, the film portrays Ruth as herself, obviously, and as a working mother who can kind of do it all. She's top of her class at Harvard, she's attending her courses and her husband's courses, she's caring for her husband during his illness, she's raising two children, she's working full-time as a professor, and in her, you know, spare time, she sets in motion changes that really are she reshaping, you know, women's rights and human rights. What is the message that you're hoping particularly--any viewers, but particularly women and girls--are taking away from this film after they watch it?

MIMI LEDER: Well, I hope that women, and particularly young women, take away that they can do anything. Women can do anything. And that you use your voice to make this world a better place.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Go for it.

[00:29:58]

JUSTIN THEROUX: I was gonna say one of the things that I like so much about--I don't know what--you know, I hope people take away, obviously, sort of a renewed or first-time or whatever interest in her life and, obviously, all the things she went on to do. But one of the things I really liked about this, just as a woman in a film, as a lead in a film is, you know, often times mothers or professionals are portrayed as sort of, like, "I'm a working mom but I can't get work right," you know? Or like, "But I can't get mothering"--you know, like mothering--well, there's just always, like, a give and a take. You know, it's like, the career is great, but, you know, at home it's a mess, you know. Or home's great and work is a mess. And Ruth really didn't really have--you know, she just really did everything really well just by dint of extremely hard work. So just--I hadn't really seen that represented so beautifully, you know, in a film before. So I hope people take away her work ethic. And also the fact that she-she hasn't just done an enormous amount--these are not things that can be undone, the things she's done.

[00:31:00]

You know, when you create strong case law, you know, that's not a plant you can just unpluck and, you know, throw away. You know, that's there for good. You know, she made a lot a very extremely permanent changes in our country.

MIMI LEDER: Yeah. May I just add one thing?

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Of course.

MIMI LEDER: I just wanted to add that, you know, she didn't do it alone. You know, she did it--

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: That was my thing.

MIMI LEDER: Oh, sorry. I didn't want to leave that out.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: I didn't mean to interrupt and steal your thing. Go on.

MIMI LEDER: All right, you say it.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: No, I'm not doing that. Go for it.

JUSTIN THEROUX: Don't slip on that banana peel.

MIMI LEDER: You know, that they had an equal partnership. That was a real metaphor for the film. And that, you know, that love and family are--you know, the most important thing in life is connectivity and how you share your life and the choices you make in choosing the people you love and that love you. Very important.

[00:32:00]

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Yeah, I was gonna say, with all due respect, I disagree with the formulation of the question. It's not that Ruth did all those things. Ruth and Marty did all those things. And I can tell you, as a guy, from experience, the bar to be considered a supportive father--supportive husband and a good father is, like, incredibly low. Like, I take my kids to school every day and people are like, "You're the best father in the world." Meanwhile, my wife is curing cancer and is made to feel guilty that she's not, like, baking for bake sales. And so, you know, I just feel like I hope that that's a walkaway from the film is that my wife and I were so benefited from having Ruth and Marty as our role models for what a marriage can be that--and, you know, part of the reason for writing this was I realized I was in this privileged position to share that with other people. So, if nothing else, the movie is a great date movie, if only as a barometer so that, like, if you walk out of the theater and the guy is like, "That guy couldn't exist," like, just run away.

RACHAEL JANOWSKI: Great. Well, it's a beautiful love story.

[00:33:00]

And then also, you know, adding on the sort of momentous changes that she, with others, helped to put for our country's laws is pretty incredible. So thank you all for coming here today.

DANIEL STIEPLEMAN: Thank you.

MIMI LEDER: Thank you.

PERSON: Thanks for listening. If you have any feedback about this or any other episode, we'd love to hear from you. You can visit g.co/talksatgoogle/podcastfeedback to leave your comments. To discover more amazing content, you can always find us online at YouTube.com/talksatgoogle, or via our Twitter handle, [@googletalks](https://twitter.com/googletalks). Talk soon.