

Women's Fund Speech — May 6, 2026

Good evening everyone, and thank you to the Women's Fund for creating this space and for inviting me to be here.

I was asked to introduce the films tonight, and I want to begin by briefly acknowledging the work of Janet Fitch, whose films a group of us came together to archive after her passing.

Some of you may know Janet or her work. She was deeply committed to telling stories that centered women's voices and experiences. Over the past year, with the support of the Women's Fund, we have been working to archive her films and make them freely available online. The goal is simple—that her work can continue to be seen, shared, and used by anyone who wants to engage with it.

The first film we will watch tonight is *Gender Gap*, released in 1984. At that time, the film captured a shift—when women's concerns were becoming central to national political conversations. It engages with issues like equal pay, childcare, healthcare, labor, environmental justice, and reproductive rights.

Watching it today, what is striking is how current these issues still feel. The context may have changed, but the core questions remain. It is a reminder that progress is not guaranteed—and that staying engaged, especially in civic life, still matters.

The second film, *Most Dangerous Women*, comes from an idea Janet developed after attending a reading of a play that deeply moved her. The film draws from a reader's theater production that brought forward stories of women's peace and justice activism—stories many people had never learned in school or even imagined before experiencing the work.

The phrase “most dangerous women” has a history. Women who speak up, organize, and challenge systems are often labeled “dangerous”—not because they are a threat in a literal sense, but because they disrupt what is comfortable and expected.

Janet began this series in Wyoming, the first state to grant women the right to vote. With support, she completed this film as the beginning of what she hoped would become a larger series across the country. In many ways, it connects to a longer history—from the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in 2020 to the more recent global movements where millions of women have come together to demand rights and recognition.

Together, these two films speak to each other—one looking at policy and public discourse, the other at individual courage and action.

As a filmmaker, I feel very connected to that idea. The work does not end with making a film. It continues in how it is shared, who sees it, and what conversations come from it. And that is where the idea of a ripple feels important.

The Women's Fund speaks about driving lasting change for gender equity—through advocacy, programs, and collective giving. But what stands out to me is how that work creates ripples.

A film gets archived. Someone watches it years later. A conversation begins. Someone sees something differently or decides to act.

That ripple is not always visible in the moment—but it moves outward.

Even this invitation—to reflect, to share what resonated—feels like part of that. It asks us not just to receive, but to respond.

In my own work—whether it is a film on incarceration in Wisconsin or environmental change in Hyderabad—I am thinking about how stories can create that kind of movement. Not in a grand way, but in small, steady ways that stay with people.

So I hope tonight is not just about watching these films, but about noticing what stays with you. What shifts, even slightly. What you might carry forward.

And I encourage all of us to continue supporting spaces like this—not just by donating, don't get me wrong, donations in this climate where arts funding has been cut is critical, but by showing up. Come to screenings. Watch the films. Tell someone about the work. That is how this ecosystem sustains itself.

And maybe, in our own ways, finding the courage to be just a little more “dangerous.”

Thank you for being here.

Without further ado, let us begin with the *Gender Gap*, followed by the *Most Dangerous Women*.