

STAIN RESISTANT

A film by
SHRUTI TEWARI



A WOCF Lab presentation

CAST: ANJALI BHAI, AMEERAH GROVER, SAREEKA MALHOTRA, SHRUTI TEWARI, ALLISON VON HAUSEN
CINEMATOGRAPHER: RYAN CASTANEDA, EDITOR: DIANA CHEN, COMPOSER: JUSTIN PORTIS
WRITER, DIRECTOR & PRODUCER: SHRUTI TEWARI

2022

**A
SHORT FILM**

**BY
SHRUTI TEWARI**

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

SYNOPSIS

This is a story of two women, former classmates from Delhi, who reconnect in Silicon Valley in their forties, after taking completely different paths through life. Sunny came to the US after an arranged marriage and raised a family in Silicon Valley. Tara, a single New Yorker, is a successful journalist content with fulfilling her career ambitions. After being ghosted for a decade, Sunny meets with Tara on the very day that her husband, a tech CEO, is caught in a sting operation. Unbeknownst to each other, both women were abused by the same man, and they had remained silent for different reasons. On this day, one has chosen to fight back while the other contemplates giving up. With words remaining unspoken, they recognize each other's trauma and resolve to liberate themselves of their stains.



Director's Statement



Shruti Tewari
Writer, Director &
Producer

I made this film as a call to action for all women trapped in abusive marriages to choose self-preservation over self-sacrifice. Given the recent incident of an Indian American woman in New York, who ended her life of daily abuse at the hands of her spouse, my film is sadly even more relevant today, as the South Asian diaspora engages in assessing its collective responsibility in bolstering our patriarchal values.

Artistically, I've been inspired by directors like Mira Nair and Deepa Mehta whose portrayal of the feminine is, both, delicate and hurt; restrained by society, yet screaming to break free. My exploration of the female mind strives for similar balance between social constructs and independent thought, while also provoking reflection through metaphorical artwork and ornamentations placed in frame.

In "Stain Resistant," when my young protagonist is being coaxed to accept her fate in an arranged marriage, I use the crushing action of a mortar and pestle to emphasize the stronghold of society on this girl's choices. The metaphor of stains and the festival of Holi are referred to throughout this film. During Holi, the vibrant festival of colors celebrated in India to mark new beginnings, one is accustomed to dealing with superficial stains on our skin, our clothes and even our homes. While these are easily glanced over and forgotten, the stains on our souls continue to impact every subsequent decision in our lives and have been put under the magnifying lens in this film.

I am also drawn to reflective surfaces, not just to showcase the inner turmoil within a character's journey, but also to magnify the multitudes we carry within us as products of two different cultures. In my films, I like to include imagery that alludes to the endlessness of certain aspects of society, such as patriarchal value systems that have weighed upon women's choices for countless generations. Through such depictions, my hope is for the audience to identify similar patterns of suppression of choice in their own lives and confront their own convictions in the process.

Overall, my filmmaking approach centers on gentle revelation of egregious occurrences and their impact on a character's choices through poetry, metaphor, and cultural nuances defying stereotypes.

Cast List

Anjali Bhaid as SUNNY/SUNAINA

Sareeka Malhotra as TARA

Ameerah Grover as YOUNG SUNAINA

Shruti Tewari as SUNNY'S MOTHER

Allison von Hausen as WAITRESS





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Writer & Director Bio



Shruti Tewari
Writer & Director

SHRUTI TEWARI has spent over two decades in the creative arts with acting projects ranging from a Bollywood blockbuster to numerous award winning independent films. After her stints in investment banking and tech, she, an MBA from Mumbai and MIA from Columbia University, changed course to authentically represent minority voices.

A contributing playwright to Playground writer's pool, she has written several plays and screenplays. Earlier, she was selected for the Sundance Collab directors and producers programs to develop her first feature film, "Flares," the screenplay for which is an award winner at the Alliance of Women Filmmakers Scriptwriting Competition and a finalist at WeScreenplay Diverse Voices Screenwriting Lab as well as the Big Apple Film Festival. She was also a finalist at the Austin Film Festival Virtual Pitch Fest, 2020. Her pilot script, "Letters in Her Name," was a second rounder at Austin Film Festival in 2021. Another feature she wrote, "Mixed In America," was a semi-finalist at the 1497 screenwriting lab for South Asians.

This year, she was selected for the Women of Color Filmmakers Lab where she got to bring her script for "Stain Resistant" to life. She received a grant from Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and from the BraveMaker Film Festival Pitch Fest to partially fund this project. Prior to this, she wrote, directed and produced two short films. Her first film, "Trail Past Prejudice," won the Silver Remi Award at WorldFest Houston and played at over a dozen festivals worldwide. Her second short, "Mum" premiered at Silicon Valley Asian Pacific Film Festival in 2021 and won an Award of Merit at the Best Shorts film festival among other recognitions.

She was awarded a Certificate of Honor by the City and County of San Francisco for creating positive impact through the arts for her mentorship in juvenile halls.

WHY THIS FILM?

- Normalizes breaking the silence over suppressed traumas amongst women
- Focuses on those who remain unseen and unheard amidst the success stories of the "model minority" community
- Challenges cultural preconditioning and patriarchal value systems in immigrant communities

WHY NOW?

- Women's rights and choices continue to be curtailed in many ways, now more than ever
- Cultural incongruence, control over one's choices, and the weight of forever being torn between two worlds and identities



SUPPORTED BY:



WOMEN OF COLOR
FILMMAKERS



Highlights



- Previous versions of the script for "Stain Resistant" have placed well in different screenwriting competitions
- All female cast
- Significant majority of women in the crew
- Passes all diversity and inclusion benchmarks including Bechdel Test
- Immigrant story written, directed and produced by an immigrant



"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." - Martin Luther King Jr.

HELP US SPEAK UP

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