

JAY CHARAN

RASHMI RUSTAGI

FRANK LAWSON

DESIGNED BY

# Preeti

... when the old life no longer fits



STARRING RASHMI RUSTAGI JAY CHARAN ANNA KHAJA FRANK LAWSON PUNEET SANGEETA AGRAWAL SHAVYA SAMALA JEWEL HARGROVE RANJITA CHAKRAVORTY  
 CINEMATOGRAPHER LOKESH AKULA DIRECTOR GAYATRI BAJPAI EDITORS BRIAN FEENEY, ALEX ZAJICEK COMPOSER MARK RHODES, DAN PINNELLA, RIC MARKMANN  
 POSTER ARTIST SAAD VISUALS PRODUCERS RASHMI RUSTAGI, PRIYANKA PARANJAPE, ARATI MISRO, TANYA MOMI  
 WRITERS RASHMI RUSTAGI, WENDY MOULTON-TATE, YASHNA MALHOTRA



DESIGNED BY  
*Preeti*



**LOGLINE**

*Designed by Preeti* is a romantic drama about a woman's journey from spouse abuse to personal and professional empowerment as she experiences real love for the first time with someone outside her rigid community.

[www.designedbypreetimovie.com](http://www.designedbypreetimovie.com)

GENRE: ROMANTIC DRAMA  
UNION: SAG  
LOCATION: SAN FRANCISCO, BAY AREA, CA  
ASPECT RATIO: 2:39:1  
FILMED IN 6K ON A RED KAMODO  
RUNTIME: 93 MINUTES

DIRECTOR: GAYATRI BAJPAI  
WRITER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: RASHMI RUSTAGI  
PRODUCER: PRIYANKA PARANJAPE  
PRODUCER: ARATI MISRO  
PRODUCER: TANYA MOMI



SCAN FOR  
WEBSITE AND  
TRAILER

RASHMI RUSTAGI



*Avengers*  
*Never Have I Ever*

ANNA KHAJA



*The Walking Dead*  
*The Good Place*

RANJITA CHAKRAVARTY



*Never Have I Ever*

JAY CHARAN



*For All Mankind*

SANGEETA AGRAWAL



*Amar Colony*

**WHY OUR FILM AND WHY NOW**

There is a notable lack of films that center on South Asian women, particularly those over fifty. *Designed by Preeti* addresses this gap, bringing much-needed diversity to modern cinema.

Inspired by actual events, this film shines a light on the abuse women face, cutting across religious and socioeconomic boundaries. It courageously delves into timely themes such as divorce, mental health, gender inequality, ageism, LGBTQ bias, and interracial relationships.

What makes this film even more unique is a predominantly female crew of color and a cast of first-generation immigrants over fifty.

*Designed by Preeti* is not just a movie; it's a voice for an underrepresented community. Now is the time to amplify this powerful narrative and share it with the world.



Contact: Rashmi Rustagi, [rashmi.rustagi@gmail.com](mailto:rashmi.rustagi@gmail.com), 310-498-8194, IG @designedbypreetimovie



# SYNOPSIS

Preeti, a graceful woman in her 50s, leaves her abusive, unfaithful husband, Ajay, and steps into an uncertain future. Battling ageism and sexism, she courageously starts her own dress-design business while working to heal the strained bond with her daughter. She forms a genuine friendship with Jackson, the kind-hearted owner of a restaurant and bar. Preeti faces ridicule and exclusion from her Indian community for defying her husband's abuse and for her connection with Jackson. As she navigates her new life, Preeti discovers that freedom has its consequences.

# BTS PHOTOS



# SOCIAL IMPACT

***Designed by Preeti* is more than just a film - it's a catalyst for change, shedding light on critical social issues and inspiring action.**

By sharing a woman's courageous journey from an abusive marriage to self-reliance despite social pressure, stigma, and financial challenges, this film increases awareness and understanding of the complex factors that shape the experiences and actions of domestic violence survivors.

While the story unfolds through a South Asian immigrant lens, it is universal to any woman who has struggled to leave a toxic relationship and reclaim her power and happiness - a situation that is unfortunately all too common.

One out of three women experience violence in their intimate relationships through their lives. And this violence can occur in any relationship, no matter the culture, background, education, or socio-economic status.

***Designed by Preeti* has joined the movement to end violence against women, which is more critical than ever.**

**Collaborating with Service & Advocacy Groups:** To amplify its impact, *Designed by Preeti* has partnered with organizations like Narika and Maitri, which are dedicated to supporting South Asian domestic violence survivors and preventing abuse. We are also starting to work with mainstream service agencies, like CORA (Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse) to expand our impact beyond the South Asian American community. These collaborations focus on raising awareness, providing resources, and supporting action.

**Fostering Community Conversations:** The film serves as a platform to initiate dialogue about cultural norms, gender roles, social stigma, and other factors that contribute to domestic violence in any community. Through screenings, panel discussions, and conversation guides, *Designed by Preeti* encourages communities to reflect, discuss, and take collective action to cultivate healthy relationships and support survivors.

***Designed by Preeti* is a self-financed labor of love. We need your support to expand our reach and impact.**

Together, we can transform narratives, create positive social norms, and build a future where everyone lives free from violence and fear.



'When Friends Turn Their Backs', by Tanya Momi



## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Born and raised in India, my childhood was immersed in storytelling through radio dramas and stage plays.

Driven by a passion for social change, I've written and produced short films that aim to inspire a more equitable society. Among these is *Unborn*, a poignant exploration of female feticide in Indian American communities, now streaming on Amazon Prime.

My journey began with an arranged marriage at 21, bringing me to the United States, where I've spent most of my life acting, raising children, and navigating the complexities of Indian and American cultures. These experiences have shaped *Designed by Preeti*, a film exploring the lives of Indian women across three generations as they confront issues like domestic violence and interracial relationships while balancing tradition and modernity.

*Designed by Preeti* sheds light on hidden struggles, giving voice to the voiceless and inspiring change. This film is more than a story—it's a call for empathy, empowerment, and transformation.

## HOW *DESIGNED BY PREETI* CAME TO LIFE

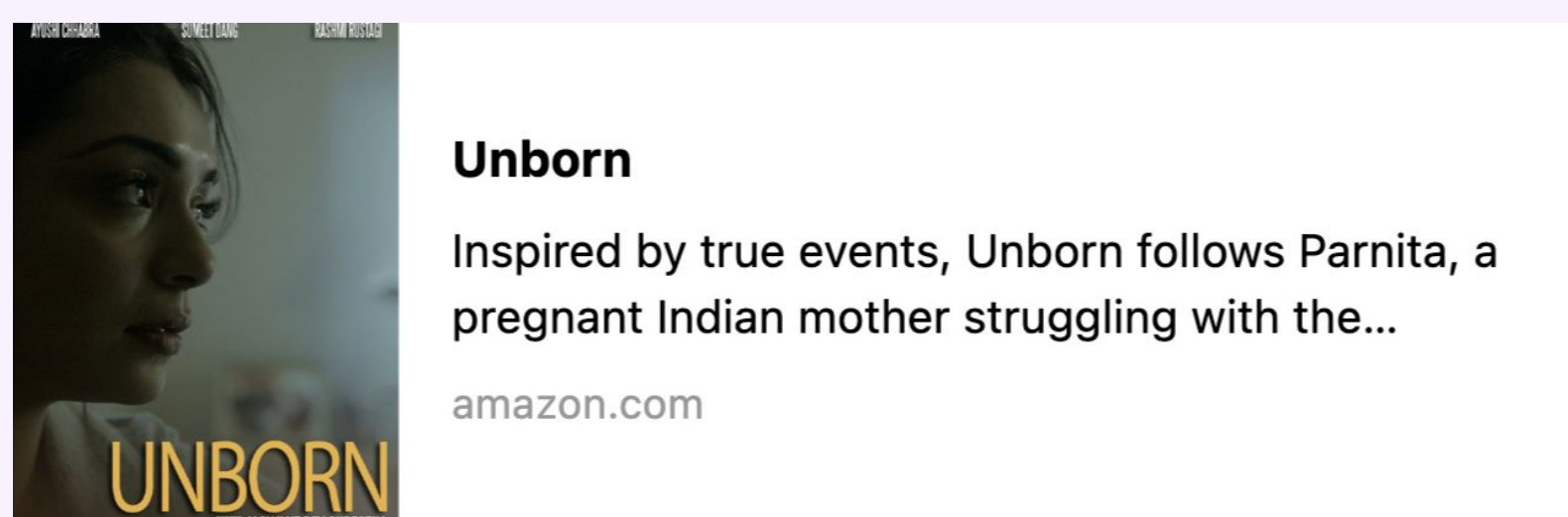
While living in Palo Alto, California—a wealthy and highly educated suburb—I encountered South Asian women in their 50s trapped in abusive marriages. As a storyteller, I felt compelled to shed light on the dangers of control and abuse. When a young relative faced a similar ordeal, this mission became personal. After two years of writing and refining the script, *Designed by Preeti* was born.

By 2023, I entered pre-production, raising funds, rallying support, and securing filming locations—many offered for free by those who believed in the project. Tanya Momi, a domestic violence survivor and producer, contributed her artwork for the sets, saying, “As a middle-aged immigrant who survived years of abuse, I finally feel seen.”

As a Screen Actors Guild (SAG) member, I recruited professional actors willing to work on a modest budget. Fiscal sponsorship through *From the Heart Productions* (a 501(c)(3)) allowed us to accept tax-deductible donations, and by the end of 2024, production was complete.

## CREDITS

**Unborn, award winning film I wrote and produced:**



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AFTER THE SCREENING

We've held several virtual screenings of *Designed by Preeti* for domestic violence support organizations. The film was met with an overwhelmingly positive response, with many women sharing their own experiences or those of friends and family.

Here's a sample of the questionnaire we used:



## 1. Reflection on the Film

- What moments in the film stood out the most, and why?
- How did the film portray the complexities of domestic violence within a South Asian American family?

## 2. Cultural & Societal Factors

- How do cultural expectations around marriage, gender roles, and family expectations influence a survivor's ability to seek help?
- What role did extended family and community play in the survivor's experience—were they supportive or complicit in maintaining the cycle of abuse?

## 3. Barriers to Seeking Help

- What were some of the obstacles the survivor faced in the film, and how do these compare to real-life challenges in South Asian American communities?
- How does immigration status, financial dependence, or lack of culturally competent services impact a survivor's ability to leave an abusive relationship?

## 4. Taking Action

- What emotions did the film evoke, and how can we channel those emotions into action?
- What steps can you take to prevent domestic violence and support survivors?
- What can we do to create safer spaces for survivors to speak up without fear of shame or judgment?
- How can we engage religious leaders, elders, and community organizations to encourage healthy relationships, challenge harmful norms, and support survivors?
- How can we engage men - husbands, fathers, brothers?

'Beaten But Not Broken', by Tanya Momi



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My attraction to directing *Designed by Preeti* lay in how it follows a middle-aged South Asian woman's journey of self-discovery and empowerment. Like a woman waking up from a terrible dream, Preeti looks around her and resolves to change her destiny. Her transformation begins quietly at first, then with increasing strength and fire. While the film highlights her escape from abuse, it delves deeper into what comes after: the resilience required to rebuild, the courage to rediscover love, and the possibility of thriving at any age with the support of a few good friends.

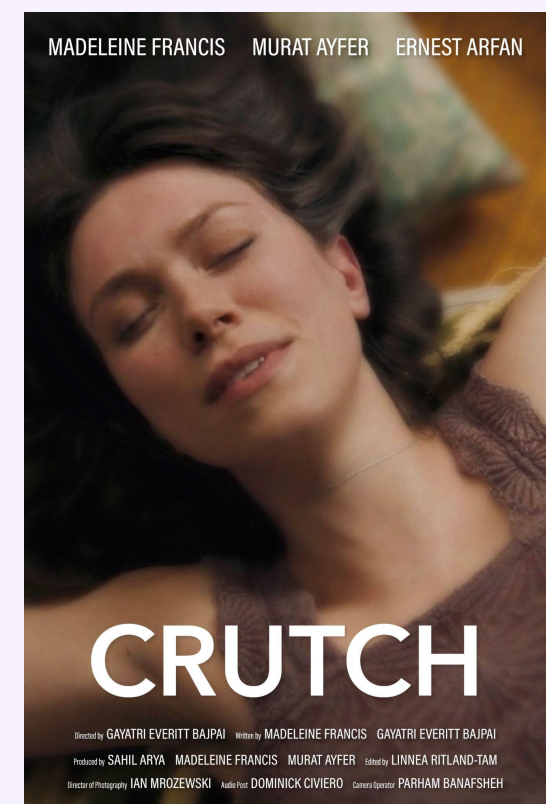
On a subtler level, it is also about how the South Asian community is not a monolith. It moves beyond clichés of overbearing mothers and arranged marriage conversations. We get to watch a contemporary, diverse group of South Asian friends in their 40s and 50s navigate love, work, and social expectations as they rally around our heroine, who herself is going through a kind of second adolescence.

Indie filmmaking is never without challenges, and our Bay Area cast and crew put their heart and soul into this labor of love. Directing this incredible cast has been one of the joys of my career, and I take great pride in how our team came together to bring a fresh and unique set of immigrant characters to life. I hope that this story creates its ripple effects in inspiring others to find their authentic selves and claim their spaces, especially within the South Asian community. Most importantly, perhaps it will make one more woman struggling with abuse behind closed doors feel less alone.



## CREDITS

Award winning films directed by Gayatri Bajpai:



# CAST AND CREW INTERVIEWS



## PRESS

[Click here for Press Coverage in New India Abroad](#)

[Click here for Press Coverage in India Currents](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT RASHMI RUSTAGI

rashmi.rustagi@gmail.com

# CAST BIOS

## Rashmi Rustagi

As Preeti Kumar



Rashmi Rustagi plays Preeti Kumar, the lead, in *Designed by Preeti*. Born and raised in Lucknow, India, Rashmi has brought stories to life since a young age, starting with radio plays and theater. You may have seen her in movies such as *The Avengers*, *Perfect Mismatch*, *India Sweets and Spices* and *Hungry*, and TV shows like *Grey's Anatomy*, *Atypical*, and *Never Have I Ever*, to name a few. She has written and produced several short films on narratives advocating social change. She acted in the short film *Bienvenidos a Los Angeles*, which was shortlisted for Best Live Action Short Film at this year's Academy Awards.

## Jay Charan

As Ajay Kumar



Jay Charan plays Ajay Kumar, Preeti's not-so-nice husband. He has a BA and MFA in theater from New York. He has worked Off Broadway with such playwrights as Tony Kushner on *Homebody/Kabul* (world premiere), Theresa Rebeck on *Omnium-Gatherum*, Julie Marie Myatt on *Someday*, and many more. Some of his film/television credits include *Inside Man* with Spike Lee, *Hungry*, *Cardboard Boxer*, *Stumptown*, *For All Mankind*, *The Brink*, *Windfall*, and *Law and Order*. Last year, he shot USC-GRAD (pilot) *Failure to Launch* by Jay Mandyam LIVE in front of a studio audience. He has done voice-over work and ADR/LOOPING for feature films & television. He is a lifetime member of The Actors Studio and a founding member of Connection Theatre Company in NYC.

## Anna Khaja

As Sonia Singh



Anna Khaja plays Sonia Singh, a lawyer and friend of Preeti. Anna is an award-winning TV and film actress, writer, and solo performer best known for her roles as 'Manisha' on NBC's *The Good Place*, 'Indira' on AMC's *The Walking Dead World Beyond*, and 'Miriam Arselanian' on *The Lincoln Lawyer*. She also stars as Jaya in the Netflix feature *Definition Please*, directed by Sujata Day and produced by Ava Duvernay. Anna is also the Grand Prize Winner of Screencraft's 2023 Pilot Competition (for her second pilot, *What Doesn't Kill Me*). Her first pilot, *Infidelle*, landed her the Google x Black List Storytelling Fellowship and acceptance into both Mentorship Matters and Diverse Voices labs. She is developing *Infidelle* into a series with Rosewood Television and Executive Producers Laurie Zaks and Nastaran Dibeï (*Dear White People*). Her play 'Shaheed: The Dream and Death of Benazir Bhutto' had an acclaimed and extended Off-Broadway run in NYC. *Time Out* called her performance "a wonder," and the *NY Times* praised her as a "gifted actress." *Edge Magazine* said *Shaheed* was "a one-woman triumph, and a testament to Khaja's talent, capacity and gifts, of which Hollywood must take full notice."

## Frank Lawson

As Jackson Simmons



Frank Lawson plays Jackson, a friendly bartender. Frank, an actor-singer-writer, graduated from SMU Meadows School Of The Arts with a BFA in Theatre. He has appeared on screen in *Mind Your Business*, *Wild West Chronicles*, *General Hospital*. He starred in *Marilyn The Musical* at Paris Hotel in Las Vegas, the NAACP award-winning James Brown musical *Down Around Brown Town* and played Ben Vereen in Edgar Arceneaux's play *Until, Until...Until*, which won the top honor at Performa 15 in NYC. He also crooned in the one-man musical *Songs From An Unmade Bed*, sang with Jennifer Nettles in *Mamma Mia* at the Hollywood Bowl and toured Asia in *RENT*. His other credits include *Porgy and Bess*, *Hair*, *The Who's Tommy* and *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*. He is a recipient of LA Ovation and NAACP Awards for his portrayal of Billy Strayhorn in *When Jazz Had The Blues*. Lawson has shared stages with legends Debbie Allen, Ben Vereen, Michelle Lee, Bernadette Peters, Ossie Davis and Grammy winner Angelique Kidjo.

# CAST BIOS

## Sangeeta Agrawal

As Revathi Nagarajan



Sangeeta Agrawal is an award winning actor and filmmaker with more than 30 years of acting experience on stage and in film. She caught the stage acting bug in college and continued to pursue her passion after moving to the US. In recent years, Sangeeta started acting in films, winning many awards for her performances. She believes that being an actor has allowed her to live several lifetimes within one. Her films have screened at many prestigious festivals such as Tribeca, Cannes Film Festival and the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. Her most recent work is the Netflix funded TV pilot in which she plays the protagonist of the show. Sangeeta made her writing and directing debut with a short film, Five O'Clock Shadow. She has since written and directed several shorts, although acting will always be her first love.

## Shavya Samala

As Malika Kumar



Shavya Samala plays Mallika Kumar, a college student and a singer. Her character embarks on a transformative journey, grappling with the complexities of family dynamics. With her recent standout performance in “Mirage,” which was recognized in numerous film festivals, and her role in the acclaimed ‘Venus As A Boy,’ which earned accolades at Tribeca Film Festival, Shavya proves her versatility time and again. From her captivating debut on Netflix’s ‘Santa Clarita Diet’ to her appearances on shows like ‘On Call’ on Amazon, she leaves an indelible mark in the industry. Fluent in Telugu and with upcoming ventures in Telugu cinema, Shavya is set to enchant audiences worldwide.

## Jewel Hargrove

As Susan Smith



Jewel Hargrove plays the role of Susan, Preeti’s friend and confidante. Susan hails from the temperate rain forests of Washington State - raised between ferns and musical theater. She Most recently she finished writing and starring in her short film Reverberate- an intersection between mental health and martial arts. She is also Chair of a few SAG-AFTRA Subcommittees, and loves discovering new storytelling worlds with other good humans.

## Ranjita Chakravarty

As Biji



Ranjita Chakravarty plays the warm, talented role of Biji. She has had numerous appearances in Bay Area South Asian Community theater groups. She directed The Square Root of a Sonnet, Water, and Alipha for Bay Area Drama Company, Chitra, Kingdom of Cards, and A Nice Indian Boy for EnActe Arts. She has acted in numerous short films, feature films, and Indie projects. Recently, she was a recurring guest star in Netflix’s Never Have I Ever, where she played the role of Patti/Nirmala. Ranjita has worked at Stanford University since 1998 and is currently a Director of Internal Audit.

## Puneet

As Harminder (Harry) Singh

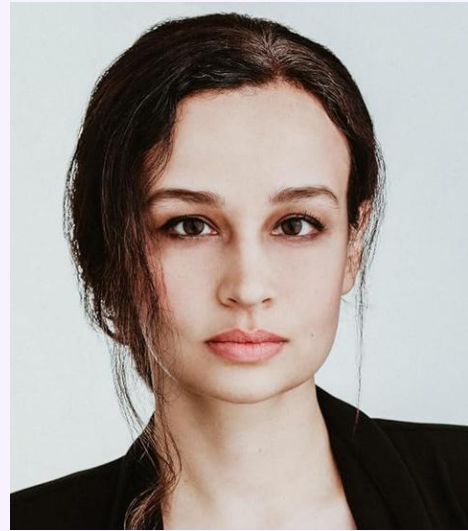


Puneet plays Harminder (Harry) Singh, Preeti's friend and confidante. He is a film and theatre actor in San Francisco/Los Angeles. His filmography includes features, shorts, and series. He was recently seen as Indian freedom fighter Lala Hardyal in the Punjabi film, “Sarabha – Cry for Freedom,” which enjoyed a global theatrical release last November. He can next be seen in the feature film - “Not Tonight,” in which he plays the lead. He returned to theatre for a brief stint recently, in the lead role of Aidaa Peerzada’s “Children of the Wise,” one of the selected plays in the 46th Bay Area Playwrights Festival.

# CREW BIOS

## Gayatri Bajpai

Director



Gayatri Everitt Bajpai is an award-winning director raised in Delhi and based in Vancouver and Los Angeles. Gayatri holds an MFA in directing from UCLA. She won UCLA Directors' Spotlight Awards for two of her short films, MUCK (2013) and Housewarming (2017), and produced Francis Ford Coppola's Live Cinema (2017), a documentary called Distant Vision. Gayatri was one of three directors on the anthology feature, Rio (2017), executive-produced by James Franco. Gayatri and her co-director Nirav Bhakta won HBO's 2019 APA Visionaries Competition with their film Halwa (2018), which was licensed by HBO, and launched on Disney Plus in India. Most recently, she directed Yatra (2022), a short film that blends the mythical world of the Ramayana, with one immigrant's experience in modern-day America. The film has won Best Director at the Mumbai Indian Cine Film Festival and the Toronto Feedback Female Film Festival in 2023.

## Rashmi Rustagi

Writer, Executive  
Producer



Rashmi is a passionate filmmaker devoted to producing films that drive social change. Her award-winning SAG film Unborn casts a spotlight on the issue of female feticide and is streaming on Amazon Prime. Her latest project, Designed By Preeti, tackles domestic violence and aims to uplift survivors. Rashmi brought together a skilled team, secured filming sites, arranged funding and got the film finished. Rashmi leverages her filmmaking talents to confront and raise awareness of vital social challenges, proving her to be a significant influence within the film industry. Her unwavering commitment to telling stories that matter underscores her role as an impactful force for change.

## Priyanka Paranjape

Producer



Priyanka Paranjape was born and raised in Mumbai, India, and now is a San Francisco local. After receiving her M.A. in Communication and Journalism from the University of Mumbai, she kickstarted her career with the Indian version of the popular quiz show 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire,' where she worked as a content creator and researcher. While working on digital content and television, she focused on production and was an OTT crime series executive producer. Priyanka got her second M.A. in Broadcast and Electronic Communication from San Francisco State University and started working as a producer for feature and short films. She aspires to bring finesse to big and small productions and is particularly interested in bringing South East Asian stories to the screen.

## Arati Misro

Producer



Arati brings 20 years of experience in the Entertainment, Tech, Education & lifestyle business. Her expertise includes feature films, TV, product sales & startups. She has worked with Sony Pictures, Fox, Netflix, Paramount, and Apple, to name a few. Arati produced a podcast for diverse women and sold it to Warner Music India. She has judged for various international film festivals and is currently a Juror for the Hungarian Film Festival of Los Angeles. Her extensive experience with Silicon Valley startups was a great training ground, as she worked alongside product managers from Google and Apple. Her experience chairing Women in Film, LA, has allowed her to hone in on her passion for mentoring and giving voice to countless women worldwide. She received recognition from President Obama.

## Tanya Mami

Producer



Tanya Mami, an inspirational artist known for her diverse work in realism, cubism, abstract, social realism, and spiritual art, draws deeply from her life experiences. Born in India and a Fine Arts graduate from Chandigarh, Tanya moved to the U.S. after marriage. Surviving over nine years of marital abuse, she divorced and focused on raising her children and building a business in Silicon Valley, pausing her painting for 22 years. Her series on the suffering of a single, divorced woman features impactful pieces like "When Friends Turn Their Backs" and "Beaten but not Broken." Tanya's work has led her to speak on women's empowerment and leadership at prestigious venues worldwide, including the White House. Her story is one of resilience, empowerment, and the transformative power of art.

# CAST & CREW

**Cast:** Rashmi Rustagi, Jay Charan, Anna Khaja, Frank Lawson, Shavya Samala, Sangeeta Agrawal, Jewel Hargrove, Ranjita Chakravarty, Puneet, Anish Chandak, Sami Kuncharapu, Vasanti Bhatt, Monica Chitkara, Havish Ravipatti, Palak Joshi, Francis Perry, Jackie Dallas, Tracey Silver, Gurudev Nagaraja, Kavita Malaviya, Allison Ewing, Vicki Beretta, Nicki Randhawa, David Schively, Ritu Marwah, Vinata Karra, Tanya Momi.

**Executive Producer:** Rashmi Rustagi

**Director:** Gayatri Bajpai

**Cinematographer:** Lokesh Babu Akula

**Story By:** Rashmi Rustagi

**Written By:** Rashmi Rustagi, Wendy Moulton-Tate, Yashna Malhotra

**Producers:** Rashmi Rustagi, Priyanka Paranjape, Arati Misro, Tanya Momi

**Production Designer:** Riverjoy

**Editors:** Brian Feeney, Alex Zajicek

**1st Assistant Director:** Andre Marigny

**2nd Assistant Director:** Rosa Garcia-Ayala

**Original Score:** Mark Rhodes

**Sound Design:** Ric Markmann

**Unit Production Manager:** Priyanka Paranjape

**Line Producers:** Rashmi Rustagi, Priyanka Paranjape

**Production Associate:** Weiming Wang

**Script Supervisor:** Katie Grubbs

**Production Assist:** Dimona Jeller, Joshua Perdomo, Carmen Nathalie, Carlos Cortez, Elyssia Tingley

**1st Assistant Camera:** Alex Zajicek, Jessica Le, Camen Hodges, Diana Rodriguez

**Additional Photography:** Brian Feeney

**Hair and Makeup:** Emily Frew, Mayra Aguiar, Carla Grace Fajardo

**Set Photographers:** Joanne Brohmer, Tejpal Reddy, Simcha Moyal

**Artwork:** Tanya Momi

**Gaffer:** Bryce Myrah

**Key Grip:** Peter Dendrinis

**Grips:** Kevin Kodama, Benny Vinas, Darwin Saquilayan, Marc Lenahan, Nolan Gonzales, Lyle Kahney

**Production Sound Mixer:** Buntheon Real

**Dialog Editor:** Sven Martin

**Re-Recording Mixers:** Ric Markmann, Sven Martin

**End Titles and Credits:** Tony Jonick

**Wardrobe Coordinator:** Alice Xavier

**Colorist, Conform Editor, and VFX Artist:** Moksh Chitkara

**Singer of "Point of View":** Shivani Rustagi

**Song Composer of "Point of View":** Simon Wilson

**Lyricist:** David Lin

**Hindi Songs: Written, Composed, and Produced by:** R. M. Menon

**On Set Chef and Catering:** Tanya Momi, Ravi Handa

**Social Media:** Carmen Nathalie, Monica Fraszek, Elora Lucquet

**Marketing and Media:** Amira Wachelka

**Boutique Owners:** Navpreet Kaur, Designer at Soohab by Kaur

Kinjal Jani Nayar, Founder & Designer of Chiffon and Spice

