

UMBrella

Melissa Berton, MFA



Melissa Berton, Academy Award-winning producer, recipient of the 2019 Eleanor Roosevelt Global Women's Rights Award, and founder and executive director of The Pad Project, was recently named to Forbes' 50 Over 50 list, Dreamers & Doers: Women Making Social Impact.

A lifelong advocate for girls and women, Berton has taught English at Oakwood Secondary School in Los Angeles for over a decade. As faculty advisor for Girls Learn International, a program of The Feminist Majority Foundation advocating for equal access to education across genders, she has thrice participated as a delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, leading the largest student delegation from a single high school.

In 2013, following that first U.N. trip, Berton inspired her students to produce a documentary to raise awareness about menstrual health and education worldwide, leading to a 2019 Oscar win for Best Documentary Short for "Period. End of Sentence." With her students, she also co-founded The Pad Project, a global nonprofit organization dedicated to the idea that "a period should end a sentence, not a girl's education." The newly released book, "Period. End of Sentence.: A New Chapter in the Fight for Menstrual Justice," with foreword by Berton, outlines universal menstrual challenges and the solutions being championed by a new generation of body positive activists.

Berton has appeared as a guest on the "Today" show, "Good Morning America," and "The View" and has been featured in publications including Forbes, The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Time, Los Angeles Magazine, Cosmopolitan, Shape, Teen Vogue, Marie Claire, Elle, and USA Today.

Her screenplay, "Do Not Go Gentle," about poet Dylan Thomas, had a live reading at the Geffen Theater in 2016, with Jack Black in the lead role.

Berton earned her BA from UCLA and her MFA in creative writing from Warren Wilson College.

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620 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, MD 21201 | 410-706-3100
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