

## The Representation of Childfree Women in Film & Television

### **VoiceAmerica** 00:04

Welcome to New Legacy Radio with Christine Erickson. Are you someone who doesn't have children by circumstance, choice or chance? This show is for our collective community. Are you someone who influences policy, DEI initiatives or media narratives? Learn how you can co-create inclusive, equitable policies and environments, for people without children. Now, here's your host, Christine Erickson.

### **Christine Erickson** 00:31

Welcome, everyone and thank you for listening to New Legacy Radio. I'm Christine Erickson and I'm the founder of New Legacy Institute. The Institute was created to bring together a collective community of people without children to create meaningful change for social, reproductive and workplace equity and policy. Today, I am thrilled to have with us award winning filmmaker Therese Schechter. She is an inspiring public speaker and the founder of the production company, Trixie Films. Her work fuses humor, activism and personal storytelling to disturb what's considered most sacred about womanhood. Therese began her two decades long film career as an intern at Robert De Niro's production company Tribeca Productions. Since then, her documentaries have screened on television and at film festivals from Rio de Janeiro to Istanbul to Seoul. Her work is in the collections of over 300 universities, nonprofits and libraries and has been covered by Salon, The Atlantic, New York Magazine, the Chicago Tribune, The Guardian, and Ms. Magazine, among others. I felt that introduction warranted all that so thank

you for being here, Theresa. We're excited to have you. Her current film, 'My So-Called Selfish Life' is a paradigm shifting journey through one of our society's greatest social taboos, and something that we have been addressing on this show in this series, choosing not to become a mother. And now we will roll out our own red carpet for the trailer of 'My So-Called Selfish Life'.

**Speaker 1** 02:14

"Nobody doesn't want kids."

**Speaker 2** 02:21

"People cannot want kids. It's a thing." "It's not a thing." "Well, it's my thing."

**Therese Shechter** 02:31

"I've known since high school that I did not want to be a mother."

02:35

"At some point, you just declared that if I ever want to have grandchildren, don't look at me."

**Therese Shechter** 02:41

"I didn't really ever want kids. But I always assumed I would have them." "I kept asking myself, is this going to happen to me? Does it have to happen?" "What does it mean to live in a world where motherhood is our destiny? And what happens if we say no?"

**Speaker 2** 02:56

"Remember, your biological clock is ticking." "I gotta have a baby. I gotta have a baby. I gotta have a baby." "Do you have a biological clock?" "Not ticking within me. So the answer would have to be no." "There's no biological reason for that to happen."

03:16

"You could list any number of honors and degrees and somebody will still think that you're not fully accomplished if you haven't had a child."

03:28

"Motherhood has increased in value yet again. It's almost fetishized in our society."

03:34

"This is the real solution to climate change. Babies." "Nations need childbirths." "Babies are good for the economy." "This is by design. I'm not missing anything. I didn't forget to have kids. I'm just not interested."

03:58

"To have somebody tell you, you don't know what's best for you is extremely condescending and insulting."

04:08

"Never question my African identity because I'm childfree."

04:12

"You can be an aunt or an uncle to your friend's children. And you'll be fine. In fact, you'll be great."

04:19

"Don't forget to take your pill!" Collective response, "I won't!"

**Christine Erickson** 04:27

Just the trailer. (laughter) Again Therese thank you for being here. On this day, where news is echoing across the US today regarding Roe v. Wade, what would you like to share with us about this journey of making this brilliant film how this relates to your work and voice as a filmmaker?

**Therese Shechter** 04:53

Oh man, yeah. Happy Tuesday, everybody. Yeah, you know, we've known this was coming. I feel like we've known this was coming like from five minutes after Roe v. Wade was passed. But it still really, really stings a lot to see it in writing and to see the justices' arguments for why it is a really great idea to deny women their reproductive rights. That's the thing that is amazing to me as listening to them sort of justify it based on garbage, can I just say garbage. I mean, it's monstrous. It's really monstrous. You know, today is just a day for kind of taking stock. And I've been talking to a lot of people about it, and sort of like, they're like, "What can I do right now?" And I'm like, this is a marathon. So it's fine. Take a breath. And then, you know, we'll see. But um, yeah. You know, I mean, the connection, obviously, to my film, is that we are talking about women having bodily autonomy, and being able to make their own decisions about whether or not they're going to reproduce, what seems like the most fundamental of human rights. And if you don't have that

you have forced birth, you know, you're basically forcing women to have children. Now, I don't have children. However, even for me, the idea of forcing someone to go through a pregnancy, deliver a baby, and then either now be responsible for it for two decades, with all that comes with it. Or give it up for adoption, which Amy Coney Barrett seems to think is just like a great idea. Yeah. Right. All these parents that are just like waiting for their beautiful white babies to be born. And or, you know, die in childbirth, because we know that maternal mortality in the US is at alarming rates, especially for Black women. So yeah, I mean, all of it is monstrous. This is what the word of the day is, is monstrous.

**Christine Erickson 07:16**

Yes, we're going to be hashtagging monstrous. All day. Um, yeah, it's I mean, it's so timely, and not because this isn't new, as you said, you know, five minutes after that law was enacted, we've been fighting this. I mean, I was thinking today, I was 19, or 20 years old when I first met Sarah Weddington. And when I first drove across the country, you know, to Washington, DC to march, and I'm like, I don't even have words for what that feels like to count the years, the decades now, I have to say, in between that, and I'm like, we've just been on this repeat cycle of wait until the January of the new administration. This is the first thing attacked every January. I mean, it's beyond insulting and disturbing. It's I don't know. It's just disappointing, and it's just so lacking in common sense is at an antithetical to human based rights.

**Therese Shechter 08:24**

It's at odds with how Americans feel also. The feelings of the Supreme Court justices that are doing this are completely at odds with a majority of Americans who think abortion should be available. And so that's the other thing. They're not

speaking for the majority of Americans in this decision they're speaking for I don't know, they're people who fund their I don't know, you know what I'm gonna say, yeah. I have to say, we've been posting these tiny little snippets from the film leading up to our premiere Friday night. And they're all like little snippets, and they're mostly kind of fun. You know, they're 10 seconds long if that. Today, I was like, okay, I'm pulling this one out. And it's Dr. Bernadith Russell, who is actually my gynecologist, and also just a boss in the film, who says, and I'm going to quote her, "When we talk about women's reproduction, we are still considered vessels rather than independent thinking people." Which is the that's so clip up today, if you're on social media. I just got it up on Facebook so far. And you know, and this is very similar to what Ruth Bader Ginsburg said at her hearings to become a Supreme Court Justice, and that that clip is also in the film, but I'm not going to try to I remember the whole quote. But it's the same sort of thing. Like when government controls what we do with our bodies, we're not fully human. We're not being treated like full human beings. So, yeah, good times.

**Christine Erickson 10:14**

Yeah. Yeah. And I will say that in this film, and in your process of this brilliant integration of all the things you have in this film, while it's educational, and it touches on all these sensitive and real things that we have already been living with, and now may be going backward in another way, there are some actual good times in your film, I would say.

**Therese Shechter 10:42**

It's a really entertaining film.

**Christine Erickson 10:45**

It is. Would you like to share some of the highlights. I mean, you've had the reels out or some of the reels. So I encourage everybody to go to Trixie Films social media and check those out. Definitely. But what would you like to share? What highlights would you like to share about this journey and how you came to be this filmmaker that can so brilliantly weave all of these things in from history, to pop culture to, you know, delving into these real issues that as we're saying, make women not even human, not even fully human?

**Therese Shechter 11:21**

You know, it's interesting, I've been I've been doing this for over 20 years now, which seems ridiculous, actually. But when I was making my first film, 'I Was a Teenage Feminist.' It evolved so organically, out of just the way I like to tell stories, and the fact that I have very wide-ranging interests. (laughter) So I'm a maximalist by interest, you know, so my films do tend to take a subject related to sort of, quote unquote, "womanhood," usually, because they're confusing to me, because someone is telling me a way that I should be, which doesn't, totally makes sense to me. And I'm trying to figure out why we all believe this. And the kind of journey starts from there. And I like to talk to a lot of different kinds of people, because I don't think there's any kind of monolith of experience in any of these things. And I am very interested in the like, historical roots, religious roots, scientific roots, what is this, that has been all sort of conspiring, specifically, conspiring to make us believe certain things that, you know, when you actually look at them, they're not true, but they serve a purpose to someone in, you know, in power, basically. So that's been the journey, and those are just some. I don't know if I could make a different kind of film, honestly, these are this is just my way to it. It's, it's complicated. I'm grateful for your complexity. When I was when I was talking to

different editors to figure out who I was going to work with on this film, I remember sitting with Siobhan Dunne, who is our absolutely brilliant editor. And Siobhan was a big fan of a previous film I had made on virginity. And she said to me, "How does it all come together? Like How do you bring it all together? All of these different ideas and things?" And I was like, it's magic.

**Christine Erickson** 13:29

I'm gonna take your word for that, because that is how I felt viewing this film.

**Therese Shechter** 13:34

It's not magic, it's more like 3,000 iterations, until it feels right. And a great editor.

**Christine Erickson** 13:43

Yeah, yeah, I know. But how brilliant to be asked that by an editor. Right? Who's work you respect? That says a lot. Beautiful. What, if anything, what surprised you the most in your 3000 iterations, on this journey to making this film?

**Therese Shechter** 14:02

I think the biggest surprise for me was when I started out on this, I really only knew my story. I didn't really know anybody else's story. And so the first thing that surprised me was I did this is back in 2016. I did a survey, which I put on Facebook, like a very unscientific survey that was just like tell me about your experiences not having children. And it went viral. We got like 1900 responses in the first week. Nothing I've ever done has gone viral, except for this survey. And so that was kind of shocking, but it was helpful because I thought, huh, this might be something people want to talk about, which turned out to be very true. But the other thing, and I did learn about many, many people's different experiences around not having

children by choice or circumstance. But the other thing that it was kind of a big sort of happy, I guess surprise was I started out on a very, like, sort of personal level. You know, like the kind of stuff your family might tell you, you know why? Why do they keep saying the same old stuff when you're going to give me grandchildren? Oh, you'll never know real love until you have a baby. Look, just do it, you'll, you'll love it once the baby's born, you'll be so happy; things like this. Why are people like, are they jerks? Or is there something else? You know, is there something else going on? And that was really my first question. It's like, what is going on that everybody, you know, does this, that even like considering what they're saying? But what happened was that led me to, of course, a lot of research and a lot of talk to people who were really experts in this area. And the more I did, the more I realized that this was really part of this gigantic system that we live in called pronatalism, which is kind of, you know, sharing space with patriarchy, with nationalism, with racism; these are all these like, these are all these artificial structures, societal structures that were created for a purpose. They didn't like rise organically, you know, out of our lives, and pronatalism is one of them. And that is basically the suggestion, the pressure, the coercion, the obligation to have children. And pronatalism can be very benign, it could just be your, you know, great aunt asking you questions. It could be the subsidies you're getting, because you're having children. So the government is giving you money, really, as an incentive to have more children. And it could be then this is in the film, but pregnancy test advertising where, you know, never does anyone feel happy that it is a negative outcome. There are a few exceptions now, but generally speaking, it's always positive, and they're always happy. And they're always hugging each other. And there is no room in that world for anyone who might be happy not to be pregnant, which I feel like, there are people who are very often happy not to be pregnant,

**Christine Erickson** 17:20

Or just just scared. I mean, or in an unknown or not expecting to be expecting? I mean, there's a whole gamut of things that happen. I think.

**Therese Shechter** 17:31

They can't they can't sell pregnancy tests based on that, though. Apparently.

**Christine Erickson** 17:35

No, but it'd be so real.

**Therese Shechter** 17:37

Yeah, there are a couple now I have to give props to Clear Blue and another company, I'm not remembering they're dabbling in this, which is nice to see. Yeah, so that was the biggest surprise was discovering this concept of pronatalism, and going down the rabbit hole to see all the places it led. And that journey is really the film.

**Christine Erickson** 18:03

Yeah, I mean, it is what makes it so beautiful, that that personal journey is in there. And then all the way to this larger, global look really, at pronatalism, and all the layers within that. Can you say a little more about the film's connection to policy change and reproductive rights, and you don't have to go into all what's in the film, but just your purview of what you put in, and where you think we need to go, and how it speaks to that, without giving away all the good things?

**Therese Shechter 18:40**

You know, I have to say that when Jody Day, the great Jody Day introduced us, I was so excited that you were doing this work, because I've been walking around muttering for years, like why are we not talking about policy here? Like, I feel bad for people who are being, you know, given a very hard time on a personal level. But why aren't we going to a policy level on this and talking about how to make significant social change? So I'm so glad about your work, where that's happening in that area. So thank you.

**Christine Erickson 19:18**

Thank you for how you're meeting us with visuals and audio and all the great things that say so many things for us and with us.

**Therese Shechter 19:27**

Yeah, I'm happy. I'm very happy to know that I can help others in their own, you know, goals. But in terms of policy, well, we know, we've been talking about reproductive justice. And you know, the idea that this actually needs change at very high levels. The change we want to see, of course. The interesting thing with reproductive justice is that there is no reproductive justice without the option of not reproducing. I mean, if you if you don't want have the option of not reproducing, then you're not fulfilling the that framework. And you know, reproductive justice is this framework created by Black women. And it's about the right to have babies, the right to raise them in a safe environment and the right to not have babies. Well, that third one just doesn't really show up that much, honestly, and I understand there's historical reasons for this and cultural reasons that their focusing on, you know, being able to have children and, in safe environments. But come on, it's one of the three things in the framework. So that's one thing I really like to talk about

this, like, why. Abortion narratives speaking of abortion, are never ever about someone who just doesn't want children and will have an abortion to make sure that they never have children, maybe two abortions, maybe three abortions, you know, we are not the poster girls for this movement at all. So that's like, that's another thing. And again, I understand how we talk about these things is super sensitive, because of everything, but I'm sorry, I'd like a seat at that table. I'd like to talk about this. You know, and finally, in terms of reproductive justice, the idea of voluntary sterilization or permanent contraception, as I call it; it's very, very hard to, for example, get your tubes tied if you don't already have kids. Very, very, surprisingly hard. And, you know, that's another thing why you should-that's a reproductive right.

**Christine Erickson 21:42**

Yeah. And I think, in my conversations with people around that throughout the show, too, I mean, off air conversations. Some people think that it's illegal, that these are illegal procedures. There's such a misconception around that. And it's not it's really down to medical practitioners blocking women from making choices, reproductive choices.

**Therese Shechter 22:05**

Exactly, exactly. And we do make a point of this in the film that really, you just have to be old enough to consent to a medical procedure, you know, and whatever that age of consent is, in your state, or country, whatever. That's it. That's it, there's no, there's nothing else. And yet, you know, doctors put up a lot of roadblocks. And you know, you have to be a certain age, you have to have a certain number of kids, you have to have your partner's signature on a piece of paper. But again, I get why they do this. They don't want to be responsible for some later regret, which I feel

like you're dealing with adults, we've been thinking about what we're doing. But they make it seem like it's the law without actually being explicit about it. Yeah, go ahead. Well, and

**Christine Erickson 22:56**

Well, and just that assumption that's the majority of the outcome that the majority of people who choose not to have children or who choose permanent contraception, that that's what the outcome is that later, they regret it. Like who said that? You know?

**Therese Shechter 23:10**

Yeah, I mean, there's studies on there's a famous study called the HILUS study, which is, which gets trotted out and quoted, whenever someone's talking about this, and, like, super, like concerned, trolling about it. And they try to, like 20% of people who have had tubal ligations regretted it. And that's like, no, that's not right. If you look at the-if you break it down, look at younger women who have never had children who are in their, you know, 20s, their rate of regret is 6%. Mm hmm. So we're comparing a rate of regret to people who already have children, and then get their tubes tied and then maybe decide, you know, maybe I do want another one. The number for young women and the women who have the most trouble getting these procedures done because of this fear of regret, are about 6%. And that's still, you know, a number, but we are adults, and we are able to make decisions about our lives that feel like the right decision, at the time.

**Christine Erickson 24:21**

Exactly. Yeah. And I mean, and people have those procedures for other reasons for other health reasons, as one of which I assume is mixed in there. Yeah. And

then, you know, well, we won't get into this, but then there's a larger conversation of what surrounded that regret, you know, what were the pressures? What were the circumstances? That's a whole other...yes.

**Therese Shechter** 24:45

There's some questions we can't answer. We just don't know.

**Christine Erickson** 24:50

We don't know. We don't know. But wouldn't it be nice if we said that more often? If more of us said that more often? We don't know. So we will trust that you know, and that's really what the basis of all these conversations are. The other thing about the policy space and this film, which I think is so dynamic for the space, is the DEI space, the DEIB space in, in organizations and for DEI practitioners-where's that landing? I know that the film, you've been distributing it in an educational way, and you've had other screenings, can you say a little bit more about what you've been doing in those spaces?

**Therese Shechter** 25:31

I think that right now, the biggest conversations are happening on social media. When if I post a story about this, this is where the conversations happen. And I do think that there is, you know, people without children or families, as they like to say, are generally treated different in the workspace. They're expected to do more work, to fill in on holidays. And there's a lot of resentment over that, which it's unfair, frankly, and this really came to a head during the pandemic, where, you know, understandably, parents had to spend more time with their kids. But people who didn't have kids were, I think unduly burdened with picking up slack. And that's not to say that parents should not get time off to do the things they have to do. But

this is a management issue that management is ignoring, like, they just go into the office and lock the door, because you know, there has to be equitable policy that accounts for everybody and, you know, in a fair way, and isn't, you know, basically saying, if you have kids, you can do this, if you don't have kids, you can't do it, because you don't need to, because you have nothing else in your life outside of work. But I think it's like an abdication of responsibility of employers in handling this, and leaving it to the employees to fight it out, which is not good management.

**Christine Erickson** 27:06

No, and just defining the narrative for your employees' lives. I mean, yeah, it's a default, it's an absolute default. And, you know, people have tried to make change within companies. And there's some people that have made some headway. But individually to try to do that is such a setup, you know, to go to HR to try to do that, which is the whole reason, you know, things that educate people, people outside, beyond people that don't have children. And what we're trying to do with the Institute is to come together collectively to do these things to make those changes, you know, it shouldn't be on any one person having to, you know, stand up in an organization or stand out, I mean, you know, and do that. I mean, and then the rejection of it, or going back to the default is just so much all the more disappointing. I mean, it's a really serious issue. And it's at the public policy level, and it's within the workplace. And I thought about it a lot during it-well I think about it all the time. But I thought about it also, during, you know, when we're talking about the wage gap, gender wage gap, and this is a chasm in terms of wage gap, when you look at benefits, and we need better paid policy leave, we need better childcare, we need all of those things for parents, absolutely. But we do need equitable packages, as well for the choices that we are making in our lives or the needs that we have, whether that's caregiving or doing whatever we want, that we

don't need to name, we need reason agnostic policies, where everybody has the same and you do with it what you need to do in your life. It shouldn't be a permission slip. We're adults, you know. And that's what it really feels like when there is an edge toward those policies. It's a permission slip. Well, what are you really doing with that time? Well, the whole point is that it's my time, or it's your time. And we need to get to that. You know, we're creeping up there with you know, caregiving policies, and those are good moves, and it's in the right direction. But it would just be so much more equitable, and clear if we had universal paid policies that were equitable for all employees, because you're hiring employees.

**Therese Shechter** 29:22

Yeah. I mean 100%. Yeah, but my fondest wish is that DEI programs use this film in the workplace. Yes, that is one of my very, very high goals for this film, is to get into those spaces and be able to talk about this stuff.

**Christine Erickson** 29:38

Absolutely. Thank you so much, Teresa. We're going to take a short pause. And when we come back, we're going to look at some of the fun and admirable things in this film and continue our larger conversation on childfree women. We'll be right back.

**VoiceAmerica** 29:56

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You are listening to New Legacy Radio with Christine Erickson. Now back to the show. Here is Christine Erickson.

**Christine Erickson 31:57**

Welcome back, everybody. And thank you for listening. Today we're speaking with award winning filmmaker Therese Schechter. And we're discussing her new film, which will premiere on Friday, May 6, 'My So-Called Selfish Life.' So Therese, I want to ask you to share with the listeners some of the great-I mean, there's so many great points and pieces and just poignant language in this film. It's so I don't have words. I mean, I remember after I watched it, I wrote an email and I was like, oh, I fangirled too hard. She's never going to write back again. Like it was this and

it was that. It just really is. I mean, I'm, I'm always so amazed by filmmakers. People who do documentaries like Hilary Fennell's radio documentary as well—all what you can put in and integrate that, you know has been on my mind or years-worth of conversations and topics, and pick and choose where the breath is covered and in such brilliant ways, and with a sense of humor and a savvy and a respect for people. Yeah, what would you love to share with us about some of the great stuff in your film? And we can talk about some of the wonderful characters as well. Well, they're real people, but they're characters.

**Therese Shechter 33:16**

Yeah, they're real people. Oh, thank you so much. I have to say the more people who see the film, the more feedback I get. And it's all been really lovely. I've been a bit overwhelmed by the loveliness of the feedback. And yeah, we have our premiere on Friday, it's just a May 6 to 16th streaming. It's not we're not like indefinitely streaming. So I urge you all to get in on that action. But I mean, I think that, I don't know, what do you like, there's what do you want to talk about?

**Christine Erickson 33:51**

I will I just found what I so I, my story is a childless story, you know, and this is focused on childfree and in our space with the Institute, this is a collective community. And so I watched it and I felt even more overwhelmingly surprised than I thought it would have how I felt seen and included, you know, and I laughed, I cried, I ached for people. Just the brilliance of the history, the pop culture, the sound effects, the imagery. I feel like you scaled it from, you know, origins of a movement to this moment that we're talking about today in Roe v. Wade. So there are too many moments for me, to pull out. And then just the realness of back to

your personal story. You know, I mean, your mother is in this film. What was that like for you?

**Therese Shechter 34:48**

My mother is the breakout star. She really is. I mean, everybody mentions her, and I have to say I have wonderful parents. Both my mother and father are wonderful and endlessly supportive. And so I knew I wanted my mother in this film. She was in 'I Was a Teenage Feminist' actually, also, I wanted her in this film. And I had some very specific questions to ask her about. And she's just so fantastic. And, you know, she's, she's like a modest person. She's, she's self-effacing. I think that a lot of this is just to support me and the film, that she agreed to be in it. She's not a big attention seeker to say the least. But she's so smart, and she's so wise. And she is somewhat of an iconoclast, you know, growing up, I knew that my mother was not like a lot of other mothers. First of all, she has a profession, she has two graduate degrees, and she's a professional person. And, and she's, she's smart. And she has opinions. And yeah, so we talked about Mother's Day, we talked about, um, I don't want to give too much away. But we talked about an early time, which in her life when she found herself pregnant, and was trying to figure out what to do. And yeah, she's really wonderful. And when we were shooting it, like, I didn't ask her anything that I didn't know the answer to already, because it's family stories that we've talked about. But something about being in front of a camera, it was very electric and very emotional. And I think the audience, you know, feels that how intense it it was to talk about these things. And I like to be like, the sort of semi sarcastic observer of all of this, but I really started crying in the middle of this interview. And so yeah, she's great. And we're actually trying, your listeners should know this. We're having a few free Q & As during the run of this. And I wanted to do a one on one with her as part of this, which I think would be really great. And of

course, I said, "Do you want to do it on Mother's Day?" And she said, "No, no, we're driving up north on Mother's Day. We're, going away for a few days." So I think we're going to do with the following weekend, maybe the 14th. And I'm looking for questions like, what do you want to know? Okay, you've seen the film, what do you want to ask my mother?

**Christine Erickson** 37:26

Yeah, yeah.

**Therese Shechter** 37:28

So little, little plug for our conversation, there.

**Christine Erickson** 37:32

Yes, prepare questions for Therese's Mother. I just found her. So um, yeah, you really have to watch it. It's I mean, even just that, that, that part of the film alone, the organic way that conversation goes in the authentic, like, just all the depth of layers that she brought to her words. You can't prepare for that. You can't you can't script that.

**Therese Shechter** 38:05

Yeah, no, absolutely. And we're looking at old photographs and things like that.

**Christine Erickson** 38:09

Yeah.

**Therese Shechter** 38:09

They are so nice. Those old photos. Yeah. So, yeah, um, yes, yeah.

**Christine Erickson 38:21**

There are so many people in your film, I mean, that touch on different things, but someone who really stood out to me was your doctor who you mentioned earlier, and I just was like, the first word, she added, I was like, Oh, I like I want to talk to her. I want to know her. I want her to be my doctor. You know, I mean, that was so brilliant. And then I thought, wow, you found a doctor like that. Actually, it was just recently the last few years, I've had a gynecologist who was for the first time in my life, I had somebody actually read my chart, before they came in to meet me. And he never asked me one thing about having children or not having children. And so I have asked him, and so then we really hit it off. And so then I kept forgetting to ask him and I said, was that by accident, or like, what was that? You know? And he said, "Well, I just don't think it's any of my business. And I figured if you wanted to tell me you would." You know, and that was just really surprising. But then I heard your doctor was like, but it was it was just so surprising and welcoming to me because I was just bracing for it and not because I can't handle the conversation I expected, but I just I realized how unconsciously I was just waiting to get through it. And it never happened. So then I noticed that it was missing and that was just so wonderful.

**Therese Shechter 39:48**

Yeah, and that's Dr. Bernadith Russell who practices in New York City. Yes. But she's been my gynecologist for 20 years and I get it that. I mean that thing, having her in the film, I mean, she and I talk about this stuff at my appointments, all the time. But a lot of these issues like around reproduction, not because of me, but because I still interested in it, and I love talking to her about it. And then I said, "Do

you want to be in this film? Could you be in this film?" And she's like, "Yes, I'd be delighted to." And I'm like "Oh, my God, that's amazing."

**Christine Erickson 40:23**

I love it.

**Therese Shechter 40:25**

Yeah. So she's wonderful. Yeah. And she also gets into the politics, which I really appreciate. Yeah, she gets into it. And I think, you know, I think with, you know, she's a Black woman. And I think that that also informs a lot of the things that she wants to talk about, which is, you know, it's great. It's really good. It adds a level in the film, that's like, really important.

**Christine Erickson 40:49**

Yeah, absolutely. So just to reiterate that the streaming is available from May 6 to May 16th. So, you know, this is another thing I felt watching it or after, after I thought, well, what a great opportunity for some of those, you know, you'll see this conversation between Therese and her mother. But not everyone has that opportunity, or has even had those kinds of conversations with whoever is close in their life chosen family or nuclear family or friends. And I think this film is a brilliant bridge for a lot of people who either aren't in a space to have those conversations, to share with people like that. There's an option to gift these tickets as well, or to watch together and have some of those conversations together, because it breaks the ice of that. And it's very educational, as much as it is connective and intimate and informative. I really encourage people to, you know, do that-it's an opportunity to utilize this brilliant film for those conversations.

**Therese Shechter 41:59**

I just want to say on those conversations, I got an email from someone who had seen the film. A few weeks ago, we had a special screening for some of our Kickstarter backers. And she said she watched the film with her mother. And they kept pausing it to talk about stuff and share experiences. And to cry a little bit. And I was so touched by that. This is like, in my fondest wish is that that is what happens. So having an email from somebody telling me about it was like, just, it was beautiful, actually. And I do hope people use the film in that way. We also we have a Q & A on Friday night on reproductive rights, which has just been ramped up a lot. And then on Sunday, on Mother's Day, we're having a Q & A where we're discussing, like, what makes a family which should be also like a lovely conversation. So there are these opportunities to the Q & As are free. These are opportunities to come join us. And and maybe it leads to conversations that should be had, can't be had.

**Christine Erickson 43:09**

Yeah, absolutely. And we'll put those links up on our sites, too. So we make sure people have access to them. But yes, seriously, it's a powerful bridge to so many different conversations. I think so many perspectives are brought up in this film. Thank you for that. And it's exciting to hear about those Q & As. I'm excited. And then that email, I'm even, I'm just I'm so happy to hear that too. Because that's all I could think of. After I just thought, wow, what an opportunity, you know, for these conversations, and to bridge that. I keep repeating it, but it is, it's all that please see this film. Buy a ticket, buy a ticket for people that you love. Watch it with people that you need to have hard conversations or that you have shared conversations. And we will have the link up and you can go to [Trixiefilms.com](http://Trixiefilms.com) for information as well. Yeah, it is not something you want to miss-again, this the 6th through the

16th. And I think you know I would really love to start other conversations online from this domain. Certainly, Therese is always posting something that provokes great reflection and conversation. But we invite you to that conversation collectively as well. You know, and along these lines, we think about childfree women and representation in film, and television. And I'd like to hear a bit about your perspective around that, outside of the film. I know you touch on some of those things as well and certainly in your conversations online. What does that feel like right now? You know, I mean, I know what it feels like from a childless perspective as well. And then thinking about the collective perspective, how these narratives go and they always end in ways that aren't really our stories; not really what we're living a lot of the time or the majority of us.

**Therese Shechter** 45:08

Yeah, I think that's really true. They're not our stories, you know, they're, they're cooked up by a writers room who wants things to go a certain way. And, and they're not, they're often not true to anybody's lived existence, lived experience.

**Christine Erickson** 45:27

Like we need disclaimers on these stories.

**Therese Shechter** 45:33

When I was younger, sort of developing, you know in my teens, let's say, I used to watch 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show,' and 'Rhoda' the offshoot. Those are both really fabulous women who did not have kids and seem to have very nice, full lives.

**Christine Erickson** 45:55

And they laughed a lot. I loved that.

**Therese Shechter 45:57**

They had a wonderful time. They were happy people. And I remember that. And I, I feel like that was like the high point. You know, of representation of people without children, you know, for what, we don't know why they didn't have children. Like, it's not really stated explicitly. But they didn't, and they lived very nice lives. And there wasn't a lot of conversation about it. And people didn't seem to really, like constantly ask them about it, things like that, which is great. I think for the most part, I remember watching some of the older folks listening to this, I used to watch 'Thirty Something,' which I guess in the 80s, maybe, which was this group of what we would definitely call yuppie friends that lived very, very comfortable lives, but were very miserable all the time. There were two female characters who both didn't have children, and they were such stereotypes, like really awful, you know, one of them wanted kids and was really desperate about it and depressed about being single and not having kids. And then the other one, clearly didn't really want kids, but she was a "career woman." I don't know like bitchy and miserable. And I remember watching this, and it was the first time I watched it and like, it just didn't make sense. What, like, I don't understand these characters. They should be you know, happy. I mean, I didn't I just did not understand why they're being portrayed as such, like unpleasant, miserable people. I knew people who wanted kids and wanted a husband, but they weren't like those characters at all. And that was the first time I really thought about this, like problem of representation, which, you know, is if there's somebody without kids, they're either broken, neurotic, or, you know, they're mean and maladjusted and hate everybody. That sums it up. No, unfortunately. That's I think that's really like a, like, if you look at all the difficulty is like recently all there a lot of great, like, seriously childfree, openly childfree characters on television, for example. But they're all like, they all have things, they

all have issues. I mean, even like Samantha on Sex in the City, she's just this-she had an I'm not having a baby party at some point. You know, you can look at her and say, oh, she's super promiscuous, and you know, all of this stuff. One of my favorites is Jen Barkley who was on Parks and Recreation, as like a political operative. And really, like a lot of her jokes had to do with how much she hated children. And it was hilarious, because Kathryn Hahn is hilarious. But, you know, she's, again, she's not like a really pleasant person. She's, she's kind of awful. So, I don't know, but the biggest insult for me, definitely is 'Big Bang Theory,' which is a show that I am not a regular was never a regular viewer of, but it was wildly popular. One of I think, the top shows for a long, long time. And on that show, there were two different women who were outspokenly childfree, did not want kids, and were very clear about it. And that seemed to be treated like okay, cool. You know, that's fine. Let's move on. Well, then one of them gets pregnant. And I'm sorry, is there no birth control in the world of 'Big Bang Theory'?

**Christine Erickson** 49:49

So many questions.

**Therese Shechter** 49:50

So many questions. She gets pregnant and she does several times say you know, I don't know how I feel about this, whatever. But you know, eventually she has kids. She has a kid, and then she has another kid. And it's not really discussed. Like, what? What happened?

**Christine Erickson** 50:09

Is she really okay?

**Therese Shechter 50:11**

s she really okay? And then another main character finds out she's pregnant in the series finale. And again, it's like, oh, oh, well, the entire season was her talking with her boyfriend about how much she did not want kids.

**Christine Erickson 50:25**

Yeah. there are so often I think when I'm thinking of a few characters, when they don't have children, that there's always something tangential and relational to children, then they're either it's the aunt or they foster somebody or that it has to have to be made, okay in some way, within that pronatalist or child narrative, they have to be okay, by their relationship to others, if they don't have children. And I'm so curious, you know, I think about all the things that film producers, writers, do bring in experts on, people in different fields, people with different experiences, but it cannot be happening. Because we don't see these characters. You know, whether that's people that wanted children and didn't have them or childfree, I just don't see the narratives played out in the way that our stories do, as how we started this conversation, and I think, but they could be, and we watch TV. You know, like, we're here. Like, if this is just like, a marketing gesture with a bow on it, you know, so many things are wrapped up in Hollywood, like, we're here, you know?

**Therese Shechter 51:52**

and we also bought pregnancy tests. So yeah,

**Christine Erickson 51:56**

right. Yeah. All the products, all the services, you know, I've thought about this. So often, I, I went to buy like a lock one time for my office door, because my, large German Shepherd dog learned how to open it. And it couldn't find them anywhere

in the store. I went to like the hardware section, all over. And then they said, we'll go in the baby section. And I finally found one, and I just thought, but why wouldn't these be everywhere? Because that's not what I thought, like, why don't the in the pet section and the hardware section and the baby section? Because that makes like, that's how my brain works. Not just my experience, but that's how my brain works. Like, wouldn't that be good? You know, and was just so many things like that, that are assumed in this track like that we're not users of these products, or services, or whatever it is. And I'm like, we've always been here and now there are really a lot of us, you know, so think about it.

**Therese Shechter** 52:55

This is pronatalism. This is all pronatalism. Yeah, it's like, it's overwhelming. Yeah. The character on 'Big Bang Theory,' by the way, they knocked her out in a series finale, because the producer wanted to give them a happy ending.

**Christine Erickson** 53:10

Yeah, there's so many happy endings on TV and we want like, we want real stories, and we're happy, but maybe not for the same reasons you're writing. It's like, um, yeah. I don't know. There's so much but you know, call us we're out here. We're ready. We have a filmmaker writer, here with us today. Call Therese.

Do you have any last comments, Therese, before we close today?

**Therese Shechter** 53:42

I would say like I would invite people to check out our social media, because we're having these conversations all the time. And if you go to our website, my so-called selfish-sorry, I don't even know my own website, myselfishlife.com, will get you

everywhere you want to go. So I invite you to do that, and of course, to see the film next week.

**Christine Erickson** 54:04

Excellent. Check it out, get your tickets, watch it with people, have great conversations, and we will continue this conversation on our social media as well. And if you have any questions you want to email us you can reach us at [radio@newlegacyinstitute.com](mailto:radio@newlegacyinstitute.com). Thank you for listening today, and we'll be back again next week.

**VoiceAmerica** 54:28

Thank you for listening to New Legacy Radio. We hope Christine and her guests have given you the context and insight to connect with our community in new ways. What personal or professional change might you consider to acknowledge and include our diverse community of people without children? Until we speak again, we invite you to engage with us on any of our platforms.