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### Dreya Weber

by [Rachael Scott](#)  
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Under the US Armed Forces' 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy, gay people may only serve if they keep their sexual orientation private and do not engage in homosexual activity. President Obama repealed the 1993 act in December 2010, beginning the transition to an armed forces in which gay soldiers no longer need to conceal their sexual orientation in order to serve.

In *A Marine Story*, Dreya Weber plays a decorated Captain who's outed and thrown out of the Marines. The film highlights the absurdity of the policy through the personal story of one courageous woman standing up for equality within the forces and in the civilian world where she faces sexism and even more bigotry.

As well as an accomplished actress, Weber is a trapeze and aerial artist to the stars. She performs acrobatics in the air and has designed and choreographed three tours for Pink, Britney Spears' Circus tour and Cher Live at Caesar's Palace. She's also worked with Madonna, Christina Aguilera, 50 Cent and Michael Jackson.

#### What drew you and your director husband Ned Farr to make *A Marine Story* and what interested you about the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy?

Originally when we had developed the idea it was very practically oriented. We make movies on very small budgets with independent financing and with *A Marine Story* it was largely our own self-financing that allowed the movie to happen.

We have to make character driven stories that don't need fancy sets or special effects or huge casts. We wanted to make a story with a female protagonist and I wanted to do a story that had a physical element. We are very interested in making stories that we feel passionate about.

As soon as we started to narrow down what kind of characters a woman could play in a contemporary drama where there could be an action element and an issue that we cared about, putting a woman in a military situation seemed like a very rich environment.

'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' was being brought up in the press a lot at the time when we were thinking about what we were going to do. So all of these sort of things led us to focusing on a woman who experienced the kind of issues that were brought up gay and lesbian service members and the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy.

#### You've said that you spoke to ex-military personnel who are gay as part of your research for the role. What was the most surprising thing you learned?

The most surprising thing I learned, and this came more from the stories that I read more than from speaking to people, although it was certainly reinforced by what people said, was that regardless of the personal horrors and the cost of having to serve closeted and the process of being kicked out, the person inevitably and invariably said that the military was the best thing that ever happened to them, that they would serve again in a heartbeat and they would never change it. That was very unexpected to me.

I expected to find people who were, to my mind, justifiably angry about a discriminatory policy. It really opened my heart to people who were willing to serve and loved the military. They experienced so much, the camaraderie, the code of ethics, the feeling of being part of a brotherhood or a sisterhood, feeling part of a bigger family that was

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**"I expected to find people who were, to my mind, justifiably angry about a discriminatory policy. It really opened my heart to people who were willing to serve and loved the military."**

**The director questions whether the military are more afraid of gay people than Osama Bin Laden. What do you think about that statement?**

That statement deals directly with the fact that translators of Arabic and Farsi were being kicked out of the military because they were gay at a time when we needed every translator that we could get our hands on to deal with the flood of information coming from the Middle East.

In 2005/6 when we were developing this story there were a lot of translators being kicked out. If you're going to kick out gay people when you need them desperately for your national security, then the message that you're sending is that you care less about your national security than the fact that there's a gay person serving in your military. So I think that statement is very accurate, at least that's the message of what 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' was sending.

**Apart from the inequality and injustice of banning gay people from the military what would you say are the more far-reaching effects on society in general of such a policy?**

If we support bias, and our government supports discriminatory policies, it's going to have a huge ripple down effect on society, first of all because they're such huge employers and they set the tone. The whole idea of the military is that you are trained to follow orders. You aren't necessarily given the option to question whether those orders are right or wrong. So if you're being told that someone doesn't deserve to serve openly because the law is biased, then when those people who serve under that system get out into the world at large they're going to be affected and potentially be as discriminatory because that was the system that they learned.

The military has a profound effect on people, and largely positive I think. A feeling of family, a feeling of being supported and so its very important that our military leads and show that we don't need to support bigotry and discriminatory policies. We need to be respectful of the civil rights of every single human being, especially the people who choose to serve our country and lose our lives serving.



**Do you think the current administration is doing enough to abolish the 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' policy?**

I personally always believed Obama was going to repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' and in the past year before the policy was overturned people would always ask us why we chose to show a headline in the movie that he did overturn it, even though we filmed it a year and a half before the policy was overturned. That's because I think he was sincere and he went about it in a very systematic way – to go through the judicial branch, to have the military weigh in and then have congress sign off on it. Otherwise I think it would have been too easy for someone to overturn.

I wish it had happened faster. It was very sad to me that people continued to be kicked out in that time period when the policy was being studied while the process was happening. I don't know. It's strategic what the administration is doing and, like I said, I wish it had moved faster, but I do believe they have the best interests of repealing the policy and implementing the new law.

**You served as a producer on the film. What did producing *A Marine Story* entail?**

It entails hiring crew, creating the budget, finding locations, casting, driving set vehicles, taking care of cast and crew, helping actors, getting food. It's everything basically at our level. I think a more pertinent question would be what *doesn't* it entail when you produce an independent feature film. It's really everything.

**"I described myself as being omnisexual once for an interview...because I do have this idea that human beings have the capacity to love in all spectrums. There aren't hard lines between attraction the way we think."**

**It seems lots of things went wrong on the shoot. You suffered an allergic reaction to some cosmetic glue and found a dead animal in a water tank after the water had been drunk. What other things stretched the shoot to its limits?**

Oh my gosh - location problems were a huge challenge to overcome. We lost what was going to be the Everett house mid shoot and we had to shut down for 10 days while we scanned 100-mile radius of Los Angeles looking for a new location. The one we found was beautiful, the house on top of the hill, which had a 360-degree panoramic view of

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beautiful countryside, exactly what Ned had imagined and what he had written into the script.

What else? Cars breaking down, equipment breaking, accidents with production vehicles thank goodness nobody was ever hurt. What else? Late actors, late crew people, sound problems with production - it goes on and on and on. Once time passes you mercifully forget most of this.

**How did you find Paris Pickard and what made her right for the role of Saffron?**

We met Paris through a mutual friend. She came to a party at our house. She's a very striking person, she's very tall and very beautiful. We had been trying to cast the part of Saffron for about two years. We had auditioned several actors and offered one actress the role but she wasn't able to do it because she became pregnant. And then production delays also made us change cast. Then finally it looked like we were going to do the movie and then we found Saffron which really encouraged us to push forward because casting that role is key.

She has a quality of being on the cusp of womanhood, but still having a kind of teenagerish quality, which was really beautiful for the role of Saffron. Plus she has a kind of stature that, because she's so tall, we really believed that she would make a credible Marine at the end of the movie. Besides that, she has a kind of a perfect spirit for a person who lost her family, a little lost, a fighter, someone who's a little prickly who will go head to head and toe to toe with anyone if she's challenged. We also loved that she was taller than me and that would be a great visual thing, especially when I'm mentoring her, preparing her for the service.



**What sort of training did you have to do for the fight sequences with the male actors?**

I trained for almost two years with a martial arts specialist and Cher's head of security and he taught me a system, which was developed by a man named Paul Vunak, which is called Progressive Fighting System, which is a lot of real life scenarios and teaches people how to defend themselves in various environments.

So I had a great foundation when it came to preparing the actual shoot sequences. Our fight choreographer, named Ned Mochel, staged the fights and we had a rehearsal day with the actors where we were able to map out the movement. We already knew the location so we knew the parameters we would have to work with. The guys I had the fights with are fantastic and gave 150 percent throwing themselves around like maniacs and were incredible fun to work with. I was more worried they were going to get hurt with their wild enthusiasm.

**You're in the middle of performing as an aerialist in Kylie's 'Aphrodite: Les Folies' tour. What's your role been and how's the tour going so far?**

I'm actually not performing anymore for Kylie's 'Aphrodite: Les Folies' tour. I had to perform for one of the injured aerialists for the first two shows, which were up in Denmark and Finland, but then my aerialist got better.

I choreographed all of the aerial numbers for the shows and it was a fantastic show to work on. William Baker is the director and I've worked with him on Leona Lewis's tour last year and also on Britney Spears' Circus tour. He brought me in early on and we got to brainstorm about what apparatus we would use for aerials and he gave me a lot of latitude to create what I thought would be fun and add to Kylie's show.

He's an incredible visual artist and he and Kylie are a great team. The show is incredible. So basically I was the aerial choreographer and I got to train all the dancers and aerialists and I also ended up performing, which was great fun. Kylie's an amazing headliner, great person to work for.

**"What don't people know about Pink? That woman loves to laugh. She loves nothing better to laugh and have a great time. She's got a great mischievous sense of humour and a raucous love of life."**

**You've also worked with some of the greatest gay icons on the planet. Can you tell me one thing we might not know about Cher, Madonna, Britney Spears and Pink?**

Cher's favourite thing is making people laugh. She loves delivering a laugh line and making a big arena crowd laugh. That was a bit of a surprise to me.

Madonna, let's see. I think everybody knows how hard Madonna works, she's an incredible perfectionist and her shows are great to work on. She has an eye on everything, she's incredibly meticulous and works harder than anybody.

Britney Spears, I think people know everything about Britney Spears and I don't think I can add anything to public knowledge there.

What don't people know about Pink? That woman loves to laugh. She loves nothing better to laugh and have a great time. She's got a great mischievous sense of humour and a raucous love of life.

**What are the plus points and the downsides of being directed by your husband?**

There really aren't any downsides. He's an amazing director and I've been so thrilled to work on his movies. First of all, he writes extraordinary, rich roles for me to do. *The Gymnast* was a great challenge. Really fun to play a character who was so smashed and crushed, who kind of tries to find her voice, tries to find her spirit. And in this film I was so honoured and felt such a sense of responsibility to fulfil this great role that he had written for me to do. So the pluses are that I've been given incredible opportunities to play very rich roles in movies that I'm so proud of.

The downside is not anything to do with him, but that we've never had enough time and money to take the kind of care that we would like to take in making our movies. If there were one thing that I would like to be able to do differently it's just to have a little more time and a little more money.



**You describe yourself as omnisexual. Can you explain to our readers what that means and how it differs from being bisexual?**

I described myself as being omnisexual once for an interview when *The Gymnast* came out because I do have this idea that human beings have the capacity to love in all spectrums.

There aren't hard lines between attraction the way we think. Some people have said to me that they don't get that because they've never been attracted to a woman or attracted to a man, but I was really trying to paint a broader picture - that I feel that sexuality is so much bigger than what we like to think of.

What I said came out of the question why I would play a lesbian? I've played lesbians in three films and I never really saw it as being different to playing any other human being. Every human being has sexuality and they express it in the particular and unique ways of themselves, each human experience. When we start to make a broad wash on someone's sexuality I think we really miss the point. Sexuality is a creative act and it is a broad spectrum

**You must be careful about what you eat. What's your desert island food and what's your one guilty pleasure food?**

My guilty pleasure food is great old cheese. I love old goats cheese and sheep. I love cheese and wine. I think I'm like Mediterranean because I like olives, cheese and red wine. I am careful about what I eat. I love fruit, I love vegetables, I love salads.

**Please tell us about the all-female cowboy version of *As You Like It* that you starred in.**

This was a production that was produced by the Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company, which is run by Lisa Wolpe who played Shelley, the bartender in our movie. Fantastic Shakespearean actress, one of the best Shakespearean actors I've ever seen on stage. I auditioned for her and it was one of the happiest theatre experiences I've ever had. The camaraderie backstage with this cast was insane, we laughed ourselves stupid constantly.

I played Charles the Wrestler in the first part of the show and then when they moved to the forest I sang and played guitars as the singing cowboy. It was so much fun. She's a wonderful director, a great spirit to head a company because her heart is in absolutely the right place. She told me once that her goal in life was to be able to read Shakespeare out loud or work on Shakespeare every day and that's why she directs this company. I love that woman. She's fantastic and she's an inspiration to me.

**A Marine Story** [2010]  
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**Released:** 11 April 2011  
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