

The Female Surfer Working in Filmmaking is Passionate about Protecting the Environment

Heather Hudson, a surfing athlete, has made several films about female surfers successfully while serving as an event manager at Heal The Ocean.



Filmmaker Heather Hudson and the President of California Surf Museum, Jim Kempton. Heather Hudson's profile image.

By Haoning Zhu
Sep.3, 2021

SANTA BARBARA- Smiling big, Heather Hudson was standing on stage during a Q&A session on July 21 at the California Surf Museum. Her film "93-Letters From Marge" was just screened there. She answered her audience and media's questions patiently and appreciated all feedbacks from others for the film- which mostly are positive.

This was not the first time for Heather to attend such a big film event. Since she started her film company and released her first but groundbreaking documentary surf film- "The Women and the

Waves,” she has received tons of appreciation from the audiences as they are impressed by the power and values of female surfers. Interestingly, Heather herself is also a great surfing athlete, and she begins most of her days with a surf session at a world-class surf break in south Santa Barbara County, where she is known for her graceful longboard style. Except for the identities of a filmmaker and surfer, Heather is also the event manager at Heal The Ocean (HTO). HTO is a nonprofit organization consisting of surfers, swimmers, divers, boaters, beachgoers, and all-around ocean lovers, focusing on wastewater infrastructure and stopping ocean dumping practices that have contributed to ocean pollution. With so many roles and duties, how could Heather get into each of the fields and become so successful in all of them?

Everything started when she was a young surf athlete. In around the 70s, Heather moved to Santa Barbara as a young girl and she was very excitedly thinking, “I am gonna surf the beautiful and clean ocean every morning with the warm sunshine!” However, when she got there, she was disappointed due to the septic pollution: plastic bags scattered all around the beach; the air was kind of putrid-smelling. From then on, the belief in protecting and “healing” the ocean is rooted in this little girl’s heart and facilitates her to join HTO when she grows up.



Heather Hudson is surfing. Heather Hudson’s profile image.

At the age of 17, she attended UCLA and got a bachelor’s degree in sociology. During school, she took many art classes that she was interested in and worked in advertising after she

graduated. Looking at the camera she worked with every day, she thought she could try to create a film about female surfers and the ocean she loves with the skill of filming. Although people around her didn't believe she could make it, she confidently refuted them, "Watch me. I can do it." Heather met many difficulties when she started, such as composing a documentary script and using shooting techniques to show ocean sceneries, but she kept learning. "You never know everything," said Heather. "There is always gonna be something new you will learn, and you have to be open to that. If you can't work things out, don't think "I am a failure;" just take it a step at a time, and the problems will eventually get solved."

Through creating movies about female surfers, Heather became an advocate for feminism and knew a lot of people who love oceans. Heather's first movie, "[The Women and the Waves](#)," explores the lives of female surfers who, through the decades, have chosen to paddle headfirst into the male-dominated sport of surfing, found a place of their own, and always been passionate about the ocean. Due to the film's great popularity, "The Women and the Waves 2" came out in 2016, introducing six women surfers' dreams on the beautiful ocean. As knowing so many people who love and care about the ocean in Santa Barbara, Heather remembered the pollution she saw there when she was young and she knew how disappointed it would be for these ocean lovers if the pollution continued to worsen. Thus, she decided to take action and chose to work at HTO to outreach the community, "healing" the ocean together with residents there.

As the event manager at HTO, Heather has held big annual events for 15 years to communicate with people in Santa Barbara county to attract them to join the organization and be aware of environmental protection. Last October, Heather helped create a video for the event "[HTO Imaginary Gala Promo](#)," a party held on a beach and welcomed all ocean lovers- even seafood businessmen- to come and join. The attendees talked about the severe marine environment problems, such as plastic pollution, and proposed some possible solutions. In this way, the organization could build good relationships with these potential participants of their future community programs in cleaning the ocean, such as collecting plastic bags on the beach.

In the future, Heather is planning to continue what she has been doing- focusing on septic pollution, wastewater, and groundwater. "Take it one step at a time," said Heather. "There are always things we can do. Now we are doing really well with people who mail-in and are interested in our work during the pandemics-- it's like a virtual party which I am not physically going to, but people respond online because they want to give and help."

With such great achievements in all the fields- surfing, filmmaking, and environmental protection, how could Heather manage all the difficulties she met and keep her great passion for everything about the ocean? She responded that life isn't easy, but she always sees things positively to solve problems and keeps moving forward. Particularly, when talking about her love for the ocean, which is the motivation of everything she did in her career, Heather

emphasized: “Please remember that oceans are the source of life. If we don’t have water, we will have nothing. It feels overwhelming at times because there’s so much going on to protect the ocean, but we take it one day at a time and we can do our best.”

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