

Actor Meryl Streep gave this speech at the 74th Golden Globe Awards on 8 January 2017:

Please sit down. Please sit down. Thank you. I love you all. You'll have to forgive me. I've lost my voice in screaming and lamentation this weekend. And I have lost my mind sometime earlier this year so I have to read.

Thank you, Hollywood Foreign Press. Just to pick up on what Hugh Laurie said, you and all of us in this room really belong to the most vilified segments in American society right now. Think about it — Hollywood, foreigners and the press.

But who are we, and what is Hollywood anyway? It's just a bunch of people from other places. I was born and raised and educated in the public schools of New Jersey. Viola was born in a sharecropper's cabin in South Carolina, came up in Central Falls, Rhode Island. Sarah Paulson was born in Florida, raised by a single mom in Brooklyn. Sarah Jessica Parker was one of seven or eight kids from Ohio. Amy Adams was born in Vicenza, Veneto, Italy. And Natalie Portman was born in Jerusalem. Where are their birth certificates? And the beautiful Ruth Negga was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, raised in London — no, in Ireland I do believe, and she's here nominated for playing a girl in small-town Virginia.

Ryan Gosling, like all of the nicest people, is Canadian, and Dev Patel was born in Kenya, raised in London, and is here playing an Indian raised in Tasmania. So Hollywood is crawling with outsiders and foreigners. And if we kick them all out you'll have nothing to watch but football and mixed martial arts, which are not the arts.

They gave me three seconds to say this, so — An actor's only job is to enter the lives of people who are different from us, and let you feel what that feels like. And there were many, many, many powerful performances this year that did exactly that. Breathtaking, compassionate work. But there was one performance this year that stunned me. It sank its hooks in my heart. Not because it was good. There was nothing good about it. But it was effective and it did its job. It made its intended audience laugh and show their teeth. It was that moment when the person asking to sit in the most respected seat in our country imitated a disabled reporter. Someone he outranked in privilege, power, and the capacity to fight back. It kind of broke my heart when I saw it and I still can't get it out of my head because it wasn't in a movie. It was real life. And this instinct to humiliate, when it's modeled by someone in the public platform, by someone powerful, it filters down into everybody's life, because it kinda gives permission for other people to do the same thing. Disrespect invites disrespect, violence incites violence. And when the powerful use their position to bully others we all lose. Okay, go on with that thing.

Okay, this brings me to the press. We need the principled press to hold power to account, to call him on the carpet for every outrage. That's why our founders enshrined the press and its freedoms in the Constitution. So I only ask the famously well-heeled Hollywood Foreign Press and all of us in our community to join me in supporting the Committee to Protect Journalists, because we're gonna need them going forward, and they'll need us to safeguard the truth.

One more thing: Once, when I was standing around on the set one day, whining about something — you know we were gonna work through supper or the long hours or whatever, Tommy Lee Jones said to me, “Isn’t it such a privilege, Meryl, just to be an actor?” Yeah it is, and we have to remind each other of the privilege and the responsibility of the act of empathy. We should all be proud of the work Hollywood honors here tonight.

As my friend, the dear departed Princess Leia, said to me once, take your broken heart, make it into art.