

# Songs That Change Lives

FOR DECADES, VISIONARY AWARD RECIPIENT DIANE WARREN'S MUSIC HAS MADE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE BY ALEX BEN BLOCK

**D**IANE WARREN doesn't like change. She has lived in the same house in the Hollywood Hills for 23 years, been a vegetarian for 20 years, still uses her Blackberry and for 31 years has had the same nearby offices and studio.

She stops on her short drive to work each morning for a blended latte. Her cat and 24-year-old parrot Buttwings keep her company in a cluttered office that she has called her "secret world." She still uses a tape recorder to create both music and lyrics that is initially recorded on an audiocassette. She listens on an analog Walkman.

Still pixyish and youthful-looking at 60, she never married or had children. She exercises, has friends and supports charities, but much of her life involves long days making music that has filled the songbook of her generation.

She has been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Her hits include "Nothing's Going to Stop Us Now" (with Albert Hammond), "Because You Love Me" (Celine Dion), "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" (Aerosmith), "Music of

My Heart" (Gloria Estafan) and "Grateful" (Rita Ora).

Overall she has had over 100 top ten hits, and her songs have been heard in more than 100 motion pictures, earning her eight Academy Award nominations and five Golden Globe nominations. She has also won eight Grammy Awards and, this past year, claimed her first Emmy.

Tonight, the Los Angeles Press Club is honoring Diane Warren with its 2016 Visionary Award, created to honor an individual in the entertainment industry who uses his or her high-profile status to make the world a better place, and to spread information about issues of freedom and importance.

That is what Warren has done again and again. In 2011, a video of Beyoncé performing her song "I Was Here" was shot inside the UN General Assembly. It was seen by more than 1 billion people.

Early this year, Warren worked with First Lady Michelle Obama on behalf of the "Let Girls Learn" campaign, to make sure girls all over the globe can get an education.

Warren's song "This Is For My Girls" uses positive

Warren won her first Emmy in 2015; Warren with David Foster, Whitney Houston and Clive Davis





Left, top to bottom: Andrew Lloyd Webber; at the Academy Awards; Warren and Celine Dion; and chatting with Elton John.



Warren in the studio with Cher and right, with music giants Quincy Jones and Clive Davis



lyrics to empower girls and women. It urges them to “stand up, put your head up, don’t take nothing from nobody.”

Warren joined Mrs. Obama in Austin, Texas, in March for the song’s premiere at the South By Southwest festival. It was performed by musical all-stars including Kelly Clarkson, Janelle Monae, Lea Michele and Missy Elliot.

“Diane Warren and this collective of powerful, talented artists have truly taken action in support of ‘Let Girls Learn,’” said the First Lady at the time. “I am thrilled that they’ve created this anthem for the 62 million girls around the world who are not in school.”

Another song with an impact was also a life-changing experience for Warren. She wrote “Til It Happens to You” for Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering’s documentary *The Hunting Ground*, about the problem of date rape.

“It really gave voice to that,” said Warren. “Music is more powerful than anything. It goes right to your heart.”

Performed with emotion and depth by Lady Gaga, it became the anthem for a cause. It was also a landmark moment for Warren, causing her to reveal a dark personal secret she had kept hidden for five decades—she had been molested when she was only 12. She had never told anyone, not even her parents.

“You have no idea how many... people I’ve met on the street who tell me the song gave a voice to people who couldn’t talk about it,” Warren said. “It even made me talk about something I had never even told friends.”

During an event in New York City with Lady Gaga and the filmmakers, Warren “blurted out,” she recalled, “Hey, I was molested too.”

It was weeks before the Academy Awards, where the nominated song was performed by Lady Gaga and a chorus of real-life victims. Vice President Joe Biden then called for attention to a serious problem.

Warren loved meeting the VP, praising him because he “doesn’t have a filter. He has so much heart. He is



Warren with mother, Flora; Right: Being held by father, David



so genuine. When he talked to me about my work he had tears in his eyes.”

Lady Gaga’s performance was among the most talked-about on the Oscars, and earned a standing ovation and an outpouring on social media worldwide.

Warren’s ongoing passion is animal rescue, and it only begins with her vegetarianism. “You can’t love animals and eat them,” said Warren. “Like, I hate Thanksgiving. It’s a dead headless bird on a table.... It’s a turkey holocaust.”

Warren estimates 98% of her philanthropy goes toward animal rescue. “My favorite right now,” said Warren, “is Mercy for Animals. They do stuff for farm animals. That’s my passion. It’s so terrible what happens to farm animals, the murder and cruelty.”

Warren continues to write music that supports important causes and subjects. Next year one of her songs will be the theme for *Marshall*, the powerful story of the first African-American Supreme Court Justice. “It’s one of the best songs I’ve ever done for a movie,” said Warren.

Just don’t ask her to explain her process of songwriting. “I don’t know what my process is,” she says. “I show up. I get to work. I don’t ever analyze. I don’t like to explain what I do. It’s magical. It happens. I work very hard.”