



MHS '12 Angry Women' joins initiative



The cast of "12 Angry Women." COURTESY ALICIA GODSIL

By ALICIA GODSIL
For Montclair Local

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On Thursday, April 12 a production of “12 Angry Men” was performed at Montclair High School. MHS junior Mirit Skeen directed. The catch was: she directed a cast of all women. The reading is part of the 12,000 Voices Initiative. The play has been performed in 60 communities across 23 states (plus one in Canada), with more than 1,000 women participating and over 12,000 people reached, according to the [12,000 Voices website](#). 12,000 Voices is a voting registration initiative. The website points out that the teleplay “12 Angry Men” was written in 1954, 19 years before women were permitted to serve on juries in all 50 states. It was made into a film in 1957. We talked to Skeen to learn more about this initiative:

What is the 12,000 voices initiative?

The 12,000 Voices initiative was created by producer Lauren Class Schneider to encourage and organize staged readings of “12 Angry Men” with all-female casts across the country. It began in New York City [in 2018] with a staged all-female reading featuring Broadway actresses, including Tony nominees and winners.

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What is the goal of the initiative and how does it plan to achieve it?

The goal of the initiative was to have 1,000 performances of the play this year so that 12,000 female voices could be heard in a play that has been historically male. Although there wasn’t quite that level of support this year, over 100 productions were on across the country with the help of the Initiative organizing funds and scholarships to groups that needed it.

How did you hear about the initiative?

I follow a lot of theatre and actors, and I saw some of my favorite actors were doing this reading. I’m a huge fan of the play itself and it just seemed like the most perfect thing to put on. When I mentioned how much I would love to be part of the initiative, a friend of mine asked “Don’t you have a drama club at school?” and suddenly I was organizing the show!

Why did you choose to be part of the initiative and what does it mean to you?

I love unconventional theatre and finding something new in old works. I think that reimagining classic pieces of theater is one of the most important things to do. It helps to find new voices to tell stories in ways we never expected before. Although there are many female-led musicals and plays, it's difficult to find ones so serious and grounded in issues that are so human and real, and to have the chance to have 12 female voices talking about this issue and telling these stories means so much to me.