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**Leading Filmmaker, Philanthropist, Activist Abigail Disney to Speak at
2015 Simmons College Commencement, May 15**

BOSTON (April 6, 2015) – [Simmons College](http://www.simmons.edu) is proud to host filmmaker, philanthropist, and activist Abigail Disney during its 110th Commencement ceremony Friday, May 15 at the Blue Hills Bank Pavilion in Boston.

Disney will be the speaker for the morning undergraduate ceremony at 9:30 a.m. Distinguished literary critic Deborah Porter will be the speaker for the afternoon ceremony for master's and doctoral students at 2:30 p.m.

“These two women exemplify the Simmons College tradition of educating students for leadership and success to make a difference in the world,” said Simmons College President Helen Drinan.

The college will be live tweeting from the ceremony at [@SimmonsCollege](https://twitter.com/SimmonsCollege) #SIMS15.

Disney has devoted her life to amplifying the voices of women fighting for peace in war-torn countries, and highlighting the key role women play in modern warfare. Her first film, the acclaimed documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, tells the inspirational story of Liberian women who came together to end their country's brutal civil war. The film won Best Documentary at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival and went on to be viewed across the United States in theaters, on public television and later in 60 countries around the world. It is broadly credited with helping its lead figure, Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist responsible for leading the peace movement that helped bring about the end of the civil war in her country, be named a Nobel Prize winner in 2011.

Porter has enriched the city of Boston through her love of literature and her generosity in sharing this with others. A Simmons College alumna, she is the founder and executive director of the Boston Book Festival, the largest public literary event in New England. The first festival—held in 2009—drew more than 10,000 attendees; it has since doubled in size with 25,000 attendees and more than 100 presenters annually including Pulitzer Prize-winning authors from around the world. Porter served as a judge for the 2014 Massachusetts Cultural Council's Artist Fellowships review in Fiction/Creative Nonfiction and was on the advisory committee for *Boston Magazine's Power of Ideas* issue. She has reviewed books for *Kirkus Reviews*, WBUR online, *Ruminator Review*, the *Harvard Review*, and the *Horn Book*.

Both Disney and Porter will receive honorary degrees from Simmons. Also receiving an honorary degree is Laurence Prusak, a knowledge management researcher, teacher, and author, and founder and director of the Center for Business Innovation at Ernst and Young, and the IBM Institute of Knowledge Management. A Simmons College alumnus having received an M.S. in Library Science, Prusak is a Senior Advisor on Knowledge for NASA, and has been a guest lecturer at some of the world's most renowned universities, including MIT and Stanford.

Founded in 1899, Simmons College (<http://www.simmons.edu>) is a nationally ranked university located in the heart of Boston and the preeminent authority on women's leadership. Simmons offers undergraduate education for women, and the nation's first MBA program designed for women. Simmons also provides renowned coeducational graduate programs in nursing and health sciences, liberal arts, library and information science, social work, and business. Follow Simmons on Twitter [@SimmonsCollege](https://twitter.com/SimmonsCollege) and [@SimmonsNews](https://twitter.com/SimmonsNews).