

# Yes, Sacramento, 'LADY BIRDS' can – and do – fly home again



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Maritza Davis at the boutique, Damas, in Oak Park, founded Unseen Heroes, a marketing company that builds community.

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The Oscar-nominated movie “Lady Bird,” set in Sacramento, has trained a spotlight on the capital city as the pleasant but unexciting hometown of a young woman eager to escape to a bigger life elsewhere. There’s more to the Sacramento story. Some of those who leave – some “Lady Birds” – fly home. Call it the real-life sequel. Meet seven Sacramento women and men who left, several about the time “Lady Bird” director Greta Gerwig did, only to return. Their city is not quite what they want it to be. They’re working on that.



Amy  
Aswell



Tre  
Borden



Garrett  
Larsson



Brandon  
Salzberg

### MARITZA DAVIS

Maritza Davis' specialty, she says, is "creating something from nothing." It's a niche skill, she says, one that Sacramento needs.

She and husband Roshaun Davis founded an event agency called Unseen Heroes a decade ago and have used it to create some of the city's most energy-inducing moments. They came up with the company name after hearing a Grammy award winner thanking the unseen heroes behind the scenes who make things happen.

Davis helped turn the sleepy midtown Farmers Market into a major event. They're the cre-

ative team behind "Gather," a popular and ethnically diverse monthly dinner and music party in the street in Oak Park.

Davis also is an organizer for what may be the most visually dramatic annual event in the capital city, the "Diner En Blanc" or White Dinner, an outdoor party attended by 1,000 Sacramentans dressed all in white, down to the shoes, dining at white-clothed tables.

Last week, she helped organize Sierra Health Foundation's "Equity on the Mall" meeting, attended by several thousand and aimed at bringing a voice to Central Valley workers.

She says her goal is to create

moments that allow people to cherish community. "People here want to interact," she said of her hometown. "They want to break out of the mundane."

Davis, 34, is a member of Christian Brothers High School's class of 2002. The south Sacramento native, now living in Oak Park with her husband and three children, initially didn't believe there was a place for her here.

She worked in Los Angeles as a manager for a restaurant chain because she wanted to be somewhere that had more culture. The company transferred

SEE LADY BIRDS, 12A

Nikky  
Mohanna



Clay  
Nutting

her temporarily to Sacramento, but when they asked her to take a new assignment in another city, she surprised herself by saying no thanks.

She had fallen in love with the man she'd later marry. Together they talked about how to apply their love of culture here. Davis assembled "a vision board," pasting on it the silhouette of a powerful woman in a black suit. She pasted food there. "I love food," she said. Art collections. Music. Gatherings of people. A stack of money.

Their company has since gained a reputation for its creative approach. Christine Ault, a consultant who has worked with them, called them clever, passionate and refreshing. She cited the Gather event. "The name says everything."

Davis hasn't seen the movie "Lady Bird." "It's on my list. Maybe this weekend," she said. But she said understands a young person thirsty for culture might feel a desire to leave Sacramento. Even now, if Los Angeles is a five on the vibrancy scale, Sacramento is just a two.

"I still think we are pretty conservative. There is still a lot of red tape when people are trying to be creative. We have a long ways to go."