If this year's Oscars are remembered for anything, it may be for making the term "inclusion rider" common parlance. Mentioned by Frances McDormand at the end of her best actress acceptance speech, it refers to a clause actors can insist be added to their contracts.

"[It] means that you can ask for and/or demand at least 50% diversity, not only in casting but also [in] the crew," she explained backstage afterwards.

Its mention prompted a dramatic surge of interest in the term on Google.

Many people also searched for inclusion "writer", having misheard the final sentence of McDormand's rousing address.

Image copyright Google

McDormand said she had only become aware of the term recently. But it's actually been around since 2016.

It was coined by media researcher Stacy Smith in a TED talk she gave that year, in which she posited ways to show more women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities on screen.

Dr Smith came up with the concept with Kalpana Kotagal, a civil rights and employment practice attorney in Washington DC, and the producer and actor Fanshen Cox DiGiovanni.

The University of Southern California professor argues that an "equity clause" in an A-list actor's contract could allow the film's minor on-screen roles "to match or reflect the demography of where the story is taking place".

Speaking to an audience in San Francisco, Dr Smith said: "The typical feature film has about 40 to 45 speaking characters in it. I would argue that only 8 to 10 of those characters are actually relevant to the story.

"The remaining 30 or so roles, there's no reason why those minor roles can't match or reflect the demography of where the story is taking place.

"An equity rider by an A-lister in their contract can stipulate that those roles reflect the world in which we actually live."

Speaking after the awards, Dr Smith said the mention had come as a "complete surprise" and that she was "utterly elated" that McDormand - who won for her role in Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri - had so publicly championed her proposal.

"The goal is that talent can take the inclusion rider and adopt it in ways that make sense for their values and their beliefs," she told The Guardian.

The good news is that some A-listers are already taking the initiative when it comes to using their position to negotiate a more representative work space.

"I'm committed to the Inclusion Rider," tweeted Brie Larson, Oscar-winning star of Room and the forthcoming Captain Marvel. "Who's with me?"

McDormand also got the backing of former tennis player Billie Jean King, British screenwriter Jack Thorne and Pitch Perfect star Elizabeth Banks.
The day the women went on strike
Tue 18 Oct 2005 23.59

On October 24 1975, 90% of Iceland’s women refused to work, cook or look after children. The effect was incredible, recalls Annadis Rudolfsdottir

Gudrun Jonsdottir was 21, just married with a young child, and was not going to cook, clean, and was definitely not going to work. Nor was my mother, my friends' mothers, the shop assistants in the supermarket, the teachers - in short an estimated 90% of women in Iceland. A neighbour, the mother of three boisterous boys, left her family to fend for themselves at 8am and did not return until late in the evening. Remarkably, although Icelandic society was almost brought to a standstill that fine day, its women had never felt so alive, so purposeful and so determined.

When the United Nations proclaimed 1975 a Women’s Year, a committee with representatives from five of the biggest women organisations in Iceland was set up to organise commemorative events. A radical women’s movement called the Red Stockings first raised the question: "Why don't we just all go on strike?" This, they argued, would be a powerful way of reminding society of the role women play in its running, their low pay, and the low value placed on their work inside and outside the home. The idea was bandied about, and finally agreed to by the committee, but only after the word "strike" had been replaced with "a day off". They figured this would make the idea more palatable to the masses and to employers who could fire women going on strike but would have problems denying them "a day off".

In the days preceding the 24th it seemed that women everywhere were grouping together, drinking coffee, smoking incessantly but doing a lot of agitated talking. My granny, who was working incredibly hard in a fish factory, was not going to take the day off. But the questions raised by the women’s movements whirred around her mind. Why were young men taking home higher wages than her when her job was no less physically strenuous? My mother, who was 28 and worked in a dairy, had to use all her negotiation skills to convince her boss, a hard-working woman in her 50s, that they should leave work.

In Reykjavik an estimated 25,000 women gathered to listen to speeches, sing and discuss matters - an astonishing number considering that Iceland's population was then just under 220,000. The women were from all walks of life, young and old, grannies and schoolgirls; some wore their uniforms from work, others had dressed up. "It was the real grassroots," recalls Elin Olafsdottir, who was 45 and later represented the Women’s Alliance on the Reykjavik city council. "It was, in all seriousness, a quiet revolution." It was this sense of togetherness, the calm and quiet determination, that most women remember from that day.

Gerdur Steinthorsdottir, then a 31-year-old student at the University of Iceland and now a teacher, helped organise the rally. She claims the participation was so widespread because women from all the political parties and the unions felt able to work together, and make it happen.

The atmosphere at the rally was incredible. Sigrun Bjornsdottir was a student of 19 and had just found out she was pregnant. It was a difficult time, she remembers, but being part of the rally made her feel that she was connected to a bigger force - empowered. Meanwhile, 21-year-old Gudrun Jonsdottir stood in the crowd, quietly crying. She could not believe that an old family friend, Adalheidur Bjarnfredsdottir, was going to be one of the rally’s main speakers. She represented Sokn, the trade union for the lowest paid women in Iceland. Reading her first public speech now sends a chill down the spine. "Men have governed the world since time immemorial and what has the world been like?" she asked in her deep, gravelly voice.

Answering herself, she described a world soaked in blood, an earth polluted and exploited to the point of ruin. A description that seems truer now than ever.

Iceland's men were barely coping. Most employers did not make a fuss of the women disappearing but rather tried to prepare for the influx of overexcited youngsters who would have to accompany their fathers to work. Some went out to buy sweets and gathered pencils and papers in a bid to keep the children occupied. Sausages, the favourite ready meal of the time, sold out in supermarkets and many husbands ended up bribing older children to look after their younger siblings. Schools, shops, nurseries, fish factories and other institutions had to shut down or run at half-capacity.

It was a moment of truth for many fathers who were exhausted at the end of the day. Not surprisingly this day was later referred to by them as "the long Friday".

But what did Icelandic women gain by all this? For many it was a wake-up call. I, like many women of my generation, became a feminist that day at the ripe old age of 11 - despite being left at home alone with my nine-year-old sister, furious at being forbidden from attending the rally. It was a spur to action and many feel that the solidarity women showed that day paved the way for the election five years later of Vigdis Finnbogadottir, the world's first democratically elected female president.