Cultural Daily

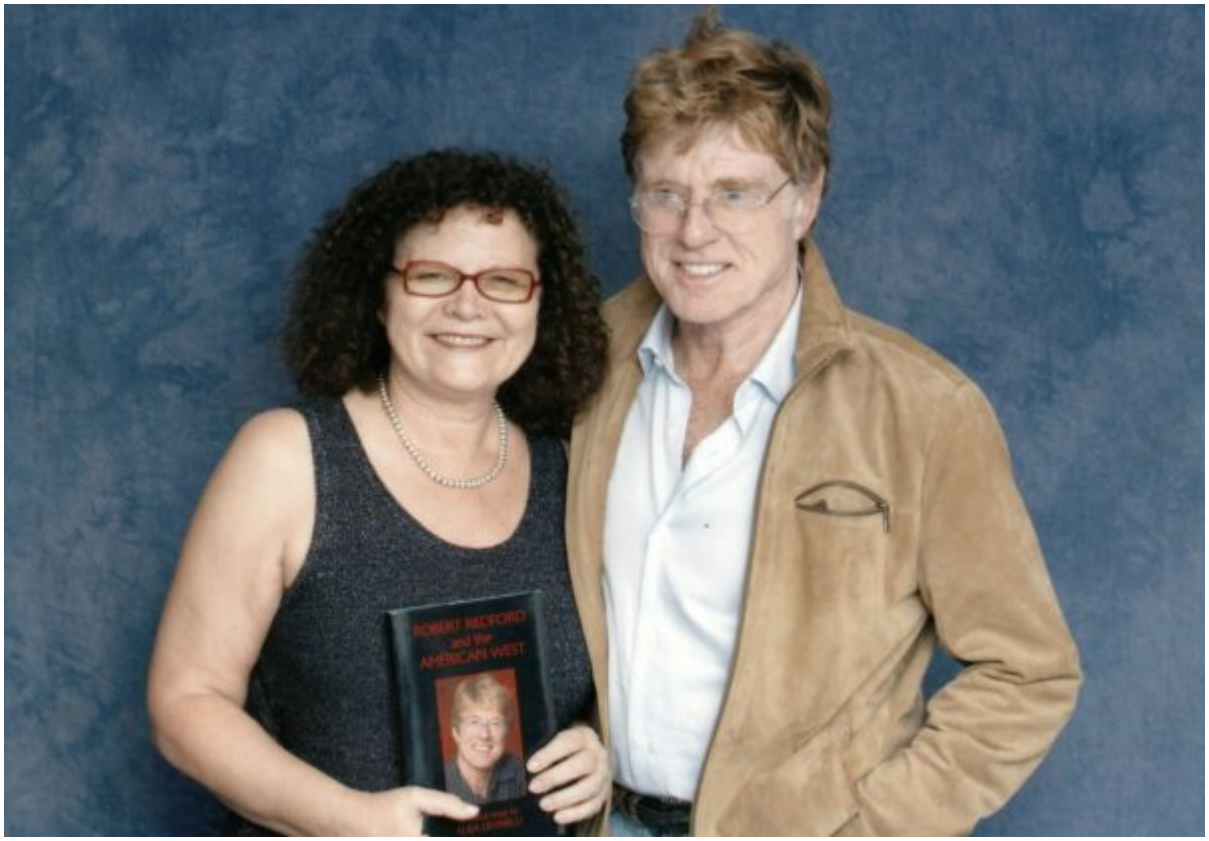
Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Robert Redford Said

Elisa Leonelli · Monday, September 22nd, 2025

I had been working on my Robert Redford archives for some time, when I learnt of his passing last week.

I wrote several interviews with this legendary actor for international and domestic publications from 1992 to 2004, and published my book *Robert Redford and the American West* in 2007. You may read here my August 2024 article about this work.

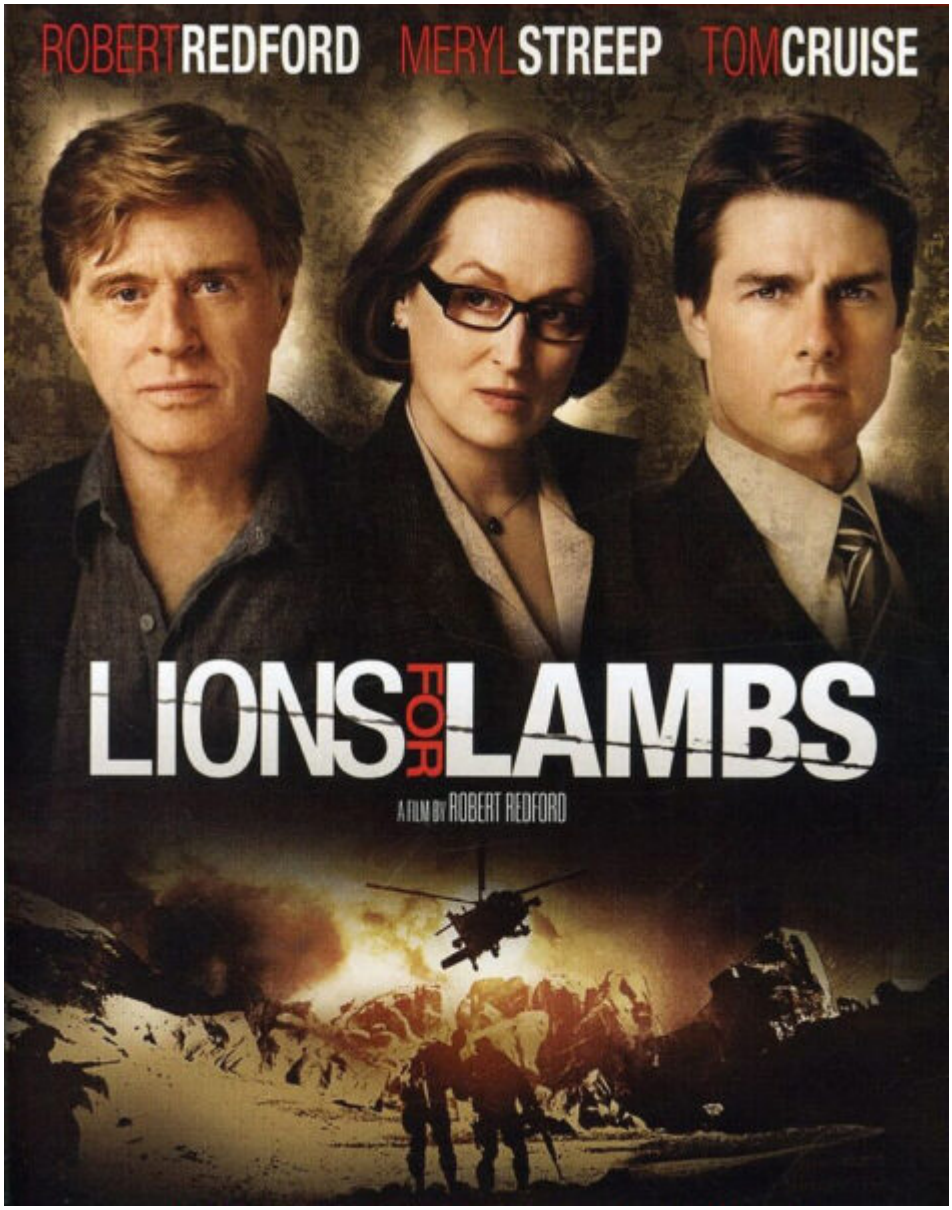


Elisa Leonelli, Robert Redford © HFPA 2007

So now I went back to look at what Redford said during four exclusive interviews he did with us, journalists of the Hollywood Foreign Press, from 2007 to 2018, and pulled some quotes still relevant for today.

Robert Redford-Lions for Lambs (c) Universal

“My research on the press to prepare *Lion for Lambs* (2007) goes back to *All the President’s Men* (1976), which I made in a very different time in our country. That was a high point for journalism’s ability to protect our First Amendment rights. *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein got most of the attention, but other people demanded the truth and literally behaved like detectives, investigating what the government was doing and saying, until they finally caught them. But journalism at that time had a very strong ethic and a rigid principle that, before you could print anything, you had to get two people to go on record and verify it. Also, the Congress and the Supreme Court were more bipartisan, they weren’t in the hands of one party. Now, in the time since Watergate and in the last six years (since George Bush became President in 2001), a lot of changes have occurred and that ethic no longer stands. Newspapers go for market share, are run by business affairs, so you have publications, like Rupert Murdoch’s empire and new channels like Fox, that are all about entertainment, not necessarily out to get accurate information and uncover the truth.”



“My film is not an indictment on all of media, I remember certain journalists asking, where are the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? But it is a wake up call for students, the media and Congress to do their job, and for people to get involved for the sake of our country. Over the last few years there’s been a lot of apathy, but there may be a movement beginning with young people getting more active in their social or political lives and their professional future. I would understand if they were skeptical, and i certainly agree, in terms of the last six years in our country, but paying attention and demanding accountability from leadership is more vital than ever.”

“When I was as child growing up in Los Angeles, everybody in the country was totally united in the war efforts, we were pulling together to deal with issues regarding the second world war. In my memory it was a wonderful time, and I just assumed that it was probably the way it would always be. So I am in a bit of mourning right now (in 2017), because I feel like we have become so polarized and so divided, which is unhealthy and it keeps us from going forward. But I also have hope, because when I look at the history, this country has always pointed to the brink, to that extreme edge, then it pulls itself back at the last minute. And there is a positive, that the 2016 election (when Donald Trump was elected President) has shaken us out of our apathy and that’s a good thing. I have been inspired by the marches that have happened throughout the United States and the world, which I find very encouraging.”

“It’s a sad thing to have to say, but you all know it, that we’re living in rather dark times politically, we’re at a time now (2018) in our cultural environment that’s very dark. The polarization that exists with the two parties not agreeing to cross the aisle to work together is depressing, and we, the public, are the losers.”

Robert Redford © HFPA 2018

“I believe that, if we continue on the path we’re on, there won’t be much world to live in. But we have a history of going to the last moment before we change something, so I’m optimistic that we’ll get to a point where there’ll be a wake up call and we’ll make an adjustment. We’re heading in that direction right now (2018), because we have to. Unfortunately we are led by people who believe that we can keep development and mining going to its limit, so you want to be a voice that says, if you say that there’s no climate change and you’re willing to ignore science, then what’s the point of science, what value has science played in our history? Right now things are moving so quickly and getting so dangerous that we better start thinking about that before it’s too late. The future is going to be about what we developed and what we preserve for our survival. So I did everything I could to express the value of preserving what we had, before there was nothing left.”

Robert Redford © HFPA 2013

On March 24, 2002, as he accepted an Honorary Academy Award, Robert Redford said: “As we all struggle to make sense out of the chaos, the destruction and the tragedy (9/11), one word that emerges is freedom. It’s going to be important in the years to come to make sure that the freedom of artistic expression is nurtured and kept alive.”

Redford received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Barack Obama at the White House on November 22, 2016.

On July 15, 2025 it was announced that the Sundance Film Festival was planning to honor founder Robert Redford in January 2026. Those celebrations are sure to be even more extensive and deeply felt now.

This is what Jane Fonda said on September 16, after Robert Redford's passing: "He stood for an America we have to keep fighting for."

Fonda and Redford co-starred in *The Chase* (1966), *Barefoot in the Park* (1967), *The Electric Horseman* (1979), *Our Souls at Night* (2017).

Read here how Redford summarized his life in November 2024, interviewed by his grandson.

The actor's last on screen appearance was as a cameo on March 9, 2025, in the TV series *Dark Winds* that he produced.

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