

dent of harassment (sic). "They called me a feminist dyke," she complains.

A fierce essentialism emerges. Racism isn't mentioned. Crucial connections aren't made. And yet we find ourselves wanting to draw together, make the circle again, and hold one another as we mourn. The fear is that we won't move on into activism, and that, claiming unity, we ignore difference. The hope is that we will rebuild feminist community in a way that can include supportive strategies so necessary in these hard political times. There have already been so many casualties; too many feminist periodicals and collectives have collapsed, winded by a combination of under-funding, infighting, and exhaustion. Our anger at the massacre can begin to fuel our awareness, and our desire for social change. In her article "Uses of Anger," Audre Lorde describes anger as being full of "information and energy," which moves us into speech. She makes distinctions between hatred and anger: "Hatred is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction. Anger is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change."

Marc Lepine said, "You're all a bunch of fucking feminists." The only way to avenge his hateful, terrorist act is to prove him right. And to organize, along feminist and anti-racist lines, in every corner of our communities. ■

**Marusia Bociurkiw is a feminist artist, writer & activist living in Toronto.**

# Speaking of Colour

## IMAGE & NATION Festival of Gay & Lesbian Film and Video

FUSE MAGAZINE SPRING 1990

by Molly Shinhat



**MONTREAL**—Image and Nation II: The Montreal International Festival of Gay and Lesbian Cinema and Video took this city by storm from November 2-12. Held at the Goethe Institute, the NFB Cinema and the Cinéma-thèque Québécoise, this year's festival went a long way towards establishing the event as a permanent one. Over 60 films and videos were screened, the majority of which were made in North America and Europe. Taking a bold step forward, this year the organizers, Diffusions Gaies et Lesbiennes du Québec (DGLDQ), chose to engage in the debates and questions around the representation(s) of gays and lesbians of colour.

On average, 80 per cent of the seats in the cinemas were filled for every screening, giving this year's festival the highest attendance rating yet. The total number of tickets sold stands at about 4,200. The first attempt to revive and consolidate the festival was made in 1987, but endeavors to hold such a festival can be traced back to 1980. Unlike this year's festival, early at-

tempts did not manage to attract either a high level of community funding or mass audiences. In 1986, two small festivals were held—one at the Université de Montréal, organized by Pierre Chackal; the other, organized by René Lavoie, at the Cinéma-thèque Québécoise. Through Concordia film professor Thomas Waugh, the two were subsequently put in touch with a group of women who wanted to organize a lesbian film and video festival. The efforts of their work throughout 1987 resulted in the first major festival of Gay and Lesbian Cinema and Video (1988). The approximate ticket sales that year levelled off at about 3,000. The outstanding debt of \$500-600 was later absorbed by the individuals in the organizing group.

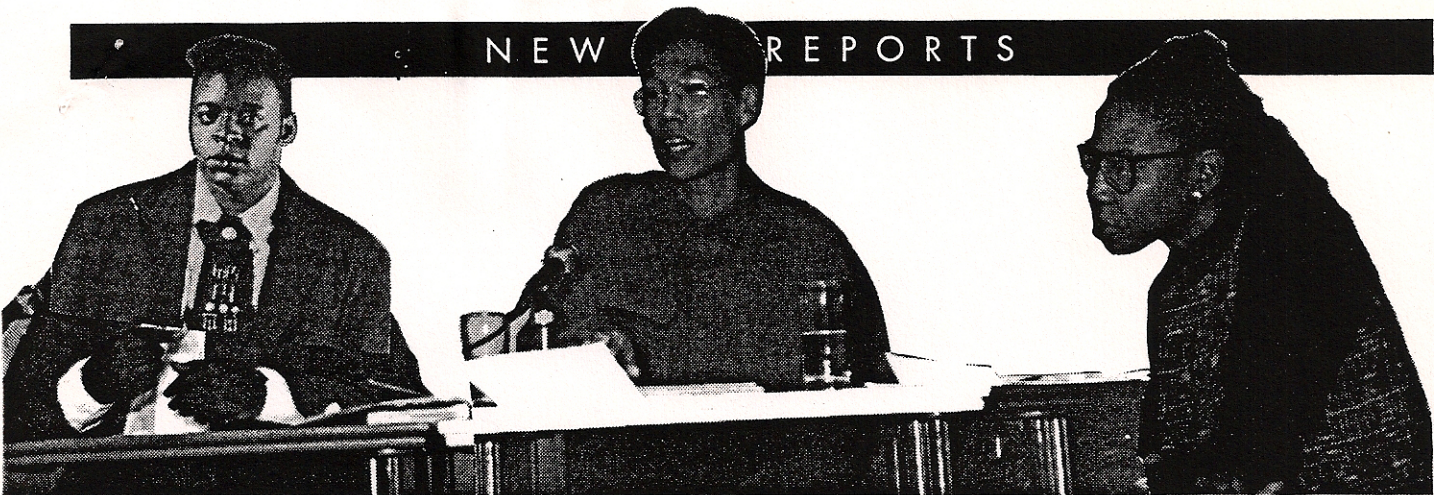
This year, with the added energy of new members, the group wrote up stacks of grant applications to all three levels of government. In the meantime, the organizing group initiated a massive outreach to gay and lesbian businesses in the Montreal area. While this consumed a lot of time, ulti-

mately the festival would never have taken place without it. Bars, video clubs, city councillors, banks, hotels, restaurants, bookstores—even Studio D of the National Film Board—bought ads in the festival catalogue. These paid for a substantial part of festival costs. The Cinéma-thèque Québécoise agreed to hold its week of gay and lesbian cinema in conjunction with the festival so it picked up some of the costs of bringing in films and guests.

The only other money the group received was the paltry sum of \$1,140 from the Canada Council, designated for subsidizing the travel expenses of guests travelling to Montreal from other Canadian cities. Significantly, all levels of government DGLDQ applied to are known to fund one or more of the other film festivals in Montreal. None of the organizers publicly allege homophobia, but, they say, the facts are the facts and in this case the fact is that government funding from the various departments simply did not materialize.

As part of the programming,





**Panelists Midi Onodera, Isaac Julien, Richard Fung and Michelle Parkerson.**

a panel discussion called, "Representation, Responsibility and Moveable Margins" was held halfway through the festival. Chaired by Jose Arroyo, a professor of cinema at Concordia University, the panel consisted of the following film and video makers: Richard Fung and Midi Onodera, of Toronto; Isaac Julien, from London, England; and Michelle Parkerson, from the U.S. All the panel members were gay or lesbian and Black or Asian, probably the first time such a panel has been convened in Canada.

A discussion was supposed to follow a brief address from the chair and each of the panel members. However, the entire process became bogged down in the process of translation. Part of the problem may have been the translator's unfamiliarity with the terminology of cinema and representation. It may also have been nervousness. Given the funding problems, DGLDQ could not afford to hire a professional translator. The fact is that sections of the panelists' papers were mistranslated on occasion, sometimes to the point of completely altering

what the person was saying. At one point in his presentation, Isaac Julien spoke about the violent impact of the white man's gaze on the Black man's body. The translator mistranslated one of the racial identities of the two figures involved. In addition, the theatrical and, on occasion, comic delivery of the translator bordered on the catastrophic; for example, by ending a segment of translation saying, "Well, some people might not agree that that's what s/he said, . . . but that's roughly what s/he said" or ". . . but that's what I think s/he said."

Most of the people in the room seemed to be bilingual: frequently members of the audience would shout out corrections. My greatest continuing fear centres on what completely incorrect impressions and information unilingual francophones left with—not only of what was said but also of how it was said. When the translator searched for the right words, there were times when it was difficult to tell whether the audience was laughing at what was being said or at the difficulties the translator was having. The difficulty of hold-

ing serious discussion in this environment persisted. Members of the organizing committee that could have done the translation were no doubt suffering from burn-out already. Hopefully, the resources available to the group will be increased for next year's festival so that this regrettable situation will not be repeated.

Midi Onodera, a Japanese-Canadian, spoke in detail about how a white perspective had been imposed on her as a result of her parents' background. In particular, she referred to the impact of her family's internment during World War II. Within the gay and lesbian movement, she discovered how her concerns were different from her white gay and lesbian contemporaries. The questions around sexual orientation in an Asian context and vice versa continue to be areas she explores in her work. She discussed the newness of the whole debate around questions of race and sexuality to her. She concluded that the purpose of the panel was, for her, more about trying to answer questions on a personal rather than a global level.

Isaac Julien spoke about the process that debates around Black identity have gone through in Britain. Racism has dictated that Black and British are two incompatible elements. Black British art practice was, therefore, on the whole, centred on challenging this construct and establishing the right to be both Black and British. The desire now is to move beyond that, beyond a critique of contemporary racism and to concentrate on cultural construction. It is within this space that Julien's interest in memory, archive, and reconstruction take place.

In addition, it has been accepted that no essence of Blackness exists. At the present time in Black British cinema, there are two general forms of practice: One is realist and documentary-oriented and makes the Black subject the centre of the film; the other confronts the latter, and leaving racial essentialism behind, questions the social construction of race, and celebrates plurality and difference with respect to class, sexuality and gender.

Because he tires of having to repeat the same analyses



over and over again, Richard Fung decided to review *Jesus de Montreal* by Denis Arcand for his presentation. He chose it randomly—not because he thought Arcand had any malicious intent but because it just happened to be the last film he had seen. His review focused on the part of a Black woman. She fit right into mainstream representation of Black people. The audience at the Cineplex laughed at her because they knew her: they had seen her before in *Gone with the Wind* and on cereal boxes. Fung used this example to illustrate the kinds of racism that permeate cinema—either a glaring absence of people of colour or, as in *Jesus de Montreal*, a series of narrow stereotypes.

In his videotape, *Chinese Characters*, one man (in the tape) says that he thinks he has the smallest penis in the world. This happens to be a stereotype of Asian men. Fung decided to include the comment because, though racism and homophobia dominate the mass media, we cannot produce only positive images. At the same time, he cautioned against creating images that would be prime candidates for co-optation into a racist discourse.

Fung ended by situating the subject and audience of his work as specifically Asian. The decision came out of the realization that in doing outreach to general audiences, the audience Fung is trying to reach becomes constructed as passive. He made several other points about audience. Working in community media does

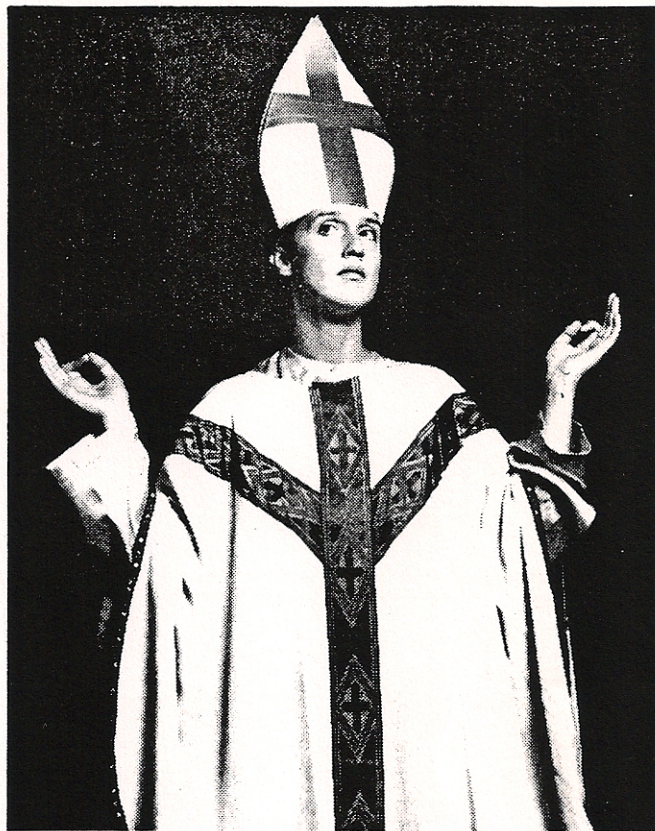
not mean the community will like the product. Part of this is a function of what people are used to, and part of it comes out of the sensitivity everyone has to representation(s) around her/his identity.

Michelle Parkerson's paper, "Answering the Void," was written two years ago. Her observations centered on Black American audiences, images of Black Americans on film through history and the role of Black feminist filmmakers. She began by describing the work of Black independent filmmakers and feminist filmmakers. Black feminist filmmakers were the first to see that film and video no longer solely serve as entertainment and were the first to use film to validate their experience and history, she said.

Film is a potential vehicle of social change that can be used to demystify the Afro-American experience and bring out the depth and diversity of some of our unsung artists. During the silent era, there were a number of films made with a Black crew and cast made for segregated audiences. Most of the crew were male. For a long time, Black women were images on the screen, or spectators—rarely imagemakers.

At the end of her presentation, Parkerson presented a short clip from a tape she is in the process of completing. It featured Black American writer Audre Lorde reading from her work and taking part in a writing workshop. ■

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**Maureen White in Pope Joan.**

# 10 Years & 5 Minutes

## NIGHTWOOD Celebrates a Decade of Feminist Theatre

**by Susan G. Cole**

Nightwood Theatre, on the brink of its 10th birthday, is in the throes of a pre-teen identity crisis. The small company, created as a creative laboratory for four feminist theatre artists, has, over the years, substantially transformed its original concept. And with its umbrella hovering over a burgeoning population of writers and performers, the company

is grappling with some fundamental questions. How does a theatre company remain true to its alternative roots while fulfilling a political mandate of reaching out to a large audience? How does it function within a theatre community unfamiliar and sometimes hostile to feminist principles? For that matter, how can any theatre company leaping into