

Two hot nights in July

Toronto's first look at films & videos by lesbians of colour

Two dykes sit calmly in their living room in New York City. They are describing how their apartment was broken into: furniture turned upside-down, obscenities scrawled on every surface ... "He drew his cock on the wall—he had to, 'cause of course we'd never seen one, right ... But the worst part was all the anti-lesbian stuff all over the walls."

You'd never know the two women are Cherrie Moraga and Barbara Smith, two important lesbian feminist writers; racism and homophobia don't stop at their door just because they write books. Says Smith impassively, as though she's had to say it a hundred times before: "This wasn't just the general kind of New York City violence. It was about me being black, it was about me being a lesbian, it was about me being a woman."

This scene is from the video, *Just Because of Who We Are*, a documentary about violence against lesbians by a US lesbian video collective called Heramedia. It's one of several works being highlighted Jul 21 & 22 in a unique two-day video-film festival called Hot Night in July: Video & Film by and about Lesbians of Colour.

Presented by Grassroots: The 5th International Lesbian & Gay People of Colour Conference, and by Emma Productions, a feminist media collective, the event is meant to build support for the conference. Says one of the organizers, Emma member Pamela Millar, "We want these films to make people aware of some of the issues the Grassroots conference will be dealing with. It's an exciting event, because when one part of the movement for gay and lesbian liberation organizes, we should see that as an opportunity to organize our support of them. It makes our whole movement stronger."

But the screening is also an excuse to showcase an international selection of lesbian videos and films, most of which have never before been screened in Toronto. The constraints of funding and censorship, not to mention homophobia and racism, mean that there are never enough images of lesbians of colour in the movies, in videos, or anywhere—images that are active, articulate and strong.

The only Canadian work in the event is *Displaced View*, by Toronto film maker Midi Onodera. That's because Onodera is the only 'out' lesbian of colour filmmaker whose work is in general distribution in Canada. The film is a gentle exploration into the lives of three generations of Japanese women in On-

odera's family. She includes herself in the film—clearly visible to other lesbians as a dyke, but not so clearly to her family. In the film, she speaks about the racism meted out to Japanese Canadians—quite overtly through the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War and less overtly in her own experience. Newly released, *Displaced View* will encourage gay and lesbian audiences to make connections between their own understanding of homophobia and a larger understanding of systemic racism.

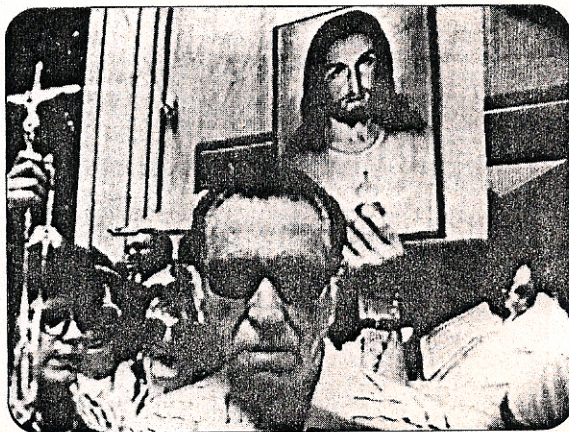
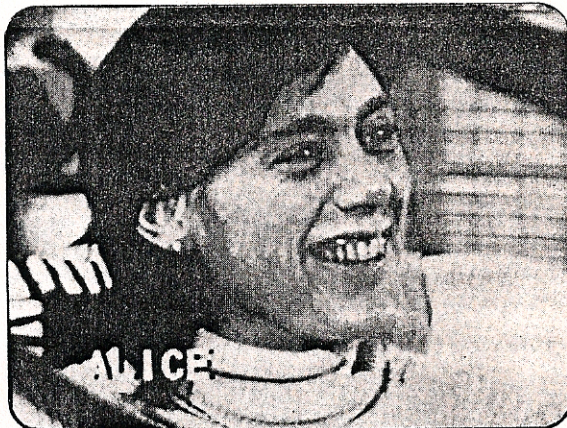
Hot Night in July is divided into two nights. The first night, called Private Images, features *Susana* (a film by Argentinian Susan Blaustein Munoz about a woman's view of herself as a latina and as a lesbian) and *Domestic Bliss*, a British lesbian sitcom with a multi-racial cast, by Joy Chamberlain. It depicts the interactions of a doctor, her lover, a 10-year-old daughter, an ex-husband, a best friend and a neighbour who has a bad habit of locking herself in the bathroom and crawling through the doctor's window. Barring any undue intervention by the morality squad, the evening will conclude with a San Francisco offering simply titled *Masturbation: Five Women*.

The second evening, *Going Public*, features *Displaced Views* and *Women in Love*, a documentary by Sylvie Rhue about black lesbians. *Just Because of Who We Are* concludes this evening; its testimonies of violence, familial rejection, arrest and psychiatrization end with triumphant footage of the fight for human rights protection for lesbians and gay men in New York State. Its call for resistance and community organizing is one that it is hoped will be particularly meaningful for Grassroots participants and supporters.

All this takes place at the Rose Cafe. Women and men are welcome, but get there early—seating is limited.

□ Marusia Bociurkiw

Hot Night in July: Video & Film by & about Lesbians of Colour. At the Rose Cafe, 547 Parliament (north of Carleton). Jul 21 & 22, 7pm. Admission: \$5 & \$4, or \$8 for both nights.



Being black, lesbian & female. Faces from *Just Because of Who We Are*, a work by US lesbian video artists, showing Jul 21 in Toronto.