

# In Visible Colours Remediated 2022

Select audio from the original conference panels.

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Item 2009-116.0557. In Visible Colours: *Celebrating our Cinema*. With speakers: Loretta Todd, Ayoka Chenzira, Viola Thomas, Pratibha Parmar — celebrating the opening of In Visible Colours.

## **Viola Thomas 00:02**

First of all, I would like to acknowledge our grandmothers. The opening evening event featured our grandmothers: Mary Uslick, Minnie Peters, and they offered a prayer song that would help guide us in our deliberations over the duration of this symposium, and this film and video festival. I also want to acknowledge the people's territory in which we are in — the Indigenous peoples of the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) and Squamish (Sḵwxwú7mesh) peoples. This particular panel, called *Celebrating our Cinema*, I believe is an opportunity to hear women of colour, First Nations women, and Third World women to challenge and unmask the white and male supremacist forms of control in the production and distribution of films and videos throughout the world. The irony is that this country and many other countries label us as minorities, but when you put it in the context of a global world, we are a majority. First Nations women, Third World, and Women of Colour, continue to be constrained by the forces of cultural imperialism, colonization, and racism. This kind of repression is what brings us together today – what brings us together or for the next few days to figure out how it is that we can be proactive and supporting each other in the work that we're doing.

## **Pratibha Parmar 04:47**

I just want to make a few very broad generalisations and general observations rather than about the growing body of cinematic representations, which have been coming from a diversity of women from a variety of racial, cultural, political, and geographical locations, and many of which are actually included in this festival. I think that, you know, two years ago – even three years ago – we couldn't have talked about a body of work that is actually worked by women of colour, who are filmmakers, and that is now beginning to happen in that kind of international sort of movement of Black women and women of colour felt as filmmakers, I think, is a very exciting moment. And this festival, and the symposium is sort of a start of that moment. And I think that sort of from just looking at the program, and looking at many of the films and videos that have been featured in the symposium, and the festival, that I see that there's one fundamental link that we – most of us have in common, and we're all coming

from very diverse communities – racial and cultural communities – and yet, I think that there are many common links. And I think one of the sort of the broad links that we have, or that most of us are women whose voices, whose experiences and also our visions have been systematically marginalised, and displaced, from the centres of cultural industries, whether it's in our countries where we operate from, or anywhere else. And these are cultural industries, which have dominated the West, and often the cultures of colonised peoples. And it's the systematic marginalisation and invisibility that has deprived many of us access to the skills and resources of actual film technology. And it's essential for us to have the skills and to actually have the whole sort of process of filmmaking and film production demystified. Not so that we can just make films but really much more importantly, that that would actually give us a means over the control over a means of control over our own representations.

### **21:58**

I hope we can have about the kind of the language of filmmaking, because I think that we need to, I mean, I'm very interested in and I think it would be really good for us to be able to have the space to talk about experimental work work that is like, where in filmmaking, we're actually sort of trying to create our own visual language is to say, to tell our own stories, and that, why that's actually important and sort of, you know, create our own codes and our own ways of telling our stories.

### **Viola Thomas 23:07**

Within this country they call Canada there is a large diversity of First Nations people in this country. And in fact, within this country they call Canada there are 57 different indigenous languages in this country, Native people's languages, that mother tongue has been ripped out of our mouths. And in British Columbia, there are 37 of those languages. Here in British Columbia, this next person- woman, who is going to speak, is deeply committed to support and to work, and helping to cultivate indigenous peoples in this country. To take control of our stories, to be proactive on fighting the appropriation of our peoples.

### **25:26**

Please welcome Loretta Todd.

### **Loretta Todd 25:32**

Thank you. First, I would also like to thank the grandmothers. I'd also like to talk about In Visible Colours before I begin. And again, thank Lorraine and Zainub for their work, commitment and vision. And I'd like to thank all the women at In Visible Colours and the volunteers. And I'd like to thank the fellow advisory board members, our Vancouver society on immigrant women, and Woman In Focus for helping make this all possible. And before I make my presentation, I'd like to say that I'm here because of many other Aboriginal woman. I won't presume to speak for them. But I

will say that each one gives strength and leadership so that other Aboriginal women can tell their stories.

### **28:09**

As Aboriginal women, our maps are our cultures, our experiences, our strengths. Our maps are our films and videos made from the directions left by our grandmothers who knew from where they departed and where they were going. Our work is hopefully the maps for others, our children in our communities, and perhaps their messages for the world. So that they can learn to respect the earth as we do. Another current dictum is that the medium manipulates desire, levelling difference, collapsing time and space, living only in the present and foregoing the past. These are perceptive observations on the part of the academic. This postmodern world is certainly in a state of dislocation and decay. But the work of woman of colour, First Nations, third world woman resists such pessimism and therefore offers hope. The work that we produce resists the desire for manipulation of mainstream media. Instead, our cinemas give voice to our desire for Aboriginal woman our cinema gives voice to our desires and duty to protect the land as our mother, to affirm our rights as First Nations of this land and to protect our children and give them a past, present and future. Our cinemas do not level difference indeed, they affirm our uniqueness and multitude of nations. Our cinemas don't live only in the present as fantasy but incorporate the past, present and future on the circle. But because we resist through affirmation, celebration and indictment, we are threatening to the dominant culture.

### **Viola Thomas 38:24**

Our next speaker is a woman who has chosen to resist the kind of institutionalised categorising that goes on in many countries of the world. Because she believes that through the multi-dimensionals of music, song, dance, and theatre, and utilising her training and all of these areas in addition to having training and still photography, as well as film and video production work, that it enriches the work that she's currently involved in.

### **40:18**

Please welcome from New York City. Ayoka Chenzira.

### **Ayoka Chenzira 41:45**

Most of us have not formally said hello or are seeing one another for the first time. And this cannot continue. (laughter) Many of us who do know one another met at similar festivals or symposiums around the world. These events are critical. For a number of reasons it connects you, it lets you know that it is just not you who's struggling and starving and thinking and crying and getting angry and, and looking for new forms of presentation. Or looking to be connected and looking to make sense of the madness.

## **2009-116.0569 — Brown Bagger: Celebrating Our Cinema**

With speakers Nancy Marcotte, Ayoka Chenzira, Audience, Pratibha Parmar, Maria Angelica Lemos, Audience Member, Flora M'mbugu-Schelling, Loretta Todd, Viola Thomas — continuation of In Visible Colours introduction

Nancy Marcotte 08:35-9:27

There was one woman called Madame Meyer from Argentina that said that in her country it's never given the right to woman to be a camera woman, because there's the mentality that they're only able to carry heavy stuff. Heavy material. Like cameras are very heavy. Also in the video Aline Sasahara, who is also a camera woman in Brazil, expresses one sentence that I will read like the translation, literally. *I prefer to carry the weight of a camera during long days and 10 hours a day than to carry the weight of this judgement of man saying that women are incapable.*

Viola Thomas 46:08

Did you hear that question in the back there? The question was to each of the panel members, and this time we'll go from the right to the left. The question was, that this woman has heard the term feminist floating around and is asking each of the panel members, if they consider themselves being a feminist, or a feminist filmmaker, or what their thoughts are, on that particular term.

Loretta Todd 46:48

Recently, somebody asked me did I consider myself a Native filmmaker, a Native woman, filmmaker, or filmmaker, a lesbian? And I said to them, Well, no, I have some of my experience and who I am is intimately tied up with who I am, where I came from, where I'm going with people who shaped my life, the people who made a difference in my life.

48:02

So I think that just as I am a Native woman filmmaker, and in defining the term woman, I am defining my commitment to feminism.

48:36

We are empowered. And by being empowered, we are saying who we are, and we are creating a circle, a holistic approach to what we do. And that circle includes all the people of our communities, and all the people, the men and the woman, the young and the old, the- all the varieties of people that are in our communities. And that's that's the goal, I think, is to reach that circle and reach that healing point where we all are equal on that circle.

### **2009-116.0568 — The Risk of Self-Definition**

With speakers Miriam Patsanza, Lorraine Chan, Yu Jing Yan (Translator), Liu Qing, Julia Barco, Goretti Mapalunga — Examining the risks taken by women in their relationships, everyday interactions and cultures.

Lorraine Chan 01:42

And putting on this festival, Zainub and I took some risks, because it's never been done before. And we want it to reassure everyone that we're really willing to listen to any ideas you have about suggestions and changes, and we would welcome them. And that we're really interested in building bridges at this event. This is initiation, is a start of dialogue. And by no means are we trying to define or put any definitive meanings on anything, whether it's the term 'woman of colour', 'third world women'; what the cinema means. This is a start to building those bridges.

Yu Jing Yan (Translator for Liu Qing at 35:43) 36:12

Based on my accumulated experience in the last 45 years, I am eager to make a film about the relationship between my mother and myself. I wish to focus on different perspectives that emerge from being situated in different generations. It would be a film about women made from a woman's point of view and thus articulating a woman's psychology. However, until now, I have not got a chance to make such a film. This is something I regret.

Liu Qing 36:56

Yu Jing Yan (Translator) 37:14

This is something I regret. Sorry, there are three such regrets that form the basis of my introduction. All revolves around this...scarcity of words which are made by women and which give voice to a woman's perspective. These regrets stem from the nature of my life and the environment in which I live in coming to e In Visible Colour, I seek the understanding, support and help that will enable me to make such words.

Yu Jing Yan (Translator) 38:15

Women have to face tremendous risks, especially the risk of transgressing the notion of morality, if they wish to analyse and express in an authentic manner their meanings and rather re realities. Sorry, the world is which we- we still live in a man dominated world.

Yu Jing Yan (Translator) 39:07

Men are used to treating women as something to be enjoyed, used and mystified. They want to maintain distance, a distance of observation in order to sustain their interest in women and vice versa. As soon as you expose yourself completely, you face all manner of retributions and sanctions.

Yu Jing Yan (Translator) 39:37

Chinese women writers and directors face special restrictions. One derives from the political values and the other from the moral. In Chinese art circles, there are too many restrictive notions of what constitutes sanctioned and unsanctioned behaviour. Too many concepts of what's right and wrong, revolutionary and counter revolutionary.

Yu Jing Yan (Translator) 40:43

*You simply cannot do anything naturally, innocently or intuitively. Everything has to pass through a forced and narrow door. The permission to publish is given only to those who are considered as being right and revolutionary.*

Lorraine Chan 53:36

I would like now to introduce our final speaker Miriam Patsanza. Miriam co founder and director of the talent consortium in Harare, Zimbabwe. She has produced, directed and narrated six different works. As well she has produced programmes for television. Her educational background includes Nursing, Midwifery, and Community Medicine. She has also delivered various lectures and has published in a number of magazines, and, to her documentaries, dealing with Zimbabwe were screened at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology programme and Women's Studies. Miriam is the first black woman to run a production house in Zimbabwe.

Miriam Patsanza 1:02:12

African artists therefore, face a unique risk in trying to contribute to the self definition of themselves and of the African people. Whereas here in the West, one could argue that one may be right wing, left wing or middle of the road, in Africa, because of the system that prevails, the people are forced to be two things simultaneously, they are at once liberal and authoritarian, left wing and rightist. At the same time they will pose foreign domination but leave or foreign exploitation for as long as it suits them. It is no wonder, therefore, that a large number of critical and analytical African artists are forced to live in exile outside Africa, in that much of the creative work by African artists is published or shown mostly outside Africa.

### **2009-116.0567 — Voices and New Visions**

With speakers Gloria Ribe, Kim Soyoung, Manjira Datta, Moderator: Yasmin Jiwani — What are the dreams and visions of Third World film and video makers? What new developments do they foresee?

Gloria Ribe 19:50

Well, what it was, what I wanted to maybe point to my Into Vision in this is that we still have that image of women as victims, especially the Third World, Third World, citizen and woman is like a double victim. And I've still seen a lot of films where you suffer with the character you're looking at. At some point, I think it worked, because it created a sensibility toward those people that were suffering those victims. But on the other hand, I think we, I personally think we will have to approach the end of the victim image. The third world also has propositions and solutions, visions to propose without taking the place of the victim of an unjust world. Of course, it is what I mean through the images is to reinforce the strength, not the weakness, of it, and the strength lies on a cultural background that is not easy to to get out because we have a lot of structures mind mental structures, narrative structures already find the first

world. So trying to find the proper visions through language, a narrative that does not correspond sometimes to the visions and to the proper culture is a very difficult way. I think it is the same problem for a lot of artists that are looking for new forms. For the third world, what I consider the third world, which is a very huge variety of thoughts and visions, also, it will be important and very necessary to explore new narrative narratives, new ways of expressing proper visions, without the use of that victim that needs help from the outside. And for women, also to explore the strength and not the weakness of it manifested and express it. I tried to do it through my work.

### **2009-116.0566 — Production & Co-Productions**

With speakers Afi Yakubu, Tamer Abera, Premika Ratnam, Jenny Shaw, Grace Kanyua, Flora M'mbugu-Schelling, Sadie Kuehn — No quotes from this panel.

### **2009-116.0543 — Beyond the Exotic and Erotic**

With speakers Dionne Brand, Hiroko Yamazaki, Ayoka Chenzira, Carol Geddes, O. Funmilayo Makarah — Examining how women of colour are defined through societal codes, and how those codes work to oppress them.

Dionne Brand 00:04

Good morning, everybody. My name is Dionne Brand, and I'm moderating this panel. The panel is called Beyond the Exotic and Erotic.

02:03

In looking at the exotic, and the erotic, I think what that what we're actually looking at is how we are defined how women are defined, and specifically how women of colour are defined through those codes in the societies that we that we come from, that we live in, and how those codes work to oppress women when we talk about doing creative work, which overturns those codes, and I think we're all involved in in doing that, whether we work as women of colour in community organisations, or in activist organisations or political organisations, or in the production of cultural expression, that we work to overturn those images, as well. And what we're looking to overturn is certain power relations in the society, which not only determine our economic positions within the society, but also the cultural terms under which we live. The sexual terms under which we live, how those power relations dictate and define the roles that men and women play and codify sexual difference through ways and gestures and attitudes and shapes, and you know, what we look like what we're supposed to feel like, and so on. And I think in, in overturning those power relations, we also have to overturn those terms under which we live.

05:02

The first speaker is Carol Geddes. Carol is Tlingit, I got it didn't I? From the Yukon and she has produced numerous works dealing with Native issues in Canada

Carol Geddes 07:02

The problem that we're discussing today is how this representation can be oppressive and destructive, not just oppressive, but the destruction that goes with that. And the means of creating appropriate images. How do we, how do we counter that? How do we create appropriate images for ourselves? This representation that we see mostly is destructive by actually distorting reality, and people's, the perception of given groups of people. Specifically, we're talking about representation of women, people of non white races, the poor, and disabled, and others. For example, in Native representation in popular media, we've become used to Native people being depicted as everything from the most inhuman kind of savages to the other end of the spectrum. The idealised Native as a person possessing a natural affinity with the spirituality of the earth. While the last image is much more positive, we still must resist that because it's, it's, again, it's a one dimensional kind of view that that that is, is still racist in its side, because of the one dimensionality of it.

09:33

Very often Native women are shown as one of two types mostly derived from Western movies. And you see a Native woman as either sort of the matronly, stoic type or else you see the young maiden of very exotic sexuality, who usually ends up helping the cowboys in one way or the other and by betraying her own nation in doing so. I think that with, with the advent of more Native people making films, there's there are really very few in Canada, we still have very great difficulty in taking hold of our own images in telling our own stories

Dionne Brand 12:06

The next speaker is Ayoka Chenzira.

Ayoka Chenzira 14:39

For the most part, the images of African American women have fallen into the categories of the Mammy, who was usually very large, very stoic, very strong and in control. Always there for everybody, who puts her own feelings back and never deals with them because she is the caretaker for everybody.

20:52

I was trying to think of the stereotypes that I grew up with in terms of women of colour and how their sexuality and or sensuality was portrayed on the screen. Not by them, but based on European fantasies about them or about us. The American women had been the the mummies, the religious stoics, the Sex sirens, the caretakers, East Indian women, I always thought were presented as being extremely flirtatious. And the Native women were only raped. The Latino women were considered the most sexual of any group. And Asian women did not have sex. And Caribbean women were put under spells so that they would have sex with the Orishas an African women had lots of children, but did not have sex. Now, the

reason why I think that it is critical to talk about the fantasies that we've grown up with and how they impact on our imagination.

22:39

And I think it's critical to do this work, because it really does have a tremendous impact on us when we begin to deal with jobs, to deal with the legal system. Because we're talking about other people's myths and expectations about us.

Dionne Brand 35:35

The next speaker - O. Funmilayo Makarah.

O. Funmilayo Makarah 46:02

You know, I always found it very interesting, because it goes back to this thing of what kind of positive images am I going to deal with? And if I have to be responsible to my community, in the images that I make, so does that mean that I can't? If I want to be if I consider myself a sexual being if I want to show sexuality, eroticism, or even just any truth as I define it, then what responsibility do I have? And why do I have to take on the responsibility of every African American man, woman and child that has ever breathed the breath? Thank you.

Ayoka Chenzira 1:01:32

I have something I want to say. One of the reasons why I think dance is so critical. And I also think it's been used against us terribly. It is because it does allow a freeing up, and a connection with memory. When you dance. When, let's say, African American women, dance it's very different from how those of you who learned to dance watching John Travolta dance. It does connect with memory.

1:04:42

So that I am consciously aware because I danced for 17 years and it's, it's, it's critical in my life. We use space differently. We use our bodies differently. We use language differently. We laugh differently. And many of us have been trained not to.

### **2009-116.0594.1 - Distribution**

With speakers Cheryl Chisolm, Zainub Verjee — on distributing films and media as independent women of colour filmmakers

Zainub Verjee 21:35 - **Quoted until 27:43**

I'm Zainub Verjee. And I've been working as a distributor at Women in Focus for the last three years. Before I talk about distribution at Women in Focus, and basically how it happens in Canada, and the way that we were, I think it's really important to put it into, you know, the context of, of what Women in Focus is, how it started, and where we are at, and how did we get there? Well, it was founded 15 years ago, by a woman named Marian Barling, who had moved here from Britain, and was doing her, her Master's out at UBC, and got really frustrated with things that were happening

there in the 70s, and decided that she wanted to form a woman's Co Op and make her own images. And basically, that's how it started. So she found women that were interested and basically harassed Rogers, to show, you know, these women how to use the equipment, and basically just kept going back, kept going back with all these women, and just took the cameras and went out and made and made this work. And of course, it was around sexual harassment, on the job, it was lesbian issues, you know, all the issues that have been pertinent in the feminist movement. And it's really interesting, the way it was done, I mean, she was totally dedicated to making this work and, and getting women involved and getting training from them in any way that she could. And she, basically, these women worked really hard to get these tapes made. And you know, it was, I think, a real struggle, but they were so determined, and the mind was so set on doing it, that they actually managed to produce, you know, numerous amounts of work. And I think that in three years, they produced, like, 50 videos, or something, and they will not have the best quality. Everyone that was on the sort of core corporate of workshops were being trained. And they now said that these sort of archival collection of Women in Focus, and it's really interesting to look at it. So it was sort of one woman's vision to have this happen. And the next thing she wanted to do was make a film. And so she was trying to, you know, get money for that. And she did get money and she did make it and it got sent to a conference, I believe in 1975 that was held in the Netherlands that was the decade of women conference. And at the same time that all this work is being made. She is struggling to get money from Canada Council, which is you know, the cultural body that funds arts organizations and the federal government and it was a time in the 70s when no other artists and centers were being formed like video in and Western Front It was when Studio D the women's production unit of the National Film Board was formed. And it was sort of this big movement that happened during the 70s, when artist-run centers got established. And we're trying to fight for funding to make work to show visual art, and to promote a parallel culture. So this film got sent to to the Netherlands. When she came back she went to the Secretary of State, and told them what had happened and that she got invited and please, could they give money to what was then, what became, Women in Focus. And secondly, the Secretary of State granted Women In Focus a one time only grant to make one one film, and she made that stretch out and made 40 titles. And all these women were not paid, but they really wanted to get the images out. And so they did it. And I think when we're when one works, and that sort of passion and that intensity, people get burnt out, people get angry. And that whole sort of split started to happen. But Women in Focus survived. What Marian did was, she realized the structure was breaking down. And because she was working at UBC, and in Women's Studies, where women's groups are being formed. Throughout the universities, all these departments were opening up, she started to send these tapes to all the universities and colleges, right. I mean, she never stopped, she just kept going. And that's how distribution started at Women In Focus. And what happened was really interesting, because she went back and said, "We want money now to make more work, look, because work is being distributed. All these people are really

interested. And we want more money to make more work.” And they said, “We're sorry, you're dealing with women's issues, this is not art, forget it.” So. Video Inn, places like Western Front, the two artist-run centers in Vancouver got funded as artist-run production centers and got money for equipment, and Women In Focus got money for distribution, and [production] work had to stop. And that's when it became a distribution center. And, also an art gallery was started. And we started showing visual art in the gallery. Of course, there's a lot more to that history, but I can't possibly talk about it all now. But that's how our distribution started.

2009-116.0594.2 – Distribution — a continuation of the panel above  
With speakers Deb Zimmerman, Cheryl Chisholm and Zainub Verjee

Deb Zimmerman 07:50

I just wanted to, I just want to clarify what Cheryl was saying, not about this particular sector. And also talk a little bit about this exclusive versus non exclusive. Because it is such an important thing, it is just looking for distribution and having to make those kinds of decisions. But I must be really grateful. I really think that what's really important about this meeting today is talking about how we can further develop existing networks, and develop networks to exist in other parts of the world. Because I think that that's what is supposed to be valid. And I think that it's very meaningful that there are two people that are both from developed countries, speaking about distribution networks, because there are very few distribution networks in third world countries. There are people that are here at this event, who are trying to do that. So I think that's more important. But I just want to say one thing, which is that this whole model of solid distribution is very important. If you're a young and upcoming producer filmmaker, and can't find a distributor. But oftentimes, it really isn't a long process that is very typical, if you want to make your own films. And in fact, as an example, both are noticed. Now, with Women Make Movies, they got really tired of doing their own distribution. And that's what distribution is to pay their rent, to work, we aren't real exclusive at what we do. I have the utmost admiration. This is a mutual admiration beside Women in Focus, and also for Cheryl's work, but we spent the last six years really working very, very hard and our budget went from \$30,000 to \$350,000. We put a lot of time, a lot of money in for full time.

Zainub Verjee 09:41

Can you repeat that your budget went from what?

Deb Zimmerman 09:46

\$30,000 to \$350,000 in the last four years.

Zainub Verjee 09:52

That's amazing.

**2009-116.0554.1 – Censorship**

With speakers Marlene Nourbese Philip, Premika Ratnam, Manjira Datta, Peng Xiaolian — Regarding censorship of filmmakers and activist media in China, Canada and India

Marlene Nourbese Philip 1:23

When I was thinking about doing this, I went to some one of my files, I kept lots of files, about many things. And there was an article that I had photocopied about a year ago from Index on censorship by a man called James R Bennett. And dealing with censorship in the Reagan administration was very interesting because he made a distinction between cultural censorship, in which group, he identified things like racism, sexism, nudity, religion, evolution, and so on. And then he talked about political censorship. I think that sort of cultural censorship that he talked about, and I have some problems with that, which I'll get to— is best exemplified by a recent event in the state, some of you may know about it, a man called Mr. Frohnmayr who funded an exhibition, the National Endowment for the Arts funded in an exhibition that had to do with AIDS in the States. And then when he saw the exhibition or saw the catalog, he claimed he defunded the exhibition. And right now, in the States, there's a great deal of all this very strong attempt being made by the administration to make a concerted attack on the arts and certain aspects of the arts. And there is, I would say, an equally strong response from the artistic community. Now, Mr. Bennett draws a distinction between us cultural censorship and political censorship. And his definition of that is, I'll just read it to you very quickly, the deliberate act by federal government officials to prohibit or curtail ideas or actions, which the officials consider harmful to themselves, to the government or to the people. And it seems to me that there's a very blurred area where cultural censorship merges into political censorship.

03:52

So I personally think that there's a very blurry area there. Another definition of censorship, I want you to bear in mind in terms of hearing the speakers because I think each of them will be speaking about some aspect of this area is a definition by a man called John Phelan, in which he talks about censorship as as in woven in the social structure, communication, the cognitive net, that enables societies to function coherently, and is inevitably institutionalized in such a way as to automatically shape the content of all communications to meet the needs of society and culture it serves. And what I'm reminded of when I read that, of course, is, is the argument made so well, by Noam Chomsky, about how the media as an arm of the very powerful economic states that we live in in the West actually do express certain views. It's very subtle. It's not through official censorship, but you do have a sort of self selection of information that comes to people in the West and I should just end with will not end one one brief. I won't be very much longer.

Premika Ratnam 18:45

So censorship. In terms of distribution, well, I guess we could talk about censorship when we come to the mainstream media and as well, dealing with state or state or developmental agency sponsored things as well as feminist organizations who get access to money. As women of color, our, first of all, our agendas are not the same. We're all different. We have a wide cross section of politics and styles and languages of filmmaking. But always the decision making of who gets what money is not in our hands.

20:28

And, of course, you know, there's a whole entertainment value, like there's nobody beating each other out for nobody, there's no kind of drama or excitement in terms of the film, he would, would like to see the actual confrontation between men and women. And I, and I think that as, as, you know, when we cover films, or making films in India, I'm always concerned about the entertainment value presented by the developing countries of third world countries, whatever you want to call it, you know, there's this spectacle that we present. And that is a kind of self censorship that we undertake, when we get funding from the Western world, or I guess, from the west. And, and I think that sort of is universal is this self censorship that we have to undertake? Let me see if there's anything... I guess there's another kind of censorship that takes place is that, you know, if you, if you do stick it out, then you never get to make your film the film that you really want to make. And so that's the reason I have several proposals that I want to make. And I haven't been able to make other kinds of films. There's a serious co opting of our issues where women with more opportunities or people with more opportunities use us as resource people, as researchers, you know, as writers, or, or in some other way, as community workers to work with films, there's this there's a trend of not using filmmakers to make films on issues for women of color, but to use people who have other kinds of experiences. So that the white person or the mainstream person, or, or whatever, still has control over what is the political message of the film. And I was attending a writer's workshop in Toronto, and there was this, I felt the tension right through the whole workshop was that I'm discussing my issues in front of an audience that is mainly white. And what I really wanted was to have a separate forum, just for women of color with no white women present for us to sort out between ourselves our own individual differences and to see what we want to do, but the workshop ended up being finding some reasons rationalizations of where and when and why mainstream women, or should I say that not everybody identifies themselves as mainstream, as white women can make films on questions like racism, because these are all hot subjects right now. And people are just waiting for you know, people want to see films on this and they want to co-opt our issues, and sorted out for us even before we've had a chance to work at it. That's it.

2009-116.0554.2 – Censorship — continuation of above

Premika Ratnam 05:50

But I think, in terms of Canadian policy and planning of this festival, the first program had two panels on the risks of self definition in third world countries. And there was no Canadian panel in terms of, you know, what do we as women of color, what are the issues that we are confronting? And I know, for myself, I'm always, you know, I guess, myself, censorship comes in terms of making films about immigrant women, I sort of have this, maybe I shouldn't, but I do end up having a sense of responsibility that we've always been portrayed in certain ways. You know, either with wide angle lenses looking up in dimly lit rooms, or, you know, and distorted in so many in so many ways that I say, Well, I just want to show people as they are, and then, and then they say, Well, I want to try things differently in terms of film language. And I always settle for very conventional forms of filmmaking. Because I feel well, I think people must first, you know, just try to be as neutral as possible, which of course, is not the case. I mean, one is always defining and editing images. But I think I do have this great burden of how I am going to portray immigrant women without reinforcing stereotypes.

Premika Ratnam 49:49

I certainly wouldn't like to speak on behalf of the organizers. I just like to say that. I mean, the films of women of color are emerging, and the weeks in general suffer from low self esteem. And we don't think enough about our work. And, and I, I hope that, you know, we'll have more opportunities for women across Canada, women of color to get together. But I don't know about the organizing side of it.

Marlene Nourbese Philip 52:41

Okay, I would like to thank Peng Xiaolian, surely for being here. And for sharing with us some of her anxiety, anguish and pain about one particular form of censorship and the ramifications that it has here, with the way we see censorship and how that is dealt with, I'd like to thank Manjira who came in at how many minutes notice? One minute, who actually gave the longest and most thorough presentation. And presentation, I thank you for that. And I certainly didn't want to censor what you were saying. But I was just concerned that the audience had some time to respond to many of the other points you were making. I'd like to thank Premika who had a couple of hours. Maybe I had mentioned that to you early on this week. And you said no, maybe yes, maybe. And who at lunchtime sat down and put together something to make this I think a very worthwhile event. So I thank you all very much. And I'm very pleased to have been part of it with all of you. Thank you, and thank you to the audience for being very responsive.

Premika Ratnam 54:04

So you owe me a beer on this one. (laughter)