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SISTERS IN THE STRUGGLE

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Sisters in the Struggle features Black women who are active in community organizing, electoral politics, and labour and feminist organizing. They share their insights and personal testimonies on Canada's legacy of racism and sexism. The analyses they present link their struggles with the ongoing battle against pervasive racism and systemic violence against women and people of colour.

Black and female, these women strive to remain whole beings as they situate themselves within today's progressive movements.

Filmed in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Ottawa, **Sisters in the Struggle** examines the roles of Black women in the struggle for human rights. Focusing on events in Canada since the 1970s, the women in this film articulate some of the challenges they face going into the 1990s.

This is the second film in the Studio D series *Women at the Well*.

Directors:
Dionne Brand
Ginny Stikeman

Producer:
Ginny Stikeman

49 minutes 23 seconds
Order number: 9191 014

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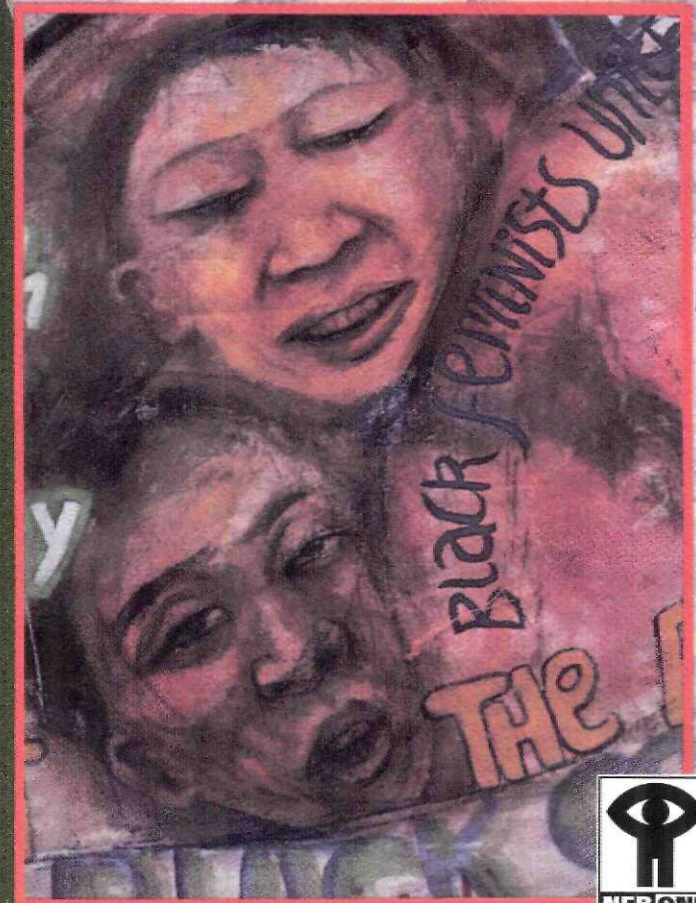


VHS

9191 014

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Sisters in the Struggle

Sisters in the Struggle explores the diversity, vision and impetus of the contemporary Black women's movement in Canada. The women in this film, active in community work, electoral politics, and labour and feminist organizing, contribute their analyses of, and personal testimonies on, Canada's legacy of racism and sexism.

The film articulates the struggles of Black women resisting the cultural, economic and legislative practices which subordinate them. Through frank interviews, women from across Canada relate their personal testimonies of racism, from schoolyard taunts to more systemic forms.

The activists in this film talk about the position of Black women in the labour force. As workers, they have jobs that pay low wages and benefits. Thus, they must work longer hours as a matter of survival. They face the double burden of being female and Black, as they challenge white male dominance.

The economic difficulty for Black women is compounded by restrictive immigration policies whose purpose has been to remedy the labour shortage without granting permanent residence to workers or their families. For example, in the 70s, Caribbean women who applied as domestic workers were required to be unmarried with no dependent children. Women who defied those restrictions faced deportation from Canada. A nationwide protest, launched by the women and their community, overturned the deportation orders. Some of the activists involved appear in this film.

These activists also speak of more than a decade of racially motivated police violence, climaxing for some of them in the shooting of Sophia Cook, in Toronto, in 1989. The incident illustrated how Black women were just as vulnerable to acts of police brutality as the men in their community and further energized them to mobilize against the racism entrenched in police practices across Canada.



Directors
Dionne Brand
Ginny Stikeman

Assistant Directors
Glace Lawrence
Nicole Thompson

Cinematographers
Joan Hutton, csc
Moira Simpson
Zoe Dirse
Susan Trow

Sound Recording
Diane Carrière

Editor
Margaret Wong

Artwork
Grace Channer

Original Music
Composed &
Arranged by
Faith Nolan

"Sisters in the Struggle"
Composed & Written by
Leleti Tamu/NESIS

Music Recording
Karen Kane, Open
Door Recording

Music Editing
Diane Le Floc'h

Sound Editing
Danuta Klis

Re-recording
Adrian Croll

Producer
Ginny Stikeman

Executive Producers
Rina Fraticelli
Ginny Stikeman

Produced &
Distributed by
Studio D/National
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The film concludes with an animated interchange about sexism within the Black movement and racism within the women's movement. The debate is a contentious one in which the activists affirm themselves as feminists or womanists or as women who see the struggle against racism as foremost.

The women in **Sisters in the Struggle** strive to realign the traditional boundaries of class, race, gender and sexuality.

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

- Police brutality and systemic violence against women and people of colour.
- Women and work, pay, type of work, job security, occupational safety and work conditions.
- Racism and feminism.
- Sexism and the Black movement.
- Sexism and community activist groups.
- The shaping of Canadian institutions by a set of norms and values that do not represent the cultural diversity found in Canada.



RELATED NFB FILMS AND VIDEOS

Sitting in Limbo 0186 070
Black Mother Black Daughter 0189 025
Older Stronger Wiser (*Women at the Well* series) 0189 105
Home Feeling: Struggle for a Community 0183 031
Unnatural Causes 9189 129

AUDIENCES

- Black women's organizations and community groups.
- Women's groups and anti-racism groups, labour groups and unions, human rights groups.
- Education: secondary and post-secondary studies, (contemporary issues, women's studies, Canadian studies, multicultural studies).