

Encyclopedia of
**SOCIAL
MOVEMENT
MEDIA**

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the U.S. AIDS activist movement, is a video-documenting affinity group of ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). ACT UP is a diverse, nonpartisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. Its website proclaims, "We advise and inform. We demonstrate. WE ARE NOT SILENT."

Founding members of DIVA TV include Bob Beck, Gregg Bordowitz, Jean Carlomusto, Rob Kurilla, Ray Navarro, Costa Pappas, George Plagianos, Catherine Saalfield, and Ellen Spiro. The extensive media produced by DIVA TV in its several manifestations (over 700 camera hours) documented ACT UP and community responses to AIDS. According to Saalfield, DIVA TV was "organized to be there, document, provide protection and counter-surveillance, and participate. . . . [It] targets ACT UP members as its primary audience and makes videos by, about, and, most importantly, *for* the movement" (cited in Juhasz, 1997, p. 37).

ACT UP was founded in 1987 in New York City and is often acknowledged for reenergizing civil disobedience tactics in the United States. Video has always played a central role in the AIDS activist movement. AIDS video activists used newly available camcorders to form a local response to AIDS, to rebut or revise mainstream media representations of AIDS, and to form community around a new identity, PWA (Person With AIDS, as opposed to AIDS "victim"), forced into existence by the fact of AIDS.

In her *Camcorderists Manifesto*, Ellen Spiro, another DIVA TV founder, insists that

camcorder footage contributes to a broader analysis of an event by offering an alternative to broadcast media's centrist view. It has the power to add a dimension to the chorus of voices heard, providing a platform for seasoned activists and concerned community members, rather than the same old authoritative experts giving their same old scripted raps. (Cited in "Media Praxis," 2008)

DIVA TV AND ACT UP (UNITED STATES)

DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activist Television), founded in 1989 during the height of

DIVA TV understands, critiques, and celebrates the central role of media in determining the meanings, policies, and histories of AIDS. In its first year, the group produced three tapes documenting AIDS activism. *Target City Hall* chronicled ACT UP's March 28, 1989, demonstration against New

York City Mayor Ed Koch's administration for its refusal to respond adequately to the AIDS crisis. *Pride* covered the 20th anniversary of the city's gay and lesbian pride movement. *Like A Prayer* consisted of five 7-minute perspectives on the ACT UP/WHAM (Women's Health Action Mobilization) demonstration "Stop the Church" at St. Patrick's Cathedral on December 10, 1989, to protest Cardinal John O'Connor's responsibility for neglecting the crisis. About this work, Saalfield explains, "Here protest is the process, communication is our form of resistance, and everyone has a say" (quoted in Juhasz, 1997, p. 37).

Like many activist collectives that hold themselves to radical and communal standards, by 1990 this initial configuration of DIVA TV had folded. "DIVA TV has long been more of a state of mind than a collective," it stated on its 2008 website. It was revived in 1990 by new ACT UP member James Wentzy, who committed his energies to producing AIDS Community Television (ACT), a half-hour public access show devoted to programming for greater advocacy, coalition building, and greater public awareness of AIDS activism. From January 1, 1993, until 1994, Wentzy produced more than 150 half-hour programs, airing many times monthly in New York. Many of the shows were also aired by ACT UP affiliates across the country. From 1994 to 1996, he produced more than 40 programs called *ACT UP Live*, a live call-in weekly public access television series sponsored by ACT UP/New York.

Like the first DIVA TV collective, Wentzy produced video that covered the AIDS crisis as AIDS activists see it, including *The Ashes Action* (1992) and *Holding Steady Without Screaming* (1995): "What is unique about what I'm doing is twofold: it's the only weekly series in the world devoted to covering AIDS activism, and it's political. All activists see the crisis as a *political* problem" (quoted in Juhasz, 1995, p. 71). Since 1996, Wentzy has continued to document ACT UP demonstrations, political funerals, and public lectures under the DIVA TV moniker, and in 2003 he produced *Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of ACT UP*. The work of DIVA TV is archived in the AIDS Activist Video Collection (1993–2000) at the New York Public Library.

See also Advocate, The (United States); Anarchist Media; Deep Dish TV (United States); Gay Press (Canada, United Kingdom, United States); *Gay USA*; Human Rights Media; Stonewall Incident (United States); WITNESS Video (United States)

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FEMINIST MOVEMENT MEDIA (UNITED STATES)

The second wave of the American women's movement was an outgrowth of progressive organizing of the 1960s, including the civil rights, youth, and antiwar movements. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and other protofeminist texts (like those of women avant-garde filmmakers, including Maya Deren, Shirley Clarke, and Carolee Schneemann, all working in the 1950s and early 1960s), set the stage for this movement by beginning to articulate women's discontent, "a problem without a name."

Then, women who were radicalized and given a set of critical vocabularies through the 1960s protest movements began to add their critique of gender to shared movement concerns about personal freedom, social justice, and structures of domination. Women spoke out about sexism within these radical communities, as well as how issues like discriminatory work practices, female sexuality and health, day care, education, abortion, and lesbianism were left largely unaddressed by these movements. However, the feminist movement adamantly shared with the New Left a critique of the politically conservative role of the mainstream media and a commitment to the progressive possibilities within what B. Ruby Rich would call "cine-feminism."

In the 1960s and 1970s, feminists organized around several media concerns, including women's lack of employment within the industry, sexist and stereotypical depictions of women found within dominant media, the creation of a distinctly feminist media education and institutions, and the invention of new languages for avant-garde feminist media-making and criticism.

Differences within feminism often led to debate among the creators of these various projects (particularly between "activist" media-makers and "academic" theorists), fueling several streams of movement media with often contradictory aims. The mid-1980s brought a backlash against feminism (part of a general quieting of the U.S. Left). This coexisted in perhaps contradictory ways with "postfeminism" claims—some thought feminism's gains large enough to assert sexism had been vanquished—and in this climate, the feminist media movement slowed.

Discrete feminist practices, on the other hand, continued unabated and in ever greater numbers, due in large part to the ideas, images, and institutions created during the movement's heyday. Although most feminist media institutions closed along with most countercultural organizations due to de-funding, feminists visibly continued to contribute to dominant media, to teaching, to writing, and to media activism. Feminists professionalized, inhabiting positions of cultural power, just as they have dispersed, bringing their multiple interpretations of gender inequality to other, ongoing movements. Meanwhile, global feminist media movements have taken on an urgency of their own, learning from, challenging, and adapting the concerns and practices of this highly productive, earlier U.S. tradition.

Professional Media Employment

Feminists were quick to understand that controlling images was central to shaping ideology. They also understood that women were almost entirely unrepresented in the media professions, within both mainstream and alternative domains. The early golden days of Hollywood had seen only four women directors: Ida Lupino, Lois Weber, Alice Guy-Blaché, and Dorothy Arzner. The alternative media were no better. Very few women directed films or were trained in media production. Until 1980, women directed less than 1% of all studio films.

Thus, demands for women's inclusion across the media workforce were some of the first demands the movement made. Activism in this vein occurs to this day because women's representation in this field remains far lower than in other professions. The national organization Women in Film, founded in 1973, continues to support women's networking and career growth in chapters across the United States. In 2007, less than 7% of working directors were women, according to Martha Lauzen, a scholar who tracks the industry through an annual study titled *The Celluloid Ceiling*. It took until 2010 for the first woman—Kathryn Bigelow, for *The Hurt Locker*—to win top director awards from either the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences or the Directors Guild of America in the United States.

Images of Women

In the early 1970s, several highly influential books introduced the histories and analyses of women's representation to feminist politics. Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* (1973), and Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (1974) all looked at the stereotypical sexist depictions of women created by a male-dominated industry. Using sociological and historical approaches, these books catalogued common and recurring patriarchal movie roles for women, which represented them with maximum sexuality and limited agency. In Hollywood, women were inevitably seen as sexual objects, suffering mothers, man-hating spider-women, or dependent girls. They were fated to inhabit stories organized around either their successful romance and marriage or their punishment for crimes (of hypersexuality or other forms of transgression).

Feminists demanded more complex (or positive) images of women. Some feminists demanded more positive images of women, others more balanced and complex images. All wanted a cinema that would expand to include women's concerns and a female point of view. Moreover, feminists of color, lesbians, and others marginalized within mainstream feminism, began to enumerate their particular stereotyping (or absences) within this more

global analysis, also demanding self-representation and greater visibility.

Feminist Institution-Building

As was true for the U.S. counterculture more generally, feminists understood that beyond critiquing the workings of dominant, patriarchal institutions, the movement needed to form parallel institutions that would enable women's media-making with feminist principles. With a large social presence in the 1960s and 1970s, a smaller number holding out through the de-funded Reaganite 1980s, and a few victors continuing into the present, feminists founded a vast array of media institutions for exhibition and conversation, archives, artist collectives, media centers, festivals, conferences, journals, production education, distribution, and funding.

For example, 1971 saw the First International Festival of Women's Film and the First Annual Women's Video Festival, both in New York. More than 100 films from the United States, Canada, and Europe were screened. In the next few years, as many as 50 more such festivals took place in the United States alone. Feminist film festivals, conferences, and seminars began to flourish internationally as well, including a celebrated if controversial set of feminist screenings at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1972. Feminist production and distribution collectives also flourished. During the feminist media movement's heyday, women could make, fund, watch, talk about, write about, and distribute films within a lively interactive network of feminist institutions.

As of 2010, however, there were only about five women's film festivals held annually in the United States, with about the same number internationally. Feminist distribution companies, journals, and funding sources have similarly declined in number, as feminist aims have lost funding, have become incorporated into the larger goals of progressive media organizations, or have been institutionalized in academia.

Feminist Film and Video

Empowered by the women's movement and the feminist institutions mentioned earlier, women started at that time making their own films and videos to self-represent female experience

and feminist demands. Expanding upon then-contemporary theories of consciousness-raising, film proved an ideal vehicle for the representation of women's voices, which were bent upon expressing their shared experiences and interpretations of patriarchy through a public discourse that could motivate further analysis and change.

Inspired by the feminist credo "The personal is the political," a significant majority of feminist media focused on biographical or autobiographical images of women, with feminist historical or political concerns arising out of this self-exploration. Making use of newly available handheld consumer technology, in particular video (which was cheaper to purchase, easier to use, and initially not dominated by men), many women were able to bypass sexist media education and professionalism altogether, while a small but growing number of women also began to make their work inside Hollywood.

Furthermore, women began attending, and then teaching within, film and art schools. Beyond increasing the number of educated women practitioners, these feminist teachers were changing media education by serving as role models as well as by establishing feminist methods for approaching technology and production. In great and continuing numbers, women began producing an eclectic array of media dealing with feminist issues as diverse as women's sexuality, employment, mothering, abortion, history, labor, and debates within feminism over racism and homophobia within the movement. A guiding feminist vision was often also found within media connected to other political movements, such as civil rights, queer politics, antiglobalization, antiwar, and environmental activist media.

Feminist Film Theory

As the feminist film movement expanded the places and processes by which women encountered film, women scholars were radically rethinking media studies' relation to film texts. Feminists strove to position, within the heart of film scholarship (where it has stayed to this day), their radical analyses concerning the ways that classical cinema is organized around the production of patriarchal definitions of women.

Much of this work was initially inspired by Claire Johnston's essay "Women's Cinema as

Counter Cinema" (1973) and Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), both of which relied upon feminist interpretations of contemporary critical theory emerging from psychoanalysis, structuralism, Marxism, and semiotics. Moving past the earliest studies, which had focused on images or roles of women, foundational feminist film theory set out to understand the patriarchal structures undergirding dominant systems of representation, relying in particular upon psychoanalytic concepts of the "male gaze" and identification and Marxist-inflected semiotic discussions of ideology.

Staunchly antirealist, and quickly anti-essentialist, these film scholars did not support the kind of political and personal feminist cinema described earlier—rooted in self-discovery, self-knowledge, self-representation—for in the critical theory they were investigating, the self was in crisis. They argued that realist representation could enable neither ideological nor formal analysis, nor could it break from the structural limitations of cinematic institutions where pleasures in looking were rooted in patriarchal systems of desire, knowledge production, and identity formation.

Feminist film scholarship looked at form, or signifying systems, inspiring a critical look at classic cinema and a celebratory analysis of avant-garde, experimental film. A feminist countercinema developed, in close conversation with this more academic tradition. Feminist countercinema attempted to radically reconfigure traditional practices of looking by developing alternative forms and experimental techniques to create a viewer self-aware of the patriarchal structures of cinematic spectatorship and storytelling.

Since the 1990s, feminist media scholarship has grown beyond and challenged the narrow if seminal concerns of this early tradition, in directions as diverse and dispersed as is feminism itself. Contemporary feminist media scholarship adds theoretical considerations of difference (including race, nation, and sexuality) to rethink spectatorship, textuality, and authorship. It engages with televisual and digital production where feminists play a larger role in the construction and viewing of images. It researches women's multiple roles in the history of cinema and focuses upon international and transnational feminist media, as well as the diverse practices of American feminists.

In this way, although feminist movement media may be a thing of the past, feminist practices continue to radicalize media, in relation to gender and its associated issues, and contribute to political explorations of the themes, forms, institutional practices, and analyses of global media.

Alex Juhasz

See also Barbie Liberation Organization (United States); Feminist Media, 1960–1990 (Germany); Feminist Media: An Overview; Women's Movement Media (India); Women's Radio (Austria)

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