

Organízate Y Lucha: 1980s Non-Fiction Film Distributed by Cinenova, and Beyond

Isabel Seguí

Faced, once again, with a situation where we find ourselves governed by those least suited to do so, I turn my attention to what women have been doing for millennia to protect their communities: organising and fighting, organising and resisting, organising and insisting. These struggles, forms of resistance and insistence proliferate throughout history, and it is precisely because of them that we have managed to carry on. Yet, despite the collective nature of human survival and thriving, fantastical narratives in which an exceptional individual saves the day are almost always privileged. This same approach extends to film studies.

In established cinema histories, constructs such as the single author are central to scholarly narratives, while epic sagas, which bear little relationship to the material conditions of filmmaking, are repeated until they are set in stone. Thankfully, the histories of moving image work made by women have unfolded differently. Researchers have often been unable to transform the women we study into heroic figures, despite our desire to do so. Because feminist materialist histories of the moving image are attentive to the contingencies that shape creative work, and, in the process of recovering the lives and works of overshadowed figures, the stories of many others are harvested, like clusters of grapes.

Our methods and our sources – scattered across remarkably diverse archives – are too grounded, too materially anchored, to allow for delusions. The sources reveal networks rather than singular geniuses, and processes rather than products. Through oral history and archival research, we piece together incomplete yet richly layered pictures of epochs, communities, ecologies, or worlds. These complex realities have something in common: they are born from and represent organisations, collectives and groups of people who got together to get things done.

In this text, I highlight films from the Cinenova distribution catalogue made by and about organised women, alongside some Latin American examples. I have chosen to focus on the 1980s because women's non-fiction filmmaking and videomaking help us to characterise this watershed decade. Production was plentiful due to factors including the availability of cheaper, lighter technology and the expansion of funding sources. In the UK, the ACTT Workshop Declaration was signed in 1982 by the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), Channel 4, and the British Film Institute. The funding mechanisms established as a result of this agreement supported small, independent production units and legitimised and sustained collective modes of production. In Latin America, in the context of the United Nations Decade of Women (1975–1985), NGOs and multilateral organisations fostered the production of numerous

films led by and centred on women¹. In these propitious global and local scenarios, women in numbers never seen before took up cameras and sound recorders not only to tell their own stories but to salute the memories of their mothers and grandmothers and share the voices of their ‘othered’ sisters: working-class and rural *compañeras* in their own countries or on the other side of the globe.

Paradoxically, this was also the decade neoliberalism took over the world. In no time, the malign economic system ushered in the prolonged ecological and social collapse we are currently enduring. In the Anglo-American world, this shift was led by the conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. In Latin America, two financial institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – wreaked havoc; their market fundamentalism deployed as neocolonial strategy. The foreign debt promoted by structural adjustment policies sank the economies to the point that the 1980s would become known as *la década perdida* – the lost decade. All these circumstances together appear as the backdrop to the films discussed below. But neoliberalism was still in its initial phase in the 1980s. For this reason, we can feel in these images of cooperative work and direct action the optimistic spirit of the long sixties; the certainty that new opportunities were opening up for women globally, heralded by grassroots movements, that would mean the beginning of the end for patriarchy.

The Cinenova catalogue contains a large number of films that demonstrate the richness and complexity of women’s organisations in the 1980s, including – to start at home – an exceptional documentary about Circles, one of the film distribution networks that gave rise to Cinenova (the other organisation being Cinema of Women). I would recommend that all film studies programmes in the UK include Margaret Williams’s ‘Seeing For Ourselves’ (1984) in their syllabi. The reasons are plenty. First, it offers a first-hand account of the work of a small distribution company. Besides explaining the origins, management and politics of Circles, the film also delves into the creative practices of its founders – Joanna Davis, Tina Keane, Annabel Nicolson, Felicity Sparrow, Lis Rhodes – and highlights the films held in Circle’s vault. The screenings organised at the Four Corners centre in Bethnal Green appear prominently in the film. Its focus on exhibition allows to showcase the incomparable atmosphere of women-only screenings: safe spaces of intergenerational and inter-class encounter that proliferated from the 1970s as a strategy to avoid mansplaining and microaggressions.

¹ See the recently published special issue of *Feminist Media Histories* 12, no.2, ‘Gender, Media, and Developmentalism’ edited by Dalila Missero and Masha Salazkina.



Fig 1. 'Mam' production photograph

The historicisation of women's struggles by film collectives is a defining feature of the films in Cinenova's holdings. Groups including Steel Bank Co-op, Leeds Animation Workshop, Sheffield Film Co-op, Red Flannel Films, WITCH (Women's Independent Cinema House), Wimmins Film Collective, and Cine-Mujer Colombia, to name but a few, are present, but the collection also includes films and videos made by groups of women who came together for a specific project without adopting a collective name. What mattered across almost all of these processes was the generation of self-awareness and the transmission of feminist histories to avoid reinventing the feminist wheel with each new generation. A perfect example of this is Boadicea Films' 'I'll Be Here For All Time' (1985), a film that traces the long tradition of radical action by Welsh women, from demands for food security in the 18th century, to involvement in the People's Charter and the suffrage movement. This lineage continued well into the 20th century, when organised Cymry confronted a wide range of challenges, from unemployment and pit closures to the threat of nuclear weapons.

I'll be there for all time



This film, made by an all women crew, places today's protest by Welsh women within the context of a long tradition of protest. The Greenham Common Peace Camp was set up as the result of a march from Cardiff in 1981. One of the popular criticisms of the Greenham women is that they are abandoning their traditional role in the home. I'LL BE THERE FOR ALL TIME shows that direct action and protest belong very much to the tradition and history of Welsh women. It shows that participation in Food Riots in the 1790's in the Chartist activities of the 1830's. Dora Cox recalls her participation in the Hunger March of 1934 from Tonypandy to London and Susan Lamb talks about the peace movement and her life today.

This film informs and entertains. Its basic premise is that a knowledge of womens history is essential: without it women are always having to begin again.

I'LL BE THERE FOR ALL TIME is a Boadicea Films Production
Wales, 1985, colour, 25mins, 16mm.

Hire fee: £25 (film)

£15 (video)

Distributed by CIRCLES, 113 Roman Road
London E2 0HU,

Fig 2. 'I'll Be There For All Time' publicity material

One theme that allows to bridge Cinenova's holdings and what was being produced in Latin America in the 1980s is the central role played by organised women in mining communities. The state mine closure policies implemented by Margaret Thatcher's government in the 1980s had more to do with her aim of weakening labour organisations than with any calculus regarding productivity, whatever the public discourse maintained. The same strategy was applied in Bolivia, a country where the mining proletariat had long been a continental vanguard that needed to be neutralised in order to implement structural adjustment policies.

The heroic male miner is part of the cultural pantheon of Wales and Bolivia, so a comparative study of its mythologisation and subsequent decline of that working-class hero would be extremely illuminating. But what interests me here is the other side of that coin: the films about collectives made up of the wives of unionised miners². Several of these are distributed by Cinenova. One of the earliest examples is Esther Ronay, Mary Kelly, Mary Capps, Humphrey Trevelyan, Margaret Dickinson, Brigid Segrave and Susan Shapiro's 'Women of the Rhondda' (1973). Filmed in the Rhondda Valley in South Wales in 1971, the project began as an oral history initiative to document women's participation in the struggles of Welsh mining communities during the 1920s and 1930s. The women who are interviewed display an eloquence that seems to recur across films about mining women. Their strong class consciousness is combined with an acute awareness of their subordination, effectively conveying that despite it women have been the rock upon which family, community, and trade union life has been built in the valleys.

Known as Red Flannel Films, Pearl Berry, Fran Bowyer, Clare Richardson, Michelle Ryan, Caroline Stone, Carol White's 'Mam' (1988) centres on Welsh matriarchs, offering an ode to their reproductive, emotional, and community labour. But it also explores their contradictions, including their responsibility in passing down patriarchal values by raising Welsh men to be "spoilt mam's boys" who will refuse to take on reproductive work when adults. A new generation of mining women appears in 'Please Don't Say We're Wonderful' (1986) by the Steel Bank Co-op. The film offers a sophisticated and precise account of the process of political subjectivation fostered by women's organising. It stages the encounter between those who have been historically active in mining communities and the ideas of second-wave feminism. Relying on the testimonies of activists from the Women Against Pit Closures movement, the film directly addresses the tension between women's central role in trade union struggles and the discomfort their leadership generated among their male comrades. As the title suggests, these women of

² In Bolivia, the women defined themselves explicitly as housewives (*amas de casa*), a designation they embraced with pride and political intent. This identification was institutionalised through organisations such as the Comité Nacional de Amas de Casa Mineras (CONACMIN), the National Federation of Mining Housewives' Committees.

mining communities were not fulfilling maternal roles or seeking easy praise, but rather effective recognition as equals within trade unions and community organisations.

RHONDDA WOMEN STAR IN VALLEY FILM

'Women of The Rhondda was shown at Ystrad Labour Club last Friday. The 'film stars' in this showing were four Rhondda women, Mrs. Doreen Adams, Mrs. Davey, Mrs. Beatrice Davies, all of Ystrad, and Councillor Alice Boxall of Cwmparc.

'The film was made in the Rhondda last December and followed a survey made by Mary Capps, a young American teacher, who came here to study the position of women in the Rhondda during the period surrounding the 1926 Miners' Strike

and since.

'The film consists of interviews with the four women interspersed with 'shots' of Rhondda streets and coal mines. The memories elicited, as well as the performances on film of ordinary working class women was outstanding, and well worth watching. Without any 'make-up' they were excellent, and their sincere stories captured and pleased the small audience gathered to watch the film ...'

The Rhondda Leader 29.6.1973

'It started in 1971 when I was in a women's group with Mary Capps and she asked me to do some research because she was compiling an oral history book about the General Strike. She has a grant from a Canadian university and was able to pay me to go round the country interviewing people who remembered the strike — dockers in Liverpool, textile workers in Lancashire and so on. But the first place I went to was the Rhondda Valley in South Wales because I was looking for people who could talk about the Miners' strike, which was the longest one as there had been a lock out for ten months in 1926. . .

Eventually Mary Capps went to Ystrad in South Wales to look up the people, and she rang me, saying how she'd talked to everyone, especially the women. . . and what did I think about the possibility of making a film. . . ? Her idea was that when she started talking to the women quite a different story emerged about the General Strike, one that had never been told before because it was from the women's point of view, and it's not the one that's in the history books. Because, particularly with the Miners' strike in South Wales, the hardship suffered was all on the women's shoulders — as Mrs. Davies says in the film "It was my mother in the home who suffered much more than the men — my brothers ended up the strike very, very sunburnt, whereas my mother was worn out. . ."

Anyway, we assembled this makeshift crew and we tried to find women able to do all the jobs. We asked Humphrey Trevelyan to do the camera work as we didn't know any camera women at the time and he was the only man on the crew.

We set off and shot the film in a long week-end — Friday to Monday. It was a rather painful and laboured thing, because. . . it was a good idea, but to put it into practice. . . We weren't professional interviewers and I think we underestimated that interviewing is an art, or at least a skill, and we didn't have it. That was one thing, we just weren't experienced. And the other was that the women were quite old and you couldn't force the pace on them and nor did we wish to duplicate that kind of television — what's known as 'hard interview'. I think in those circumstances we could have briefed the women better and talked to them much longer beforehand. . . As it was there were a lot of long pauses and the film was turning over — it was really desper-

ate; Mary Capps was paying for all this film and there was no other money. Of course the men in the village couldn't understand what we were on about so they were quite worried and confused and kept taking Humphrey to one side and asking him what was going on. I think the women on the whole quite enjoyed it.

When we got back and had the film processed, a group of us sat down and watched the rushes. What we had was something like five hours of material which were the most depressing rushes you ever saw in your life. . . full of monosyllabic answers. . . Shortly afterwards Mary Capps went back to the States and everyone else dispersed — some had only been there to crew and the women involved really were Mary Capps, Brigid Segrave, who at the time was working in television, and myself, working in a cutting room as an assistant editor.

So this rush print which had been very cheaply done and was very dark and difficult to see, was literally trailed round from cutting room to cutting room with me wherever I happened to be working as an assistant. And I'd get it out after work and try to do some work on it — I didn't really know what I was doing, I'd never cut anything on my own and had no experience at all. I had the tapes transcribed and, as you can see, it was literally cut on paper. I decided to structure the film so that each of the four women would say as much as she could remember about the General Strike — or, more to the point, all the strikes of the period — which were rolled into one in their minds because their memories weren't that good. So, they were talking about the 1926 one, 1910 and other strikes in the '20s leading up to the General Strike, it wasn't that clear. Anyway, I put all that together and in the second half had each woman talking about herself with more general personal memories about what it was like being a woman in a mining community. Eventually I showed the film to Brigid and we thought we had something which amounted to a film — much to everyone's amazement!

Then Brigid and I took the film down to the Rhondda to show to the women in it and that's the occasion Mrs. Davies talks about in the letter. They booked the room above the same Working Men's Club in Ystrad, (the club which is shown in the film) and invited their husbands and close relatives. I think their first reaction, after the projection was finished, was amazement that this ragged crew, mostly consisting of women, had actually managed to make something which resembled the kind of film they were used to seeing on television—that you could see it, and hear it. . . ! Then I asked them what they thought about the film. And the first person to get up and say anything was this man. He thanked us for showing the film and said he thought it was good but "I do wonder why, if you are so interested in the General Strike and the strikes of the period and the miners, why you didn't ask people better qualified. . . the miners themselves who were involved in these strikes. . . ?" Brigid and I didn't say a word and Mrs. Davies very promptly answered the question for us and said more or less what she's said in the film—about the way the strikes affected the women and the hardship they had suffered and how " . . . we were slaves because they were slaves to the mineowners. . . " which was the most important point in the whole film—it's the point which says they understand quite clearly their position in relation to their men. I feel that one of the reasons why the film works is because in many ways it was made from a political base. Mary Capps and I were in the Wages for Housework group which was essentially a way of applying a political analysis to women's situation—in that housework reproduces men's labour power. . . It was quite mindblowing as in a way we had thought—not that we were going to have to impose that analysis on the film—but that we were going to go there and tell them about women's liberation and in fact they were several jumps ahead because they knew this analysis. It was a very important lesson from the film really. . .

The film is a bit rough round the edges technically—the print was very cheap and some of it is out of sync, which is quite unimaginable today—and it worries me a lot but it doesn't seem to worry other people. In a way the film has gone beyond all that really, because of what it has become. It was the product of a particular moment, at the beginning of the women's movement in this country and it's got all that enthusiasm and excitement in it because it was the first time that women had got together to do something like that, with very little technical skill. I think that was quite a good thing then, you sometimes got something very good, very spontaneous. . . The film wasn't a vague notion about something, it was a well formulated thesis about this time in women's history which had not been recorded. And it just seemed to be a time to start exploring history through women's eyes, or women's history, or both, on film. . .'

Esther Ronay (extracts from a conversation with Felicity Sparrow recorded 16.6.1982)

Fig 3. 'Women of the Rhondda' promotional leaflet

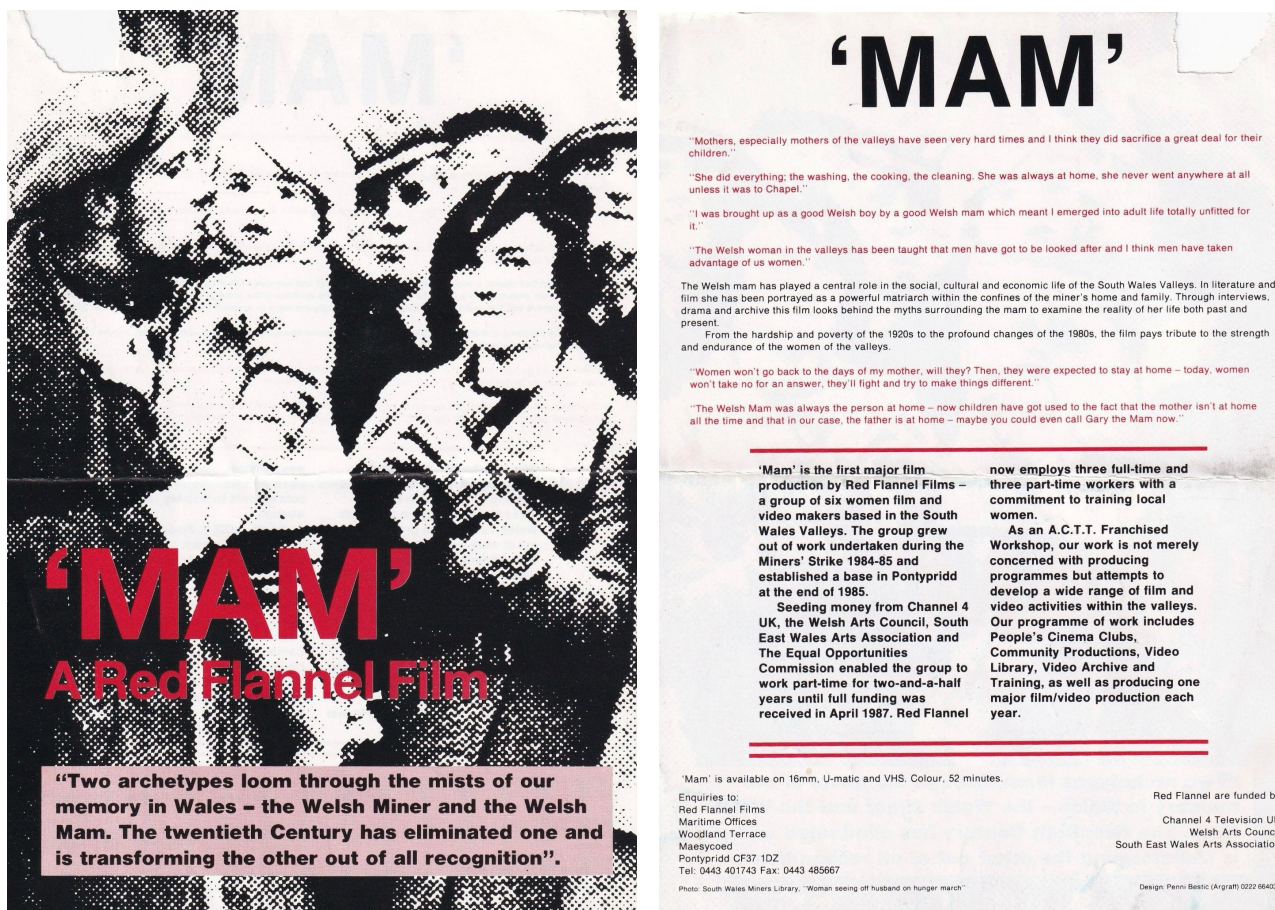


Fig 4. 'Mam' flyer (front and back)

A similar stance can be observed in the films about the women of the Bolivian mines. Liliana de la Quintana, Beatriz Palacios and Raquel Romero's 'La mujer minera y la organización' (1986) recounts women's participation in the political transformations of the second half of the 20th century, including the decisive role they played in bringing down dictatorships through acts of civil disobedience such as months-long marches and hunger strikes. These productions portray how their leadership roles – which often came about through necessity rather than choice – led them to question patriarchal mechanisms of domination, bringing them into conflict with their husbands and with the male leadership of trade unions, left-wing parties, and mixed grassroots organisations. The Welsh films in Cinenova's collection also showcase how women gained visibility, as their presence tended to encourage favourable public opinion in support of the miners' cause. The same developments recur across the Welsh and Bolivian cases. Once the strikes or other actions had come to an end, husbands and unions often wanted women to return to the home, yet many resisted giving up the freedom and social respect they had won. It is therefore particularly noteworthy that the Cinenova collection includes Elizabeth Barret's 'Coalmining Women' (1982), a film that not only documents the history of the organised housewives but also focuses on the women in the United States who became

coal miners themselves, after successfully challenging prejudice and labour discrimination in court.

In the Andes, that claim was not possible in the 1980s. Women going underground was taboo because of the historic belief that a mythic figure governs the mines: El Tío (the uncle), a devil whose favour must be won through offerings and strict observance of certain rules. The belief holds that the possibility of El Tío falling in love with a human woman should be avoided at all costs because it would provoke the wrath of his wife, the powerful Pachamama, whose jealousy triggers earthquakes and would provoke fatal accidents underground. Women were relegated to the lowest paid job outside the mines, the role of *palliri* or gleaner. I suspect that similar patriarchal myths helped cement discriminatory labour practices in the global North as well. For this reason, Barret's film on North American women working underground – earning equal wages and performing the same tasks as men – is central to the collection. It documents the incorporation of women into productive, waged labour within mining communities, a shift that expands the social and economic capital available to them under patriarchal labour regimes.

Some other telling parallels emerge between films made in the same decade but thousands of miles apart. For instance, due to poverty, young women were often compelled to sell their labour power as domestic workers in other regions. Peruvian films such as María Barea's 'Porque quería estudiar' (1989) and 'Antuca' (1992) – both coproductions between the Warmi collective and an association of domestic workers – address this theme: one that also appears in the previously mentioned films from the Cinenova collection dealing with the Welsh cases. There are parallels even in the films' titles. There is an Australian film on the Great Depression of the 1930s in the collection: the Wimmings Film Collective's 'Bread and Dripping' (1982), named for the staple survival food eaten during times of scarcity, such as wars or economic depressions. Similarly, the Bolivian collective Nicobis released the short 'Café con pan' in 1986, addressing the severe economic crisis in the country during the 1980s, and named it after the country's staple diet of bread and coffee (there was no dripping available in Bolivia, courtesy of the IMF).

COALMINING WOMEN



COALMINING WOMEN traces the historical role of women in coalfield struggles (in Britain and America) and the importance of their new position as working miners. Excellent for any audience interested in women's history, labour studies and women as a force for social change.

Fig 5. 'Coalmining Women' publicity material

Women's skills and ingenuity in keeping communities alive in response to economic shock appear in Peruvian films including Marianne Eyde's 'La historia de Ana' (1989), Nora de Izcue's 'Pobladoras de cerros y arenales' (1986) or María Barea's 'Juntas paramos la olla' (1991), which testify to the massive housewives' movement that, in the 1980s, managed to feed one million people a day in Lima. In the Cinenova collection, Juliet Miller's 'Seeds of Resistance' (1985), shows one of these proletarian housewives' organisations which was active in La Paz, Bolivia.

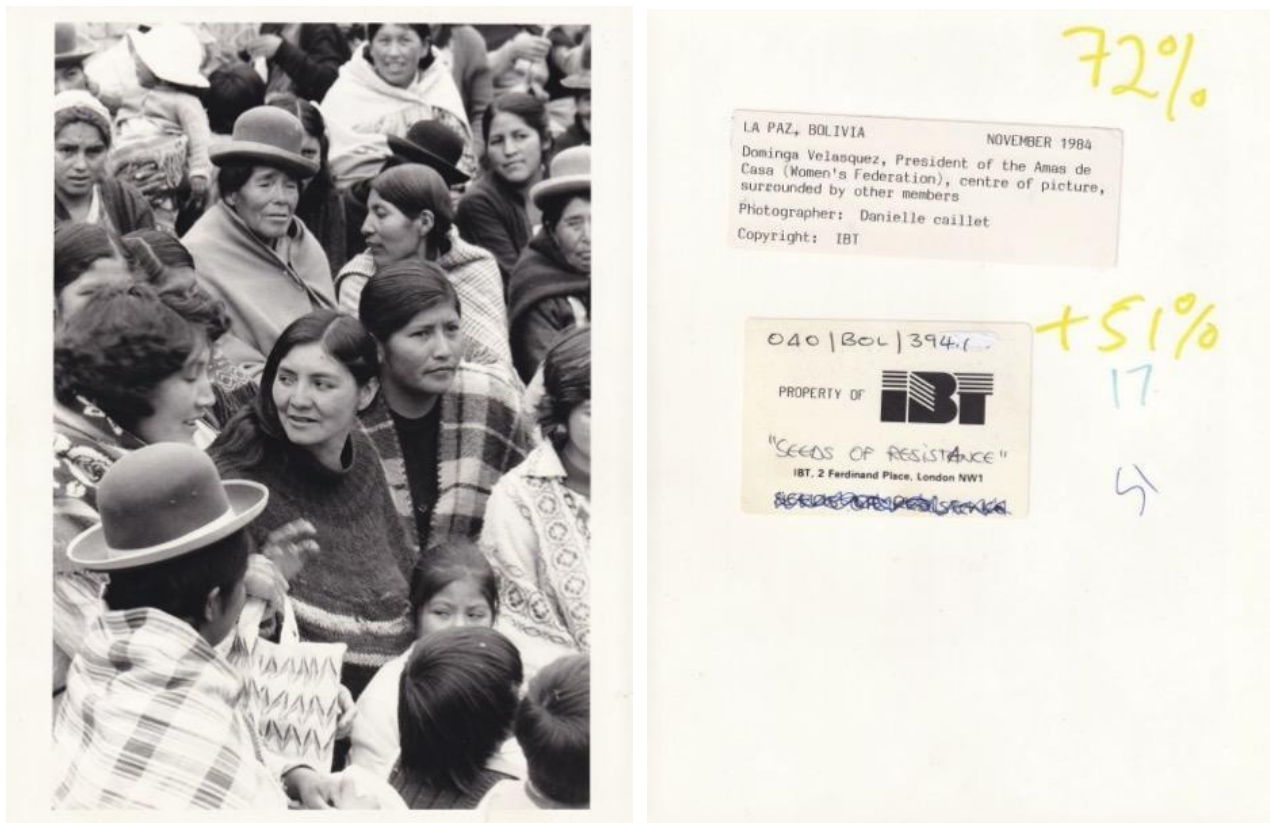


Fig 6. 'Seeds of Resistance' photograph (front and back)

Whether in Bolivia, Peru, Italy, Wales, England or Scotland, the need for inventiveness permeated all aspects of women's life: from preparing varied meals in a communal kitchen to producing films with minimal resources. These films allow us to draw a parallel between reproductive and community labour and precarious filmmaking. Preparing nutritious two- or three-course meals for dozens of people on a very small budget requires considerable ingenuity, much like making low- or no-budget films in a country without a film industry or state support for the arts. Although women typically organised not to assert their rights but out of the immediate need to ensure the survival of their nuclear families and communities, these activities required them to leave the domestic sphere and occupy public spaces. Once this step had been taken, a process of political subjectivation unfolded from which there was no return. Soup kitchens, schools, assemblies, film screenings are situated not as mere responses to capitalist and patriarchal

attacks but as sophisticated organisational structures that model alternative economies, systems of care and community governance. In doing so, filmmakers aligned their own worldmaking practices with those of working-class women's organisations.

Besides its activist side, feminist filmmaking in the 1980s was underpinned by a strong historiographical work, and the films do not shy away from making this explicit by revealing the research processes behind screenwriting. 'Red Skirts on Clydeside', made by Sheffield Film Co-op in 1983, is a case in point. It showcases the rent strikes led by the Glasgow Women's Housing Association during the First World War. The film reenacts the investigation conducted in libraries and archives, as well as the oral history side of their work. In search of clues, we see in the film their visit to the Fawcett Library, described as "the largest collection of early suffrage movement material in Britain". The voice-over states that this place gathers "evidence of the range of the political activity of women. The debates covered issues including women and work, marriage and family, the relationship between feminism and socialism, and bore a strong resemblance to the discussions... the women's movement of the 1970s was engaged in." The message is clear: the women's movement was following in the footsteps of other well-organised forebears. The same discussions were ongoing because they were not resolved. Still, the memory of these movements has been lost and found in each new generation.

A key historical event during the period we are focusing on was the UN's declaration of the Decade for Women, which started with the first UN Conference on Women in Mexico City and ended with the third one in Nairobi, Kenya. Some films in the Cinenova catalogue give evidence of these events, such as Juliet Miller's 'The Impossible Decade' (1985), and Tina Home's 'Speaking of Nairobi' (1986), a joint production between New Film Group and Studio D of the National Film Board of Canada. These films reveal one of the trickiest aspects of the topic we are surveying here: the power asymmetries between allies and how this unevenness affects representation. This is particularly poignant when women in the 'global north' portray organisations of women in the 'global south', but the same can be said of middle-class women filming working-class subjects anywhere.



Fig 7. 'Speaking of Nairobi' film still

Formally and narratively, the corpus of films I have addressed is highly testimonial. Many of them contain talking heads interviews. Such rhetorical devices (static medium shots with sync sound) are often the first outputs of oral history and testimonio processes and should not be dismissed. There is a huge debate in Latin American testimonio literature – first-person proletarian genre devised to give voice to marginalised communities – about the problematic role of the middle-class editor. Without downplaying the editor's influence in film testimonials, what is clear is that the audiovisual format at least allows us to hear the tone, texture and accent of the interviewed subjects and to avoid all the problems that come with transcription and the mediation of their voices by allied intellectuals. So, I would suggest to scholars and critics that, instead of seeing in talking heads an unsophisticated editing choice, we consider the fact that this technique avoids the manipulation of working-class voices and facilitates the appropriate preservation and transmission of working-class thought.

Regardless, films are not oral history projects, and there will always be a huge degree of mediation in their editing phase. Editorial decisions are maybe the least democratic of all the choices taken in a film, even in participatory processes – and often, it is not even the call of the filmmakers but the house style of producers (TV channels or NGOs) that shapes

the final product. To judge these nuances, we must ask who the target audience of each film is. In some instances, the desired public is the urban progressive middle class – the so-called ‘solidarity publics’. If that is the case, a good option is to do what Julia Lesage and Carole Isaacs do in ‘Las Nicas’ (1984). Lesage was hired by the Nicaraguan Sandinista Workers Central to organise and deliver Super 8 and video technology transfer workshops after the triumph of the Sandinista revolution. The goal was to make films by and for the people of Nicaragua, but when Lesage returned to the States, she wanted to create a public engagement product for the American public. ‘Las Nicas’ is a testimonial film composed mostly of still images of Nicaraguan people and landscapes, with English translations of testimonies by Nicaraguan women. The script was created by transcribing and translating anonymised interviews, later read by a cast of North American women. This was a compelling option because Lesage and Isaacs were urgently trying to foster solidarity among American citizens and internal opposition to the US government, which had the fragile Nicaraguan experiment under siege. However, if we were trying to archive Welsh or Bolivian working-class memories, not only to raise urgent awareness but also for future generations, we would do better to keep the voices of the protagonists as unmediated as possible.

A very different approach to the same topic appears in Kathleen Shannon and Ginny Stikerman’s ‘Nicaragua, Dream of a Free Country: A Message from Nicaraguan Women’ (1983). This Canadian documentary follows a more conventional television format compared to Lesage’s film. Working for the National Film Board, Shannon and Stikerman had access to more robust production resources but, on the other hand, less freedom to experiment formally. Yet when viewed together, the two films complement each other remarkably well, reviving the exhilarating optimism generated by the young revolution – a glimmer of hope that would soon be extinguished by American imperialism and by the missteps of part of the Sandinista leadership.

Many of these films for television are not subtitled or dubbed but use what is often called a ‘UN-style’ voice-over, which creates a false testimonial effect because although you hear the original voice in the back, the parallel dubbing makes it very difficult to listen to what the interviewee is actually saying. In the final testimony of ‘Nicaragua, Dream of a Free Country’, a woman states, “si no estamos organizadas no hacemos nada...” (if we are not organised, we achieve nothing). The English para-dub loses its meaning because it renders this as “we must unite”. She continues: “That is how it should be, not just for women in Nicaragua, but for women in Canada, and for women everywhere.” But being ‘organised’ and ‘uniting’ are not the same thing. Union can be temporary, conjunctural, even opportunistic; organising, as is apparent in several of these films, is an emancipatory process through which the very being of participants is transformed. Organising is messy. It requires physically stepping outside of one’s comfort zone. You leave the home to

envision and carry out complex activities, co-create and manage shared spaces. Organising teaches you a set of opposing skills: patience and firmness, tenderness and strength. Organising is necessary both for survival and for transcendence: to eat, to celebrate, to worship, to govern our lives. It is everyone's right and responsibility. It is demanding; conflict is ever-present; sometimes you will apologise, and sometimes it will be your turn to forgive.

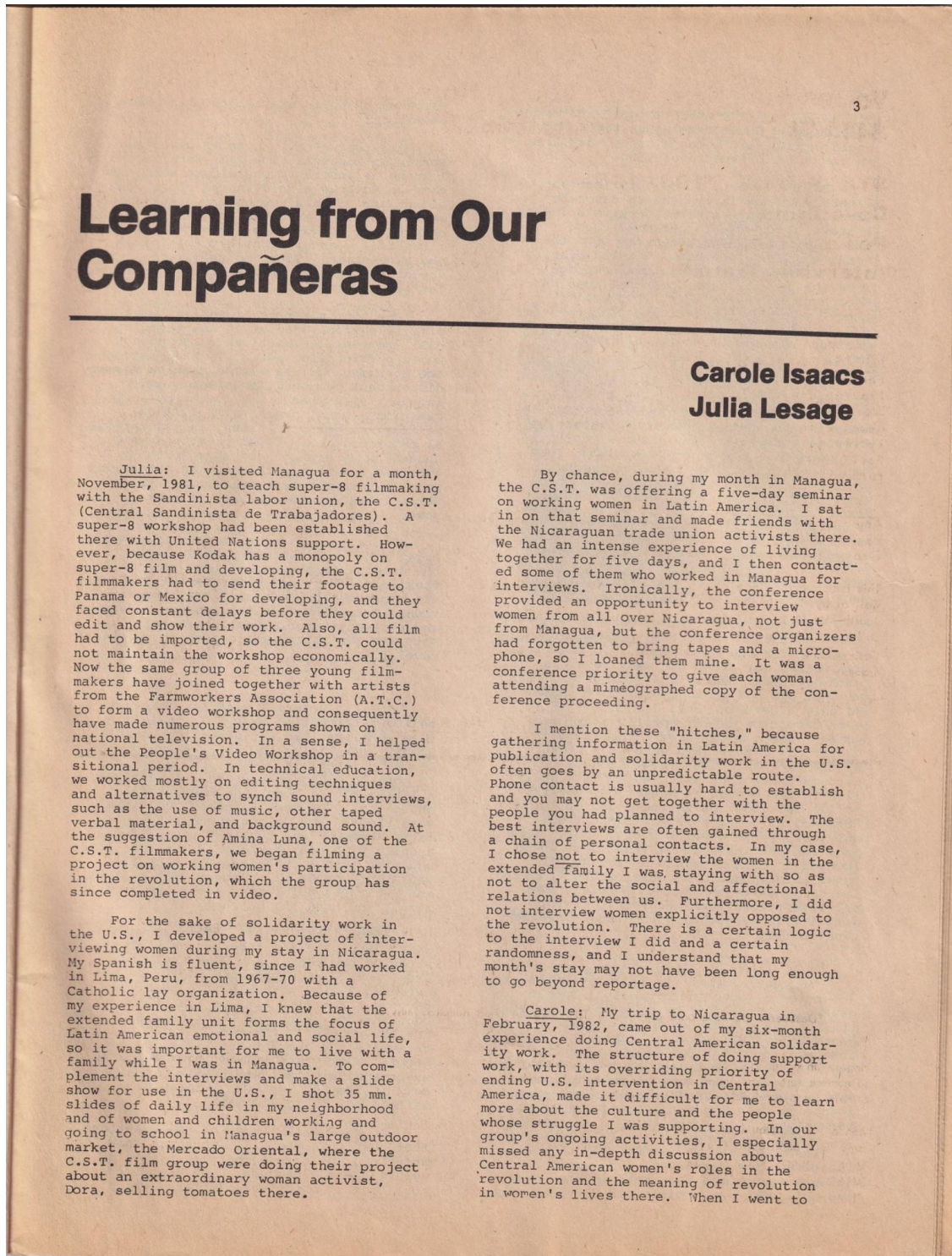


Fig 8. Page 3 of Las Nicas Voices for Nicaragua journal, 'Learning from Our Compañeras'

Over the past decade, we have witnessed a wave of collectively organised initiatives aimed at rewriting and offering a more complete overview of the history of women's film production in the second half of the 20th century. The current drive to historicise, preserve and recirculate the work of these filmmakers does not stem from a single unified agenda, but it responds to an undeniable global demand. Younger audiences of women and gender nonconforming people crave these narratives. Most current preservation and programming efforts are collective in nature, and Cinenova has contributed significantly to these processes. I am also part of a collective that historicises, preserves and archives Peruvian women's non-fiction film and video, Archivo Reversible. We can draw inspiration and nourishment for present-day organising by watching the women's films held in Cinenova's collection or in Archivo Reversible, and by following the curatorial programmes of LUX, Feminist Elsewheres, Another Screen or Invisible Women, to mention a few. The urge to dig into the past that many young feminists and transfeminists perceive today is an impulse not dissimilar to the drive that animated filmmakers in the 1970s and 1980s. While I finish this essay, I receive the news from a group of young women Archivo Reversible collaborates with in El Agustino – a working-class neighbourhood in Lima – that they have won a small fund to run a feminist film club across soup kitchens and community centres. I interpret this as a sign, a confirmation that organising is a continuum which, renewed and actualised, always pays off. Those who run the world want us isolated, but we will keep organising to fight, resist and insist.

Isabel Seguí is a Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. Her research foregrounds the participation of non-middle-class groups in cinematic processes, especially within non-fiction audiovisual practices in the Andean-Amazonian region. She is the founder of Archivo Reversible, a digital repository dedicated to preserving and amplifying primary sources on women's non-fiction filmmaking in Peru.

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