

Artist Statement

My body of work demonstrates my commitment to social equality in media representation, my love for sharing often little known stories of ordinary and extraordinary people, and my belief that the personal is political.

I am particularly interested in memory in relationship to history. I believe personal stories can help to bring into question stereotypical portrayals that sometimes dominate the media. They also help to create a public record of little known and neglected histories for future generations to come.

I use interviews, archival footage, and staged narrative recreations of key events for which there is no surviving visual documentation. I rely heavily on oral histories. With *Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100* (1999) I worked closely with my 100 year-old subject. She served as a consultant with the narrative recreations in terms of both period and personal historical accuracy. In the telling of her story, Ruth Ellis and the gay and lesbian community that supported her serve as the "experts," giving voice to a self-described ordinary woman who lived an extraordinary life. Ruth Ellis agreed to make the film because as an activist she saw it as a means to meeting two of her goals. She said, "People who don't like gays and lesbians don't know us. I want to show them that we are just like everybody else." She also wanted to encourage young people to spend time with older people.

I enjoy experimenting with filmmaking techniques. These formal digressions are clear in my early films, *Sisters in the Life: First Love* (1993), *Missing Relations* (1994) and *Remembering Wei Yi fang, Remembering Myself...* (1995). All three are basically autobiographical coming-to-terms with race, sexuality and family secrets explorations. The first is a faux-documentary set in the 1970s and 1990s which employs Super 8 flashbacks to revisit early experiences with love. The second is a black and white cinema rite documentary that relies heavily on docudrama techniques to reconstruct fractured memories. The third film shifts across time and place as I parallel my grandmother's experience of migrating from her birthplace in Honduras to America in the 1940s to mine of living in Taiwan from 1984-1990.

With *The Taste of Dirt* (2002), I interviewed a dozen women who came of age during the busing and integration days of the 1970s and 80s. Rather than use a hybrid documentary format I explored using straight narrative as part of the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women and constructed the lessons the women learned on the playground about internalizing self-hatred into a short video narrative.

With *Sisters in Cinema* (2003), I scripted the research from my doctoral dissertation into a first person documentary in which I set out on a search to find my "Sisters in Cinema." The film also uses formal documentary strategies such as talking heads, and archival footage to give voice to African American women feature film directors from the early part of the 20th century to today, illuminating a little known history of independent filmmaking.

It's been over a decade since I took my first film class. In that time I've made eight films and produced nine others. I've also created a half-dozen short pieces as a segment producer for a cable series. Rather than spend years "struggling" to get proper funding, I've made work on shoe-string budgets with lots of in-kind services and kindness from fellow filmmakers and film lovers. I've also worked as a producer to help other filmmakers achieve their dreams. I am at a point in my career where I would like to make work with proper funding and am rethinking the "struggle."