

Sexual Diversity, Sexual Rights, and Documentary Films

Vagner de Almeida^{1,2} Veriano Terto Jr.,¹ Cristina Pimenta,¹ and Richard Parker^{1,2}

¹Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de Aids - ABIA, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, ²Columbia University, New York, United States

INTRODUCTION

In HIV/AIDS prevention, films and videos are often used as instructional or educational tools to teach priority populations skills and strategies to protect themselves from HIV or to seek treatment and care. While this is important and useful, it may not maximize the full conceptual and empirical potential of films and audiovisual mediums as forms of social interventions. Documentary film can also be an important medium for social criticism and political mobilization.

For more than a decade, ABIA has used film as a way to document sexual diversity and defend sexual rights among MSM, young gay and bisexual men, transgender youth and related populations. Examples of documentary films produced by the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA) in Rio de Janeiro include *Prevention Cabaret* (1995), *Rites and Sayings of Gay Youth* (2002), *The Butterflies* (2004), *Schools Without Homophobia* (2006), and *Living Day By Day* (2006).



Living Day By Day (2006)



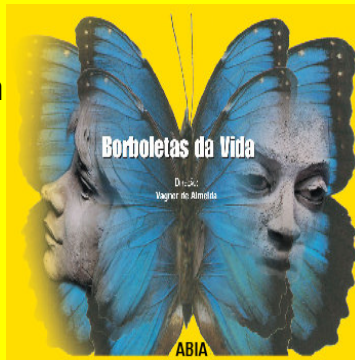
The documentary film, "Living Day By Day" depicts the lives of Brazilians who, with both courage and fear, strive to survive (many times without success) the harsh and violent reality that they experience in daily life. They are transgender individuals, homosexuals, 'fags', 'queer boys', gays, all residing in the Fluminense Valley, where they confront prejudice, violent aggression, and social (and sometimes physical) death along the margins of the Presidente Dutra highway – the main connection between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, two of the largest and wealthiest metropolises in Brazil.

The film seeks to capture the complicated negotiation and movement between life and its finitude, hope and desperation, pain and resistance, disbelief and reaction – around which these people are obligated to organize their individual and collective lives.

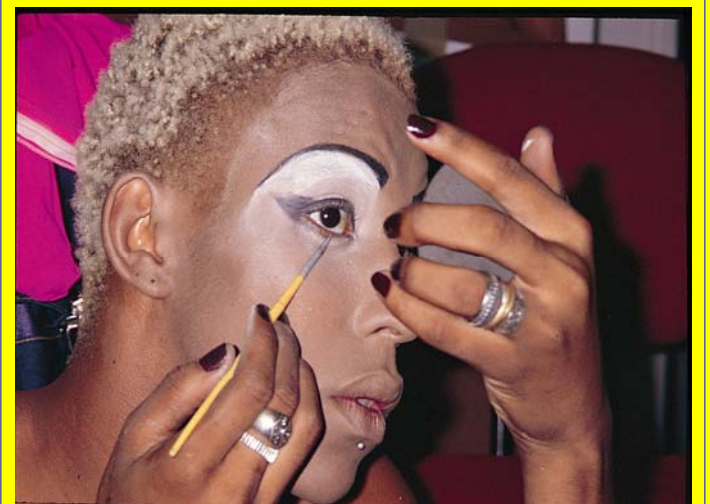
The Butterflies (2004)

The film "The Butterflies" unveils the reality of homosexual youths in the outskirts of metropolitan cities, suffering from the effects of poverty and misery, without compromising their dignity and their creativity.

Homosexuals, drag-queens: the real Brazilian Butterflies... They carry the "Woman in the Bag", experimenting with the possibilities and pushing the limits of gender and sexuality, and they face discrimination with force, courage, and determination... They fight for the right of difference, and they demand, in diverse ways, that their difference is respected. In this film, we have examples of brave people that Brazilian television does not show.



Rites and Sayings of Gay Youth (2002)



This documentary is about homosexuality and vulnerability among gay youth from the lower class in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Working with youth is not difficult and it is very gratifying, intense, creative and constructive. But to work with gay youth or with young people with homoerotic desires is a more complex task, because the realities for these youths are different from youth who are not identified as gay.

To work with poor, black and excluded youth and youth who are unemployed, lack education, and are gay is especially difficult, because each individual, and the group as a whole, must carry the weight of society's cruelty and exclusion. This film gives gay youth in Rio de Janeiro a chance to express themselves as they wish.



PREVENTION CABARET (1995)



This documentary was made as a trilogy (as a play, a book and a film) from the Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) Project developed by ABIA in Brazil. This film shows how young Brazilian MSM were living and facing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1990s.

To get copies of these documentaries, please contact:
ABIA (Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de Aids).
Avenida Presidente Vargas, 446/13 andar, Centro – CEP 20071-907
Rio de Janeiro – RJ - Brasil
Email: abia@abiains.org.br – Site: www.abiaids.org.br

To contact the director:
Vagner de Almeida
vagner.de.almeida@gmail.com
www.vagnerdealmeida.com

Schools Without Homophobia (2006)



.. School Without

Homophobia is a film made to develop an understanding of sexual diversity among the teachers in the public schools in Brazil. Many transgender and homosexuals escape from public school, because they can't support the oppression from their colleges and educators. Many youth are out of school because the terrible intolerance in classrooms and from the educators.

CONCLUSIONS

Documentary films provide an important medium for exploring sexual diversity and defending sexual rights among MSM, young gay men, transgender youth and other sexually diverse groups. When the subjects of these films participate actively in the filmmaking process, these films can also give voice to and provide a source of empowerment for groups that have been marginalized and excluded in hetero-normative societies.

