

SYNOPSIS

PASSIONATE POLITICS: The Life and Work of Charlotte Bunch

A Joyce Warshow Film

Produced & Directed by Tami Gold

Film Synopsis

PASSIONATE POLITICS is a new one-hour documentary that brings Charlotte's story to life, from idealistic young civil rights activist to lesbian separatist to internationally-recognized leader of a campaign to put women's rights on the global human rights agenda.

Interweaving past and present interviews with rich archival material, this is at once a deeply emotional portrait of a lifelong activist and an inspirational chronicle of the building of a global movement.

Over vivid 16mm home movies of small-town New Mexico life, we meet Charlotte. Her parents, Methodist church activists, raised her to see that "part of being human is being active in one's community."

Leaving home for college in the South, Charlotte found a place in the Civil Rights movement, which is brought to life by newsreel footage of her participation in the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery. As she readily admits, she was a privileged white outsider, but committed and transformed by the experience. It was during this early activism that Charlotte's life as a feminist began. Movies of Charlotte as a young bride give way to a snappy montage showing photos of the first women's consciousness-raising groups and 1970s lesbian political ephemera. Charlotte recalls the pain of her divorce, coming out as a lesbian, a whirlwind romance with renowned author Rita Mae Brown and finally, life in The Furies, the legendary Washington, DC lesbian separatist collective.

The early 1980s found Charlotte getting older, broke, and feeling that the Women's Movement in the United States was stagnating. This "crisis of purpose" segues into a present-day sequence highlighting the frenzy of her contemporary life as a global organizer.

Charlotte's next chapter in life -- working with women's groups in Latin America and Asia -- is brought to life via photographs and interviews with fellow activists, including the woman who became her life partner, Roxanna Carrillo from Peru. With Roxanna, Charlotte reconnects with feminism, but this time on a global scale.

When an opportunity arises to found and run the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University in New Jersey, Charlotte worries about

losing her freedom and her connections with international grassroots activists. She turns her thinking around and uses the opportunity to create CWGL as “a base of power” for herself and other women.

In the 1990s, Charlotte and a breathtaking coalition of women from across the world take the United Nations by storm. Crowds of women from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the West gather at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and again in 1995 at the Beijing World Conference on Women. Their mission: to deliver the message to world leaders to address gender-based violence, to acknowledge once and for all, as Charlotte has repeatedly said, that “women’s rights are human rights.”

The film reaches a rousing climax with a South African event for the “Sixteen Days of Activism, Against Gender Violence” a multi-national campaign that Charlotte helped to create. Watching women and men engaged in actions across the world, we hear Charlotte’s inspiring observation, one that comes from a lifetime of struggle in a panoply of different political and social movements: “This revolution is a symphony of liberations, and I’m happy to have been one part of that orchestra.”

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