

both better off and not better off: the glass is both half full and half-empty." Those who focus on the half-full glass emphasize only the more favourable aspects of aggregate data which can be very misleading. For example, the statement that black women lawyers increased tenfold between 1960 and 1980 has to be interrogated more closely, Sokoloff argues. She points out that the base number at which the count began was very low and when this data is contextualized it becomes apparent that black women constituted less than one percent of all lawyers in 1980. One of the strengths of this book is the fact that Sokoloff has developed an "index of relative advantage" to compare one race/gender group with another and an "index of representation" which allows comparisons within each race/gender group. In doing so she effectively documents and tracks how race and gender affect the progress of particular groups in the labour market.

Sokoloff's work is particularly important and timely because it debunks a number of myths. She argues that it is misleading to conclude that white men were displaced because of the gains by women and black men. She notes that white men lost some ground in a few moderate status professions, but more significantly "in 1980 white men still held 9 out of 10 elite professional jobs [lawyer, doctors] and three-fourths of non-elite male professional jobs."

In her chapter "Beyond the Myth of Double Advantage" she confronts the notion that black women have made the most progress because they are able to benefit twice from affirmative action measures. Sokoloff's findings indicate otherwise. Black women were able to access some professions, generally non-elite male and gender-neutral professions. But in this same period, they became "over-represented or increased their over-representation in several of the lower-status or non-male-dominated professions and technical fields: counseling, secondary education, social work, teaching and clinical labo-

ratory work." Black women did not reach parity with black men in the professions. Nor were they more advantaged than white women, only reaching parity with them in the low-status female professions. And, in comparison to white men their progress has been particularly poor.

Sokoloff is to be commended for developing a sound framework that examines the ways in which power and influence are distributed in the labour market. What is frustrating about this book, though, is that its statistical focus tends to overshadow its assessment of the broader social and political implications of the research. In that Sokoloff's thought-provoking work raises many timely issues, one cannot help but wish that her last chapter "The Half-Empty Glass: Can it Ever be Filled?" which considers these issues within the current neo-conservative context, was somewhat better developed.

This aside, Sokoloff has produced a very useful study which will no doubt fulfill her aim of being a "taking-off point" for further research. It certainly raises interesting research issues for Canadian feminists, as there are relatively few studies that consider the racial and gender dimensions of the Canadian labour market. The backlash against employment equity in Ontario in which the familiar charges of "quotas" and "reverse discrimination" are wielded underscores the need for a similar analysis here.

## LONG TIME COMIN'

Directed by Dionne Brand. Produced by Nicole Hubert. The National Film Board of Canada, Studio D, 1993.

*by Kate Kung*

The avenues of conventional cultural distribution are notoriously difficult to access for a woman artist. Add to that her Blackness. Add to that her lesbianism. Add to that her unwillingness and inability to lay low, keep still and most importantly stay quiet.

And now you can begin to trace a map with few on-ramps, and even fewer rest-stops. *Long Time Comin'*, the latest documentary by Dionne Brand, and the third and last installment of Studio D's *Women at the Well* series, features two artists from different fields sharing a common direction. Blues singer Faith Nolan and artist Grace Channing are friends and compatriots in an endeavor to create a world which resonates with their experiences as Black lesbian, feminist artists. Charting a course through studios and stages, galleries and protest marches, which is the terrain of their lives, Brand enables us to hitch a ride on their incredible journey.

This road is familiar ground for Brand, a Black lesbian feminist writer and poet whose directoral vision is congruent with Channing and Nolan's conception of art as a tapestry of aesthetic, sensual, political engagements. All three women challenge formalistic conventions to produce work which blurs the distinction between activism and artistry. "The importance of the artist in the black community is to give voice for the black community," Channing remarks in the film. "No where do we have voice. So everything we do, everything we are is an expression of our community."

Nolan and Channing realized early in their lives that women's bodies were sites of contention. Self-expression, ownership and autonomy were rights that were constrained by violent men, homophobic taboos and racist assumptions. Their choices and the work they produce are informed by their process of coming into being. Channing talks of being feminist at a very young age, of understanding that to be a boy meant being able to "run, jump and play," activities she felt compelled towards. As a painter, sculptor and poet, Channing has found form to articulate these early feelings. The women of Channing's physically expansive paintings challenge the traditional iconography of women as passive sexual objects. Her canvasses become the forum where

the relationship between power and economics is exposed. Nolan also battles against the pre-fabricated roles of an industry wherein women are expected to sing and "jiggle" as opposed to picking up an instrument and playing. The novelty tag of "all-girl band" is a testament to what Nolan is talking about.

Exhibition and performance spaces often come with onerous clauses regarding artistic or political compromise, two principles neither Nolan nor Channing are willing to relinquish. Tokenism and the "old boy's network" often threaten to hamper their resolve. Nolan relates her experience with gigs in which organizers strongly hint that she should tone down her out politics, reminding her "it's a family day thing." Nolan openly challenges the conservative monopoly on family values, "I'm a lesbian, I have a family. [But] I'm the one in the family who isn't supposed to exist."

This kind of blatant negation attempts to obscure an essential aspect of their work and identities. Channing speaks of how those who assess her work overlook her lesbianism and feminism, which she feels are essential in understanding where the art is coming from. "The organizers of the gallery saw my work only through heterosexual eyes; the lesbianism in my work is very much a part of what it is."



Toronto artist Grace Channer in *Long Time Comin'*

It seems astounding that anyone could overlook the feminist aspects of their work. Nolan's lyrics, Channing's wood sculptures, her vulva painting, and the painted statements on her canvasses are powerful declarations of their political sensitivities and personal allegiances. The driving sensuality of their work originates from the wellspring of their love for women. Their Blackness, their lesbianism and feminism are advantages factored into the creation and presentation of their work. Within this perspective, the passivity of conventional cultural consumption seems curiously meaningless and particularly lethal.

Both women are working against a status quo which valorizes art and translates success into sales. In response to the commodification of not just art but social values, Channing scripts into the border of her canvas "there will never be enough money when you follow what's right." Nolan and Channing's art exists as a vigorous dialogue with the communities which are the essence of their identities. The sing-along of Nolan bluesy folk bears witness to the intrinsic need to link with a community who know the tune and can pick up a line. "I can have a full black culture and be a lesbian," says Nolan, "which is very rewarding." On Nolan's stage, every day is Gay Pride Day. This sentiment towards community is also encapsulated within the immediacy of Channing's work. As she recites in her poem, "it would be incomprehensible/to only have only yourself to measure blackness against/in a world that claims it doesn't exist." Nolan and Channing's audiences are not passive observers but are full participants in their creations. Malaise and alienation do not figure into Nolan and Channing's vocabulary. A running subtext of the film is the necessity to build a space in which to work and thrive. Throughout the course of the film Nolan and Channing are involved in the construction of Camp SIS, a political education centre located in the country. This camp "of one's own" is to be a

sanctuary for women and children from the stresses of urbanism, corporatism and patriarchy. In all their projects, Nolan and Channing have displayed a desire for a different path. *Long Time Comin'* bears witness to their courage and is a resounding anthem of survival.

## KANEHSATAKE: 270 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Written and Directed by Alanis Obomsawin. Produced by Studio B, National Film Board of Canada, 1993.

by *Merlin Homer*

Kanehsatake.

Oka.

"When we were in Oka..." a friend of mine begins a sentence. She and her children had been part of the Peace Camp, the supporters of the resistance. I see her face, her body posture subtly change. Her unspoken words reach me: "When I was untainted in who I am, when I was unquestionably proud, unquestionably confident...when I did something I knew was good."

A few weeks ago in a circle of women, Oka was mentioned. Spontaneously, one after another, the women said what it meant to them. An awakening of consciousness, of purpose, a coming to grips with who they are, a radicalization, as if in a sudden shock of recognition each one suddenly knew that it was time for the tide to turn, and that she would be part of its turning.

Alanis Obomsawin was there, and her sense of having been part of something unquestionably good is communicated electrically by her film, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. With exquisite clarity and detail, Obomsawin documents the complex history of the fraud and expropriation that compressed a people onto smaller and smaller pieces of land, less and less favourably placed, until the tiny Mohawk village of Kanehsatake, still in 1990 being pro-