

VIDEO REVIEW

Blossoms of Fire. Maureen Gosling. Intrepid Productions. New Yorker Films Artwork, 2006.

This documentary film, about one particular community in Juchitán, Mexico, explores gender roles in relation to paid and unpaid work, community development, the economy, spirituality, and sexuality. It is a sign of respect that the filmmaker was accepted into the culture and allowed to document the gendered social organizing of Juchitán's indigenous peoples. Western cultures have often portrayed gender equality in Juchitán negatively, labeling this city as one being run by "promiscuous women." That there continues to be resistance to egalitarian relationships between men and women and to women holding financial power demonstrates the stronghold that patriarchy still has. The messages that gender relations are more egalitarian in Juchitán than in many other parts of the world, and that diverse sexualities are openly accepted as well, are continuously put forward in the film. However, it is unclear to what extent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and two-spirit peoples are supported in Juchitán; hesitation was expressed with regard to the process of coming out to parents.

Gosling presents the Indigenous peoples as insisting that patriarchal power relations stemming from colonization and industrialization did not take hold in Juchitán. Communities have been able to maintain matriarchal structures in their families, reversing the "male breadwinner" family model much of the West is accustomed to. Women in Juchitán feel valued for the work they do and their gift as a creator of life. They participate in cooperative living, support each other in their communities, raise their children in extended families, are the key financial decision makers in their relationships, and experience dignity in their lives.

Gosling also documents the political history of the peoples in this city and demonstrates how strong community organizing has allowed them to fight against oppressive governments. While it is clear the peoples in Juchitán have been able to protect indigenous ways of living, there is also an acknowledgment of fast approaching industrialization. What some members of Juchitán communities object to is not necessarily change, but to unsustainable globalization policies and practices. Instead, some community members advocate for production and consumption that is not driven by and for money but by and for community.

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