

Filmmaker documents search for her past

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What lies beneath the surface makes for drama in three very different portraits. For filmmaker Lorna Lowe-Streeter, the drama was less finding her birth mother and more finding out that neither her adoptive parents nor her birth parents were being entirely forthcoming about the circumstances of her adoption.

Have you ever had the feeling that everyone was lying to you or, to be more fair-minded, telling you the lies that they tell themselves? Lowe-Streeter's compelling bio-documentary "Shelter" explores her responses as she tries to excavate the past. Her video has been shown recently at the

Boston Women's Film Festival, the Roxbury Film Festival, the Berlin Black International Arts Festival, and, just this past week, at "The Personal is Political" Women Artists film festival at the Milky Way in Jamaica Plain.

It was circumstance more than detective work that gave Lowe-Streeter her birth mother's identity. When Lorna became the first black president of her class at Noble and Greenough's, she happened to hear of a woman who'd had a similar honor some 18 years earlier at Milton Academy, also a Boston area prep school. Without a lot of digging, Lorna learned that woman was her birth mother who had given Lorna up for adoption and then gone

on to Yale for a bachelor's and master's degrees.

"Shelter" documents the ensuing conversations Lowe-Streeter has as she valiantly tries to retrieve how the opening chapter of her life actually reads. In one instance of the stonewalling she encounters all along the way, the birth mother, very much the drama queen, relates the story with tears streaming down her face and voice raised to a near screech. Mom gets particularly maudlin when she recounts how she wrapped ace bandages tightly around her tummy every morning so that schoolmates and teachers wouldn't detect her pregnancy. Mom's grief, however, is only for her own plight as an unwed mother

not for the possibility that she might be harming the fetus.

As a filmmaker, Lowe-Streeter cleverly implies the various parents' focus on their own feelings rather than on hers by insinuating into various points of the narrative film footage from the 50's that follows the construction of a doll at a toy factory. The doll, a metaphor for objectifying the real child, is complete by the time Lowe-Streeter considers throwing up her hands at ever attaining an encouraging parent/child relationship with any of them.

Out

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