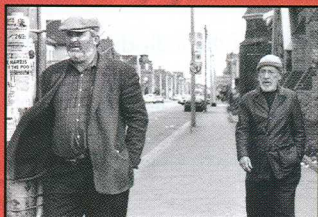


EAST SIDE SHOWDOWN

A National Film Board of Canada Production



"A superb cinéma-vérité documentary... a memorable look at how the system grinds the poor, and how the poor grind back." – Starweek

"...jagged and brilliant." – National Post

Middle-class homeowners, angry radicals, desperate drug addicts and people simply looking for a place to lay their head: all are players in a bitter struggle in the downtown Toronto neighbourhood of Dundas and Sherbourne.

Angel, a prostitute and drug addict, dodges the law. Bed-and-breakfast owner Renée rails against the sex and drug trade. Community organizer John Clarke advocates direct action in defence of the poor. And at the eye of this storm is Reverend Jeannie Loughrey, whose drop-in centre provides much-needed help for the poor, yet homeowners accuse the centre of harbouring criminals and are lobbying to shut it down.

By focusing on one particular Toronto neighbourhood, **East Side Showdown** reflects on issues affecting towns across the country, as our social safety net is eroded and the gap between rich and poor grows wider.

Contains coarse language and scenes of drug use.

Director: Robin Benger
Producer: Peter Starr

Order number: C9198 125

46 minutes, 5 seconds

TO ORDER NFB VIDEOS, CALL TODAY!

1-800-267-7710 (Canada)

1-800-542-2164 (USA)

www.nfb.ca

© 1998 A licence is required for any reproduction, television broadcast, sale, rental or public screening. Only educational institutions or non-profit organizations who have obtained this video directly from the NFB have the right to show this video free of charge to the public.

National Film Board of Canada
P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3H5

Printed in Canada



EAST SIDE
SHOWDOWN



VHS

C9198 125



EAST SIDE
SHOWDOWN

"...brilliant... marvellously raw and rich in the ironies of urban existence." – Broadcast Week

EAST SIDE SHOWDOWN

The Area

More than 50% of Toronto's services for the poor and disadvantaged are concentrated around the junction of Sherbourne and Dundas streets. Flophouses, crackhouses, warming centres, church halls, women's shelters and halfway houses for the mentally ill punctuate the neighbourhood. With its faded and crumbling mansions, Victorian rowhouses and workers' cottages, the area has historically been a source of low-rent housing. But since the 1970s, middle-class homeowners (scathingly referred to as "yuppie colonists" by anti-poverty activists) have moved in and tried to gentrify the neighbourhood.

The Characters

East Side Showdown features a number of vivid personalities:

Renée Auer, owner of a bed and breakfast and executive of a residents' association: Outspoken and tenacious, she marshals the police, the courts and local politicians to bolster the residents' position vis-à-vis the "undesirables."

John Clarke, provincial organizer for OCAP (Ontario Coalition against Poverty): John believes in direct action to make points and gain media attention for the voiceless, but the union that funds him is threatening to pull out if he doesn't change his tactics.

Lianna Hamel (Angel): A tough-talking, bible-toting, crack-addicted sex trade worker, Angel agreed to appear in the film because she felt the truth had never been told about people like her.

Rev. Jeannie Loughrey, minister, All Saints Church: Reverend Jeannie runs the church and the Friendship Centre, and she's under siege: the residents' association has lobbied the bishop to shut her programs down, and OCAP has mobilized some of her clients to march on the residents' homes.

The Issues

The admonition to "love thy neighbour" takes on a special meaning as government policies create an increasingly frayed social safety net. The growing numbers of poor and homeless who throng the city streets are testament to a loss of commitment to the notion of the common good.

- The gap between rich and poor continues to widen inexorably. In 1973 the richest 10% of Canadian families with children made 21 times more than the poorest 10%. By 1996 the richest 10% made 314 times more than the poorest¹.
- In 1996, more than one in three children in Toronto was living in poverty². This statistic was evident at shelters, food banks and welfare offices.
- The proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds who have never worked has doubled in the past 15 years. Since 1977 the unemployment rate for youth has been consistently higher than the national rate for all ages³.
- The plight of the homeless in downtown Toronto and elsewhere has become so urgent that activists are pressuring the government to declare homelessness a national disaster. The two main causes of homelessness are lack of affordable housing and poverty.

Director/writer:
Robin Bengier

Producer:
Peter Starr

Associate
Producer/Editor:
**Christopher
Sumpton**

Cinematographer:
John Westheuser

Sound Recordist:
Alister Bell

Narrator:
Nicholas Campbell

Music:
Allen Booth

Executive Producer:
Louise Lore

Order number:
C9198 125

46 minutes,
5 seconds



East Side Showdown highlights a heated dispute between the haves and have-nots, a struggle that will become more widespread across Canada if the alarming gap between the privileged and the marginalized in our society continues to grow.

Questions to Consider

- Is it possible for rich and poor to live side by side?
- In any community, how do we balance the rights of the individual with the rights of the group?
- If you were the filmmaker, would you have included other voices or points of view in this documentary?
- Do you know of any initiatives undertaken to deal with some issues raised in this film?

Audiences

This film is recommended for ages 15 and up. It contains explicit language and subject matter and includes scenes of drug use. Previewing is strongly advised, particularly with youth audiences. **East Side Showdown** is especially appropriate for the following audiences:

- Senior secondary level: for urban studies, contemporary issues, social studies.
- College and university level: in sociology, political science, community studies, applied social sciences, social work and criminology.
- Professionals and their clients in community organizations, health and social service agencies, law enforcement, and correctional training.

Related NFB Titles

Turning Away (1998): An award-winning documentary about two 25-year-olds who live on the street. Order number C9198 006.

Tu as crié: Let Me Go (1998): Film director Anne Claire Poirier enters the world of Montreal's street people to unearth the past of her daughter Yanne, who was murdered while living on the streets. Order number B9196 115.

Beating the Streets (1998): The story of two inner-city Aboriginal teens helped by a teacher. Order number C9198 025.

The Street: A Film with the Homeless (1997): A six-year chronicle following three homeless men in Montreal. Order number C9197 087.

Return to Regent Park (1994): Canada's first large-scale housing project, Regent Park in Toronto has become a haven for drugs, prostitution and violent crime. Order number C9194 068.

Confessions of a Rabid Dog (1997): Six heroin addicts in recovery. Order number C9197 073.

References

- 1 "The Growing Gap," The Centre for Social Justice, Oct. 1998, Toronto.
- 2 Metro Campaign 2000, Dec. 1998, The United Way, Toronto.
- 3 Vinay Menon, "Jobs Picture Brighter for 139,000 Youth," *Toronto Star*, Dec. 12, 1998