

[Back](#)

Tragedy on Film

By Robert Kolker

When movies concern themselves with major tragedies, many filmmakers feel compelled to avoid fiction at all costs. In the context of literature and film, Elie Weisel often has insisted that no work of fiction can recreate the Holocaust, and that most fiction that tries tends only to trivialize it. When Susan Quinby, director of Barnard's Office for Disability Services, chose six documentaries to be screened for the office's film series on AIDS, she succeeded in stressing AIDS's reality. The films in the series, which were screened all last week, don't get sidetracked by aesthetic concerns—accuracy becomes the primary concern, as it should be when dealing with AIDS.

All the films that were screened last week are available on videocassette, and the third floor of Barnard Library has VCRs ready for viewing. Watching just one or two of the movies might not help you appreciate the variety in the series—Native Americans, AIDS in Africa, past partners of AIDS victims, a hospice program and even a beauty parlor—but the fact that they are available for viewing in a college library is encouraging to anyone concerned with preventing silence.

The series, co-sponsored by Students Providing Education And Counseling on HIV (SPEACH), included "Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt," which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary.

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