

# ***SEVEN HOURS TO BURN***

A film by Shanti Thakur  
1999, 9 minutes, Color/BW  
Video, Subtitled

A visually expressive personal documentary that explores a family's history. Filmmaker Thakur mixes richly abstract filmmaking with disturbing archival war footage to narrate the story of her Danish mother's and Indian father's experiences. Her mother survives Nazi-occupied Denmark while her father experiences the devastating civil war in India between Hindus and Muslims. Both émigrés to Canada, they meet and marry, linking two parallel wars. Their daughter lyrically turns these two separate histories into a visually rich poem linking past and present in a new singular identity." – Doubletake Documentary Film Festival



- ***Margaret Mead Film Festival***
- ***Cinevision***
- ***Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival***
- ***San Francisco International***
- ***Asian American Film Festival***
- ***New York Expo of Short Film***

"Exceptionally  
imaginative...dreamlike...a visually  
compelling film."  
-Paul Curci, *Philadelphia City Paper*

"Impressionistic cinematography is  
juxtaposed with searing archival  
images while spare narration  
combines with a nuanced sound  
design. The viewer is swept into  
the mood of the piece and must  
consider the long-lasting effects –  
both internal and external –  
of conflict and change."  
- Kristine Samuelson, *Stanford  
University*



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## *Credits*

Director, Writer, Camera  
Shanti Thakur

Offline Edit  
Shanti Thakur

Online Edit  
Mary Goreeno

Voice-over Recording  
Jim Hamilton

Sound Edit  
Shanti Thakur

Sound Mix  
Bill Seery

Sound Edit  
Shanti Thakur

## cast

Sushila : Shivaani Selvaraj

Hari: Thomas Ponniah  
Ken Wyatt

Ruth: Laila Smith  
Kara Barnes

Narrator: Shanti Thakur

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## *Filmmaker's Statement*

Originally, I was making a film which was an experimental travelogue of my experiences in Romania, India, Quebec and the US. The continuing line of the film was to make sense of moments of how (as a racially ambiguous woman) people projected the most bizarre narratives onto me. It was clear that people thought my race was anything but what I actually was. Sometimes it was sweet and funny, other times, frightening (like being in Transylvania with Nazi sympathizers, not speaking any Romanian). Who I actually was became irrelevant when facing history eye to eye.

I began to develop the back-story, trying to see the other side. It became clear that people were projecting their histories and memories onto me— and many times, the memories were formed from war or forms of colonialism.

When the India segment was developed, the film shifted to being *Seven Hours to Burn*. For the first time, I realized that my parents came from parallel wars during the same decade— where both wars were based on the premises of ethnic or religious purity. The film became grounded in uncovering the emotional archeology of my Danish and Indian sides. Like the “other” who I met in my travels, I began to look at the “other” in my family, namely my parents and grandparents. In order to understand their point of view, I had to understand how their memories had been colored by grand historic moments - as well as the moments of family dynamics.

*Seven Hours to Burn* is the final product of my understanding of the “other’s” past and how it is inextricably a part of myself in the present moment. — Shanti Thakur

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## *Biography*

SHANTI THAKUR -born in Canada- has researched, written and directed documentaries for the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) as well as short experimental work since 1992. Her award-winning documentaries focus on social issues such as aboriginal justice in the Yukon (*Circles*, 1997); interracial families through the children's eyes (*Domino*, 1994); and cross-cultural tensions in a mixed neighborhood after a black-on-white murder (*Crossing Borders*, 1992). Her documentaries have been broadcast in 22 countries and distributed in 17. Her documentaries can take on experimental qualities: *Seven Hours to Burn* (1999) is a personal memoir of the two different wars of racial/religious purity experienced by her Danish and Indian parents. *Two Forms* (1998) explores gender through the simple, sensual gestures of two hands.

Awards include: Best Documentary Short Film, Cleveland International Film Festival; Silver Apple, NEMN; Best Documentary, Philadelphia City Paper Independent Film Contest; Director's Choice Award, Black Maria Film Festival; Bronze Plaque, Columbus International Film Festival. Other festivals include: Tampere, Mill Valley, Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, Doubletake Documentary Film Festival, Aspen Shortsfest and Edinburgh. Shanti holds degrees in psychology and media, as well as a MFA in Film from Temple University. She lives in New York, NY.

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## *Festival List*

Black Maria Film and Video Festival, Director's Choice Award  
Cleveland International Film Festival, Best Short Documentary  
Big Muddy Film Festival, Honourable Mention  
Worldfest-Houston International Film Festival, Bronze Award, Experimental Film  
City Paper's Philadelphia Independent Film Contest, Best Documentary  
Edinburgh Film Festival  
Margaret Mead Film Festival  
Ann Arbor Film Festival  
Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema  
Tampere International Short Film Festival  
Aspen Short Film Festival  
Doubletake Documentary Film Festival  
THAW 2000 Film Festival  
Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival  
Humboldt International Film Festival  
Athens International Film Festival  
Nashville Independent Film Festival  
Right to Have Rights Film Festival  
BAC International Film Festival  
Robert Flaherty Film Seminar  
Pacific Film Archives  
BBC British Short Film Festival