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Filmmaker's Search for Real Teens Ended at L.A. School; Movies: M glimpse into a generation,' director of documentary 'Chain Camera' [Home Edition]

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When he chose John Marshall High School in Los Feliz as a setting for his documentary "Chain Camera," Soichet sought out the high school in large part for the ethnic diversity within its walls.

And his search paid off.

"I think it really portrays their high school experience in a way that we so rarely see," Dick said. "It always couched or redirected by the media in some strange way. . . . I really feel like people are g

The film, which opens today, was shot entirely by the students and their friends and relatives in a alternately powerful and comic segments focused on one or two teenagers. Through their eyes it traditions, sexual experimentation and racial tension.

Although Marshall's neo-Gothic facade has appeared often on the big screen, housing mock schc Camera" sought out the high school in large part for the ethnic diversity within its walls.

Looking at the students featured--the film was shot in the 1999- 2000 school year--it's difficult to ir

dishes about her bouts of bulimia, running away and her tongue-in-cheek thoughts about becoming Manuel's video diary shows him striking out as he tries to woo a crush. In another segment, Silva another Armenian and tries to balance tradition with modernity. Sent away to L.A. from his native preventing him from playing football. And in another segment, Alan and Lisa are on a bed laughing with her mouth.

"While Kirby didn't choose many people, I think he chose a lot of those who speak for many other white student who "had rarely kissed her boyfriend" she was probably the least representative of I only by her first name.) "For me, what is captured is my insecurities, about how I am not pretty, an innocent part of it. And that's just fine, it's very true. When you watch lots of stuff from Hollywood : portraying 15- to 18-year-olds and it's not real."

With an adult-like self-assurance and assertiveness, Cinammon focuses her segment mostly on I she says she took the camera to make a statement to other gay or bisexual students "in the close

"The experiences Jen and I had were two totally different experiences--I didn't get a lot of hostility girlfriend who attended a less tolerant school in Valencia. "She really hid her sexuality from her pe closet because these activities had these connotations."

On campus, Cinammon served as an active voice for gay rights. Although she believes that Mars says there are still misunderstandings about homosexuality that "Chain Camera" tries to correct.

Cinammon is not Marshall's only political activist. From the metallic Pokemon action stickers dec woman--to his proclivity for eating food discarded and wasted by others, everything about Jesse r a black robe and collar to school for a week "just for the hell of it."

Reclining lazily outside a cafe in Silver Lake recently, with his peroxide-blond and blue-tipped hair passerby as a potential constituent of District 13, where he says he plans to run for City Council i corruption groups. I'm always on some list because I cannot stand by and see injustice."

In his video diary segment for "Chain Camera," Jesse, then a high- school senior, describes the b when he was in middle school. He matter-of- factly details his own past using and selling drugs.

"I've always been a very open person, but it's kind of a personal moment when you plop down wit because you get no feedback from the camera," he says. "And at Marshall, people don't care wha of others."

One of "Chain Camera's" more memorable characters is Ethan, the school's homecoming prince.

On tape his mother explains that several childhood illnesses have left Ethan speaking more slow! Ethan's video journey through his school life reveals some mockery behind his back, but mostly th school's TV newscast, for which he is an anchor.

Ethan's original footage included shots of him responding to and deflecting another student's ridic positive energy, Dick noted. "The way he handles the ridicules engenders a great deal of respect somehow he turns it around into a strength."

In a telling home scene, his mother asks Ethan if he is a virgin. His reply: "Well--what exactly doe:

"Ethan's is a situation that gets overlooked a lot," says Amy, who has known him since seventh gr and he's done so well and has made friends, he's not outcasted by people. And I love when he se because 'how could they meet me and not like me?' "

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