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November 25, 2022

Anth1103

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Pairs is Burning

RJ #4

Paris is Burning by Jennie Livingston is a documentary about the LGBTQ+ community during the late 80s along with the birth of the ballroom culture speaking on the treatment and stereotypes these individuals featured endured. The film displays the lives of African American, Latino gay and transgender members of the ballroom scene such as Willi Ninja, Octavia St. Laurent, Dorian Corey to name a few as they maneuver through life after being shut down from the world for being themselves along with why they decide to walk the balls and what the events mean to them. During this time period anything other than being heterosexual was considered unnormal outcasted or alienated by society resulting in not being accepted by their family forcing them to find ways to survive with included prostitution. As an escape from homophobia the ballroom scene was created as a safe haven for one to run to being in a space with many others who live the same life as them who can share the same struggles allowing those who attend to create bonds with various people embracing their sexuality. Those feature in the film like Venus Xtravaganza shared her life story about cross dressing around the age of 13 fleeing from New Jersey to New York where she met her house father Hector Valle after her family found out, Venus worked as an escort along Chelsea Piers to support herself and perform at

balls. Venus shared how she always felt like a woman with the hopes of getting a sex change operation to make herself feel complete before her tragic death during filming. The balls consisted of individuals in houses some named after fashion designers such as Balenciaga, Miyake Mugler, Mason Margiela with house mothers and fathers whose duties are to provide guidance, wisdom as a mentor and even a place to stay for their children, the ball has various categories showing off participants talent through dance along with fashion. Epidemics like HIV/AIDS affected the LGBTQ+ community rapidly resulting in organizers creating awareness through the use of the ballroom scene having attendees perform free HIV testing to enter the event with free admission. Paris is Burning is a film that brought something hidden to the forefront showing intersectionality through the uniqueness of those who decided to share their story by not allowing the world to define who they are. Today ballroom has become very popular with balls being thrown in various countries being open to all homosexuals and heterosexuals as well a widespread with shows such as RuPaul's Drag Race displaying a competition between drag queens lip syncing, Pose on Fx showing the essence of ballroom culture including the struggles gays and the transgender community endure during the late 80s to the 90s while telling the story of how ballroom brought so much joy promoting togetherness. Personally, watching pose multiple times, the show uses stories from Paris is burning such a Venus Xtravaganza death reenacted by the character Candy, Elektra Abundance portraying Octavia St. Laurent and Angel Evangelista telling the story of Tracey Norman the first African American transgender model, the show Legendary streaming on HBOmax quickly became a phenomenon showing how ballroom is ran during these present times as well as how ballroom

has spread to different countries but still serving as a place for someone to be their authentic self with support from their house members. Paris is Burning is a film necessary for someone who identifies within the community to see the story of those who've paved the way for others to still have resources such as the balls when they're struggling not only with the sexuality but within themselves.