

# Talking sex work, 'Fifty Shades,' and BDSM at Emerson's Bright Lights Film Series

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## FULL TEXT

Filmmaker and critic *Cheyenne Picardo*, whose film "Remedy" is a look at BDSM and sex work, didn't mind talking about "Fifty Shades of Grey" at a screening of her film at Emerson College Wednesday night.

Picardo, who spoke as part of the Bright Lights Film Series, said that even though her own film is informed by real BDSM experiences —and that "Fifty Shades" is, well, "Fifty Shades" —she doesn't think *E.L. James's* romance novels-turned-films confused people about what it means to be into bondage, discipline, dominance, and submission. ("Remedy" came out in 2013, just as "Fifty Shades" took over pop culture.)

"I feel like they're underestimating the people who read it," Picardo said, of critics of the book. "I have a feeling that people are reading the book —and then finding other [information]."

Picardo also said she believes that if the books had been better written, there would have been less criticism of the portrayal.

"If *Anthony Burgess* had tackled the subject matter, we'd have a very different dialogue about it right now," she said, referencing the late author of "A Clockwork Orange."

Picardo —whose resume includes the documentary "A Queen for the People," about *Bob the Drag Queen*, of "RuPaul's Drag Race" —was inspired to make "Remedy" after working as a dominatrix and submissive in New York. The story follows a woman who learns the ups and downs of the profession, from the close relationships she develops with co-workers to her complicated relationships with clients.

Tuesday's post-screening talk was moderated by Boston's *Melissa Gira Grant*, author of "Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work," who praised Picardo for crediting and compensating all of the people who contributed to "Remedy." There are some directors (*Steven Soderberg's* name was mentioned by the women) who have a reputation for mining the stories of sex workers without crediting them on screen.

Picardo said, of her filmmaking philosophy, "I'm allergic to not paying people."

Credit: By Meredith Goldstein Globe Staff

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